The Future of Research into Relationships Between People and Their Animal Companions

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the most workable way of defining pain was to consider it as three separate mental states, with three corresponding different sets of symptoms (quoted from J. H. Seamer, Vet Rec 110: 341-344, 1982):

1. Discomfort—such as may be characterized by negative signs such as poor condition, torpor, and diminishing appetite.

2. Stress—a condition of tension or anxiety predictable or readily explicable from environmental causes, whether distinct from or including physical causes.

3. Pain—recognizable by more positive signs such as struggling, screaming or squealing, convulsions, severe palpitation.

Although this “Littlewood formula” has not been formally incorporated into law, many of its components have been put into use, via administrative mechanisms, by the Home Office.

Conclusion

In one sense, the issue of pain in animals can be considered as an isolated element of the more general question of animal consciousness, a topic that is currently undergoing a relatively radical revision. J. Levy, a University of Chicago neurophysiologist, has decided—on the basis of neurological studies that demonstrate the continuity between the components that make up animal and human brains—that “we have no reason to suppose that there are any unique properties of the human organ of thought.” He also reiterates the common insight that much of our medical research on animals assumes a continuity of consciousness from one species to another (Psych Today 16:36-44, 1982).

Surely, then, it would seem that we can say with some degree of certainty that the evidence furnished, to date, by the traditional measures of the classical scientific approach has only served to substantiate the theory that animals not only feel an immediate reaction to pain that is similar to our own, but also end up in states akin to our own emotional and psychological states, with the possible exception of the dog’s vocalization as a reaction to noxious stimuli. The evidence supports both the proposition that animals experience pain and the idea that we should perhaps be considering its role in our human environment.

As Peter Medawar has stated (in Hope of Progress, Methuen, 1967, p. 72) "I think that the use of experimental animals on the present scale is a temporary episode in biological and medical history...In the meantime, we must grapple with the paradox that something, but research on animals will provide us with knowledge that will make it possible for us, one day, to dispense with the use of them altogether.

Until that day arrives, it is imperative that we formulate workable guidelines for using animals with more compassion—and intelligence—than we are at present.

Dana H. Murphy

Comments

The Future of Research into Relationships Between People and Their Animal Companions

Boris M. Levinson, Ph.D.

In sharp contrast to prevalent public attitudes of 20 years ago, the field of animal-human relationships is now respected as a legitimate area of scientific investigation. However, it has not yet evolved into a fully fledged discipline: a specific term for the discipline, a body of theory, and a methodology of its own must still be developed. This methodology should make use of both the intuitive and scientific approaches in order to encompass the full richness of animal-human interaction. Four main areas of investigation would be fruitful at this point: (1) the role of animals in human culture and ethnic groups over the centuries; (2) the effect of association with animals on human personality development; (3) human-animal communication; and (4) the therapeutic use of animals in formal psychotherapy, institutional settings, and other arrangements for handicapped and aged populations.

A complex relationship has existed between humans and animals since ancient times, but we may now be ready to translate into reality the myth of the Golden Age when animals and humans lived in peace with each other.

It was only 20 years ago, at a meeting of the American Psychological Association, that I first presented a paper on the “Dog as a Co-therapist” (Levinson, 1961). The reception was lukewarm. While some accepted the idea, others met it with ridicule, even inquiring as to whether the dog shared my fees. I became known as the dog’s co-therapist.

Obviously, much water has flowed under the bridge since then. The problems raised in my original paper and in subsequent articles have come to be taken seriously by society at large. Even the academic world has granted recognition to our field by awarding doctorates in the discipline of animal-human relationships. However, in spite of these promising beginnings and accomplishments, it seems to me that this field has not become a true discipline as yet.

Perhaps there are advantages to this rather ambiguous status, since our attempts to define our field help us to remain spontaneous and flexible in both methodology and subject matter. How, for example, do we account in our research for such factors as the intimate,
playful, idiosyncratic interrelations between animal companions and their owners? What are we to do with data that arise spontaneously? How can we measure these? Is it possible that our experimental and statistical studies cancel out these most important interchanges?

