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## Pets of Konrad Lorenz. Theorizing in the social world of pet owners

### **Abstract**

This article explores the personal account titled *Man meets dog* ([1949] 2002) by an outstanding ethologist Konrad Lorenz who is one of the key theoreticians of the social world of pet owners. His lines of argumentation and categories of pet perception within this social world may be reconstructed from his personal recollections. The concepts of the social world and arena are the key notions that integrate the current analysis. The arena is also formed in the course of the inner conversation and is often going together with the outer disputes of a social world. It might seem that Konrad Lorenz as a scientist and ethologist should avoid using anthropomorphic categories. However, as he shares the same space (including private space) and communicates with domestic animals, the author tends to anthropomorphise their behaviour, even though formally he opposes or even despises the idea, applying a disdainful term of “sentimental anthropomorphisation” to people who do so. Additionally, the article addresses the biographic context of the ethologist’s life and his writings together with the activities of the Second World War as well as his collaboration with the Nazi government. Konrad Lorenz represents the so-called “cult of nature” approach which, in the opinion of his opponents, has a lot in common with the Nazi doctrine (Sax 1997).

### **Keywords**

Sociology of human animals – non-human animals relationships; Symbolic interaction; Anthropomorphisation; Social world; Legitimization; Theorizing; Arena

The scientific interest in relations and interactions between people and pets has a long-established tradition and has been institutionalised in the social world of science. A number of psychological, sociological, anthropological periodicals from all over the world cover different aspects of this subject. There is also a well-known interdisciplinary magazine *Society and Animals* devoted to the subject-matter which publishes numerous sociological papers. What is more, a lot of scientific books address this theme (Alger and Alger 2003; Franklin 1999; Griffin 1992; Kennedy 1992; Katcher, Beck 1983; Regan and Singer 1976). It is noteworthy that analyses of animal-human interactions include relations between various kinds of pets and their owners (Goode 2007; Irvin 2004; Arluke and Sanders 1996; Serpell 1996; Sanders 1993, 1999; Belk 1996; Sussman 1985; Foote 1956).

In our culture the social world of pet owners still calls for justification and legitimisation. Although household pets are very common, there is no full cultural or religious recognition of their social and psychological role in our everyday life. The Old Testament has provided the groundwork for views and theorizing about animals as creatures strictly subject to people, and the insurmountable divide that separates culture and nature. The animalistic-anthropomorphic dichotomy has been validated by St Augustine of Hippo, and, more vital for us, by Descartes through introducing a mechanistic and materialistic logic for the explanation of bodily functioning, where animals are characterized as soulless creatures (Menache 1997). Negative perceptions of animals in proverbs and sayings often result from biblical references. These teachings stand in stark contrast to everyday life observations of such a common phenomenon as keeping pets at home and attributing an important role to them in our psychological, personal, or even social life. The contrast creates a need to justify and theorize the significant position of pets while upholding the socially relevant dichotomy at the same time. This is done by categories of perception included in the matrix of pet perception (see table 1).<sup>1</sup> As the matrix is of a dynamic nature, it never carries a single category of perception during the entire pet-keeping period (e.g. particularistic anthropomorphisation or universalistic anthropomorphisation). All the categories presented in the table may be applied, depending on the context or behaviour. The passages between the categories are unlimited. These categories are frequently used to account for some significant behaviour of a pet.

	Characteristic animal traits ("Animalism", Animalistic Perspective)	Characteristic human traits (Anthropomorphic Perspective)
Universal qualities	Animalistic-universalistic perspective. "All animals, including pets, behave in a certain, standardized way; it is characteristic of them, for they are merely animals, <u>they have no human qualities.</u> "	Universalistic anthropomorphisation. "All animals, including pets, feel, suffer, think <u>similarly to humans.</u> "
Distinctive qualities	Animalistic-particularistic perspective. " <u>My (our) pet is exceptional, mainly thanks to contact with me (with us); but it is only an animal, it has no human qualities.</u> "	Particularistic anthropomorphisation. " <u>My (our i.e. our family's) pet is exceptional, mainly thanks to contact with me (with us) it behaves like a human.</u> " Personification of animals, <u>naming them.</u>

**Table 1.** The pet perception matrix

The author looks at the accounts of the famous zoologist and ethologist Konrad Lorenz in *Man Meets Dog* ([1949] 2002) which depict him as a great pet lover. Konrad Lorenz was an expert in the social world of pet owners whose opinions largely shaped the social aura around pet-keeping. As a Nobel Laureate in animal behaviour, Konrad Lorenz was enormously influential in the social world of science. His writings on pets are a good example of theorizing on different aspects of the

interaction between humans and their pets whereas *Man Meets Dog* ([1949] 2002) in particular may be regarded as an instance of theorizing and an attempt to legitimise the social world of pet owners.

