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It is reasonable to suggest that at present we are witnessing fundamental changes in the human-animal relationship. Whole species are threatened by extinction or are already lost as a result of human interference with nature. World-wide initiatives to protect animals and an animal's liberation movement are without precedent. Genetic engineering has deep effects on our relationship to animals, and the electronic age produces living conditions that have far reaching consequences for the position of animals in our social, imaginary and emotional life. All this is creating strong motives for an assessment of the interaction of humans and animals. The six volumes can be read as a response to the challenge by taking an inventory of this interaction at a crucial moment in history.

A Cultural History of Animals is a suggestive title. What is hidden behind it? A continuation of Aristotle's natural history *De generatione animalium*? A history of social animals such as apes or bees and ants that live in colonies or states? It is neither, but an attempt to account for the human-animal relationship from antiquity to the present. Animals are hunted and eaten, domesticated and exploited, but are also objects of reverence, love and derision and they can cause dread and awe. Animals, both wild beasts and tame pets, is the underlying hypothesis of this publication, are inextricably intertwined with human civilization. This has left traces in arts and literature, religions, the law, philosophy and rituals of the every day life. Yet we have little reliable knowledge about this relationship and most of it is highly specialized and scattered in essays and books that are not easily accessible. The six volumes are an innovative and ambitious project that synthesizes knowledge of animals as living creatures and their symbolic representations in Euro-

pean civilizations. They make an invaluable contribution to our understanding of a field which, in spite of its central position in the history of civilization, is waiting for its due attention.

Images of animals provide clues for our understanding of the beginning of history and, indeed, human life. The earliest traces of the human-animal relationship are from Palaeolithic cave art and rock art (25,000 BC) and small figurines made of clay and stone. Written sources are younger such as the Gilgamesh epos's (2,100 BC) creation of a god like hero fighting wild animals, or the Bible's narrative of a snake's involvement in the end of paradise and beginning of human history. We know little about the myths of many cultures that involve animals in the creation of the world such as the rainbow snake of Australian aboriginal mythology or monkeys in African myths. From the Lascaux discovery in 1940 on, animal images in cave art have triggered strong responses from disbelief to fascination and created an irresistible temptation to speculate about the function and meaning of these representations of animals. The question as to „Why?“ can be read as the re-emergence of the metaphysical question regarding the nature of the human in a time of scientific research. Why would early man be motivated to take a lump of clay and form the shape of an animal or make a drawing on a rock surface that represents an animal? And is representation the appropriate word for these images? Why would the representation of animals continue in the emerging cities and high civilizations of the Near East and Egypt? And again: why should with the urbanization of life in the 18th century when, it has been argued, city life prevented close contact to animals, their representation through images and words continue and even increase in quantity? There is, and this is no surprise, not one answer to each of these questions but many, and most are interwoven with controversial theories of civilization. It seems obvious, however, that a history of animals can be written only as the flip side of a history of man as the creator of culture. The living-together of humans and animals is then interpreted as the mirror image of fundamental problems of the human living-together. In any case, the

question of what a human being is cannot be separated from the varying images and concepts of animals produced by humans.

Is this a one-way traffic or is there room for agency of animals as the title of this publication appears to suggest? Does this Cultural History construct an interaction that grants animals their own position? Are animals given their own voice? The authors are sensitive to the fate of animals in human history and demonstrate a considerable degree of empathy. Yet this history is based on a subject-object divide and the position ascribed to animals is that of objects. They transcend natural history to the extent to which they are subjected to human domination. More often than not these objects are portrayed as victims of human power, cruelty and sadism – as for example in laboratory experiments or as helpless means to inflict terror and death on humans as, for example, in the unbelievable horrors of the spectacles in Roman amphitheatres. The sirens and their bewitching voices have no place in this history, neither in Homer's nor in Kafka's version. It presents a world inhabited by animals and humans but their relationship is an asymmetrical one that invests the humans with absolute power of domination.

A persisting controversy has been the issue of a dividing line between humans and all other mobile organisms named animal. Several essays address the problem of how this distinction that is inherent in all Indo-European languages has been defined in the past. Hybrid bodies, *Mischwesen*: combinations of humans and animals in art and literature are common from Mesopotamia to current science fiction. They are not necessarily indicative of a culture that defines man as an animal but of the crucial importance of the imagination for this relationship. The man-animal relationship was never only based on observation and theory but always also the product of emotions, of fear, desire, and a longing for shedding the ego and imagines the self as other. This relationship has always led to creating an imaginary space for transcendence in sacred as well as in secular societies. In polytheistic cultures the combination of a human's and a beast's body crosses the border between the human and the divine

and in modern cultures between the world of experience and that of scientific construction. Closely related are narrations of sexual intercourse between humans and animals that are gods in disguise. Finally, there is the long tradition of metamorphoses from man to animal and vice versa, associated with magic and, in the modern period, with the sub-conscious, that produces wish dreams, such as the frog prince, or night mares, such as Kafka's story about the metamorphosis in a beetle or more recent science fiction narratives with experiments going awry.

As far as definitions are concerned, there is a further complication. The intersection of natural and cultural history gives rise to the first question of philosophy and Philosophical Anthropology as to what is human? Anthropological accounts of the human-animal relationship have attempted to associate periods in history with either of the two alternative answers namely to define humans as animals or alternatively create a category that keeps them separate with the implication of a hierarchy that justifies man's rule over animals. This is a futile attempt as these mutually exclusive answers have co-existed, some essays of this anthology demonstrate, at all times. Yet differences need to be acknowledged because, for example, the definition of man as an animal resulting from Darwin's theory of evolution is different and needs to be distinguished from this view based on metaphysics. Was the radical concept of man as an animal an achievement of modern theory or was it already the common view in Antiquity? Different contributions offer different positions and the reader is left to making conjectures. The absence of an introduction to the six volumes that would address such general issues and questions of conceptualisation and methodology is a deficiency.