It seems to me that the relationship between people and their animal companions can encompass almost all areas of human behavior. In order to begin careful studies, the domain of possible investigation has to be delimited and given a focus. We should decide what we are trying to do and in what field we are operating. Is it comparative psychology (Denny, 1980; Dewsbury, 1978), ecological psychology (Bibring, 1920), environmental psychology (Baum, 1980; Stokols, 1978), ethology (Barnett, 1981; Fox, 1974), sociobiology (Barlow, 1980; Wilson, 1975, 1980) or social psychology (Berkowitz, 1980; Goldstein, 1980)? I believe that our work actually lies in none of the established disciplines, since none of these can encompass all the concerns of our new science. Instead, we will have to look for new insights, new definitions, and new boundaries. Above all, we will have to place research in this field in a historical and comparative perspective. One possible definition of this field might be that it is the science of human/companion-animal/environment interrelationships.

On the one hand, this discipline touches upon problems that might well be investigated by rigorous, scientific experimentation. On the other hand, it involves enquiry where measurement cannot bring answers and intuition must reign—a path of study used by artists, as well as by generations of ordinary people. Both approaches are, in my opinion, equally valid and equally worthwhile. The intuitive method looks at an animal as a teacher and friend, while the scientific method looks at an animal as an object of curiosity.

**Intuitive Method**

I believe that early humans were aware of a mysterious something that united them to animals and indeed to all living things. People saw the natural world to which they and the animals belonged as the indestructible source of life. Animals were brothers in nature (Jensen, 1963), from whom humans could learn much and through whom they could achieve some measure of acceptance of their own mortality. Our early ancestors regarded animals as rational beings and as partners in life (Ciodro, 1962). Even though ferocious, animals were seen as younger companions who, while perhaps not as skilled as humans (although some were certainly more skilled in certain ways), were entitled to similar respect and attention. In other words, animals were first viewed as equals. Early humans understood that “there is a continuum between animal and man” (Fox, 1974, p. 27) and acted accordingly. There was an understanding of an animal’s feelings and a corresponding respect for the animal’s feelings and drives. Animals were perceived as having intimate thoughts and aspirations, as well as unseen powers and connections with nature that humans did not possess (Tylor, 1958). In this sense animals were viewed as supreme—sources of wisdom and strength. Early humans, therefore, began to worship animals as representatives of the natural forces that determined their ultimate destiny. Totem animals, for example, could be invoked to intercede with nature on their worshipper’s behalf and thereby provide some protection against death in a very dangerous world.

Primitive humans may have experienced mental images of dead companions (Siegel, 1977) and assumed that these were evil spirits. They therefore had to dispose of the feared dead body (which tantalized them in their dreams) in an honorable fashion so that it would not desire to return to do harm. Help was needed to pacify the dead person and send the still-living, unattached, and potentially malevolent spirit happily on its way into the netherworld. Humans may have turned to animals for guidance in this procedure, using a particular animal which, as a god, had supreme powers to serve as a psychopomp or guide to the netherworld. The rituals that were evolved to bring about this neutralization of a potentially evil spirit considerably alleviated early Homo sapiens’ anxiety about death (Leach, 1961).

Animals, therefore, have fulfilled one of our deepest human needs—the need to feel safe—and have long served as a symbol of power and nurturance. They have also functioned as an externalization of man’s control over his own evil impulses (the “wild” animal with its power to kill is converted into a savior that keeps killer man under control). Such a relationship, with its deep unconscious roots and its elements of empathy and identification, does not lend itself to study solely by objective observation and measurement. There may be an unconscious communication between humans and their animal companions of which neither humans nor possibly their animal companions are aware until a crisis such as death occurs. The intuitive ties between humans and animals require intuitive methods of study, if only to delineate those relationships that we might want to try to investigate in more scientific ways.

There are many such questions. For example, How does an animal predict when its master is due to return home? How does it become aware of the death of its master, even though the death may have occurred hundreds of miles away? What is the meaning of an animal’s mourning for a lost master? How does an animal know when it is about to die? What is the nature of the mourning that an animal does for another animal? In order to address these questions, we have to learn more about processes like psi trailing, extrasensory perception between humans and animal companions, and animal hypnosis, because these questions presuppose the existence of certain feelings and cognitions on the part of animals (Griffin, 1981). Our certainty that these exist derives from our intuitive knowledge of the animal companions we have lived with, observed, and read about over the ages.