What is a social world? A social world comprises groups that share certain activities and resources in order to reach their aims and create common ideologies pertaining to their activities (Strauss 1993: 212; Clarke 1991). Social worlds are not isolated entities or “social structures”. They are an isolated form of collective action (Strauss *ibidem*: 223). The boundaries and membership in social worlds are not as clearly defined as in other social groups such as professional organizations or families. One can join or leave a social world any time by taking a certain type of action. Individuals may obviously live in many different social worlds for, in the modern world, they may participate in many channels of communication. Therefore, they may act simultaneously in the academic world, the world of business, fashion, medicine, theatre, pet owners, the world of environmental protection and even in more loosely knit worlds of special interest, for example in the world of sports, stamp collectors or fans of a certain soap opera. Every social world is therefore a cultural area, which is defined neither by its territory nor by a formal group participation but by the boundaries of effective communication. This system of communication also creates a characteristic language, or jargon (Shibutani 1994). Below is the sample of words and expressions associated with the perspectives on the social world of pets under discussion:

- the anthropomorphic perspective: “an animal is not a thing”, “species chauvinism”, animal liberation, “animal emergency service”, “mass murder of animals”, sentimental anthropomorphisation, breeding nickname, etc. This language also contains many emotive and diminutive forms expressing particular meanings and attitudes of owners towards particular animals: kitty, kitty-kitty, kitten, pussy, pussy-cat or doggy, puppy, pup etc. (Dlugosz – Kurczabowa 2003: 242, 398), and calling a pet “a family member” (see Hickrod and Schmidt 1982; Veevers 1985; the problem of anthropomorphisation is extensively discussed in Kennedy 1992; Morris, Fiedler and Costall 2000; Irvine 2004).
- the animalistic perspective – sentimental anthropomorphisation, “stock farm”, hog raising farm, poultry farming, stud farm, raising of fur bearing animals. Yearbooks contain terms typical of the animalistic perspective imposing an emotionally neutral perception of animals and eliminating a subjective and individual approach to them e.g. cattle, hog, sows, herd, poultry, etc. (see RSRP 2002)
- various segments of the world of pet owners – “dog-lovers”, “cat-lovers”, animal breeders etc.

It is a certain universe of discourse that distinguishes between different worlds and erects a symbolic barrier and boundary around a social world. This language is also full of moral meanings, i.e. “interpretative orientations” and frequently full of what can be called “neutralisation techniques” (Lowe 2002:107; Sykes and Matza 1979; see also Sanders 1990) or accounts of improper and unforeseen acts which usually receive a negative social and moral evaluation (Scott and Lyman 1975). In every social world there exist certain norms, values, hierarchies of prestige, forms of careers and common outlooks upon life - *Weltanschauung* (Strauss 1993: 269-73).

A social world, especially the recently created one, has to justify its existence. Legitimation is one of the features of the social world and it is related to: the

demand for society's attribution of value to a given social world or its part, distancing from other worlds or their parts, building certain theories to emphasise the authenticity of a social world, setting standards of actions and their evaluation, defining boundaries of the social world or changing them (Strauss 1993:217, see also Strauss 1982).

Legitimation of the new worlds may also be carried out by means of fables that connect conventions of the new social world with the already existing, related ones, by creating an organisational (institutional) basis for the social world, intercepting the infrastructure of the social worlds that have ceased to exist and by creating links of co-operation between scattered social actors (Becker 1982: 300, 339-42). Theorizing may be a form of legitimation of actions within a social world. We may put forward a preliminary thesis that a social world needs a theory to legitimise its actions. Theorizing makes it possible to define one's own perspective on, let's say, the perception of pets as more authentic compared to categories of perception of other social actors, and set boundaries to the social worlds. There are many ways to do theorizing. It may be ordinary or scientific theorizing. The ordinary theorizing uses an *ad hoc* argumentation based on everyday observations and is not always logical. Scientific theorizing is based on reference to scientific theories and researches; it also ascribes meanings to the terms used. In both types of theorizing reference is made to scientific authorities. One may use i.e. the conception of animal liberation philosophy based on P. Singer's utilitarian theory. This is a more advanced form of theorizing that requires knowledge of certain philosophical and ethical concepts.

The social world provides individuals participating in it with a certain cognitive perspective by which they define situations. This perspective is an orderly way of perceiving the world, which comprises features of various objects, events, or human nature taken for granted. It is a matrix by means of which individuals perceive the world (Shibutani 1994: 269). This scheme provides individuals with a moral and cultural basis for their actions in a given social world as well as society. Judgments of events or actions of other people derive from these very perspectives just as selectivity of perception is conditioned by the perspective of a social world. The Animal Protection Society's activity in Poland will be perceived differently by a professional ethicist or theologian than it would be perceived by a member of this organisation. In every social world there are some divisive issues as following: do animals have some kind of mind or self and do they suffer like human beings? They are discussed, negotiated, fought against, forced and manipulated by representatives of emerging sub-worlds (Strauss 1978: 124). The common ground for this discussion is called an arena. An arena is of a political nature, but not necessarily referring to actions of purely political institutions. Not all the arenas are made public and we do not always get to know about their inner arguments via the mass media. Arenas exist inside organisations, inside sub-worlds and on the borders of different social worlds and sub-worlds. Some discussions tackle the issue of boundaries and problems with the legitimation of worlds. Struggles for prominence, influence, power and resources are also common (Strauss 1982:189; Clarke 1991; Kacperczyk 2004).

Konrad Lorenz's theorizing concentrates on his own and other people's relations with dogs and other pets. He undertakes an analysis of these relations and pet behaviour both in scientific and popular terms. You would usually expect animalistic or even mechanistic descriptions of pet behaviour on the part of an outstanding scientist, zoologist and ethologist. This researcher is an opponent of

anthropomorphisation both as regards the analysis of pets and the theory of cognition in relation to nature (Lorenz 1977:52, 280). In his opinion, the difference between the world of nature and the world of human soul is indelible only when it comes to the culture/ nature dichotomy, but not in the case of “physiological matters and experiencing”. The human heritage associated with rational thinking is of a cumulative nature and, according to the author, differentiates humans from the rest of the world of nature (Lorenz 1977: 285-90). Konrad Lorenz seems to be a great humanist who warns people against the speedy development of culture ahead of the phylogenetic development of our species (Lorenz 1986:12). It seems that owing to his scientific reputation of a renowned ethologist, the author of the memoirs has become one of the leading “theoreticians” of the social world of pet owners.

