
Animals, Women and Social Hierarchies: Reflections on Power Relations

by

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Abstract: It has been noted by several writers such as Mütterich (2003) that in western thought animals as well as women form the opposite and societal devalued pole to men and, with that, to all characteristics ascribed to men. Even more than women, animals eventually become the antithesis of culture, civilization, reason and progress. This positioning legitimates their subjugation and use as material and symbolic instruments for men's accumulation of capital. While analysis of social structures and hierarchies has examined why and how women are often deprived of valued resources usable in pursuing social advantage, very few approaches have taken into account the question of how the social structure interacts with and is affected by the human-animal relationship and how animals themselves are located in the social structure. This paper explores the potential of Bourdieu's approach to power and capital for comparing differences and similarities in the present state of material and symbolic power relations between men and women and between men and animals in western societies.

I.

There is hardly a social field to be found in the societies of human beings where animals do not appear as corporeal agents, reified commodities, material artifacts or signs. At the two poles of human-animal relations, humans face animals on the one side as someone – an individual and interacting “subject of a life”¹ – with animals on the other side as something – an object with specific meanings attributed by society and its culture (Wiedenmann 2002, pp. 19-21). The complexity of the relatedness of societal material and symbolic products to non-human animals might be derived from what Rainer E. Wiedenmann explains as “animal-related communication structured by two layers: on the one hand we

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¹ This term was formed by the American philosopher Tom Regan in *The Case for Animal Rights*, University of California Press, Berkeley/L.A., 1983.

humans communicate *with* animals, on the other hand we communicate *about* and *through* animals” (Wiedenmann 2002, p. 19 [emphasis in original]). Moments in which humans interact with animals as being someone with intentions, goals, interests, social and physical needs and feelings² are, however, rare. Rather, animals are regarded more as strange or even dangerous beings, still not understood, the very other, specimens, valorized things or anonymous typifications. Therefore humans communicate mostly about and through animals and, in doing so, they are conducting a monolog. This monolog, the fact that “it is [...] still the human being who palavers” (Latour 2010, p. 103), is not the consequence of animal individuals not having vocal abilities, nor of them not having anything to say, but of humans not having tried to find qualified interpreters³. With that, animals as a group, more than any other social groups, are at the mercy of societal ascriptions. While, at least in the scientific discourse of today and after women have intervened in discursive practices long dominated by men, it is recognized that there are no “natural” gender relations but that these are only naturalized power relations, it is still regarded that human-animal relations are the result of natural conditions and that it lies in the “nature” of animals to serve humans (and in the “nature” of humans to dominate animals)⁴. In the course of this, not only are social characteristics and “roles” ascribed to animal individuals, e.g. to be “livestock”, to be a “working animal”, to be “game”, to be “a pest” or to be a “pet”, which are all social categories of a certain society to a certain time and are therefore anything but natural⁵, but also to belong to the category “animal” which is contrasted to “man”. We will return to this later.

Although animals are rendered subject to any ascription by human society, I do not agree with Rainer E. Wiedenmann that in this context the animal “is no more than a symbolic canvas for ascribing socio-cultural meaning” (2002, p. 21) The canvas changes. The denial that animals are someone and not something, is made difficult by the fact that in all the discourses in which systematizations of knowledge are made explicit and are ascribed on animals’ bodies, the animals do not stay in the (social) position in which the dominant culture perceives or wants to

² The social sciences have so far ignored the results of the cognitive ethology that certain animals possess highly developed cognitive and social skills. Against the state of the art, social scientists adopt uncritically and almost with one voice, the obsolete ideas of animals as being dull, reduced to instincts, without self-consciousness and passive material. A good introduction into the new relevant scientific evidence of the cognitive ethology can be found in the anthology *Der Geist der Tiere. Philosophische Texte zu einer aktuellen Diskussion*, edited by Dominik Perler and Markus Wild, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 2005.

³ Latour then reminds us that the “discovery of new vocal apparatus so as not to fail to consider all non-human animals” (ibid.) would mean to stand collectively against civilization “that [is] no longer surrounded by a nature and other cultures, but is able, in a civil way, to embark on the developing composition of the mutual world” (ibid., p. 301).

⁴ A thought that goes back to Aristotle (384-322 BCE) who asserted in *Politics*, William Heinemann, London n.d., that there is a natural hierarchy and that in accordance with this, the women must serve the men, the slave must serve the master and the animal must serve the human.

