The psycho-cultural dimension in human-animal relations

In the last two decades there has been an unprecedented and growing development in the studies of human-animal relations thanks to the contribution of various disciplines. In many cases this has produced a certain degree of readjustment and an enrichment of their specific theoretical frameworks. Psychology has played a significant role in this development, in particular regarding the studies on animal abuse and on empathy towards animals as well as on animal-assisted therapies.

However, in a cultural and interdisciplinary perspective, in the study of human-animal relations psychology is providing and will continue to provide new significant clues that can help to better understand some basic aspects of human reality, such as: interpersonal relations (with special reference to trust, fear, violence, and prejudice), the child’s psychological development (especially as far as the relationship with diversity and children-robotic pets interactions versus children-pets interactions are concerned), the concept of “humanity” as compared to the concept of “animality”, and the definitions of intelligence and of consciousness.