### **The analysis of personal accounts in *Man Meets Dog***

An attempt has been made to analyse Konrad Lorenz’s personal accounts using the pet perception matrix (see table 1, with a primary focus on anthropomorphic and animalistic categories in various contexts of action as well as applied justifications) in order to verify its analytical adequacy and applicability. Triangulating the data, I show that a debate concerning the arena and categories of pet perception in the social world of pet owners exists not only in official arenas but at the individual level reflected in the inner conversation, too. A book by Konrad Lorenz ([1949] 2002) will be analysed in an effort to provide an answer to the following question: What meaning does Konrad Lorenz attribute to the relationship between humans and their pets? An outside sociological or psychological perspective applied to the text and the search for parallels with existing ideological, political or philosophical conceptions could distort the key intentions and structures of meaning included in the text itself and originally intended by the author.

To begin with, Konrad Lorenz keeps track of the pedigree of dogs as pets (Lorenz [1949] 2002:1-18) in the mode of fictitious story-telling. The phylogenesis of the species is indispensable for the subsequent plausible explanation of the behaviour of his own pets which appears later on in the book, whereby the author refers to the natural traits as compared to the modified qualities of the species resulting from breeding and domestication. According to Konrad Lorenz, our ancestors tamed the jackal and the wolf centuries ago, to the mutual benefit of both hunters and wild canines. Packs of golden jackals followed people and spent the night nearby to get leftovers, and warned people about dangerous predators approaching their camps at night. This was the beginning of the common ecological environment shared by humans and jackals. As mutual attachment developed, jackals helped people trace their prey. From a jackal’s perspective, the killing of an animal by a human was associated with the possibility of obtaining and/or gaining meat leftovers. Humans established their first settlements at the beginning of the late stone age. At that time they already tamed the golden, Spitz-like jackal helpful for hunting and guard. The wolf had also been tamed by that time, being one of the ancestors of wolf-blooded dogs such as Huskies, Eskimo dogs, Samoyeds, Russian Laikas, Chow chows, and some other breeds. The majority of today’s dogs have descended either from wolves or from jackals.

In the first chapter the author uses mainly animalistic categories to describe animal behaviour. The jackal is still not fully tame, but gets closer and closer to people. It is free, lives in the open space. It makes a choice including the choice of a human as a prospective companion indispensable for the species’ procreation. This

is a choice made for biological reasons, to increase the chances of the species to survive. The animalistic categories used by the author apply to the reconstruction of a jackal's motives of dependence on human households. These motives are strictly biological and evolutionary, not psychological or typically human.

In the second chapter ("Two origins of fidelity") the author further inquires into the reasons for dog fidelity in the animal traits of the species. The category of "fidelity" is in itself an instance of anthropomorphisation of pet behavioural motives. Konrad Lorenz uses an animalistic category at the theoretical level, to account for a term derived from our culture (fidelity). Today's dog behaviours are explained by their ancestral features typical of the species. Fidelity primarily originates from the bond between the dog and his master, namely

a lifelong maintenance of those ties which bind the young wild dog to its mother, but which in the domestic dog remain part of a lifelong preservation of youthful characters. The other root of fidelity arises from the pack loyalty which binds the wild dog to the pack-leader or, respectively from the affection which the individual members of the pack feel for each other. This root goes much deeper in dogs with more wolf than jackal blood, for the obvious reason that the preservation of the pack plays a far larger role in the life of the wolf. (Lorenz [1949] 2002:20)

The author is using the terms "pack" and "bond" between animal child and its parents which in this particular context serve as animalistic categories. Pet's independence is accounted for by referring to other animalistic categories:

the marks of domesticity particularly that of persistent youthfulness are much less distinct in Lupus-blooded dogs than in those of our Central European breeds. The place of this trait is taken by a completely different type of dependency which derives its origin from the specific propensities of the wolf. While the jackal is chiefly a carrion feeder, the wolf is almost purely a beast of prey and is dependent on the support of his fellows in the killing of the large animals which are his sole means of sustenance in the cold season (Lorenz [1949] 2002:25)

Jackal dogs perceive their master as their parent whereas wolf-like dogs perceive a parent as their "pack-leader". However, later on Lorenz applies anthropomorphic categories in order to explain motives of dogs' behaviours: "The submissiveness of the childish jackal dog is matched in the Lupus dog by a proud 'man to man' loyalty" (Lorenz [1949] 2002:25). The author shares his own observations as a specific empirical example to support this theoretical generalization.

In chapter four, "Training", the author once again adopts the animalistic perspective on animals and animalistic categories. Lorenz seems to be more attached to the breeds that have kept a lot of wildness and independence. The author shows that domestic animals, dogs in this case, may be educated. He does not explicitly clarify the reason for dog training, although we may guess that it is about introducing them to family and domestic life: teaching pets their hygiene and discipline "should simplify any dog owner's relations with his charge" (Lorenz 1949/2002:37). This can be achieved by three basic drills: "lie down", "basket", "heel". It is noteworthy that the author does not mention a popular command 'paw' as it is not crucial (from the point of view of the target behaviour pattern of a dog) for less troublesome companionship of a pet. It is rather used for expressing emotional states, initiated by the master and/or independently by the pet itself.