⁵ It depends on the *culture*, for example, which animals are perceived as edible, if meat plays an important role at all, and which animals are used for work or to live in the family or with single human persons as companion animals.

see them, as the writing culture debate has generally described this to be for the cultural stranger (see Moebius 2009, p.115).

The animal subject does *not react* to human actions, she or he *replies to them*. The animals' own, spontaneous movements lead humans to attempt to mislead, threaten or please them, to install traps and to fix them in carceral architectures such as cages, tethers or apparatus used to immobilize animals during experimental procedures. Humans use violence against animals, do harm unto them, empathize with the animal victims and show solidarity, despise or adore them. And that is why it makes no sense to put animals into categories with things or "nature". Humans do not feel challenged or threatened in their social status by a grass stalk or by a rock. They do not compete with them for resources. They are not in social conflict with them as they are with non-human animals. The historical development of society has brought this conflict to a conclusion for the moment: they have excluded animal individuals from competition to the greatest possible extent by coercive force: the use of weapons and by means of destruction. And they have excluded them from acts of solidarity and considerations of justice. Simultaneously humans have included animals in their societies by means of coercion: by using them as means of production, productive forces and means of consumption. The stables, boxes, cages, nets, tanks, leashes and so on prevent their escape or any form of exit. Consequently, animals are the locked-in outcasts of the human social world. Although animals are unrecognized as subjects and social beings and human-animal relations are ones of power, most human individuals have enough personal experiences with animal individuals in face-to-face interactions to make forgetting that animals are individuals always connected to a remembering and therefore about rejecting as a product of societal labor. As a result of this, humans attempt to legitimate the oppression of non-human members of society in interhuman communications: animal-related religious justifications, scientific discourses, everyday conversations, while the reaction of people, the state and enterprises on the oppositional discourse of the animal rights and liberation movement demonstrate this most clearly.

In the legitimating discourse, as already stated above, power relations are often justified with reference to a "divine" or "natural" order so that these relations appear to be unalterable and unquestionable. Animals and women, as well as other oppressed groups, for instance humans from non-western cultures, people of color, with disabilities or with different sexual orientations, are often assigned the category "nature" and contrasted to culture. This needs some further explanation.

II.

With modernization at the latest, society produced its means of subsistence against the backdrop of rationalization of the economy and, as a consequence, of lifestyles. Since efficiency and usefulness became the guiding principles of the developing industrialized and administered society, and human progress became equated with technological progress and increased utilization of "natural" resources and labor power, all living beings and all things became subordinated to material interests, instrumental reason and purposive rationality. All those humans who do

not possess means of production and must therefore offer their labor power, but who cannot take part in this production process under these labor relations or who are opposed to them are thus regarded as being not or less worthy, useless or even dangerous. These production relations are the causes for the developing divisions of labor, for example into the spheres of production and reproduction, with women still largely expected to be at the disposal of both, yet widely excluded from good and just employment and even more from leadership positions. This leads some women to be heavily dependent and others to have no or not enough income from employment, which, in the extreme, forces them into labor conditions akin to slavery and into the trafficking of human beings, and increasingly for women into sexual exploitation. For the poor, for women, for those excluded from advantaged positions in society, the body – not understood here as an organ of the workforce but as a material *thing* – is sometimes the only resource left with which they can secure their existence. The body becomes a consumer good, is valorized, measured, quantified and either desired and demanded or rejected and devalued as inadequate according to economic norms and, as an effect of this, to what is socially desirable. I will go on to discuss the importance of the body in more detail below.

In the history of ideas⁶, which reflect and result from the economic and social transformations of the respective periods⁷, the body, and all beings reduced to corporeality, have been associated with “nature” and ascribed the characteristics projected onto “nature”, such as lacking reason, being passive, undeveloped, mere matter, brutish, wild, libidinous, and finally dangerous. Women and animals belong to those groups ascribed to “nature” with the legitimation of which they became devalued in the civilizing process which was opposed to the “natural state”. Functionalist theories, especially, like that of Talcott Parsons or Norbert Elias’s *The Civilizing Process* (1939/2000) regard modernization as a form of social change for the better. These theories subscribe to a rather linear progress, whereby the new stage is better and overcomes the old one which was deficient. In this view, animals, tribal and non-western societies, and in part, women are viewed as being a deficiency that western society would have to overcome, annihilate or control and subject to its rule. Apparent advancement through the domination of nature particularly rationalized the domination and sacrifice of animals. As I have described elsewhere (Bujok 2007):

⁶ Not just since Descartes (1596-1650) separated the body (*res extensa*) from the mind, the cognitive substance (*res cogitans*).

