

Not only in English: The first textbook for Human-Animal Studies in German

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Gabriela Kompatscher, Reingard Spannring and Karin Schachinger: *Human-Animal Studies. Eine Einführung für Studierende und Lehrende. Mit Beiträgen von Reihard Heuberger und Reinhard Margreiter*. Waxmann 2017.

The first German textbook for Human-Animal Studies (HAS) reveals in its title how predominant English has been in this quite new field of study. The writers do not comment on the use of English for this term, which seems to be a current practice in German-speaking research communities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The book includes a valuable overview of HAS research groups and study opportunities in universities both in the above-mentioned countries and in Scandinavia (pp. 20–22). The expression *die Untersuchung von Mensch-Tier-Beziehung* (or *Verhältnisse*) comes closest. It is the name of the German HAS journal (*Zeitschrift zur Mensch-Tier-Beziehung*) and of the interdisciplinary master programme in Vienna, and it is used in the description of HAS on

the web page of the University of Kassel (*die Untersuchung von Mensch-Tier-Verhältnisse*) – the only university in Europe which has, thus far, a professorship in HAS (p. 20). The foreword (*Vorwort*, pp. [7]–[9]) is written by a well-known HAS scholar, Margo DeMello, to whom the book is dedicated. A foreword in English is not unusual nowadays in scholarly publications in German, or the back cover might be in English or an English abstract could well be included. DeMello recounts the Schulte hoax, a fraudulent article published in an academic journal which claimed, among other things, that the dogs which patrolled the Berlin Wall were descendants of the dogs which were used in concentration camps. The aim of the hoax was to question the intellectual status of HAS and its methodologies.



As a counterbalance, this book provides multiple starting points for human-animal issues, and provides German *termini technici* for this field of studies.

The target audience of the book, as the subtitle and introduction (p. [13]) state, are both the students and the teachers of HAS. The level of this *Studienbuch* is not specified but it could certainly be used in the upper levels of high schools. The book is pedagogical in aim, including keywords (e.g. “*Ausschluss und Abwertung von Anderen*: othering”, p. 31), an introductory summary (*Hinführung*) at the beginning of each main chapter, some recommendations for further reading at the end of the chapters, info boxes (with a picture of a light bulb in the margin), and 27 exercises (*Arbeitsaufgaben*, marked by a picture of a pen), which function mainly as preliminary questions, before reading. In addition, some very good review questions (*Wiederholungsfragen*) are posed after some specific subjects. The book contains a short glossary (pp. 220–223, e.g. *Speziesismus*) and a list of research questions for students (pp. 232–233, e.g. ‘What kind of roles do animals play in a child’s development?’), and as a second appendix, a selected list of HAS associations both within and outside Europe, as well as a list of useful net addresses, such as the *Minding Animals* list (pp. 234–236, *Anhang 2*). The bibliography contains journals (divided into German, English and Italian journals), the most essential

HAS research in German, as well as some statistics and bibliographies available on the Internet (pp. 237–264).

The introduction (*Vorbemerkung*, pp. [13]–15) includes a clear account of the areas of interest of the three authors, all originally from the University of Innsbruck. The politics of inclusiveness is shown with the use of expressions like *Sprachkritiker/innen* (critical linguist). Two other contributors, Reinhard Heubiger and Reinhard Margreiter, are mentioned in the book’s subtitle; Heubiger has written a subchapter on linguistic usages (3.2) and Margreiter the whole of chapter 5 on animal ethics.

The opening chapter of the book is the introduction, followed by a definition of HAS, its origins and historical premises and its possible future in chapter two. The third chapter (*Die Gesellschaftliche Konstruktion von Tieren*) concentrates on social and political questions including questions on the human-animal divide (3.1) and linguistic practices (3.2). The long fourth chapter, titled *Kulturelle Praktiken* (cultural practices), includes anthropocentric categories, domestic animals and companion animals (*Tiere in unserem Zuhause*, 4.2) – with an interesting discussion on the difference between the German expressions *Heimtiere* and *Haustiere*, pp. 62–4, and livestock (*Tiere im Dienst der Ökonomie: Sogenannte Nutztiere*, 4.3). This chapter closes with a discussion on animals as entertainment

and changing human-animal relations. Some topics in this chapter connect with the previous two or are discussed more thoroughly in the following chapters. Overall, the exposition is logical and proceeds by first introducing questions and then going into greater depth. There might, however, have been more cross-referencing, and the book would have benefited from an index. The book is divided into chapters and subchapters, but the further division of subchapters into unnumbered sub-subchapters makes locating information difficult. Thus, for example, finding information on Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka's *Zoopolis* (pp. 121, 182–3, 188–90) or on Carol Adams (p. 88, 159–60, 162) or on *Tiergeschichte* (Animal history, p. 26, pp. 187–8), requires considerable patience from readers, who must skim and locate the information themselves.