In chapter five “Canine customs” the author emphasizes the role of specific laws governing canine behaviour. He puts forward a strong methodological statement:

Seen from without, the effects of these laws, which are firmly anchored to the hereditary behaviour pattern of the dog, closely resemble the regulations of our own transmitted human customs. This also applies to the effects of these laws on social life, and it is in the sense of this analogy that the chapter heading is to be understood. (Lorenz [1949] 2002:51)

Canine rituals are inherited in encounters and patterns of the ranking order behaviour as in e.g. the dog stiffening up and raising its tail vertically on high in self-display or dogs sniffing one another. It is the first instance of anthropomorphisation though used by the author to describe dog behaviour. He clearly comes across the arena of two competing categories of pet perception, the need to mingle animalistic and anthropomorphic terminology: “The urge to preserve prestige and dignity is not specifically human, but lies deep into the instinctive layers of the mind which, in the higher animals, are closely related to our own” (Lorenz [1949] 2002:53). In his application of human characteristics to domestic animals (dignity, prestige) the author emphasizes their common phylogenetic origin, in order perhaps to evade allegations of anthropomorphisation and uphold his former methodological statement.

Further details of canine customs call for further anthropomorphisation. The example below is a description of an interaction between two dogs of equal physical strength that would have separated and gone their own ways (having sniffed one another), had it not been for the interference of a bitch:

Bitches behave in a peculiar way when they are present at a meeting of two dogs equal in strength and rank. On such occasions, Wolf’s wife, Susi, certainly hopes for a fight; not that she helps her husband actively but she likes to see him thrash an opponent. I have twice watched her adopt a most deceitful ruse in order to achieve this end: Wolf was standing head to tail with another dog—each time it was an outsider, a ‘summer visitor’—and Susi prowled round them carefully and interestedly, the dogs in the meantime taking no notice of her as a bitch. Then, silently but vigorously, she nipped her husband in his hindquarters, which were presented to a foe. Wolf assumed that the latter, by an intolerable breach of all the age-old laws of canine custom, had bitten his posterior whilst sniffing it, and fell on him immediately. Since the attack appeared to the other dog as equally unforgivable contravention, the ensuing battle was unusually grim. (Lorenz [1949] 2002:54)

Some instances of anthropomorphisation are of a social nature, namely role categorizations (“Wolf’s wife”), taking the role of the other (“certainly hopes for a fight”) and cracking down on the one who does not observe the custom. “Wolf’s wife” took part in a strategic interaction determined to incite a fight between the two male dogs who are unaware of the provocation. From Susi’s and observers’ point of view, this must have been a closed awareness context (interaction partners are not aware of the real intentions of one of the participants). Thus, animals are ascribed the ability to get involved in strategic interaction. Social anthropomorphisation is accompanied by psychological anthropomorphisation e.g. dogs may hate each other, feel contempt and fear, which is deduced from their non-verbal behaviour (Lorenz [1949] 2002: 55-56). What is more, one may interpret pet gestures as the expression of feelings and views such as self-confidence, devotion, attack or self-defence.

“Chivalry” is a term taken from our cultural milieu, and its application in reference to the animal world requires a biological explanation:

There is one particularly endearing canine habit, which has been fixed since early times in the hereditary characters of the central nervous system of the dog. This is the chivalrous treatment of females and puppies. No normal male will bite a female of its species; the bitch is absolutely taboo and can treat a dog as she likes, nipping or even seriously biting him. The dog has at his disposal no means of retaliation other than differential gestures and the 'politeness look', with which he may attempt to divert the attacks of the bitch into play. Masculine dignity forbids the only other outlet-flight-for dogs are always at great pains to 'keep face' in front of bitches. (Lorenz [1949] 2002:60)

As stems from the above, male dignity and chivalry are hereditary in dogs.

In the chapter "Master and dog" the author engages in "theorizing". Konrad Lorenz strongly emphasizes the difference between the animal and human world. Anthropomorphisation of canine customs from the previous chapter is replaced by the animal/ human dichotomy:

Extensive knowledge of the social behaviour of the higher animals does not, as so many think, make one underestimate differences between man and animal. I maintain, on the contrary, that only somebody who is really familiar with animal behaviour is able to appreciate the unique and exalted position held by man in the world of living creatures. (...) The scientific comparison of man and animals which forms such a large part of our research methods no more implies a lowering of human dignity than does the recognition of the origin of species. The essence of creative organic evolution is that it produces completely new and higher characters which were in no way indicated or even implicit in the preceding stage from which they took their origin. (Lorenz [1949] 2002:64-65)

Despite the unity that exists between our part of animal nature and the animal realm, human culture continuously creates something new, something that has never existed before, the achievements of human mind and ethics: "The assertion that animals are better than man is sheer blasphemy" (Lorenz [1949] 2002: 65). The author criticizes those who bestow their love on dogs or cats while doubting the moral virtues of mankind. He calls this phenomenon a "social perversion". Animalistic categories in pet perception are again attributed to the world of animals whilst anthropomorphic (and anthropocentric) categories - to the human world. As a result of the author's "theorizing", the original balance of the analysed dichotomy is restored. One can still observe the existence of the arena across the accounts of domestic animals.

In the chapter "Dogs and children" the author stresses the positive impact of pet-keeping on children and their socialization, as they learn very quickly how to treat animals in order to strike up a "friendship" with them. He undermines the belief that dogs are a real danger to children as ensuing from the learned distortions in their interrelations. According to Konrad Lorenz, the human and animal realms join together when it comes to relations between children and pets. Culture has not yet managed to create an insurmountable divide between the two which is subsequently formed in the course of primary socialization.

