

The Messerli Research Institute Vienna, Unit of Ethics and Human-Animal Studies, is looking for a

PhD student (University Assistant)

Grade:	B1 (pre-doc)
Level of employment:	30 hours
Length of employment:	3 years (fixed term)
Deadline for applications:	31.08.2018
Start of the employment:	1 October 2018
Research Area:	Animal Ethics

The Messerli Research Institute is located at the campus of the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna and is also part of the University of Vienna and the Medical University of Vienna. It is entirely dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of the human-animal relationship and consists of a Unit of Comparative Cognition, a Unit of Comparative Medicine, and a Unit of Ethics and Human-Animal Studies.

The PhD candidate will be a member of the Unit of Ethics and Human-Animal Studies and work in the research group on Animal Ethics and Animal Cognition of this unit. The position will be funded by the FWF Stand-alone project 'Morality in animals: What it means and why it matters' (PI: Dr. Judith Benz-Schwarzburg) and the candidate is expected to develop her research in a way that incorporates the goals of this project.

During the past few decades, empirical research in comparative cognition has revealed unexpected abilities in animals. Biologists, psychologists and philosophers are currently engaged in vivid debates on how to interpret these findings. The project contributes to this endeavor by focusing on the specific debate on animal morality and addressing two main questions: What does morality in animals mean? And why does morality in animals matter?

This project firstly aims to specify the character and cognitive requirements of moral emotions in animals. Whereas the current debate mostly concentrates on empathy as a moral emotion and on morally good behavior, the members of this project will engage in an analysis of other moral emotions, such as patience, compassion, guilt, and grief and, furthermore, consider negative moral emotions, such as cruelty, jealousy, schadenfreude, and callousness. Secondly, the project will deal with whether the attribution of morality to animals comes with ethical implications – a dimension that scholars in the debate have widely neglected. The PhD candidate is expected to develop her research project as part of this second goal. The project will analyze the ethical consequences of being a moral subject from the perspective of three important theories in animal ethics: the capabilities approach, the integrity approach, and the rights approach.

This project aims to adopt an interdisciplinary and empirically-informed methodology. To accomplish this goal, the latest empirical results will be discussed in monthly lab meetings with members of the other units at the Messerli Research Institute, and two international and interdisciplinary conferences will be held as part of the project.

Responsibilities

- The PhD candidate will write a doctoral thesis, via a compilation of papers, in the field of animal ethics, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Herwig Grimm and Dr. Judith Benz-Schwarzburg.
- The PhD candidate will be enrolled in the PhD Program of the Vetmeduni Vienna (awarding a Dr. phil.) which offers possibilities to adapt to the requirements of a PhD in philosophy/animal ethics
- The PhD project will be a part of the FWF-funded Stand-alone project 'Morality in animals: What it means and why it matters' (PI: Dr. Judith Benz-Schwarzburg) and will adopt the research goals of this project.
- The position involves active participation in the monthly lab meetings, as well as support in the organization of two international conferences at the Messerli Research Institute.
- We expect all our PhD students to assist in teaching and supervision of MA students within our interdisciplinary Master in Human-Animal Interaction (IMHAI).

Necessary knowledge and qualifications

- MA (or equivalent) in philosophy (preferably practical philosophy), completed by the time the contract starts.
- Substantive familiarity with the field of animal ethics is required (demonstrable by the topic of the MA thesis, choice of courses during the degree, or publications in the area).
- Familiarity with the debates on animal cognition (especially animal morality) will be an advantage.
- Evidence of an ability to work across disciplines is desired, as well as the capacity to read and comprehend empirical literature.
- The position requires a very good command of English.

The application has to be in English and include a letter of motivation, a short CV (including the names of two referees who can be contacted for letters of recommendation), and a writing sample. The letter of motivation serves to provide an explanation of the extent to which your interests and qualifications correspond to the objectives of the Stand-alone project 'Morality in animals: What it means and why it matters'.

Potential candidates will be invited to a skype interview.

Minimum salary

The minimum salary for university staff is regulated by the collective contract and at the level given above amounts to EUR 2,112.40,-- gross per month. The minimum salary may be increased when previous employment and other salary components are taken into account.

Applications

Please submit applications via e-mail to judith.benz-schwarzburg@vetmeduni.ac.at at the latest on 31 August 2018.