**The Scientific Method**

The second approach, the scientific one, is a method by which we seek to answer some of the questions suggested to us by our intuitive knowledge. It is a method that seeks to place our knowledge within a logical structure or system to discover the underlying mechanisms of animal-human relations and thereby bring these relations into the domain of natural law, rather than relegating them to the realm of magic, symbolism, and fantasy.

In order to do useful scientific research, we first need an adequate theory to generate questions and methods. Then, the results must be very carefully evaluated. The model we should be seeking should allow both naturalistic observations and controlled field and laboratory work. We need longitudinal, cross-sectional as well as experimental studies. We also need replication of studies. We must also remember that there is an interaction, i.e., a reciprocal relationship between the animal companion and its master and that each causes effects in the other.

While I wish to stress most forcefully the need for rigorous research in our field, no matter how we may define it, I wish to stress with equal vigor that the non-experimental, non-replicable observations made by generations of animal companions have contributed immeasurably to the development of our field and indeed may actually have brought it into being.
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While I wish to stress most forcefully the need for vigorous research in our field, no matter how we may define it, I wish to stress with equal vigor that the non-experimental, non-replicable observations made by generations of animal companion owners have contributed immeasurably to the development of our field and indeed may actually have brought it into being.
Scientific research in the field of animal-human relationships, by whatever name we choose to call it, has been very meager to date. However, there have recently been promising beginnings (Bustad, 1980; Corson and O'Leary-Corson, 1980; Fogle, 1981; Katcher and Weir, 1977), although this field remains a stepchild in terms of research interest, financial support, and prestige. There are numerous methodological challenges, challenges that have sometimes been met in very inadequate ways. I have discovered, for example, that a favorite study of investigators into human-animal relationships is the comparison of the personality traits of dog and cat owners with those of non-owners. However, this has been done without specifying in exact terms how such personality traits were to be defined and measured, so that the reliability and validity of the measures used left much to be desired and, consequently, invalidated the subsequent research involving these measures (Allen et al., 1979; Anonymous, 1976; Brickle, 1980, 1981; Corson and O'Leary-Corson, 1975; Kidd and Feldman, 1981; Levinson, 1969; Mugford and M'Comisky, 1975; Wilbur, 1976).

Similarly, sampling techniques were such that the findings could not be generalized to other populations. Important variables of the animal owners such as age, marital status, education, intelligence, and socioeconomic status, if not specified, prevent us from knowing whether the sample studied is representative of more than a particular group. The characteristics of the companion animals also have to be specified when comparing animal owners with non-owners. We forget that each human and each companion animal is unique. A cat or a Great Dane, or of a Siamese or an alley cat? Suppose we do secure statistically significant differences between the two groups (i.e., owners and non-owners). In this instance, we must remember that these are quantitative differences, and we must not forget about the qualitative differences that may concurrently exist. We must also consider the contexts in which the subjects find themselves. Are they comparable? And if not, are our findings of any practical value in the absence of assurance of comparability between samples?

However, in spite of my criticism of the various studies, because of the great diversity of instruments and which the subjects find themselves. Are they comparable? And if not, are our findings of any practical value in the absence of assurance of comparability between samples?

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The characteristics of the companion animals also have to be specified when comparing animal owners with non-owners. We forget that each human and each companion animal is unique. Are we talking about the owner of a Pekingese or a Great Dane, or of a Siamese or an alley cat? Suppose we do secure statistically significant differences between the two groups (i.e., owners and non-owners). In this instance, we must remember that these are quantitative differences, and we must not forget about the qualitative differences that may concurrently exist. We must also consider the contexts in which the subjects find themselves. Are they comparable? And if not, are our findings of any practical value in the absence of assurance of comparability between samples?