This publication avoids exploring the philosophical dimension of the problems and adopts a descriptive approach within a chronological framework. Without addressing the epistemological issue, the publication follows the model of a re-constituted historicism. This is its weakness and also its strength. As this is a pioneering work, I tend to consider it a strength – stocktaking of the relationship between humans and non-

humans in terms of philosophical and anthropological definitions implicitly made and openly practiced by each period in question. The essays are well researched and convincingly argued. They offer a solid body of detailed information and general knowledge. However, the absence of definitions of concepts leads to drifting perspectives and relativism that avoids judgement even in extreme cases such as Roman slaves being torn apart by wild animals for entertainment or animals sadistically tortured for pleasure of a paying audience. Many contributions give the reader a sense of the authors' opinion through qualifying comments and a wording indicative of ethical positions. Yet the history of the man-animal-relationship raises such fundamental issues and requires such far reaching and basic decisions regarding methodology, definitions of concepts and exclusions that individual evaluations are insufficient and a reflection on the meta-level is indispensable.

A preference for a history of facts and events guides most chapters and this is due to pursuing an ideal of objectivity. At the same time it leads to a devaluation of the imaginary and limitation of the concept of culture to an epiphenomenon of the material world. To be sure, myth and imagination are not excluded. Images are given considerable space and some interpretations of images are among the highlights of the investigations of the invisible bonds that link humans and animals and create togetherness. But these interpretations deal with images as media of representation. The imagination is not understood as a means of production and the material quality of images is given the short shrift. We are informed about the cloned sheep Dolly and ensuing imaginations, male fantasies and public myths surrounding its name and fate, but Kafka's ape or Cronenberg's fly are deemed not fit for inclusion in this cultural history that privileges a concept of material history over one constituted through the imagination's faculty of creation. Some chapters differ from this approach as, for example, the introduction and most contributions to volume 4 (Enlightenment). They are in danger of losing contact with the other chapters and drifting into the arbitrariness of deconstructive language games.

Has the human-animal relationship a history of its own? The implicit answer of this publication is in the negative. One of the fundamental decisions taken by the editors is the division of history in six epochs of unequal length, from 1 500 years (Antiquity) to 80 years (Modernity). The underlying assumption is that the man-animal-relationship needs to be conceived within the frameworks of historical periods constituted by criteria unrelated to cultural history. Criteria for delineating these epochs vary: abstract macro-history for Antiquity (Egypt, Greece, and Rome), religion for the Medieval Ages, intellectual and artistic innovation for the Renaissance, power politics for the age of Empire, and ideological and aesthetic categories for Modernity. Within these epochs the images of and attitudes towards animals vary fundamentally and the connection between the definition of an epoch and the specific issue of animal-human relations remains loose. While the introductions to the volumes try to establish certain cohesion, this is rarely ever achieved and indeed seems impossible. The volume on the age of Empire is a case in point. Empire shaped the political agenda thus constituting this period but did it also determine the images of animals and the human relationship to them? Would it not be more appropriate to define this period through the rising of modern science? It is questionable whether, as the introduction argues, an attitude of domination that was characteristic of the political constitution of this period also shaped cultural attitudes of this time; furthermore, should the assumption of a collective attitude of domination be justified, the question can be asked of whether this attitude was not equally strong during other periods, e.g. the Roman period or the present.

Given the variety of issues and number of contributors it is no surprise that there are inconsistencies. Most are of minor importance, but some are related to central issues and are irritating. The introduction to volume 6 argues, to refer to this one example, that it is a characteristic of the modern period to systematically remove animals from their natural habitat, whereas previous volumes make it clear that this attitude towards animals was introduced in ancient Rome, continued in the

Middle Ages and was popular in the Renaissance. Philosophical Anthropology and empirical research have demonstrated that place is of utmost relevance for animals. It requires careful assessment and would need to be addressed as central for the human-animal relationship.

This cultural history is Euro-centred. This is a limitation and a wise one. Certainly, insight in the specific European conditions creates an appetite for learning about the human-animal relationship in other cultures such as Japanese and Chinese or traditional and contemporary African societies. But a genuine global approach would require a huge amount of research in areas hitherto unexplored and lead to many more volumes. I would like to express the hope that these six volumes are a first step that will be followed by publications exploring this fascinating field of knowledge on a global scale.

It is an advantage that all six volumes have an identical structure: an introduction outlining the period is followed by six chapters on symbolic representation, hunting, domestication, spectacles and entertainment, the sciences, philosophy, and art. This makes it possible to read the volumes either synchronically or diachronically, for example read the chapters about animals in art from the beginnings to the present, or, alternatively, read one volume and get immersed in an epoch. Either way, all six volumes offer a wealth of well presented information. It is easy to be seduced and spend hours reading about obscure subjects such as the origin of Egyptian medicine, bearbaiting in the Middle Ages, the death of a white dove in a vacuum glass cylinder, the public sculpture devoted to a terrier dog who was the victim of vivisection in the early twentieth century, or Emily the cat flying home in the lap of luxury to Milwaukee after an extended journey to France – and realize how significant these seeming trivia in fact are for cultural history and the image we have of ourselves. A combination of surprise and entertainment with serious research gives these volumes a place in the best tradition of accessible science. This cultural history explores the fate of animals in human civilization and raises fundamental issues of what it means to be human – it is a fine extension of

the eighteenth century encyclopaedic projects and exemplary of the enlightening power of popular science.

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