The next chapter "Choosing a dog" advises on how to choose the right dog that goes with its owner. According to Konrad Lorenz, "comical breeds" like Sealyhams may be a great support for a melancholic person. To those who prefer wild nature,

independent breeds that are closer to their wild ancestors are advised. Nervous persons should avoid getting very lively dogs, like fox-terriers. When getting a dog, one should always take heed of picking a dog that is physically and mentally fit. Konrad Lorenz claims that bitches are much more noble, intelligent and faithful than dogs, which should also be taken into consideration when choosing a pet. It is clear that the two worlds, animal and human, can be brought closer together by a rational choice of the man.

Dog breeders, as it is stated in the chapter "An appeal to dog breeders", overestimate the importance of physical qualities in comparison to mental ones. The lack of fidelity in the case of some gundogs is an example. Physical perfection is ill-assorted with mental characteristics. Selective breeding is, so to speak, anthropomorphisation in action, as it follows a rational conception of breed shaping that closes the sharp divide between the two worlds and distorts relations between them. The author is an advocate for milder interference, since too much of human intrusion into the animal world is destructive.

The chapters titled "Animals that lie" and "Cat!" seem to be the most pertinent to the analysis in question. The facial expression of the cat openly communicates its mood. An attack in self-defence is preceded by threatening gestures such as making the "hunchback", with ears laid flat, the tail slightly to one side, the corners of its mouth pulled backwards, the nose wrinkled, producing a metallic growl and splutter. Konrad Lorenz claims that such non-verbal communication is present and noticeable in interactions between cats as well as dogs and may be deciphered together with the underlying motives. Apart from the most superficial layer of gestures involved in direct communication, pets are also capable of using symbolic communication for strategic purposes. "Deliberate misrepresentation of facts" understood as a lie or hiding some facts, is the case under consideration (Lorenz [1949] 2002:164).

Despite clear anthropomorphisation, the author shows his usual scientific meticulousness, as in his use of the term "lie" in inverted commas (Lorenz [1949] 2002: 164). The real, disguised intentions behind pet behaviour are noticed and decoded by the observer. In other words, an animal has adopted a certain strategy in order to achieve a given goal by misleading behaviour. Closed awareness context may turn into open awareness context if one party discovers the true motives governing other partner's actions (Glaser and Strauss 1964).<sup>ii</sup>

The description of animal interactions in human terms is a manifestation of anthropomorphisation. A search for real intentions behind certain gestures is rational and applies to a rational actor such as a human being. Interaction is seen as symbolic (gestures are interpreted on the basis of conventionally ascribed meaning) or strategic (goals are achieved by way of actions which conceal the party's true motives).

In the chapter "The truce" Konrad Lorenz once again tries to restrain himself from anthropomorphising animal behaviour. The author adopts the animalistic-particularistic perspective. He claims, for instance, that his own dogs would usually win a fight. The author turns to an animalistic outlook when maintaining that friendship between different species is impossible. Apparently, numerous animal species (badgers, monkeys, dogs, cats, geese and others) were forced into peaceful coexistence in his house by the law of a "cease-fire" and not the bonds of friendship. Mutual tolerance is an essential element of the code of conduct observed by the occupants of a shared dwelling place who may even resort to play, but never an act of aggression against another animal who occupies the same home. A play as symbolic interaction is an essential prerequisite for this type of coexistence.<sup>iii</sup>

Play authorises mutual tolerance and acceptance imposed by the shared dwelling place.

The author proceeds to assert that “sentimental anthropomorphisation” of animals disgusts him:

It makes me feel slightly sick when, in some magazine published by an animal defence society, I read the caption ‘Good Friends’ or something of the kind under a picture which portrays a cat, a dachshund and a robin all eating out of the same dish [...]. From my own experience, I should say that real friendships between members of different species only exist between man and animals, and hardly ever between animals amongst themselves [...]. Mutual toleration is certainly not synonymous with friendship, and even when animals unite in common interest, as for a game, it cannot generally be said that they are bound by a real social contact, far less by a firm friendship. (Lorenz [1949] 2002: 106-107)

The author clearly tries to refrain from anthropomorphising by applying the animalistic-universalistic view of the relations between different species (Lorenz [1949] 2002:90-108) although it does not come easy. Still, he maintains that real friendship is possible only between a human and a pet.

The animalistic-universalistic perspective is also present in the following two chapters: “The fence” and “Much ado about a little dingo”. Konrad Lorenz tackles the issue of a distance as the biological constituent of pet nature. As an illustration of this point, the author mentions aggression expressed by animals towards outsiders who encroach on their territory. Similarly, the success of the adoption of a changeling by a bitch largely depends on the site of the first encounter between the prospective foster-mother and the puppy. To stimulate the female’s brood-tending instinct, it is advisable to present her with a strange baby outside her nest. If the foster-mother initially encounters an orphan among her own litter, she may bite or even devour it. The latter action may be preceded by a sucking and licking movements normally employed to remove the foetal membranes from the newborn puppies. Thus, even domestic animals abide by the code of behaviour that is only too different from human.

