

## BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS IN DOGS AND CATS. HOMOEOPATHIC VISION (PART I)

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### SUMMARY:

In the following article we describe and analyse the harmful variables that according to the authors had been added through the domesticating process of dogs and cats from its beginning until nowadays, giving as a result a set of behaviour problems that are in worrying growth.

**KEY WORDS:** Domestication – Morphogenetic fields – Motor fields – Stress – Behavioural problems.

### INTRODUCTION:

In our opinion, it is essential before addressing the issue at hand, to refer briefly to the research of Rupert Sheldrake, an English biologist, who in the 1980s, following the unconvincing statement that cited DNA as the only responsible entity for the information determining the form, instinct, reproduction, regulation and regeneration manifested by living organisms, attributed to the environment a secondary role, influencing, for example, the final size reached by an individual, the functionality of their metabolic profiles etc., and taking up again the proposals suggested by Bergson (theory of the vital force), by H. Driesch (theory of entelechy) and by H. S. Burr (theory of the L fields), among others, he elaborated the "Hypothesis of formative causation". It suggests that between the DNA and the formation processes of an organism, there would be a state of mediation, composed of a complex set of hidden fields that would direct all the stages of morphogenesis and the definitive form that living beings take, including behaviour. He called these hidden fields "morphogenetic fields".

Sheldrake later expanded his hypothesis, arguing that "not only would life be guided in its form by hidden fields, but also the inanimate world of crystals, molecules and atoms, which in turn is alive in some form. All growth and form would be influenced by the action of fields, from subatomic particles, through the human species, to the galaxies and beyond.

Sheldrake's morphogenetic fields are different from the other fields proposed by biologists or discovered by physicists. They are very subtle forms of energy (formative waves), with the implicit function of guiding atoms or cells to a predetermined location to form a structure. They would act as patterns, channels or planes on which beings and things would unfold. For example, the formation of an atom from the electrons and the nucleus would be guided by one field; the formation of a molecule by another; the metabolic regulation of a cell by yet another; and so on, elaborating an intricate network of infinite interlacing between the fields, which would contain each other. Consequently, the morphogenetic fields would be influenced by the beings and things that are being formed, not remaining the same

throughout time due to the continuous and subtle modification that would be constantly exercised over them by every being or thing that exists or has existed.

The pressures exerted by the environment on a group of individuals of a given species would be transmitted to the corresponding underlying field by modifying it; this would act indirectly on the other individuals of the same species, thus being affected by the change, even if they were geographically distant.

The fields in charge of directing the movement, shaping the patterns of behaviour and instinct of living beings, are called "motor fields".

## DEVELOPMENT:

### 1) INITIAL SPONTANEOUS DOMESTICATION:

Archaeological and anthropological retrospective studies maintain that the first species of animal recognised as domestic is the dog (*canis familiaris*), such an event occurring approximately between 14,000 and 12,000 B.C. The assumptions that try to explain this apparently spontaneous domestication are

- Gradual approach of some specimens to human camps in search of food (leftovers).
- Adoption and artificial rearing of orphaned pups by some humans (a predominant role is attributed to women and children in this case).

Once the pups were incorporated into the "human family", there would have been a positive interaction between individuals of both species, facilitated by certain precise behavioural characteristics, such as the sociability and gregarious behaviour characteristic of the canines (the dogs instinctively "stand guard", even at night; they warn of potential dangers; they collaborate in defence of the settlement; they join in the hunting tasks etc.), benefiting in return from obtaining food, security and shelter in a less laborious way.

Returning to Sheldrake's ideas, the first dogs that approached humans would have initially modified the motor field of the canine species, thus favouring the successive and later encounters with other specimens. As more and more dogs came into contact with humans, the motor field continued to strengthen, facilitating the modification of behaviour for all individuals of the species. This hypothesis would explain why the concomitant domestication occurred, according to the researchers, in North America, Asia and Europe, with no other presumption than that attributed to chance.

When the human being settles down as a farmer, the process of domestication of the small ruminants begins, incorporating gradually the dog to this pastoral task.

