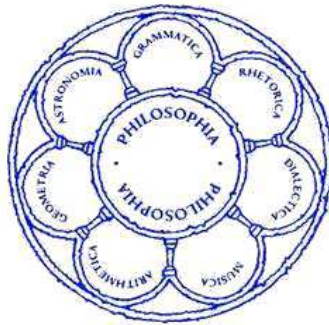


**Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies “Artes Liberales”
University of Warsaw**



CONFERENCE INVITATION

THE EXPERIENCE OF ANIMALITY IN CULTURE, SCIENCE AND DAILY LIFE

Venue: Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies “Artes Liberales”, University of Warsaw
ul. Nowy Świat 69, PL 00-046 Warszawa

We would like to invite you to participate in an international scientific conference entitled „The Experience of Animality in Culture, Science and Common Sense” schedule to take place in Warsaw, Poland, October 11 to 12, 2012. The conference is organized by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies “Artes Liberales”, University of Warsaw.

Subject of the conference:

The dominant and paradigmatic model of Western thinking about the relationship between humanity and the animal world follows the Cartesian approach where animal is reduced to a machine, and human being is predestined to transcendence. In this paradigmatic model, animality is either to be transgressed and liberated from, or suppressed, or excluded from one’s humanity.

The conference will provide an opportunity for us to rethink whether it is possible to go beyond this paradigm so deeply rooted in our culture. Our intention is to discuss the presence of animal in our culture, science and everyday life. The success of the conference depends on our ability to avoid a double trap – the animalization of *homo sapiens* and the anthropomorphism of animals. The problem is to find a language that would set forth the

dilemma of humanity versus nature away from the traditional language of animalizing and anthropomorphizing.

Focus of the conference:

The conference centers on the exchange of knowledge and experience in areas related to the theme:

1. We identified three areas to within which we will discuss the issue of animality – culture, science and daily life. Of course we are aware that the areas mentioned are not totally exclusive. If we talk about animality in culture, we mean its vision above all in literature and art. If we talk about animality in science, we above all mean its image in natural science. And if we talk about animality in daily life, we simply mean everyday experience of animality shared by ordinary people.

2. Our aim (in an open sense) is finding a new language which could be used to describe the animal and animality. This task is both important and difficult for at least one reason: the issue presented above has been already appropriated by natural sciences, especially evolutionary biology and scientific psychology. The trick is to avoid animalizing the human and “humanizing” the animal.

3. We would like to rethink new forms of ethical life that rather than *post-human* would be *with-animal* or *open to animal*. The animal spirits stimulating the academic field of critical animal studies have much to do with a certain ethical uncertainty or unease arising from the conviction that the established model for negotiating otherness has done all it could, but that the nature of the model that would replace it remains unclear.

4. We would like to follow Claude Levi-Strauss’ famous phrase – “Animals are good to think with” as an innuendo to the saying “animals are good to eat”. Levi-Strauss argues that besides serving as food source for the physical body, animals can be nourishment for the human mind as well. At the conference, we would like to clarify the meaning of Levi-Strauss’ statement. What could it mean at all “to think, not only *about animals* but above all *with animals*”?

5. We would also like to comprehend the source and the sense of contemporary movements such as birds watching or apes watching, which seem to seek a new relation between the human and the animal. We ask whether this is only a new, decadent way of looking at nature, arising from the boredom of being a human, or rather a noble thing –an attempt to be more than just human and to experience something beyond the human existence.

6. Finally, we would like to understand the relations between the human and the animal world in a wider perspective – transcultural and historical. We therefore ask not only how various cultures represent animality, but how in practice they construct their relations with the animal and how they practice sharing culture and history with the animal, a being supposedly beyond culture. Does the animal really exist beyond history and beyond suffering related to culture, thus making its existence always voiceless?

This is an interdisciplinary conference – we invite theoretical contributions and historical, literary or case studies on these and related themes from philosophers, sociologists, psychoanalysts, literary theorists, historians and others. Perspectives from different schools will be most welcome. English will be the language of the Conference. All accommodation and travel costs are covered by the organizers.

Keynote lectures:

Profesor Andrew Linzey (Faculty of Theology in the University of Oxford)

Profesor Ewa Mazierska (University of Central Lancashire)

Profesor Krzysztof Ziarek (English Department, University at Buffalo)

Profesor Monika Bakke (Institute of Philosophy, UAM, Poznań)

Call for papers:

All persons interested are invited to send the title of presentation, affiliation and a brief abstract in English by May 31, 2012 so that we can proceed with selection and logistics. Final confirmation and further information will be sent to you by June 30, 2012 along with a detailed conference program. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact wrobelsz@gmail.com.

We are convinced that your participation will provide a valuable contribution to the conference and we look forward to hosting you in Warsaw.

Organizing Committee:

Profesors Jerzy Axer and Szymon Wróbel