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BLOGPOST: Monthly motivation: Planet of the unicorns



There are few mythical figures in cultural history that are as popular as the unicorn. There even exist unicorn researchers, so-called cornologists, who study the history and meaning of the unicorn. The philosopher and author Jörg Benardy is also concerned with this topic in our current issues of the [monthly motivation](#).

What the cult of the unicorn reveals about human nature

About 5000 years ago the first unicorn was sighted in China. Supposedly it predicted a happy reign for Fu Hsi, the first mythical emperor of China. Ever since, the unicorn has been regarded as a lucky animal and held in high esteem by various rulers, potentates and emperors. On top of that, the unicorn has been attributed an array of highly diverse and ambivalent meanings throughout history.

Unique global cultural history

Originally a symbol of strength, prosperity and luck, the unicorn soon became a symbol of wisdom, fertility, sexual potency and redemption as well. In China it was a unicorn rather than an angel that heralded the birth of Confucius, and in the Indian epic Mahabharata, a gazelle gives birth to a wise saint with a horn on his head. In times of drought in the neighbouring kingdom, the unicorn is summoned to make it rain again.

Around 400 BCE the Greek physician Ctesias, personal doctor to the Persian king, reported on unicorns from India, and the unicorn took on a medical significance. From that time on, it was believed that drinking from a cup made of unicorn horn contributed to a robust health and minimised the effects of poisoning.

How the unicorn entered Western civilisation

It wasn't only the philosopher Aristotle who spoke of unicorn-like animals in his work, but they are also mentioned in eight different places in the Old Testament. Even Jesus is referred to as a uni-corn at one point. However, in contrast to the predominantly positive connotations in the Asian region, here they are often seen as unpredictable, violent and threatening. In Christianity horns are considered intrinsically suspect, and yet the only reason the unicorn ended up in the Bible is because of a translation error.

The mistake occurred when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek. In reality the text only described non-domesticated, wild animals, but the translators turned these into unicorns. The Greek word for unicorn, monokeros, became the Latin unicorns, which Luther in turn translated as 'unicorn'. And naturally, what is written in Aristotle and in the Bible must be true and important.

Unicorn empowerment: between commerce, kitsch and esotericism

In the Middle Ages, the mysterious veneration of unicorns reached several heights. A veritable competition arose; as real unicorns couldn't be found the hype surrounding unicorn powder resulted in, among other things, the mass killing of narwhals – whose horns were turned into powder that was sold as an expensive healing and magic agent. Pictures from the 15th and 16th centuries show unicorns walking peacefully through the Garden of Eden together with Adam and Eve.

Of course, unicorns never really existed and perhaps the reported sightings go back to the oryx antelope, but this is merely conjecture and we will never know for sure. However it may be, it's a fact that there has never been a more diverse range of unicorn products available than at pre-sent: unicorn toothbrush holders, salt shakers, cuddly toys, cup noodles, flipflops, ice cream, haemorrhoid ointment and unicorn baking mixes, as well as various unicorn essences, meditations, unicorn prayers and songs and offers for unicorn channelling. And not to forget unicorn condoms.

Cult, hype and mascot for start-ups

Unicornologist Jochen Hörisch calls the unicorn a border-crosser between this world and the next, between reality and fantasy. And so all the main threads and themes of our day converge in the unicorn cult: individual uniqueness, diversity, gender, sexual identity, disruption, destruction and valuable business-unicorns, but also wisdom, strength, hope, boundless imagination, visionary innovation and our ability to creatively shape the future.

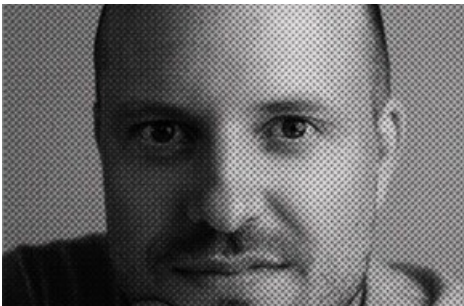
The unicorn's multifaceted significance stands for the creative power of human beings. It isn't without reason therefore that the unicorn has asserted itself as the token and mascot for billion-dollar start-ups from 2010 on. In the unicorn, we see the very essence of human nature: creative consciousnesses that remain a bit of a mystery to themselves.

'The unicorn is the animal that never was.' (Rainer Maria Rilke)

This article was originally posted in our blog:

<https://www.newsaktuell.com/blog/monthly-motivation-planet-of-the-unicorns/>

Medieninhalte



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