⁷ See also Nibert, David in *Animal Rights, Human Rights. Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation*. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2002 and Maurizi, Marco in “Die Zählung des Menschen”, edited by Susann Witt-Stahl, *Das steinerne Herz der Unendlichkeit erweichen. Beiträge zu einer kritischen Theorie für die Befreiung der Tiere*, Alibri Verlag, Aschaffenburg, pp. 109-124 with regard to their arguments that against the assumption of many writers in the field of Human Animal-Studies such as Peter Singer in *Animal Liberation* (1975) or Tom Regan in *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983) the causes of the societal and systematic oppression of animals are not to be found in ideas, prejudices or believe systems of people but in the materialist organization of society and its social structures.

The institution of sacrifice, a “historical catastrophe”, an “act of violence, which befalls humanity and nature equally”, as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno point out in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), is accepted in current society, as, so to say, a natural part of its self-image. Acts of violence against animals are consecrated as reasonable, furthering advancement, or even as necessary, according to the critique of the Frankfurt School. This, because civilisation-historically, the human individual, emerging from the domination of nature, hopes to find his or her own self-preservation in the death of the animal, or even to circumvent his or her own death. From this perspective, animal research laboratories and slaughterhouses are the sacrificial alters of old and new. (pp. 313-4)

Following the victims of the Holocaust and the many other recent man-made catastrophes, the older modernization theories’ belief in historical linear progress through rationalization, technology and materialism was unveiled as the myth of the Enlightenment.

It was the Frankfurt School, with its representatives Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, who, more than any one else, stated that the causes of these catastrophes are not to be found in something that is outside of or opposed to modernization, but which is caused *by* modernization. It is the central thesis of the Frankfurt School’s Critical Theory that the advancement of society to a better one always contained within it the germ of repression, in that it was based on the *domination* of nature instead of its *comprehension*. The deception of the domination of nature is that it does not eliminate the blind natural context in order to reconcile nature with itself through historical labor, but that human society has conformed to the natural growth, imitated and rationalized it (Horkheimer/Adorno 1944/1997).

Western societies thus grounded their advancement on the twofold domination of nature: the domination of the ‘outer nature’ such as animals and simultaneously of the ‘inner nature’ of humans. The domination of ‘inner nature’ in the form of self-control, rationalization of life and suppression of drives and mimetic impulses was seen by western society as essential for civilization – and this always means first and foremost for economic development following the interests of power. Norbert Elias (1939/2000) and Michel Foucault (1975/1995), especially, showed modern society that following the process of social differentiation, the conduct of individuals was decreasingly affected by external control, and especially less by direct external physical violence, but more by an apparatus of self-control. Those who do not act for the purposes of and adjusted to the given social order, those who fail to bring their mind and body under control, are said to behave like “animals”. The animal metaphor, according to Birgit Mütterich (2003, pp. 32-38), serves as a stigma that is frequently used to dehumanize human individuals or groups and to exclude them from moral considerations and, essentially, from access to valued resources. She argues that the “antithetical idea of ‘the animal’ and its construction as a stranger provide a basis for the stabilization and legitimation of ‘natural’ hierarchies, including interhuman ones, as well as structures of exploitation and violence, which are practiced and reproduced in the context of the traditional human-animal relationship” (2003, p.17).

Picturing non-human animals as the antithesis of man could only become fully effective by drawing one straight line between the two that strictly separated the man from the animal without leaving any animal individual in between. As with

other binary orders of dualist oppositions⁸ such as man/woman, white/person of color, the binary order man/animal made it possible to attribute schemes of inferiority uniquely to the other (here: the non-human animal, the woman, the person of color) and of superiority to the self in order to legitimate the oppression of the other. Zygmunt Bauman suggests that in modernity there “is a fight of determination against ambiguity, of semantic precision against ambivalence” (1991, p. 7). The insertion of all species except the human species under the term “the animal”, in the singular, is a *social* taxon, a political act to mask diversity and to place all other animals at distance. This is because “the animal” does not, in fact, exist. In the view of Derrida, the differences and similarities between animals (including the human animal) could be imagined as a “plural and repeatedly folded frontier” (2008, p. 30) rather than a single line. It cannot, however, be questioned that there are differences between the human and other animals⁹. However, it is of sociological interest and of socio-political brisance to ask why, in which context, on which basis, to which extent and with which consequences for whom does society make a distinction out of a difference, to refer to Stefan Hirschauer. (2010, pp. 208-9) Or in Adorno's words: an “emancipated society [...] would be [...] the realization of universality in the reconciliation of differences”; and therefore would be “one in which one could be different without fear” (1951/2003, p. 116).