However, in spite of my criticism of the various studies, because of the great diversity of instruments and the lack of randomized samples, the mere fact that similar results have appeared in many different studies is significant. This should increase confidence in the field and in the results obtained, since these have been secured despite disparate measures and populations (Allen et al., 1979; Anonymous, 1976; Brickel, 1980, 1981; Corson and O'Leary-Corson, 1975; Kidd and Feldman, 1981; Levinson, 1969; Mugford and M'Comisky, 1975; Wilbur, 1976).

What, then, do we see as fruitful avenues for the researcher in the field of animal companion-human relationships? From the vantage point of a participant observer, I see four distinct areas for possible concentration, although these are by no means all-inclusive in terms of the questions we need to ask. These areas are: (1) the role of animal companions in various human cultures and ethnic groups from earliest recorded history to the present; (2) the effect of association with animal companions on the development of character, emotions, and attitudes in humans; (3) the human-animal companion communication; and (4) the therapeutic effects of associating with animal companions.

Obviously all of these research areas are interrelated; if we approach one we cannot help but touch upon the others. If we discover a new facet in one, we cannot help but see other problems in a new light. For the sake of brevity and clarity, however, I will limit myself to looking at each of these rubrics separately and leave it to the synthesizers in the field to elucidate their interrelationships.

B.M. Levinson

The role of animals in human cultures

We are continually being made aware of the mysterious thread that unites all life. W. Horsely Gantt (cited in McGui­


Comment
that many preliterate peoples have learned how to take care of their sick and wounded by learning from the behavior of animals (Siegel, 1973)—for example, snake-bite treatments and the healing properties of mud and clay.

Myths and fairy tales express the basic world-view of a people, often through the behavior ascribed to animals. Ethical values, and the struggle between good and evil forces have frequently de-picted in terms of animals, as in the modern literary myth, *Moby Dick* (Melville, 1952). Freud (1964, p. 9) has reminded us that "animals owe a good deal of their importance in myths and fairy tales to the openness with which they display their genitalia and their sexual functions to the inquisitive little human child."

Through a study of the art, religion, and literature (oral and written) of diverse ethnic groups and pastoral, hunting tribal, or industrialized societies, we could attempt to determine how humans have tried to come to terms with them-selves as "reasoning animals" and with what has happened to human social relations, as well as human stewardship of natural resources, when animals have been elevated or derogated in relation to humans.

**Animals and human personality development**

In our rapidly changing technological society, in which the small nuclear family functions as the "school" in which human relations, love, and empathy are taught, companion animals may play a more important role than they did when the extended family pro-vided more companionship and learning experiences, and life, particularly in the rural areas, provided more opportunities for daily contact with the domestic ani-mals that were crucial to the economic existence of the family (Levinson, 1972). I believe that the personality develop-ment of an individual who has an ani-mal companion or is surrounded by ani-mals will be somewhat different from that of an individual who does not have daily contact with them (Levinson, 1978). The ownership of an animal companion may aid in the development of adaptive per-sonality traits. Research should be able to determine whether, other things being equal, adult owners of animal compan-iions show more empathy for fellow human beings than non-owners do. What of those who did or did not have animal companions in their childhood? Are owners of animal companions more comfortable in their sex roles than non-owners? Do animal companions play different roles in the personality develop-ment of boys as opposed to girls? Is there a different incidence of mental ill-ness—e.g., severe depression and schiz-ophenia—among animal owners versus non-owners? Do owners who have experi-enced the death of an animal companion handle human bereavement more effec-tively than non-owners? Is there any difference in the way owners treat animal companions when they view the latter as either similar to or different from them-selves in terms of personality traits?

Animal ownership may contribute to the establishment of a life-style that involves nurturing of and companionship with a living creature that can sustain a conviction of life's value even under difficult circumstances. It would be valu-able, for example, to investigate the effect of animal companionship on people with terminal illnesses such as cancer. Is there a difference in survival rates be-tween owners and non-owners of animal companions? What of those with chron-ic illnesses, such as diabetes, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, and cardiovascular diseases? Does animal companionship sig-nificantly reduce the stress of divorce and widowhood and help in the effective management of these situations?

