



Das Forschungsinstitut Brenner-Archiv und das Institut für Philosophie laden ein zum Gastvortrag von

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The Horrific History of Comparisons between Cognitive Disability and Animality (and How to Move Past It)

Datum: Dienstag, 19. Juni, 18 Uhr

Ort: Brenner-Archiv, Josef-Hirn-Str. 5/10. Stock, Innsbruck

Abstract:

In the fall of 2008, the Philosophy Department at New York State's Stony Brook University took the provocative step of hosting a conference on challenges that the lives of cognitively disabled human beings pose to generally held philosophical beliefs. The conference's most intense public conversations were about what some of the speakers saw as the rebuke cognitive disability represents to the classic idea of human moral equality. This lecture takes as its frame an exchange between the Stony Brook conference's most vocal critic of a traditional egalitarian position – Peter Singer – and its most vocal defender of such a position – Eva Feder Kittay. A key issue at stake between Singer and Kittay was the appropriate role of animal comparisons in thinking about the lives of human beings with cognitive disabilities, and the lecture's strategy for arbitrating Singer's and Kittay's dispute involves sketching portions of the horrific history of the employment of animal comparisons in rhetoric urging the marginalization, abuse and killing of cognitively disabled human beings. Although more critical of Singer than of Kittay, the lecture ultimately departs from both thinkers in combining a call for extreme caution in the use of animal comparisons with a defense of a claim about equal human dignity that is consistent with the acknowledgment of important forms of moral fellowship between human beings – whatever the level or nature of their cognitive endowments – and non-human animals.