As far as the cat species is concerned, it is estimated that its domestication took place around 3,500 to 3,000 B.C., starting in Africa, in the delta of the Nile river. Precisely, it is supposed that some specimens of the African wild cat, inhabitant of that region, evolved through a probable genetic mutation that raised the activation threshold for the chemical mediators that cause excitement (adrenaline and noradrenaline), causing some specimens to be emotionally less reactive than others, being able to overcome the initial inhibition, in order to approach the barns in search of the mice that proliferated in abundance due to the stockpiling of cereals. The rest of the story is similar to what happened with the canines: more and more cats came in search of food, the human being accepting them as they were an efficient pest control (mice in this case).

## 2) LATER INDUCED DOMESTICATION:

After the first millennia of coexistence between humans and domesticated animals, our ancestors observed some desirable traits of specific behaviour more marked in some individuals than in others. In the case of the canine species, the specimens chosen were those that presented clearly useful characteristics (docility, pastoral aptitude, aptitude for hunting, etc.), arriving finally, after many intermediate stages, whose description exceeds the objective of this article, to the interbreeding with purely aesthetic purposes, originating this way, many of the breeds that at the moment are known.

Due to their particular behaviour, the felines have been much less manipulated than the dogs, being able to affirm that the current specimens distance very little, genotypically speaking, from that African wild cat of the delta of the river Nile.

The long process of artificial selection, to which they were submitted, especially the canines, has caused deep mutations in their anatomy, physiology and behaviour, allowing the expression of certain organic components (especially at the level of the CNS) that in natural conditions would have been eliminated. If the above deduction were correct, it could be stated that behavioural problems were originally due to "accidental co-variations caused by artificial selection aimed exclusively at highlighting somatic and physiological characteristics, without taking into account ethological and behavioural ones". The final result of such mutations would be the growing number of animals with behavioural disorders due to an apparent non-adaptation to the artificial environment in which they live (urban, peri-urban), pressed even more by the close relationship with humans, the dominant animal that increasingly modifies the environment, making it practically nothing like a city, with its daily rhythm, to the original habitat, from which the dogs and cats come. In any case, the suggestion that non-adaptation is solely responsible for behavioural disorders is debatable, since domesticated animals, in addition to a long artificial selection, have developed a co-evolution with breeding environments, making at least arguable the assertion that they should manifest natural behaviour, even in the artificial conditions mentioned above.

## 3) PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES:

According to current biology, innate behaviour is governed by the genetic code of each particular species, and learned behaviour, synthetically defined as "subtle changes in the CNS", cannot be transmitted to descendants (except through learning, of course). For Rupert Sheldrake, innate behaviour would be governed by the interaction of the following factors: genetic inheritance, the corresponding morphogenetic fields that control the overall development of the nervous system, and by the motor fields that shape the behavioural patterns of genetically similar animals. With respect to learned behaviour, it would be possible for it to be transmitted to other individuals of the same species without direct contact, since each behavioural variation would reinforce the motor field of the species, thus modifying the specific pattern for all individuals. It can then be conjectured that each subject would possess in his cells the memory of what has happened with his species since it emerged as such, including the evolution of behaviour. This cellular memory would be a "subtle reflection of all the past", that when being retracted, it would affect the future unfolding, since each experience of the present time would fold constantly

influencing in the whole (past, present and future of each being or thing); in other words, the present moment (that is not more than a reflection of the past), would act to give form, to guide to the succession of moments that are unfolded in that instant of the space-time, modifying consequently the future. For example, the domestication deeply modified the characteristics of the period of socialisation of the domesticated species, extending it. Experiences with wild European wolves prove that in order to be socialised with humans, they must be removed from their mother before 2 weeks of birth and regularly manipulated; on the other hand, feral dogs and cats can be socialised (recovered), in a longer period and to several different species at the same time.