When an animal companion is intro-duced into a family, the entire climate of family interaction changes and becomes more complex, thus affect-ing the development of each individual member and the personality of the fami-ly as a unit. Children become "parents" to the animal; the animal becomes a "new child" to the parents. Research into this area might include the fol-lowing: What influence, if any, does the animal companion in a family have on the incidence of divorce, desertion, child and spouse battering, and criminal actions by family members? Does the presence of an animal companion reduce parental stress? How are animals used as child substitutes? Why is the feeding of zoo animals so prevalent? Is this done more by animal owners than non-owners? Do family members do this more or less frequently than those who are single?

**Human-animal communication**

Humans and animals, as we all know, communicate with each other on an in-tuitive level. We observe humans talking to or petting their animal companions and the latter reciprocating by an appreci-able bark or wagging of the tail. Dogs seem to know when their owners have decided to take them for a walk, running expectantly to the door before they have even stood up. We also know that zoo keepers understand quite a bit. They also understand the moods and behavior of the animals in their charge. Books have been written on the communications that horses try to make to their owners (e.g., Ainslee and Ledbetter, 1980).

We know that animals can think (Griffin, 1981), although they may not think the way we do and do not follow human logic. They also use language. Again, the language is not the same as ours, although some chimps and gorillas have been taught to manipulate symbols that stand for words in our own language (Rumbaugh, 1977). Animals can commu-nicate with each other just as we do (Sebeok, 1977), and as far as I can tell, that is what language is all about. Although it is difficult for most of us to ac-cept, the idea that only humans can convey meaningful expressions has finally been destroyed, and we humans can no longer claim that language constitutes the greatest distinction between us and the animal kingdom (Schick, 1980).

Yet the idea that we can communi-cate with animal companions raises am-bivalent feelings in most of us: we feel threatened now that our unique position as primus inter pares among primates has been challenged by "talking" chimps and gorillas. However, we are also fascin-ated by the possibility that, like King Solomon, we may be able to communicate with all species. Possibly, part of the fascination the animal companion has for us, its inscrutability (because of the inability to talk), will be lost. However, in beginning to communicate with ani-mals we may be on the threshold of dis-covering the animal's point of view.

The research into communication between animal and human can be broken down into two overlapping categories: (1) verbal and (2) non-verbal. As I see it, the important research areas for us to engage in are those that are related to nonverbal communica-tion. Here I am adopting and somewhat expanding the scheme of Harper, et al. (1978, p. vii). Within these areas I would include (1) paralinguage and the tempo-ral characteristics of speech, (2) facial expressions, (3) the kinesic behavior of body movements, (4) vocal behavior, (5) proxemics, or the use of space and dis-tance, (6) touch behavior, and (7) chemi-cal sensitivity. We must also include em-pathy as a form of communication be-tween animal and human, that is, the capacity of a person (or animal) to ex-pereience the needs and feelings of others as if they were his or her own. While, for the sake of study, we may segregate these elements into separate categories, we must remember that actual commu-
that many preliterate peoples have learned how to take care of their sick and wounded by learning from the behavior of animals (Siegel, 1973) — for example, snake-bite treatments and the healing properties of mud and clay. 

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When an animal companion is introduced into a family, the entire climate of family interaction changes and becomes more complex, thus affecting the development of each individual member and the personality of the family as a unit. Children become "parents" to the animal; the animal becomes a "new child" to the parents. Research topics in this area might include the following: What influence, if any, does the animal companion in a family have on the incidence of divorce, desertion, child and spouse battering, and criminal actions by family members? Does the presence of an animal companion reduce parental stress? How are animals used as child substitutes? Why is the feeding of zoo animals so prevalent? Is this done more by animal owners than non-owners? Do family members do this more or less frequently than those who are single?

**Human-animal communication**

Humans and animals, as we all know, communicate with each other on an intuitive level. We observe humans talking to or petting their animal companions and the latter reciprocating by an appreciative bark or wagging of the tail. Dogs seem to know when their owners have decided to take them for a walk, running expectantly to the door before they have even stood up. We also know that zoo keepers understand quite a bit of the moods and behavior of the animals in their charge. Books have been written on the communications that horses try to make to their owners (e.g., Ainslie and Ledbetter, 1980).

