Donnerstag, 14. Oktober 2021, 16:30 Uhr
Universität Bern, Unitobler, Forschungspool WBKolleg, Muesmattstrasse 45

7. TAG DER JUNIOR FELLOWS

Dr. des. Andreas Berger Gehringer
Liberating Body and Soul
Suicide by Proxy in Early Modern Period

Dr. des. Saskia C. Quené
Visualizing Sound
Measured Movements in Medieval Manuscripts

Dr. Christine Sievers
The Affective Ape
A Proposal for a Necessary Paradigm Change in Comparative Cognition
Interdisziplinäres Forschungs- und Nachwuchsnetwork | IFN

Das Interdisziplinäre Forschungs- und Nachwuchsnetzwerk (IFN) am Walter Benjamin Kolleg ist eine integrierte Einrichtung zur Nachwuchsförderung auf den Stufen Doktoratsausbildung und Postdoc-Förderung. Dem IFN ist die Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities mit den vier interdisziplinären Doktoratsprogrammen Global Studies, Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, Studies of Language and Society und Studies in the Arts sowie ein Fellowship-Programm für Junior Fellows (Postdocs) zugeordnet. Im Herbstsemester 2021 bietet das IFN drei vielversprechenden Forschenden eine akademische Heimat während der Übergangsphase nach dem Doktoratsabschluss. Ziel ist die Erarbeitung eines Antrages für den nächsten Karriereschritt oder die nächste Qualifzierungsarbeit.

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7. TAG DER JUNIOR FELLOWS

Veranstalter: Interdisziplinäres Forschungs- und Nachwuchsnetzwerk
Format: Postdoc-Veranstaltung
Ort: Universität Bern, Unitobler, Forschungspool WBKolleg, Muesmattstrasse 45
Datum: 14. Oktober 2021

Programm

16:30 Uhr  Begrüssung und Einführung
Prof. Dr. Urte Krass, Direktorin IFN

16:45 Uhr  Unsere neuen Junior Fellows am IFN
Präsentationen mit Respondenz und Diskussion

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19:00 Uhr  Apéro
Projekte

Dr. des. Andreas Berger Gehringer

Liberating Body and Soul
Suicide by Proxy in Early Modern Period

Afer a harsh quarrel with her neighbor in September 1774, Sara Stähelin could not find sleep. Sometime afer midnight she entered her daughter’s room, took her outside, and tossed her into a pond so that she would drown. Luckily, but against Stähelin’s intention, the nine-year-old survived unharmed.

Stähelin had been suffering from a venereal disease for several years, lost her job, and became the subject of relentless malicious rumors. Subsequently she fell into a depression (melancholie) and, at some point, decided to end her life. However, her religious faith prohibited her from committing suicide without simultaneously endangering her own soul. Stirred up by the quarrel with her neighbor that very fateful day, Stähelin concluded that killing her innocent daughter would not harm her daughter’s soul, but would force local authorities to execute her. By killing her daughter, Stähelin hoped that she would finally soon be put out of her misery and eventually be reunited with her daughter in heaven.

Stähelin was no isolated incident. In the early modern period, quite a number of women chose to murder children in order to be executed. Anticipating the extensive pastoral care that murderers received during a trial, along with the public contrition and penance that was part of early modern execution procedures, these women understood infanticide as a means to end their lives without endangering their own or other’s souls. Research on this gruesome phenomenon is still scarce, which is why my project proposes an in-depth and profound analysis of suicide-by-murders. In particular, it will highlight the connection between suicide murders, intellectual conceptions of salvation, and bodily experiences such as physical and psychological suffering. Furthermore, I intend to use suicide-by-murders to explore the creative harnessing of legal and pious practices for individual and (self-)redemptive purposes, thus opening up new analytical perspectives on early modern spaces of bodily experience, agency, and communication.
Visualizing Sound
Measured Movements in Medieval Manuscripts

Multilayered acoustic phenomena delineated medieval liturgies and libraries, urban spaces and court cultures, diplomacy, and politics. The challenge of capturing the harmony of the spheres, harmony of the human body, and bodily perceived sounds is evinced by a rich diversity of visualizations of music, sound, and movement. These visualizations appear as diagrams, graphs, and line drawings using parchment, ink, and pigments.

My project investigates visualizations of acoustic phenomena in medieval manuscripts and diagrams between the 8th and the 12th centuries. Primarily due to modern disciplinary divides, the medial differences between “temporal” sound and “spatial” imagery have often been overstated. How can we identify, distinguish, and understand the strategies by which medieval scribes and scholars created new shapes and forms on parchment to move between dimensions while visualizing the ephemeral?
Dr. Christine Sievers

The Affective Ape
A Proposal for a Necessary Paradigm Change in Comparative Cognition

It is a common research practice in the cognitive sciences to explain concepts applied to complex communicative behaviors (i.e., intentional communication, arbitrary meaning) by reference to the cognitive complexity that is required for the behavior to occur. This leads to communicative behavior often being described in cognitively loaded ways, i.e., requiring high-level cognition such as metarepresentations. These cognitively loaded requirements in turn lead to the conclusion that a number of behaviors are exclusively displayable by humans, given that the cognitive requirements are too demanding to be displayed by nonhuman animals. The aim of the project is to suggest that a major issue with this common procedure is the lack of justification for some of the cognitively loaded descriptions of communication. Concepts such as intentional communication may require far less complexity even for the human case, as some empirical research suggests. The use of solely cognitive mechanisms as explanatory tools is based on the fact that research on these concepts originated in research, whose objective it is to find the underlying cognitive processes. That though does not imply that it is only cognitive elements that are involved in the displayed behavior. Research accumulating data on other primates and young children suggest that other mechanisms may be involved. This leads to debates surrounding questions on whether animals display concepts such as intentional communication to not make progress: two positions, one insisting on the cognitive complex description and the second position insisting on empirical studies having falsified position one, are opposing each other, with no common ground in sight. The project therefore proposes a change of focus, in order to re-activate these discussions, posing the question whether affective states and the so-called Affective Social Learning framework represent an additional source for explaining a behavior’s occurrence.

Christine Sievers

Christine Sievers wrote her PhD at the University of Basel on "ostensive intentional communication in nonhuman primates" under the supervisor of Prof. Markus Wild (Universität Basel) and Prof. Klaus Zuberbühler (Université de Neuchâtel). During that time, she investigated potential research paradigms and theoretical implications with regard to the ascription of intentional communication to chimpanzees, both on a philosophical and an empirically level, investigating chimpanzee interactions in the wild at the Budongo Conservation Field Station, Uganda.

After her PhD, Christine received an Early Postdoc Mobility stipend from the SNSF on the evolution of negotiating conflicts communicatively, comparing wolves, dogs and human conflict behavior at the Wolf Science Center Austria and at the Research Chair for Animal Minds at York University Toronto, under the supervision of Prof. Friederike Range and Prof. Kristin Andrews.

Generally speaking, Christine’s research approach is to merge methods and paradigms from different fields of research - predominantly analytic philosophy, ethology, ethics, comparative cognition and pragmatics - to tackle questions within the Philosophy of Animal Minds, not just with regards to other species’ cognitive capacities, but also to the broader implications following from these capacity ascriptions, e.g., our perception of other species in relation to us.

Outside of academia, Christine is a passionate, but averagely talented climber. She also works as a freelance writer.
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