**GROWTH STAGES:** for both the canine and the feline species, well-defined stages of development are recognised:

- a) Gestation: for both species it is approximately 60 days. In intrauterine life tactile sensitivity is developed (21 days for the cat, 45 days for the dog). The vestibular system begins to operate at 50 days more or less, for both species.
- b) Neonatal period (0 to 14 days): smell is already present, hearing is very rudimentary, eyes open at 7 to 10 days in felines and at 10 to 16 days in canines. Puppies are mainly guided by thermo-tactility.
- c) Transition period (14 to 21 days): it is a fundamental period, because during this period the possibility of establishing affective relations appears. Smell reaches maturity at about 21 days, hearing and vision allow a greater orientation at about 15 days in the feline and 21 days in the canine. Impregnation begins. **IMPREGNATION:** imprinting, primary socialisation or imprinting, is a slow and gradual process in domestic carnivores, as they are dependent on the mother for a longer time, starting during the transition period and culminating around 4 months.
- d) Socialisation period: the impregnation continues, being itself an essential learning process for the identification with the fellow beings (social and sexual partners). Around 28 days, social games begin. Visual maturation is reached at 35 days.

Cats: it extends until the 4th week (intraspecific) and until the 6th or 7th week (interspecific).

Dogs: it goes from the 3rd to the 12th week (optimum between the 6th and the 8th week).

If these periods of the sensitive-motor and social development of domestic carnivores are not recognised and respected, manipulating them inadequately (early weaning, incorrect intra- and interspecific socialisation, ignorance of the essential behavioural patterns, etc.), the correlative maturity stages will not be satisfactorily completed, predisposing the animals to present all kinds of anomalies in their behaviour.

#### 4) ENVIRONMENT:

Taking up again the previously mentioned concepts, such as adaptation to the environment and animal-environment co-evolution, we will mention below the environmental factors, whose balance is fundamental to achieve the normal development of the species in question.

#### A) PHYSICAL FACTORS:

- STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENT PROPERLY SAID: the territory or living space, understood as "the constellation of areas associated with precise behavioural functions marked by odorous signals, visual and even by vocalisations in some occasions, is extremely important for the feline species. Because cats are territorial animals, their balance is closely related to the organisation of their environment. There are 3 types of territorial fields for this species:
  - ❖ Fields of activity (hunting, playing, elimination)
  - ❖ Isolation camps (shelter, usually overhead)
  - ❖ Fields of aggression (variable spaces depending on the physiological and emotional state, etc.)

Although dogs are also territorial animals, needing vast space in the wild, they would not seem to be affected in the same way as cats by the limitation imposed arbitrarily by humans, provided that the social integration to the group to which they belong is satisfactory.

It is fundamental then to respect the environmental dimensions (suitable physical space), the presence and position of places of rest and refuge, with the corresponding and suitable hygiene in each site.

- CLIMATE CONDITIONS: acceptable temperature and humidity
- EXERCISE AND RECREATION.

#### B) PSYCHIC FACTORS:

- ENVIRONMENTAL STIMULI
  - ❖ Lack: boredom.
  - ❖ Excess: overstimulation.
- SOCIAL CONFLICTS
  - ❖ Intraspecific: overpopulation, overcrowding, forced coexistence with dominant animals, etc.
  - ❖ Interspecific: forced traumatic coexistence with animals of different species (including human beings).
- REPRESSION OF INSTINCTS
  - ❖ Hunting
  - ❖ Mating

#### 5) FEEDING:

##### A) LACK OR RESTRICTION

##### B) POST-ABUNDANCE RESTRICTION

##### C) NOT ADEQUATE

- Unbalanced.
- Not tasty (the animal doesn't eat because it doesn't like it).
- Not suitable for the species in question (feeding cats to dogs or vice versa).

##### D) TOXIC

- Chemical additives (preservatives, antioxidants, etc.)
- Bad conservation
- Contamination

## CONCLUSIONS:

According to the above-mentioned development, the problem could be almost totally synthesised in one single term: STRESS (overload, tension), understood as the "neuroendocrine response intending to correct the harmful effects of noxas on homeostasis". Such a situation, prolonged in time, leads each organism modified (to a greater or lesser extent) by the process of artificial selection, with its specific patterns of behaviour (innate and learned) and carrier of an individual psychism, to adaptation (equilibrium) or non-adaptation (imbalance). If the animal-environment interaction were to become negative, producing an energetic imbalance, the possibilities that signs and symptoms indicating illness would be produced a posteriori would be very high, depending on the manifestation of the same on individual and species susceptibility.

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