

## History of schooling and its relation with conditioning laws and welfare

### Invited Presentation

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While writings from the Hittite Kikkuli and the Greek hippiatrica concerned stamina training and mainly veterinary aspects, the first explicit writings left about schooling are from the hand of Xenophon. He showed already an intention to understand the horse's behaviour and apply an animal-friendly schooling. What happened in Roman times and early middle ages is unclear through a lack of documents. Literature increased in late middle ages (a few Iberic authors and the Italian Rusius) but remained scarce. One presumes knights were brutal because of the strength of bits and spurs, but iconography shows also horses ridden without coercion. Linear progress in schooling cannot be found before the transition between the renaissance and baroque periods. Writings from renaissance masters such as Grisone, Fiaschi, Pignatelli and de la Broue, show a generally violent way of schooling (excepted Conte and Pavari) strangely contrasting with appeals for kindness. One then observes from the 17th century authors to the 18th century baroque masters a gradual improvement concerning important aspects: evolving 1/ from anthropomorphism to understanding horse behaviour, and 2/ from coercion to obtaining gradually suppleness and applying the laws of physics concerning weight distribution. Many baroque and early 19th century masters had understood intuitively conditioning laws discovered scientifically in the 20th century by the Pavlovians and behaviourists. The essence of schooling was settled in the baroque period. It subsided unfortunately in the 19th (with better survival in Germany, Austria and Iberic countries) because of a/ more interest for racing and hunting, b/ the French revolution that closed academies and c/ mass army training. Pressure of competition in the 20th nearly eradicated academic tradition. In the second part we translate some fundamental riding principles into scientific terminology. "Independence of aids" is based on discrimination of stimuli and overshadowing. "Discretion of aids" on generalization and second-order conditioning. "Descente de mains et

de jambes" on avoidance of habituation, of confusion, and of the impossibility to apply negative reward. "Legs without hands, hands without legs" on avoidance of experimental neurosis due to contradictory stimuli. Time permitting, processes such as positive social modelling and occasion setting will be explained. The above mentioned principles are rarely applied nowadays. The FEI holds a large responsibility in the acceptance, even institutionalizing, of a probably animal-unfriendly riding. It is also shameful that some schools, that for years, or even centuries, were the guardians of old principles, are relinquishing them under commercial pressure. All too often, modern riding is obviously animal-unfriendly for the intuitive rider. Scientists however seek facts. Frequency of conflict behaviours is an indicator at ethological level. However, some horses could be in learned helplessness. There is no litmus test for that (except complicated avoidance learning procedures). There is a need for physiological stress parameters according to breed, age, sex. Horses schooled according to different philosophies are often from different breeds making matched-pairs studies difficult. The important role of pre- and postnatal experience complicates precise scientific evaluation in everyday equine practice. One cannot standardize ontogeny in horses as in laboratory animals.

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