III.

With differences between the species and between “male” and “female” being contingent and arbitrary, “the animal” as well as “the woman” are social *constructions* correlating with accepted social *norms*. The normalization of non-human animals and women, however, fitting them into society in conformity with the given social norms and values, is based on different social processes. Pierre Bourdieu maintains that masculine domination and control is not visible and regarded as such – not even by women themselves – so that women submit to masculine domination and sustain it. As Bourdieu writes in *The Masculine Domination*, through a “stroke of violence, the social world” inscribes itself on human individuals’ bodies in the form of “a real program of perception, appreciation and action” that “functions like a (second, cultivated) nature, i.e. with the authoritative and (apparently) blind force of the (constructed) drive or phantasma” (1997 p. 168).

Bourdieu (2007) concludes that the incorporation of unconscious structures, and with it of repressive social constraints, finally acts as *symbolic* violence, “a gentle violence”, upon dominated human agents like women who then perceive the social order as acceptable, just and natural. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the*

⁸ See, for instance, Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Routledge, New York 1993, p. 41 or Birgit Mütherich, *Das Fremde und das Eigene. Gesellschaftspolitische Aspekte der Mensch-Tier-Beziehung*, in: *Tiere beschreiben*, edited by Andreas Brenner, Harald Fischer Verlag, Erlangen 2003, pp. 16-42.

⁹ Always taking into account, though, that the differences between a human being and a pig are smaller than between a pig and a butterfly, for example.

Judgment of Taste (1979/1984), he explains that during that “somatization of the social relations of domination” the human individual internalizes its own social position, which generates a habitus related to that position. The habitus is a set of acquired schemes, dispositions, tastes and sensibilities, and with that is, as Bourdieu points out, also “a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices” (ibid, p.170). The social position of an individual, its class fraction, is thereby at the same time both result and origin of accumulation of social, cultural, economic and finally symbolic capital.

When taking into account that the human-animal relationship is part of these social relations of domination, Bourdieu’s approach explains why the oppression of animal individuals is also regarded as a natural relationship and why it is reproduced and remains so stable over time. Arguing along the lines of Bourdieu, societal human-animal relations, and with them the exploitation of animals, are so solid precisely because human individuals pre-reflexively and mainly without physical coercion subordinate their socialized bodies to the social world. As mentioned before, Bourdieu explains that the social world inscribes itself on individuals’ bodies in the form of schemes of perception, appreciation and action and what Bourdieu calls habitus. When people perceive animals as things and commodities and treat them correspondingly, they are doing so because of their habitus orientated towards animals, because they are socialized in a social world which is structured by relations of violence towards animals. These social schemes do not determine the individual, but rather shape its behavior and practices by the primary institutions of socialization such as the family and by the re-socialization throughout day-to-day activities, by which the individual accumulates capital and confirms or – very occasionally – changes its social position.

It is part of the habitus of people socialized in the so called western culture to think in terms of dualism, as discussed before. These “principles of vision and division”, as Pierre Bourdieu calls this “embodied social program of perception [which is] applied to all things of the world” (2007, p.11) follow the social structures of hierarchization of living beings into the vertical opposition of top/bottom. Max Horkheimer took the social situation of animals into account in his aphorism “The Skyscraper” (*Der Wolkenkratzer*, 1931/1934) in which he described the hierarchical architecture of the capitalist society of his time. The building has several storeys with the “trust magnates of the different capitalist groups of power” on top and the enslaved dying at the bottom. Under these would be “the indescribable, unthinkable suffering of the animals, which symbolizes the animal hells of human society, the sweat, the blood and the despair of the animals” (1931/1934, pp. 132-3).

Most sociologists do not want to speak of a class society of that kind today. They think to recognize a “Social Inequality without Stratification” (Wrong 1976, quoted in Kreckel 2004, p. 142). They state that members of society are no longer part of a socio-cultural integrated class (see, for instance, Kreckel 2004, p. 141 and 1991). There are no more clearly antagonistic interests; as a result, there is no class consciousness and therefore it will never come to a class struggle. Rather, members of society would have different interests with sometimes different social positions within the various social fields. Furthermore, it is criticized that

“Conventional” theories of structured social inequality consider the occupational order as “the backbone of the class structure” [Parkin (1971, p. 18)] in advanced industrial society; societies are treated as “work societies” (Arbeitsgesellschaften). Thereby, all those members of society who hold no position in the labour market, such as housewives, students and pensioners, are removed from immediate consideration (Kreckel 1991, p. 2).