We know that animals can think (Griffin, 1981), although they may not think the way we do and do not follow human logic. They also use language. Again, the language is not the same as ours, although some chimpanzees and gorillas have been taught to manipulate symbols that stand for words in our own language (Rumbaugh, 1977). Animals can communicate with each other just as we do (Sebeok, 1977), and as far as I can tell, that is what language is all about. Although it is difficult for most of us to accept, the idea that only humans can convey meaningful expressions has finally been destroyed, and we humans can no longer claim that language constitutes the greatest distinction between us and the animal kingdom (Schick, 1980).

Yet the idea that we can communicate with animal companions raises ambivalent feelings in most of us: we feel threatened now that our unique position as primus inter pares among primates has been challenged by "talking" chimpanzees and gorillas. However, we are also fascinated by the possibility that, like King Solomon, we may be able to communicate with all species. Possibly, part of the fascination the animal companion has for us, its inscrutability (because of the inability to talk), will be lost. However, in beginning to communicate with animals we may be on the threshold of discovering the animal's point of view.

The research into communication between animal and human can be broken down into two overlapping categories: (1) verbal and (2) non-verbal.

As I see it, the important research areas for us to engage in are those that are related to nonverbal communication. Here I am adopting and somewhat expanding the scheme of Harper, et al. (1978, p. vii). Within these areas I would include (1) paralanguage and the temporal characteristics of speech, (2) facial expressions, (3) the kinesic behavior of body movements, (4) vocal behavior, (5) proxemics, or the use of space and distance, (6) touch behavior, and (7) chemical sensitivity. We must also include empathy as a form of communication between animal and human, that is, the capacity of a person (or animal) to experience the needs and feelings of others as if they were his or her own. While, for the sake of study, we may segregate these elements into separate categories, we must remember that actual commu-
nication takes place simultaneously via many channels (Bowlby, 1980; Harlow, 1974; Katcher and Weir, 1977; Montagu, 1978).

The attempts to date to communicate with animal companions have been faulty. They have been limited to certain verbal instructions to our animal companions for the purpose of obedience training or skilled. They have failed to address ourselves to the fully studied to provide clues to the best ways of communicating with animals this idea in an article in 1965 (Levinson, 1965, p. 698) when I asked: “Do we possibly have in pet therapy a tool which permits us to examine at great length and under magnification the elusive something which promotes emotional healing?”

In discussing animal companions as co-therapists, we must consider the radical change that has occurred in the way we construe therapeutic services in the last 20 years. We are abandoning the older medical model; we no longer think of a person who comes to us for help as a “patient,” but rather as an individual like ourselves who has problems, as well as certain strengths and weaknesses.

When we use animals as co-therapists, patients or clients need not feel that they are mentally ill. Instead, they can consider themselves as showing some type of social maladjustment or incompetence, and we can help them recognize that they can do quite a bit to help themselves. The model of learned helplessness need not apply after all (Abramson et al., 1978).

We no longer think that one must be a professional psychotherapist to be able to help. Anyone can help. We now emphasize that paraprofessionals, peer groups, and self-help groups all have much to contribute. The use of animal companions also encourages mutual social support and thereby induces quicker social and emotional adjustment. We can therefore see how the pet therapy movement fits in well with this current trend.

The use of an animal companion as a friend is very helpful to a person who is trying to establish competency in coping with his or her life. Relating to an animal in no way denigrates clients or makes them feel helpless or dependent, as they might if all their attention were focused on a human therapist. Instead, they find their own source of good health within themselves, in the course of their evolving association with the animal companion. One factor that I believe has completely escaped research investigation so far is the fact that the individual who is treated with the help of an animal co-therapist may develop an entirely different concept of self than the one who is treated without one.

Increased independence can also be the goal of using animal companions to assist those who have spent much time in congregate living quarters—such as institutions, nursing homes, prisons—and are trying to learn to live on their own. These might include aged, partly sighted, deaf, alcoholic, physically handicapped and mentally retarded clients.

Animals can be taught to act as “trained” nurses by learning to react to any unusual behavior on the part of their charges, such as a change in the rhythm of breathing, unusual perspiration, heart palpitation or excessive fever. With chronically ill bed-ridden patients, they can act as 24-hour nurses’ aides.

