Participants and Abstracts

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Title: An hourglass model of ethology in the twentieth century and the rediscovery of animal agency

Abstract: When one reads western ecologists of the 1910s-mid 1930s, it is remarkable how much broader were their perspectives in their efforts to understand the interactions of organisms among themselves and their environments. The studies became progressively narrowed with the 1930s modern evolutionary synthesis providing a genetic basis for natural selection theory and the 1950s advent of ethology. Most would feel the views were refined rather than narrowed, and great strides were made on the basis of them. However, the post-sociobiology views acknowledging other, complementary explanatory bases for behaviour and sociality have revealed their inherent limitations as well. The current attempt to again get beyond natural selection theory is reflected in debates surrounding genetic and cultural evolution of cooperation, the biology of ‘traditions’ and the idea of ‘culture’ in animal societies.

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Title: Interspecies families, freelance dogs, and “the bond” at an assistance dog agency

Abstract: My informants say they can read each other’s minds, have saved each other’s lives, hear for one another, are members of the same family, and are business partners. The clients,
assistance dogs, and volunteers at Hearing and Service Dogs of Minnesota (HSDM) have uniquely intimate, interdependent interspecies relationships despite the dominance of human-animal distinctions, of both degree and kind, which are considered absolute. Their relationships reveal the heteromorphic and very social nature of human-animal relations neglected by most anthropology. By focusing on the mobility and multivalency of distinctions regarding humans, animals, and personhood, my work counters anthropological literature on human-animal relations predicated on *a priori* distinctions between them. What my informants understand as shared and unshared, sharable and unsharable with one another also points to the creative instability of rigid distinctions between the metaphorical and the actual as socio-cultural possibilities change and emerge. I attend to the ways my informants understand and create the shared and unshared between them as they navigate their lives and relationships within, and drawing on ideas about, domains of the family, workplace, and larger society. These relationships and cultural domains are mutually informing and illuminate the anxieties, ambiguities, and securities experienced in both.

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Title: Experts in the wild – the merits of intimacy

Abstract: *Big Cat Week* is a natural history series produced by the BBC. In each episode, a team of three presenters expertly interpret the behaviour of the cats, resituating it in its ecological context. In this paper I intend to use this natural history programme as an example to suggest that one powerful means for natural history television presenters to support their claim to expertise is by demonstrating their intimacy with the animals presented in the programme. This leads to question the engagement of these experts who, acting as spokespersons for the cats, allow their participation in a debate over the use of a particular piece of land.

The main argument of this paper is that, in *Big Cat Week*, the presence of theoretical knowledge is not made obvious. And academic credentials appear of no use in the field. However, a closer look reveals that the disappearance of science is only apparent and that behavioural ecology is pervasive in *Big Cat Week*’s stories. A striking aspect of the performance described here is that, in order to assert their expertise, instead of referring to the actual theoretical knowledge they are used to create their stories, the presenters refer to other forms of knowledge, in particular what they call their ‘intimate knowledge’ of the animals. This observation invites us to examine what the consequences of such a “burying” of scientific knowledge in stories with a strong emotional appeal can be.

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Title: Reconstructing the dawn of humanity after the Second World War

Abstract: In this paper, I address the question of why (and when) zoological and primatological research on animal behavior came to compete with anthropological studies of human cultures as disciplines providing reliable information about early human social interactions. My case study is the construction and reception of a U.S. curriculum reform project called Man: A Course of Study in the 1960s—after the atrocities of the Second World War, but before the rise of sociobiology. Primatology seemed to offer a research approach that could shed light on universal human behavior, without recourse to studying so-called “primitive” or “stone-age” human cultures as stand-ins for early hominids. In self-conscious attempt to avoid scientific racism, socially left scientists found animal models of human behavior appealing because they provided hope for discovering universal truths about all human interactions. On the other hand, social conservatives objected to other human cultures as representing “non-traditional” Anglo-American values and therefore they too found animal models of human behavior preferable to anthropological visions of social acceptability.

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Title: The bees dance and communicate – but how do they manage to manage the hive?

Abstract: For centuries the bee served as a model for how a well-run social polity might function. But over the course of the 20th century, the moral and political bee gave way to the communicating bee largely due to the work of the Austrian-born bee researcher Karl von Frisch. Von Frisch – who together with Niko Tinbergen and Konrad Lorenz shared the 1973 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine – elucidated the dances by which the bees communicate the direction and distance of food sources to their hive mates. Although communication among bees was essentially a social function, the bees under von Frisch’s gaze came to be known less for their role in the hive than for their sensory and communicatory capacities as a species. In this
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**Title**: Silent bodies, speaking minds: debating animal language in nineteenth-century America

**Abstract**: This paper traces debates among mid- and late-nineteenth-century animal protectionists, philologists, anthropologists, and deaf educators about the existence of animal language. On one side stood those who maintained that language was the product of reason and, as such, resolutely divided humans from animals. On the other side stood those who believed that animals as well as humans possessed linguistic capacity and that human language was evolved from forms of animal communication.

