

MBS Organisation Studies

Seminar Series 2005-6, Semester II

Domesticating human and non-human animals: an emotional mess

Seminar by

Prof. René ten Bos

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Domestication has always been a central issue to philosophical thought. Its presence as a philosophical concept has, however, been somewhat subdued. Moreover, in the wake of Nietzsche, it has also been regarded with a certain contempt. During the seminar it is argued that domestication is a highly complicated concept that defies easy moral logics, if only because domestication does not easily have a subject or an object. Ideas of philosophers (Sloterdijk), historians (Bulliet) and biologists (Dekkers) are used to show that people in the West do not live anymore in an era of domestication. This has, it is argued, steered their relationship with animals in heretofore unknown directions.

Nowadays, people do not relate in a spiritual or morally robust sense to animals but have a profoundly emotional, even sentimental attitude towards what they now see as 'fellow-creatures'. This clearly invokes a variety of absurdities some of which are discussed. To counterbalance the 'neo-nietzschean' scorn for domestication, some philosophical contributions (e.g. Wittgenstein, Zwicky, Hearne) which are not so pessimistic about domestication will be discussed. It will turn out that the deeper philosophy - some would argue: ideology - behind domestication is an understanding that nature is never given but something that can be developed or be helped to develop itself.

Wednesday 31st May 4.00-5.30pm

Room 4.01, Harold Hankins Building

Tea and coffee will be served before the seminar from 3.45pm

For further information, please contact:

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To see the full seminar programme go to

<http://www.mbs.ac.uk/research/organisational-studies/>