Animal companions can also facilitate the independence of institution-bound people, by providing them with a living creature as a focus for concern and care; in addition, they can draw upon the animal’s strength and intelligence and thereby compensate for their own deficits.

Possible Areas for Future Investigation

There are an almost limitless number of research topics related to companion animals, whether in formal psychotherapy or as a therapeutic element in the daily environment.

The first broad area for investigation involves amassing data about the animals themselves. We must establish criteria for the selection and breeding of animals that are suitable for work with children, the aged, the retarded, and the physically and emotionally handicapped. Animals used as co-therapists in an office setting may have to have different characteristics from those used in prisons, nursing homes, hospices for the dying or schools for the mentally retarded. We might experiment with the use of a wide variety of animals, exploring the best kinds of contributions that each might make to the therapeutic work.

Another area for investigation involves the human therapist-animal co-therapist relationship. What, for example, are the differences in personality between those therapists who can effectively use animals and those who cannot or do not wish to? How does the use of an animal affect the therapist’s attitude toward his or her patient? How does a patient’s relationship with the animal affect the therapist’s self-image and sense of competence? Is the animal viewed as a rival by the human therapist?

Animal companions have proven particularly useful in psychotherapy with children. Here, there are many questions that have come to light. For example: What problems best lend themselves to resolution through the aid of a companion animal in play therapy? How do the personalities of child, therapist, and animal interact? How does the animal help the child achieve insight or increased maturity? How can the presence of a companion animal at home augment or even substitute for the activity of a therapist? How does the child identify with the animal? How does the therapist make use of the child’s nonverbal behavior with the animal? What is the dif-
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The attempts to date to communicate with animal companions have been faulty. They have been limited to certain verbal instructions to our animal companions for the purpose of obedience training or skilled “acting” careers in the circus, TV, or movies. We suspect that dolphins and whales can communicate with each other through clicks and whistles, appearing to some human observers to be expressing in this way such feelings as anger, joy, or annoyance (Busnel and Fish, 1980; Lilly, 1978). However, we have failed to address ourselves to the meanings, i.e., the adaptive functions, of the languages of our animal companions. We have tried to teach an animal companion our language, our way of communicating, rather than trying to learn his (Terrace, 1979). Also, the bodily states of emotion in animals should be carefully studied to provide clues to the best ways of communicating with animals (Peters, 1980).

We should also become aware of the fact that, in becoming domesticated, the animal companion loses some of its ability to engage in nonverbal communication with its own kind (Scott, 1980). This happens because a domesticated animal no longer needs to forage for itself or to communicate to a specific location of food or the presence of danger.

Animal companions as co-therapists

When we use animal companions as co-therapists in our attempt to help people resolve emotional problems, we provide individuals with an opportunity to experience a variety of feelings that they may not have previously recognized in themselves. The animal permits the person to see himself or herself as small or big, as father, mother, or child, depending upon his or her specific needs at a particular point in his or her psychological development.

Perhaps this use of animal companions can help us solve the riddle of the way in which all types of therapy work. Many researchers talk about a common element, i.e., the therapeutic factor, in various modes of therapy. Perhaps working with animals as co-therapists will help us isolate this common element. Perhaps animal co-therapists supply the mysterious something that is common to all effective therapies? I first mentioned this idea in an article in 1965 (Levinson, 1965, p. 698) when I asked: “Do we possibly have in pet therapy a tool which permits us to examine at great length and under magnification the elusive something which promotes emotional healing?”

In discussing animal companions as co-therapists, we must consider the radical change that has occurred in the way we construe therapeutic services in the last 20 years. We are abandoning the older medical model; we no longer think of a person who comes to us for help as a “patient,” but rather as an individual like ourselves who has problems, as well as certain strengths and weaknesses.

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Another area for investigation involves the human-therapist-animal co-therapist relationship. What, for example, are the differences in personality between those therapists who can effectively use animals as co-therapists and those who cannot or do not wish to? How does the use of an animal affect the therapist’s attitude toward his or her patient? How does a patient’s relationship with the animal affect the therapist’s self-image and sense of competence? Is the animal viewed as a rival by the human therapist?