Theoretical thinking based on home ethnography is continued in the chapter “What a pity he can’t speak - he understands every word”. Dogs, similarly to wild animals, express a plethora of feelings including anger, humility and happiness using their facial expression and gesticulation. A large number of gestures, however, are acquired in the course of socialization and training. For example, giving the paw, laying its head on its master’s knee are learned actions practised by a dog to ask for forgiveness or conciliation. The dog breeds that are most advanced in domestication are also the most apt at miming. Apart from understanding and communicating feelings, dogs can understand words and even entire sentences. They recognize messages not only by their tone:

Every dog-owner is familiar with a certain behaviour in dogs which can never be produced under laboratory conditions. The owner says, without special intonation and avoiding mention of the dogs name, ‘I don’t know whether I’ll take him or not.’ At once the dog is on the spot, wagging his tail and dancing with excitement, for he already senses a walk. [...] on the final pronouncement, ‘I’ll leave him at home’, the dog turns dejectedly away and lies down again. (Lorenz [1949] 2002:132)

The process of theorizing results in the conclusion that domestic dogs demonstrate a superior ability to understand human language even compared to

anthropoid apes. Konrad Lorenz goes even further, drawing a parallel between dogs and people. The first similarity is the “liberation from the fixed tracks of instinctive behaviour”, and the second is “that persistent youthfulness, which in the dog is the root of his permanent longing for affection” (Lorenz [1949] 2002:133). In this chapter, the author partly abandons the animalistic-universalistic perspective in favour of universalistic anthropomorphisation.

The subsequent chapter “Affection’s claim” raises ethical questions in human-pet relations. Dogs are exceptionally faithful: “The bond with a true dog is as lasting as ties of this earth can ever be” (Lorenz *ibidem*:135). Affection and friendship that develops between a master and his dog shall be based on mutual fidelity. Regrettably, dogs are more faithful than humans. The human religion of brotherly love falls short of fidelity and love of a pet towards its master. Konrad Lorenz immediately reiterates that it is not sentimental anthropomorphisation: “Even the noblest human love arises, not from reason and the specifically human, rational moral sense, but from the much deeper age-old layers of instinctive feeling” (Lorenz *ibidem* :137). The author believes that deep layers of feelings and their dynamics are typical of both humans and animals. While apparently refraining from “sentimental anthropomorphisation” of pets, he looks at people from an animalistic perspective instead.<sup>iv</sup> The same goes for the chapter “The animal with a conscience” whereby Konrad Lorenz argues that common sense and reason alone are an insufficient basis for morality. Although animals are not humans, their treatment by people stems from deep-rooted affection. A more rational treatment of an animal e.g. for utilitarian purposes deriving from an animalistic perspective and suggested by one’s mind may still be hampered by deeply rooted instinctive feelings (Lorenz *ibidem*:178-179).

Konrad Lorenz’s book abounds in instances of pet anthropomorphisation mostly of a psychological nature. As the scientist puts it, his dog-bitch was embarrassed when she had missed a mouse trying to catch it (Lorenz *ibidem*:142). Psychological underpinnings may also be with a cognitive focus, as when the author ascribes his dogs the ability to classify other domestic animals and their respective species depending on their use. Some breeds of domestic fowl e.g. ducks, geese are easily recognised as inviolable by dogs whereas the canine pets encounter considerable difficulties trying to discriminate between different kinds of gallinaceous birds e.g. peacocks (Lorenz *ibidem*: 184). Anthropomorphisation may also involve moral issues, as in the chapter “The animal with a conscience”. In the author’s words, dogs feel remorse, e.g., when they misbehave. The feelings of remorse and guilt last as pets have to unreservedly express their genuine regret about the wrongdoing (Lorenz *ibidem*:182-183).

The last chapter, “Fidelity and death” is a word of praise for the master’s fidelity to his pets. Faithfulness to animal friends is difficult to maintain as their life span is shorter than ours. This biological maladjustment may be overcome by keeping the descendants of a certain animal. The descendants remind them of their ancestors in many ways, which helps to preserve recollections of all the forebears once owned. The most recent offspring reminds of all that has been before as if accumulating the feelings of affection and fidelity cultivated between dogs and people sharing their home. This phenomenon may be called “steered reincarnation” (the term coined by K. T. Konecki). The anthropomorphically perceived relation between a human being and a pet (based on mutual love and fidelity) is extended by means of “selective breeding” whereby animals are treated objectively and scientifically, after all.

To sum up, the author’s personal accounts abound in various rhetorical “tricks” employed in order to maintain a scientific approach which roughly corresponds to an animalistic perspective. At the same time, an anthropomorphic perspective seems

indispensable for harmonious everyday coexistence with pets. Konrad Lorenz's accounts become contradictory when his two identities of scientist and pet lover collide. The animals are no longer an object of sheer scientific experiment but a part of his everyday family life.

### **The cult of nature according to Konrad Lorenz**

Let us now focus on the socio-historical context of Konrad Lorenz's writings. Perhaps a closer look at the socio-cultural context of the renowned ethologist's writings will enhance the understanding of the author's statement, especially as regards his standpoint in a scientific debate in ethology and eugenics.

Animal psychology as a discipline flourished under the auspices of the Third Reich. Some researchers seek the roots of Konrad Lorenz's opinions in his political and organizational entanglements with Nazi Germany (see an extensive elaboration on the thesis in Sax 1997). As a member of the Nazi Party, Konrad Lorenz worked at the Race-policy Bureau at the time. In 1942 he participated in the study of 877 individuals of mixed Polish-German descent estimating their ability to assimilate into German culture. Individuals classified as antisocial or with a limited inherent aptitude were sent to concentration camps, whereas eligible candidates were assigned for forced Germanisation (Deichman 1996:193-97, 323; see Sax 1997). The fascist cult of the race and disregard for human life, individuality and individual freedom is characteristic of Nazi ideology (Sax 1997, 2000). In the light of Nazi ideology nature appears as orderly and disciplined, whereas a civilized society is permeated with anarchy and disorder. Absolute order is only an attribute of wild nature untouched by civilization. The fight for the *Lebenswelt* and survival are absolutely fundamental to this order. The Nazis disdained liberal-democratic societies as decadent, deprived of the natural power and fighting skills. Pets are a part of these degrading tendencies of a decadent, demoralized society.