Though the debate involved – and divided – scientists and social scientists, its rehearsal among contemporary animal protectionists and deaf educators shows that the matter was far from academic. Rather, it was politically and morally charged as partisans on both sides pointed to linguistic capacity to draw boundaries not only between humans and animals but also among humans. Ultimately, partisans disagreed about the status of the body and its relationship to both humanity and animality.

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**Title**: Wild at heart

**Abstract**: This paper discusses what people are doing (or think they are doing) when they conflate the categories of wild and domesticated, whether physically (by high-tech means or the old fashioned way) or figuratively.
‘There is another smell of a nobody’: William Golding, the new people, and the other

Abstract: In 1953 a truth that had been suspected for some time was confirmed: *Eoanthropus dawsoni*, more commonly known as Piltdown Man, was a fake. But the thought of primitive humans living in the home counties of England had lost none of its fascination. Two years later, William Golding published his novel *The Inheritors*, which pitched ‘the people’ – whom readers supposed to be Neanderthals – against the ‘new people,’ presumed to be *Homo sapiens*. Golding’s book was a clever and affecting exploration of otherness, unexpectedly locating the qualities of the alien in his own species. As such, it was radically different from Victorian and Edwardian representations of humanity and proto-humanity, which have been ably explored by historians. This paper asks how proto-humans were represented around the time of the Second World War and the end of empire. Focusing on Golding’s novel, it investigates the roles of mind, language, and body in the British definition of self and other, and the ways in which the boundaries between animal and human had changed over the previous fifty years.
humans were shown to establish friendly contact in ape habitats. These photographs have become part of our culture’s visual memory: the human females are portrayed to visually and physically bridge the gap to the ape lifeworlds. The shift in the images’ message coincided with a transformation in NG’s visual culture that increased the public impact of the pictures. However, while the post-60s photographs imply a mutual reaching out across the species divide, they may in fact eradicate power relations and disruptive effects on ape communities. I end the excursion into the NG visual tradition at the interface between primate studies, commercial interest, and popular culture with a problematization of these images as utopian.

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**Title:** Animals and the intimacy of history

**Abstract:** “Animals and the Intimacy of History” investigates how some environmental historians and other scholars have navigated the complex terrain of writing about nonhuman animals, particularly animals that kill and eat people. The paper focuses on two broad themes, ones which serve as subchapters and represent some of the major areas of concentration in scholarship related to animal cultures and human natures: “The Intimacy of Violence” and “The Intimacy of Transcendence.” Nonetheless, the thread that holds this paper together, with all its disparate references to literature in the field, is our shared intimacy with animals. They permeate our history and we theirs: tug at the threads and our stories, woven as they are into the same tightly knit tapestry, will not disentwine.

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**Title:** Martin Heidegger on the nature of the animal: ‘The animal is poor in world’

**Abstract:** In his lectures „Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt - Endlichkeit - Einsamkeit (Winter Semester 1929/30)“ Heidegger explores the notion of “Welt” (World) by thoroughly analyzing the following two thesis: (a) The animal is poor in world; (b) man is world-forming. In order to develop the meaning of thesis (a) Heidegger proceeds as follows: First, he utilizes the findings of contemporary biologists (such as Wilhelm Roux, Hans Driesch, Jakob von Uexküll) and claims that the most important insight stemming from these results is the idea that organism and environment are essentially linked. Second, Heidegger insists that the animal has never been considered as such, by itself, in its essence, but always been conceptualized in analogy either to (dead) matter (as machine in mechanistic accounts) or in analogy to human agency (as teleological force in vitalistic accounts). Heidegger’s methodological account of the animal as such and his philosophical reworking of findings from natural science is highly original and

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promising. Or so it seems to me. When it comes to thesis (b), however, he spoils his insights by rebuilding or re-describing almost all the traditional dichotomies concerning man and animal he inherits from the history of philosophy by starting the discussion of (b) in terms of language (assertion). Therefore, Heidegger is promoting what aptly has been called “privative zoology” (F. Dastur). How can this eminent and self-promoted critic of the history of philosophy reaffirm this dichotomies? My suggestion is that the dichotomies between man and animal are (first) something like a common frame of reference in a lot of philosophical theorizing and that (second) the dichotomy is reaffirmed in times of (supposed) crises. Heidegger’s lectures from 1929/30 articulate concerns with a contemporary crises (concerns leading to his much debated engagement for nazism). This suggestion can be confirmed by a short assessment of Heidegger’s post-war philosophy of technology: the age of technology threatens to reduce man to an animal poor in world.