

The Human-Animal Relationship

25-27 March 2011, Studienhaus Stiftung Gut Schönwag, Wessobrunn

Conveners: Julia Herzberg (RCC/Munich), Christian Kehrt (Helmut Schmidt University Hamburg) and Franziska Torma (RCC/Munich) in cooperation with Cornelia Lüdecke (RCC/Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research)

Participants: Julia Blanc (RCC), Julia Breitruck (Universität Bielefeld), Samuel Camenzind (PH Karlsruhe), Lisa Maria Glenk (Veterinärmedizinische Universität Wien), Herwig Grimm (Institut für Technik Theologie und Naturwissenschaften), Christof Mauch (RCC / LMU Munich), Dorit Mersmann (Veterinärmedizinische Universität Wien), Carola Otterstedt (Stiftung Bündis Mensch und Tier), Leandra Sabaß (LMU Munich), Johanna Sigl (LMU Munich), Sandra Wesenberg (TU Dresden), Amir Zelinger (LMU Munich)

At the joint invitation of the League for the Human-Animal Relationship (*Bündnis Mensch-Tier-Beziehung*) and the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, eight doctoral candidates from a range of disciplines descended on Gut Schönwag, close to Munich, to discuss their dissertational projects and the ways in which these interface with or shed new light on the human-animal relationship.

The program, which was based on pre-circulated papers, allowed participants not only to present their dissertation projects but also to take turns in chairing discussions. The workshop was opened with an introduction by Carola Otterstedt, Director of the Bündnis Mensch-Tier-Beziehung, and Christof Mauch, Director of the Rachel Carson Center, in which the role of the environmental humanities, and of the Rachel Carson Center in particular, was emphasized.

The first presentation, entitled *The Animal Kingdom in Syene/Aswan (Egypt)*, was given by **JOHANNA SIGL**. Her research focuses on animal bones and other animal traces (such as seashells) found on this site and is interpreted with the help of local archaeologists and the Munich Institute for Paleoanatomy. Her impressive project, which spans more than three thousand years between 2543 BC and 1412 AD (the year in which the city of Syene was finally abandoned), makes close links between the dominant culture and nutrition.

AMIR ZELINGER gave the second presentation, which went under the heading of *Citizens and Animals: Animal Husbandry and Control of Animals in German Cities, 1850-1930*; his talk focused on the

theft and slaughter of dogs in Munich at the end of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century. Many segments of the population, particularly poorer ones, were not opposed to eating dog meat instead of the meat traditionally favored for human consumption. The ethical questions posed were whether it is right to eat a domesticated animal, and on contemporary newspaper reports of the dog thefts, which were mainly concerned with the costs incurred.

JULIA BREITTRUCK followed with another historical project: *The Humanized Animal? A Microhistory of Domesticated Pets in the Eighteenth Century* looks at the differentiation between humans and animals and the construction of civil identity by means of keeping birds as pets during the eighteenth century. This was a period in which songbirds became widespread in bourgeois society, in contrast to preceding ages, when exotic pets were reserved for the nobility. The study examines the role played by pets in family life.

The Impact of the Human-Animal Relationship on Injuries and Social Stress amongst Horned and Hornless Goats was the title of **DORIT MERSMANN'S** presentation. Her veterinary research is concerned with the behavior of dairy goats in Germany and Austria, and employs a variety of different evaluation methods. Her initial results could lead her to conclude that stress and injuries in goat populations are dependent on their relationship with their human owners, rather than whether they are horned.

LEANDRA SABAB, whose presentation was entitled *The Ethology of American Commercially-Farmed Minks Reared in Conditions Complying with the Animal Protection Regulations*, surprised her audience with a visual representation of mink farming in Europe; despite the exceptions of Austria, Great Britain, and Sweden where mink-farming is forbidden, Europe is the biggest producer of mink-fur in the world, producing 53% of the total amount. As a consequence, the fur industry emphasizes the need for economical, as well as animal-friendly, means of production. Sabab's study examines how good-quality fur can be produced in animal-friendly conditions (e.g. swimming opportunities for the animals, group husbandry, increased space).

SANDRA WESENBERG'S presentation looked at the human-animal relationship from yet another new perspective. Her research project is entitled *The Positive Effects of an Animal-Assisted Intervention Program for In-Patients Suffering from Dementia* and focuses on the effects of using animals in therapeutic interventions on a group of inhabitants of a care home, compared with others where therapeutic intervention is human-only, or where there is no intervention. The results of her research indicate that there are positive benefits connected to the use of animals in therapy, leading to participants being more aware of and attentive to their environment.

LISA MARIA GLENK'S research on *Effects of Human-Animal Interaction on Animal Physiology and Behavior During Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAI) in Neuropsychiatry* looks at a similar issue from a different angle, namely the stressful effect that these kinds of animal-assisted interventions might have on the animals themselves (dogs). In this context, the relationship between dog and dog-owner is paramount; it is crucial that dog-owners understand and can react to their dogs. The study draws data from different institutions, including the Landeskrankenklinik (County Hospital) Mostviertel Mauer-Amstetten, the geriatric facility Caritas Socialis and the MTI/AAT (multi-professional animal-assisted intervention).

Finally, **SAMUEL CAMENZIND** presented his research on the ethics of cloning animals. His project, *Cloning Animals: An Ethical Evaluation* examines the process of somatic cell nuclear transfer within mammals, aiming to bridge the gap between the scientific and the philosophical viewpoints, and presenting the ethical debate on this issue. The project is an attempt to close philosophical and ethical loopholes concerning the cloning of animals, and consider the role of institutions in debates about animal ethics and bioethics.

Each of the presentations was discussed by the workshop participants as a whole, including the conveners and **HERWIG GRIMM** from the Institute for Technology, Theology, and Natural Sciences (TTN9) at LMU Munich. Due to the variety of disciplines and research backgrounds, these discussions gave rise to many “new” questions, giving doctoral candidates the chance to see their work from different perspectives. This was a very fruitful workshop and participants went away with fresh insights and ideas for their ongoing research.

--Julia Blanc