Konrad Lorenz was a co-editor of *Zeitschrift für Tierpsychologie*, a journal published by the German Society for Animal Psychology established in 1936. The bulk of Konrad Lorenz's articles were published by the journal in the Nazi period. These included, among others, his writings on the detrimental effects of domestication and civilization (Sax 1997). Due to domestication and selective breeding animals are severed from their natural ancestry and wild environment. As a consequence, natural selection does not work, natural instincts deteriorate, which impedes both innate psychological and behavioural qualities. The same goes for the residents of metropolises. This entails "entropy", that is the proliferation of random variations of forms as a substitute for the natural and remarkable variety of the kind, which, in turn, leads to genetic decline and should be treated as an illness or social downfall<sup>v</sup> According to Konrad Lorenz, further degeneration in humans may be halted by means of eugenics. Boria Sax, a vehement critic of Lorenz's scientific achievements, seeks a parallel between his theory of the dual origin of dogs (domesticated from the Mesopotamian jackal, and the Northern Wolf, the "aureus dogs" and "lupus dogs", respectively; the theory is also formulated in the book under discussion) and the racist theories of the Semitic and Aryan races. The Mesopotamian jackal is an individualist (it hunts alone), a vagabond not attached to his "own" land, it has no aptitude for team work. It is of the southern lineage, which reminds one of the origin of the Semitic race. On the contrary, the descendants of the Northern Wolf stick together, hunt in packs, know their position in a hierarchy (a

hierarchical animal), and males are chivalrous towards females. The description of the lupus dog clearly corresponds to that of the Aryan race.

According to Konrad Lorenz, dog breeds, similarly to human races, display psychological and behavioural differences. The theory of the dual origin of the domestic dog is in line with the imagery and structure of perception propagated under the Nazi government. Apart from his fascination with structure, dominance and submission in wolf packs, Konrad Lorenz took a keen interest in the 'orderly wildness' of wolves. He directed special attention to this issue (as if trying to track down the origins of the hierarchical order and positions of power in human society) in meticulously studied animal gestures and interactions. As is pointed out by Boria Sax (1997), Lorenz's post-war popularisations of animal psychology that convey his views and structural outlook shaped back in the Nazi period enable researchers to quote his thoughts without the need to refer to his shameful past. Thus, Konrad Lorenz has managed to smuggle his views in the form of popular scientific writings targeted at the general public, and above all pet owners.

The present analysis of Konrad Lorenz's personal accounts focuses on a single book and categories of pet perception expressed herein. The historical context in which Konrad Lorenz's views on animal psychology were formed is taken into account. His marked preference for dogs exhibiting fewer signs of domestication, and which are equipped with what he calls "chivalry" is in concurrence with the author's aversion to selective breeding and may suggest the cult of nature (or wildness). Nonetheless, the analysis has shown that an animalistic perspective is not the dominant line in pet description or perception. The cult of wild nature is juxtaposed with the human and cultural legacy, with a special emphasis on the latter's superiority over the animal realm.

There must be certain suppressions and omissions involved in the personal recollections under study. To discover them one has to be well acquainted with the author's biography and have access to more than his personal sources. Still, there are clear signs of reticence when Konrad Lorenz describes a great friendship that developed between him and his dog in 1940: "After two short months, my bond with this dog was broken by the force of destiny: I was called to the University of Königsberg as professor of psychology" (Lorenz [1949] 2002:32). The above reflection raises a number of questions. What was Konrad Lorenz doing at the University of Königsberg in 1940? Who could occupy a university position in Nazi Germany? How did he manage to get or to keep the job? Why does not he mention the findings of his university or home research on animals from that period? The book leaves these and similar questions unanswered. He writes elsewhere that he had to part with his four-legged friend as he had been called up for military service (what army?) in 1941. He was then working as a neurologist in the military hospital in Posen (Polish name Poznan), was sent to the front in 1944, and finally his dog was killed in an air-raid as the war was coming to an end (Lorenz *ibidem*: 36). Thus, the stories of the author's friendships with dogs took place during the Second World War. However, the war itself is not present as the background or the frame for the memoirs. The war is mentioned only twice, in passing, which may be explained by the fact that the subject of the accounts has nothing to do with war. The memories of war trauma usually present in war survivors' recollections cannot be found in any of Konrad Lorenz's lifestories.<sup>vi</sup> Perhaps in this case the suppressions are a manifestation of the trauma.

Konrad Lorenz's biographical note which goes with his Nobel Lecture of 1973 comprises barely one passage of a personal comment on his use of Nazi terminology and his writings on the dangers of domestication as well as his concern that

“analogous genetical processes of deterioration may be at work with civilized humanity” (Lorenz 1974) which unluckily came out shortly after the German invasion of Austria. Still, you would be looking in vain for a public act of contrition. Konrad Lorenz admits that he genuinely believed that National Socialism would make a change for the better. What is more, this view was shared by many of his friends and teachers, as well as his father. They had no idea at the time that the word “selection” used by the Nazi government could possibly mean “murder”. Thus, Konrad Lorenz extenuates his faults by saying that he knew nothing about the fascist atrocities against humanity. It is not to say that the ethologist repudiates the beliefs expressed in his publications. He regrets “those writings not so much for the undeniable discredit they reflect on my person as for their effect of hampering the future recognition of the dangers of domestication” (Lorenz 1974). Konrad Lorenz devotes three paragraphs to his experiences in Soviet captivity. Apparently, his stay in the captive camp enabled him to see a parallel between the Nazi and Marxist education and comprehend the nature of indoctrination. Still, the biographical note contains no mention of the fact that Konrad Lorenz joined the Nazi party and was a staff member of some of the Nazi authorities.

