

# HUMANS AND ANIMALS

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For centuries mankind has sought its place between the animals and the gods. This self-understanding in the sense of a significant difference between humans and animals and the quest for a decisive difference (mainly *logos* in the twofold sense of reason and language, but also work and culture) have also shaped the German tradition of philosophical anthropology up to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The German language itself has played a significant role in this, as it uses different terms for 'eating,' 'dying' and others when it comes to animals or humans. At the same time, people from the colonies were exhibited on annual fairs in "civilized" Europe just like exotic animals, and their purported "primitiveness" was frequently equated with a mere animality. Even as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people were brutally treated as animals by war criminal regimes. However, in recent decades, developments in philosophy and beyond have raised the question of the need to revise the hitherto prevailing understanding of animals in the West. Philosophical relevance for the relationship between humans and animals is evident, among others, in the spreading relativization of the differentialist paradigm with reference to scientific evolutionism, the establishment of animal ethics as an independent discipline and interdisciplinary animal studies, the keen interest of contemporary artists in the animal other, explorations in the field of empirical animal aesthetics and not least theories of posthumanism. Nonetheless, hardly any theoretical alternative models from non-Western philosophical and cultural traditions have been investigated.

Against this background, *polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren* invites to place the philosophical understanding of animality and the relationship between humans and animals in an intercultural context. Possible topics and questions concern:

- The status of animals in non-Christian religions; totem and the divinity of animals; mythological hybrids between animals and humans;
- Are there animal subjects? What concepts are offered by non-Western cultures to better understand animals, without recourse to the terms of subject, mind, reason, spirit, freedom and inwardness that are prejudiced by anthropocentric humanism? What epistemological advantages do these offer in terms of access to the inner life of animals?
- Agency of animals and comparisons between humans and animals in social and political philosophy. Animals as metaphors for marginalized and oppressed groups of humans. Women, slaves and "primitives" as "mere animals"? And conversely, is the animal life nothing but a "naked life"?
- Animal liberation and postcolonialism, postcolonial ecocriticism;
- Reflections from media philosophy and critical views on contemporary culture regarding the fluctuation of animal understanding between machines and their anthropomorphic Disneyfication;
- Patho- and biocentric ethical theories in non-Western cultures and philosophies. Can protomoral feelings be detected in the animal kingdom? Do animals die or do they simply perish?
- Interspecies communication and friendship in non-Western cultural traditions;
- Veganism and spirituality in non-Western cultures;

- Do animals have a cultural capacity and can the concept of interculturality consequently be applied also to the relationship between humans and animals or symbioses of several animal species? Are zoos and aquariums artificially established "intercultural" biotopes?
- From animals as mere symbols and glosses in philosophy to the philosophical interpretation of dealing with animals in everyday life;
- The relevance of cultural particularities for animal welfare, the legitimacy of animal rights and the assessment of biodiversity;
- Posthumanism as an opportunity or an endangerment for animals?
- Animal breeding as an art? Art by animals and for animals.

We cordially invite contributions by philosophers as well as academics from other disciplines in German, English, French or Spanish. Contributions from non-European traditions of thought are of particular interest. The corresponding guidelines can be found at: [www.polylog.net/richtlinien-fuer-beitraege/](http://www.polylog.net/richtlinien-fuer-beitraege/)

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