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German Thought and Animality

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Philosophy



Jack Leonard

faculty mentor: **Dr. Gelfand**

Introduction

Descartes famously argued that animals were essentially machines. Kant, in his ethical theory took a similar stance and argued that we do not have direct moral duties to animals. The question is then, if philosophy influenced by Kant (which will be taken as German philosophy) has “escaped” this machinic view of animals.

Methods

Along with Kant, I chose three philosophers that I believed captured the various German philosophical traditions after Kant to research and describe their philosophical ‘zoology’

Hegel was chosen as the figurehead of German Idealism, an obvious Post-Kantian movement

Husserl was chosen to highlight phenomenology

Heidegger was chosen as he appeared prima facie to be the most anti-Cartesian

Insights

An analysis of the Kantian conception of rationality, Hegelian Recognition, Heidegger’s poverty-in-the-world and Dasein, as well as Husserl’s unique phenomenological methodology were the key insights that lead to my conclusions

Conclusions

1. Each philosopher’s conception of the animal is directly related to their conception of the human
2. Each of the four philosophers have been interpreted in secondary sources to be hesitant to award animals personhood, though their approach to the nuances of their hesitancy differ vastly
3. If any can be said to have “escaped” the machinic view, it would be Hegel or early Heidegger

GERMAN THOUGHT HAS A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ANIMAL.

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ANALYSIS:

- Hegel was primarily compared to Kant
- Heidegger was primarily compared to Husserl
- Descartes, despite not being German, provided the “backdrop” from which Cartesian affinities could be drawn from Husserl and Kant
- Shifts in Heidegger’s and Husserl’s thought caused difficulties with mature comparison

SOURCES:

- Journal articles
- Primary Works
- Peer-reviewed Tertiary sources



**The four key philosophers researched:
Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger**

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