Today therefore, in social structure analysis, one prefers to speak of “social conditions” (Lebenslagen), “social milieus” or lifestyles. In view of Horkheimer’s skyscraper, it is thus asserted that the whole architecture has changed, with different stairwells and elevators to lead from one level to another, or doors which lead from one room to another. Up to now social structure analysis has said nothing of the situation of animals in human society. The cellar remains locked, without so much as a glance inside. There are no stairs or elevators down there, social mobility is not made possible for animals, not even through achievement. Other than for women, breaking the door down would also seem to be impossible.

IV.

Is an examination of animals as a social category in inequality studies valid?

As with other social categories – such as people of color, refugees or the long-term unemployed – “the animals” as a whole obviously do not represent any one social group. Typical attributes of a social group are lacking, such as them entering regularly into social relationships with each other, so that a certain degree of integration can be ascertained. Much less can they become conscious of their situation within human society and so become anything like “a class for themselves”, develop a feeling of belonging together as “animals in the human society” and organize in their mutual interests¹⁰ against their human oppressors. It must, of course, be noted that the terms of social structure analysis, with which the various types of social inequality in industrial and post-industrial societies are described (class, milieu and lifestyle) don’t quite want to fit. This miss-fitting emerges out of the anachronism of the extreme oppression of members of non-human species within a modernism, which requires a critique of violence, and takes the demands of the enlightenment as its value orientation: freedom, autonomy, reason, equality and inclusion¹¹.

Under another aspect it also seems difficult to identify animals or membership of a species as a dimension of social inequality. Taking a look at the means that humans employ to reach their goals and compete with each other for, and at the goals themselves that social structure analysis usually examines, there seem to be numerous arguments that would speak against looking at animals as a part of structures of social inequality: Animals neither share the human goals of wealth, political participation or their consumption desires, such as the ownership of entertainment electronics or cars, nor do they reach for the means of educational qualifications, job success or salaries in order to fulfill their goals. Nor are they

¹⁰ With reference to interests of animals, I follow Regan’s account (1983, p. 87-88).

¹¹ See also Michael Fischer for this point in *Differenz, Indifferenz, Gewalt: Die Kategorie ‘Tier’ als Prototyp sozialer Ausschließung*, in “Kriminologisches Journal”, 2001, 33 (3), pp. 170-188.

persuaded through the norms and values of human society that they have internalized and recognize to prefer particular goals or means and to reject others. It is, however, the case that social hierarchies and inequalities are formed by the relational configuration of individuals or groups, which is the result of the distribution of “valuable goods” (Hradil 2005, p. 30).

While those with a higher social position, and with it a higher status, have access to resources of social value and to social chances with only few restrictions, the social groups at the bottom are often deprived of them. Economic capital¹² such as cash, financial assets and property, that can be used in many fields in capitalist societies are part of those resources of social value. However, the accumulation of labor and social relationships of exchange are not limited to the economic market. Also cultural capital is used by individuals as a resource to improve their social position or to maintain it, such as cultural goods (cultural capital in its objectified state), education and cultivation and with that, educational qualifications (institutionalized cultural capital) or the embodied forms of cultural capital, such as knowledge, taste and what Bourdieu termed the “*practical sense* for what is to be done in a given situation” (1998, p. 25). Even social relationships and networks can constitute a type of capital, that is social capital, that allows members to access resources that are possessed by agents they are connected with. Finally, the legitimate and recognized forms and uses of these types of capital is symbolic capital. Sometimes it is used as a synonym for prestige.

Exactly which kind of material or symbolic resources are valuable and help the individual to achieve her or his goals depends on the biophysical living conditions, and above all on the socially structured conditions of action which are not under her or his control and which therefore impose restrictions on the scope of action. Resources serve to meet ones interests and needs. Hartmut Esser (1999, pp. 92-98) argues that there are two basic needs: social recognition (a need of human beings) and physical well-being (a need of humans and animals). While these needs arise from the constitution of the organism, it is the society that defines which meaning is given to these needs and which characteristics, resources and actions lead to social recognition and physical well-being (see Esser 1999, p. 98).