## Conclusion

The context behind the book *Man meets dog* notwithstanding, the above analysis has focused on the text itself. The analysis has largely concentrated on that which could be directly reconstructed from the text, namely the views articulated by the author and their structure of meaning. In sociology there is always a temptation to start searching for parallels and connections with other ideological or philosophical concepts of the time. Yet this is the subject for one more article. It is definitely worthwhile to establish procedures whereby biographical narration and other sources of personal data can be combined and/or checked against each other. For the time being let us conclude that the cultural and historical context (the Nazi era and the Second World War) could have motivated the author to produce personal accounts. Konrad Lorenz’s views may have indeed crystallized in the Nazi period, and he decided to popularise them at the time out of his own volition. The personal accounts under study were written after the Second World War.

Konrad Lorenz’s text abounds in examples of theorizing about the relations between domestic animals and people in the social world of pet owners. One can outline the arena at the individual level (the inner conversation) with the underlying, wider socio-moral context.

Is it possible to treat animals subjectively and anthropomorphise them at the same time? Is an anthropomorphic perspective moral? The author rejects the plausibility of the latter. Both as a scientist and a human being he acknowledges the Kantian view of morality as related to reason. Thus, a clear distinction is drawn between the realm of values and the realm of nature. On the other hand, one often comes across the descriptions of feelings and behaviours that anthropomorphise pets and are immediately followed by the animalistic standpoint. In this way the author ensures continuity with his original statement about the insurmountable divide between the world of animals (even domesticated ones) and the world of culture. The two conflicting perspectives frequently swap places in the course of Lorenz’s interpretation of everyday life. The interpretation of the pet definition that emerges from the memoirs seems to be rather complex. Although, from the very outset, the relationship between nature and culture was severed, the dynamics of the inner

arena clearly shows that pets, especially dogs, turn into a hybrid ascribed both human and animal qualities. In other words, the entire world grows to be in symbiosis continuously reconstructed by human interpretations. Konrad Lorenz finds it difficult to cope with the nature/ culture dichotomy. He ends up combining both the animalistic and anthropomorphic outlook on pets. The alternate application of these perspectives to the interpretation of everyday experiences makes it possible to keep up the belief that the human realm is peculiar and unique, and is separated from the animal realm by the impenetrable barrier. However, the actual actions and interactions narrow the divide e.g. by means of “interpreted symbolic interaction” the pets are involved in. Due to accurate interpretation and meticulous theorizing the author manages to see the difference. Konrad Lorenz provides an example of theorizing inside the social world of pet owners in which the dichotomy between animalistic and anthropomorphic categories of pet perception is maintained (and validated by the author’s scientific authority) along the lines of the cultural model of perception of these relations. Clear and culturally legitimised superiority of humans over the (wild) nature and the ever-lasting nature/ culture dichotomy receives further justification in the context of everyday life, where anthropomorphic categories of pet perception justify the position of animals in human homes and in their immediate interaction setting. Thus, one witnesses persistent reproduction of the model of relations in question at the level of theoretical justifications in the social world of pet owners, in Konrad Lorenz’s personal accounts as well as in interpretational work carried out by pet owners on a daily basis.

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## Endnotes

- i The matrix and categories were generated in the course of the qualitative field study entitled “Pets in a Polish family” conducted by the author in 2000-2005. Grounded theory methodology was applied to the data analysis. The above perception matrix can be successfully applied to the description of owner-pet interactions in a number of contexts. We try in the paper to use the matrix in the analysis of personal accounts of Konrad Lorenz.
- ii The notion of “awareness context” was introduced by B. Glaser and A. Strauss (1964) and refers to the level and type of the interaction participants’ knowledge about the partner’s identity and their own identity as perceived by the partner. Four types of awareness contexts may be outlined: 1. Open awareness context- each participant knows both the partner’s true identity and their own identity as perceived by the interaction partner 2. Closed awareness context -one of the participants knows neither his own identity, nor the partner’s; 3. A suspicion awareness context-one of the participants suspects the real identity of the partner or the partner’s view on his/her own identity 4. A pretence awareness context - both participants know their real identities but pretend not to. Interactions can be categorized in terms of a certain type of awareness context.
- iii Compare other descriptions of games between animals of different species such as dogs and badger, monkeys and dogs (Lorenz [1949] 2002:100-102).
- iv Usually the adjective “sentimental” is used to depreciate people who defend animals against human cruelty. “In order to forestall such a response, T. Kotarbinski entitled his text branding ill-treatment of animals ‘Sentimental meditation’ (*medytacja sentymentalna*)” (Lazari-Pawlowska 1992: 35).

- v Konrad Lorenz still adhered to the view when declared the Noble laureate in 1973; see K. Lorenz 1974.
- vi One comes across suppressions of the war years in yet another book by this author based on his recollections, although war experiences are implied in the author's sorrow following the death of the animals he took care of and that took part in his research: "Ravens are missing, geese flew away from Königsberg, where I have been lecturing at the university, because of flak. God knows where they have flown" (Lorenz 1997:19).

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