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ference between children who can and cannot use animals in their treatment? Is the relationship between the animal and the child similar to the one between the animal and the therapist? What limits should be set on the child in relation to the animal, and how does this affect the treatment? When is the use of an animal co-therapist advisable?

Finally, we may explore the fundamental nature of therapy itself, especially in the instance of those therapists who decide to use animals with some patients and not with others. Which elements that the animal introduces into the situation are therapeutic and, in some cases, which are not? What kinds of impression do therapists who use animals make of their patients by this action? Do animals make more of a contribution at some stages of therapy than at others? Are there phases of therapy during which the presence of an animal would actually detract from the therapeutic work?

There are many other interesting research problems. For instance, How does companion animal therapy compare with other current therapies in terms of the development and strengthening of the patient’s ego? Does the use of an animal promote better integration and more autonomy? Do transference and countertransference differ in companion animal-treated cases as opposed to those cases that are treated by more conventional psychotherapeutic approaches? Research is also needed to discover what kind of animal companion would be most helpful to people with specific types of problems.

Conclusion

I would like to suggest that this new science take a close look at the relationships that are currently developing between humans and animals. Some of us no longer look upon animals as either domestic or savage, or noble or base but rather, choose to consider them as our partners on earth. Most of us are aware that our humanity depends in part on how we relate to animals and to nature as a whole. Most of us also are aware that an ambivalent relationship—really an undeclared war—has existed between human and animal since ancient days. At first, we saw animals as gods, then as slaves, and then as workers; now we are finally beginning to look at them as companions. Yet we have always dreamed of the mythical Golden Age when animals and humans lived at peace with each other.

Like all myths, this one described an idyllic world that never existed but that expressed the deep longing within human beings to be at peace with others and with themselves. Now, I believe that we are finally moving closer to the vision of the Golden Age. With the gradual disappearance of wild animal life, peaceful coexistence between humans and animals is becoming a reality in zoos and in protected wildlife sanctuaries. It is now our task to work toward fulfilling the vision of the Prophet Isaiah that “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid” (Isaiah 11:6).

References

Levinson, B.M. (1962) The dog as a “co-therapist,” paper presented at the An-
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B.M. Levinson

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The Changing Concept of Animals as Property

Vincent P. McCarthy

Introduction

In a suit brought by a slaveowner against his neighbor in 1827 for the killing of his slave, the court found that the bad character of the slave (caught while stealing potatoes from the defendant's property) should be taken into account by the jury in assessing damages for the wrongful destruction of the slaveowner's property. However, the court warned:

"But where property is in question, the value of the article, as nearly as can be ascertained, furnishes a rule from which they [the jury] are not at liberty to depart (2)."

Almost 100 years later, another litigant brought suit in Connecticut to recover compensation for the wrongful destruction of his personal property, which was shot while similarly trespassing on a neighbor's property. This time the plaintiff's personal property was his dog. In reaching its conclusion that the plaintiff was entitled to recover for the loss of his dog, the court reaffirmed the well-established common law property status of animals:

"It [the statute] attaches to the right of property, including a recovery of damages under circumstances where such a recovery would be allowed for other kinds of personal property (4)."

That slaves were viewed as nothing more than the personal property of their owners had never been seriously questioned. One of the earliest treatises on British law makes note of this status, and it adds an interesting comment on animal rights. In distinguishing serfs, who did have recognized legal rights, from slaves, Maitland notes:

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In relation to his lord the general rule makes him rightless... the state is concerned to see (only) that no one shall make an ill use of his property. Our modern statutes which prohibit cruelty do not give rights to dogs and horses... (5).

The most well-known legal statement on the personal property status of American black slaves makes it clear that this view was never seriously questioned.

They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations: and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit... This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics, which no one thought of disputing, or supposed to be open to dispute: and men in every grade and position in society daily and habitually acted upon it in their private pursuits, as well as in matters of public concern, without doubting for a moment the correctness of this opinion (6)."

Enforced and maintained by a legal superstructure that regulated every aspect of a black's social, political, economic, and religious life, his property status continued until the middle of the nineteenth century when Congress passed the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, which overturned the...