Resources are not distributed equally, though, and those who have accumulated most of them – who are usually human, male, white, citizen of a capitalist, postindustrial society – are not only able to appropriate profits but also to determine the value of a good or a service and to enforce the “rules of the game” (Bourdieu 1997, p. 58) under which capital and with it the social structure is reproduced and held stable over time. Therefore there is no situation of “perfect competition and perfect equality of opportunity (...), so that at each moment anyone can become anything” as the classical market theories claim, according to Bourdieu (ibid., pp. 49-50) In this way, the individuals who are in a privileged position and live under this similar condition, the dominating class, find themselves in a power relation towards the other individuals.

¹² In the following, I refer to Bourdieu’s (1997) forms of capital.

Since possessing a huge amount of the different types of capital¹³ conveys advantages in a society based on competition, it is in the interests of the dominating class to monopolize social chances, to control important resources and to pursue strategies of social closure (see Rössel 2009, pp. 69-85). The resulting social inequalities and dependencies are institutionally secured and legitimized, for example by political measures and the rules of law, by religious beliefs and ideologies. Since it is the dominating class that determines the rules, as mentioned above, the full scope of the power relations emerges.

V.

It goes without saying that most animals that are used as resources are accumulated economic capital. They are subordinated to material interests. Possessing animal individuals or parts of their bodies, exploiting their labor power or their bodies enables the human actor to compete against others in the social field and maybe to improve her or his social position. The economy is not only historically built on the exploitation of animals, but animals and animal products also still play an important role in the circulation of goods.

But serving as material goods does not cover the whole meaning of the use of animals. Animals also serve as symbolic goods and dominating them helps achieve social recognition. Being a symbol of power, the animal commodity can also be transformed into symbolic capital and function as a distinctive sign by demonstrating prestige and social status. Accordingly, the animal commodity can contribute to the reproduction of interhuman social relations. As “condensed symbols”, meat and other “animal products”, reflect the power of human society over “the animal”, as Nick Fiddes argues in his book *Meat: a natural symbol* (1991). Being a resource of power, meat is capital to which male actors, especially, want access, as Carol Adams describes in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990).

According to Max Weber, power is “the probability that one actor in a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (Theory of Social & Economic Organization, p. 152). And that is why plants or mushrooms extremely seldom constitute symbolic capital: you cannot have power over them. As stated at the beginning, they react to actions of power but animal individuals respond to it, resist, since they are in the possession of an own will. Acting against this will and subjugating it is what distinguishes social power from merely physical force. This is particularly evident, for instance, when people take photos of animals they shot or fished or when they display the antlers of a killed animal prominently in their own house. People do not very often publish photos in magazines or on the internet of them having gathered berries in the woods. And very rarely will you be able to watch them nailing the roots of the bush on the wall as a sign of trophy.

¹³ In capitalist societies, especially economic capital and objectified cultural capital in the form of the means of production.

The same applies to meat on the plate, fur or leather trimming on the coat, animals in zoos or elephants performing handstands in a circus; the domination of animals is made visible, to be looked at and to be socially shared, affirmed and perceived as legitimate. Experiencing the oppression of animals in the company of other human individuals can help to build new social networks or to consolidate existing social connections. Examples here include the hunting clubs which male hunters in particular use to increase their social capital.

Another example would be the dinner party, a micro-social image of society, that replicates the ritual of nature domination, in this case, the subjugation of the animal individual as a “sacrificial animal” through the consumption of this. Anyone refusing complicity to power over animals abnegates these interspecific power structures. Anyone not eating meat (or other parts of animals’ bodies) does not get a seat at the same table and rejects that important source of social capital, especially when eating animals is celebrated in the context of a festival. This explains society’s disapproval of vegans, why they are imputed variously of militancy, illness or bad taste, because they so vividly prove, and therefore make undeniable and visible, that the animal victim is not a necessity for self-preservation, and therefore endanger the spell, the “fetish character of [the animal] merchandise”, to use the words of Adorno (1973, p. 346).

In western societies even infants become accustomed to eating animal products in order to form an appropriate taste which suits their social position and one that, within the human-animal relationship, is part of the dominating “class” of human beings. From picture books like “Farm Animals” – probably the first book most of us got to see – children learn the social order, for example the gender relations, but especially the human-animal relations. This knowledge, as well as the taste for animal products thereafter become embodied forms of cultural capital, habitus.