The fifth chapter on animal ethics begins with such basic questions as what is ethics (5.1.) and discusses to what extent animal ethics can be seen as a subcategory of applied ethics (5.2. *Tierethik als Bereichsethik und Angewandte Ethik*). This chapter provides a historical overview on animal ethics (5.3, 5.4) as well as a modern-day perspective (5.3.), including, for example, questions on animal rights (subchapters on pp. 117–8 and 137–9) and ending with a useful section on conclusions (*Fazit*, 5.5.). The following chapter gives five theoretical standpoints

for human-animal interactions: Marxism and the Frankfurt School (6.1); feminist perspectives (6.2); postmodernism and posthumanism (6.3); “animal agency” (6.4); and intersectionality (6.5). The section on Marxism and the Frankfurt School is rather too elaborate (see e.g. *Karl Marx' Werk, Marx und Tiere, Marxistische HAS?*). Marx, it becomes clear, adopted the 19th-century dichotomized model in discussing human-animal issues, but his creation of such concepts as *Entfremdung* and *Kommodifizierung* are still valid for human-animal studies today.

The seventh and final chapter concentrates on different methods in this field of studies, summarizing many of the themes covered in the previous chapters, ending with a short concluding section (pp. 217–219). The subchapters cover such topics as: “Benefits, goals and methods of Human-Animal Studies” (7.1), “Animal viewpoint and the question of objectivity” (7.2), “The voice of animals and the problems concerning anthropocentrism and anecdotes” (7.3), “Interdisciplinarity as a desideratum” (7.4), and “Research methods” (7.5). The “anecdotes” (*Anekdoten*) of section 7.3 refer to the method of using stories about animals in order to understand animal behaviour (see also Robert W. Mitchell, Nicholas S. Thompson and H. Lynn Miles [eds.], *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals*, 1997). Section 7.5 (pp. 212–6) concentrates on ethnographic methods

and methods of studying subjective experience including phenomenology (p. 214).

The first Appendix (*Anhang 1: Human-Animal Studies und die verschiedenen Disziplinen*) focuses on the discipline of literary studies in order to provide a case study. Literary animals are discussed in the chapter on cultural practices under the subheading of animals as entertainment (*Tiere in Literatur, Kunst und Film*, pp. 96–9), but the Appendix adds bullet-point topics and interesting questions, concluding with the notion that literary animal studies make animals more visible in a literary work. There is, however, less discussion on literary devices as such, though there is a brief comment on metaphor on p. 158. Although interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary are seen as obvious practices in the field (pp. 26, 210–2), some mention could have been made to HAS and different kinds of visual and performative art projects.

A textbook cannot avoid some generalizations. It is understandable that there is no space to mention the discrepancies in Plutarch's thinking about animals in the different essays and treatises of the *Moralia* (a collection of his writings, some in a dialogue form, but not his work as such) and in his biographies (Aristotle's different attitudes towards the human-animal divide is, however, acknowledged on p. 32 and 126). The Greek writer Celsus (*Kelsos*) is mentioned only as a

Middle Platonist and an earlier contemporary of Plutarch. Celsus's date is uncertain, and his treatise, which criticizes Christian and Jewish anthropocentrism is lost and known only as citations from the Church Father Origenes's *Against Celsus*. One reference, which could have been made regarding Celsus and the Graeco-Roman and early Christian attitudes to animal issues in general is Ingvild Saelid Gilhus's monograph (2006), which is missing in the Bibliography. The unnumbered sub-subchapter on animal history does not refer to the work of Erica Fudge, but there is a stimulating discussion of Mieke Rohde's distinction between relational, entangled and embodied agencies (pp. 187–8).

All in all, the book is highly recommendable both for students interested in the field and for teachers seeking to introduce the subject of HAS. The book is a good source for research in this field in languages other than English – one example is the book by the same three writers, with the addition of Alejandro Boucabeille, namely: *Disziplinierte Tiere? Perspektiven der Human-Animal Studies für die wissenschaftlichen Disziplinen* (2015).