Animals are presented in these books as having to serve humans and as if the subjugation of animals were even carried out with their consent. But there is no consent; animals do not recognize human domination as women, in contrast, recognize masculine domination. In practice, since animal individuals, as opposed to humans, do not internalize the social constraints of human society, the constraints on them are purely external and therefore especially violent. For them, social force is not symbolic but physical violence that directly impairs their physical integrity. Their behavior and bodies are adjusted to the social norms and economic interests by leashes, bridles, spurs, whips, restraining apparatus, chains, electric shocks, fences, nets, boxes, cages and a plethora of other coercive instruments. Human society has developed many means of force to increase its power to injure and to do physical harm to humans as well as animals. Due to the body's vulnerability to injury (see Popitz 1986/2009) and its immediacy, as well as the fact that the body cannot be possessed by anyone other than oneself and cannot be left or accumulated, the body is the most restricted resource.

VI.

At this point I would like to refer back to my accounts on the body. Even though, as we have seen, many of the resources that are valuable for humans in

current social relations make no sense for animals (such as money), this determinant, the body as resource, also makes sense for the lives of animals. It is the precondition for one's capabilities. The determination over one's own body is of the highest importance in one's ability to act and for this reason should be mentioned in social structure analysis at the forefront of the "valuable goods".

Sociology has taken the body for granted when examining social structures and social inequalities instead of including it in its considerations (see von Trotha 1997, p. 27), even though the body is the indispensable prerequisite for the *capacity* to act. In sociology – even in the action theory – the body, as the individual's supposed constantly available resource, is always thought of as a given, instead of being thematized. (von Trotha 1997, p. 27). Aspects of the social that pertain to the body may be regarded as "new" determinants and dimensions of social inequality – those properties attributed to the body such as gender, age, skin color, or access to health and nutrition, living situation, threat from environmental dangers and the results for one's quality of life – but even here the meaning of the body remains unexplained.

Humans and non-human animals have their corporeality in common, through the sensuality of which they are aware of and can experience themselves and their environment, which enables their own actions and which makes them suffer under the actions of others that are carried out against their own bodies. At least the ability to suffer and to have preferences – and as we have seen with Esser, the basic need for physical well-being – is a commonality between humans and animals that provides reason for a relationship of equality and activates modernity's enlightened demands for equal treatment that would make it sensible to draw the social life conditions of animals into questions of social inequality in the first place. The representatives of the Frankfurter School also recognized this when they saw that what connected humans and animals is the commonality of happiness, misery and pain. Horkheimer wrote pointedly, "In pain, everything becomes level, everyone becomes the same as everyone else, human and human, human and animal" (Horkheimer 1970, p. 52). The avoidance of pain, suffering, injuries and killing reasonably belong to the goals of any sentient individual, and humans know about the vulnerability of animals' bodies: Social discourses, norms and – especially ritual – practices deal with questions of the legitimacy of injuring or killing animals from their very beginnings. Their susceptibility to hurt is intersubjectively perceptible to humans, the damage is visible as wounds. Animal individuals have those "tormentable bodies" that Bertold Brecht once spoke of and which experience violence through destructive treatment; which, in the words of Heinrich Popitz, make them to victims of an "act of power that leads to [...] [their] deliberate physical injury" (2009, p. 48).

The experience of violence, having to tolerate intentionally delivered damage to the own body by humans (e.g. through experiments in animal research or through imprisonment in agricultural systems) or the threat of the same (e.g. in circuses and racing), prevents animals from freely proceeding in their bodies or to use them as means of acting. Actions of power by humans therefore form restrictions on acts, which strongly limit animals' scope of activity in any situation, causing a relevant disadvantage. If the situation is especially characterized by animals being unable to

leave it, due to imprisonment and physical force, these restrictions intensify to that specific state in which a majority of the animal members are forced to live in and which is characterized by an extreme asymmetric balance of power. The animals are highly vulnerable and are subject to a total temporal and spatial control of their behavior up to oppression and death. Thereby it is not the violence that is an “everyman’s resource”, as Trutz von Trotha (1997, p.18) would like it to be understood as, but the body that can carry out acts of violence or refrain from this, or that can be prevented from using force to defend itself. For neither is the body itself a distributive resource, that could be unequally shared out, accumulated or be exchanged for other resources (everyone has precisely one body); yet society differently enables members of society the abilities and chances to employ the body in a particular way, to move, act, educate and to experience according to affiliation.

This applies all the more to those objects that can be used as means of force and for the social norms of who may legitimately use force and against whom. The power to injure, as Popitz also refers to the power of action, i.e. the ability to hurt another, in the “human-animal relationship” is for animals rather limited in the face of the aforementioned instruments of control, through chains, electric fences, and training devices to firearms, tazars and other distance weapons, which are humans’ means of force. The imprisonment of animals in crates and cages, the transport to the slaughter house, the slaughter that takes place there, and so much more, are the manifest expressions of the power to injure that animals suffer because they are sentient.

Even for this reason alone, the philosophical explanation of a just exchange of fear of death, which is not only repeated unreflectedly in academic discourse but has become part of common sense is false when applied to human-animal relations and shows itself up to be fraudulence (see Bujok 2007).

When we look at the remarks of Jörg Rössel, for instance, who defines social inequality as “*the socially produced distribution of resources for and restrictions on actions in the population of the unit in question*” (2009, p. 21; [emphasis in original])¹⁴, the meaning of the body becomes apparent: one who is made to tolerate or cease actions by means of force or whose life is threatened by means of destruction, his or her life-chances have sunk to a level at which it is not even possible for the basic needs to be met.

For access to valuable resources, first of all the absence of violence as an extreme form of action restriction is necessary. The experience of violence is therefore an extreme form of disadvantage that receives too little attention in social structure analysis¹⁵.

¹⁴ While Rössel uses action resources as the term for the abilities and objects that one uses to help one to reach a goal and on the application of which one decides oneself, the restrictions are the non-changeable social and material action conditions of a situation that limit the choice of actions (2009, pp. 35-51).

¹⁵ C.f. Critiques on the lack of consideration on the life-long concept and gender studies e.g. Uta Enders-Drägässer, *Allein erziehen als weibliche Lebeslage*, in Veronika Hammer ed., *Alleinerziehende: Stärken Probleme. Impulse für eine handlungsorientierte Forschung*. Tagungsband. LIT-Verlag, Münster 2002.

Conclusion

Animals represent important aspects of social structure analysis in two ways. For one, as social subjects, that are devalued because of their species and are denied access to valuable goods and even to their own bodies as the most important resource, they are part of the social structures of social inequality. In the social hierarchy they are even further below the position of women, although both groups are often categorized as “nature” in the binary order. At the same time, with animals, one can not speak so much of a social position as a social positioning. For animal subjects clearly do not take a social role in the sense that they understand the social expectations that have been placed upon them and orient themselves on these expectations.

Attempts are made to legitimize their status in society, similarly to women, as explained earlier, with reference to their “biological” characteristics; however animal individuals do not internalize their social positions as human actors do in the form of habitus, rather their behaviors are fitted to the social rules through physical interventions by human actors. This results in a form of domination over animals that is not based on recognition and for this reason corresponds with Foucault’s old physics of power and not Bourdieu’s “gentle violence” (c.f. Bujok 2007, pp. 315-22).

Even though human power relations, as a direct relationship of force, remain for them purely external and as a result they can – easier than women – perceive the oppression as such, they lack the possibilities to organize their interests and, as a struggling class, to alter their situation through changing the social relations fundamentally.

Whilst animals are never examined as a social (or at least an objective) class within the discourses on social inequality, it is also denied that women form a class (see Kreckel 2004, p. 213). That gender is generally seen as a horizontal, rather than a vertical structural characteristic of social inequality, i.e that, in practice, the ascription of the gender “woman” socially disadvantages; yet it is not the main criterion in social closure. A clear, socially constructed male above and female below does not (any longer) exist. Other than in human-animal relations, in which animals (as a group, “the animal”¹⁶) still have to live in the cellar of society’s building that Horkheimer described, gender relations are seen to have a different pattern, a pattern of pluralization of life conditions.

Animals are also important for social structure analysis in the aspect that they are used by humans to reach their goals. Animals also have a part in the social structure as economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

There are important interrelations between human-animal relations and socially structured interhuman relations of inequality, such as gender relations, in that the domination of animals makes them a valuable power resource, above all a resource of male domination viewed as legitimate. If one examines the different forms of oppression of animals, it is notable that it is usually male actors – the hunter, the breeder, the slaughter man, the ring master, the matador, the vivisector – who carry

¹⁶ Of course there are animal individuals that live together with humans in solidary communities of choice and are better positioned and treated.

out the acts of violence against animals and/or who benefit from them. The act of violence, the oppression of animals, the extinguishing of life, is what makes it potent as a power resource. Eating meat (see Adams 1990, Fiddes 1991) for example, like the presentation of oppressed live animals or killed animals, is an expression of both human and male domination.

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