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## **THE INSTITUTE FOR CRITICAL ANIMAL STUDIES (ICAS) REPORT - OCTOBER 2009**

The idea of a Critical Animal Studies (CAS) is to counter the pervasive reticence of the academy generally, and mainstream animal studies in particular, to challenge the dominant relationships between human and other animals in political and normative terms through theoretical and activist means. We wish to underline the contemporary urgency of this project (to re-politicise animal studies) with reference to the twin crises of species genocide (and extinction) and global climate change. We support an ethic of abolition in regard to human violence against other animals.

CAS is committed to producing and publishing literature that consolidates the body of academic research around intersectionality, and challenges the domestication of critical thought in the contemporary academy. Part of this project necessarily involves attempts to institutionalise dialogic interaction across the scholar/activist and theory/practice divide, which challenges systems and institutions of domination and industrial complexes. CAS also works to collaboratively embed shared concerns with numerous other strands of thought including, but by no means limited to critical posthumanism, anarchism, ecofeminism, anti-racism, queer studies, disability studies, and political economy. CAS collaboration is the academic act of working together, which activists conduct through solidarity, alliance politics, and bridge building. CAS advocates for change within higher education in regard to the role the academy plays in fostering speciesist discourses and practices such as vivisection and dissection. Significantly, any group that self-consciously labels itself 'critical' must also keep itself open to constructive self-critique and reflexivity. The point is not to become the self-ghettoized superego of animal studies but to engage constructively and critically with the aims and vision of animal studies as a whole.

We are pleased to be able to report in this issue of the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* (JCAS) several significant developments at the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) in recent months. These augment our vision for ICAS in important ways. Some of

the positive developments to report centre on our own Journal for Critical Animal Studies (JCAS). Much credit is due to the new editor-in-chief Richard White (Sheffield Hallam University, UK) for the way in which he has professionally knocked the journal into shape. Elsewhere, JCAS now has a renewed and impressively large list of international editorial board members, and has expanded its capacity in film and book reviews. There are plans to move to a standard four issues per year and potentially to secure funds for a hard copy version. Please note that we now have an ISSN for JCAS. This is an excellent development, and one which will be crucial for promoting the journal to new audiences, not least as it enables JCAS to be formally listed in libraries and other mainstream resource centres.

Credit for many of the other developments in ICAS must go to Anthony J. Nocella II. Firstly his work has led to ICAS being awarded 501c3 non-profit organization status ensuring under US law that donations are tax exempt. Secondly he has secured a CAS book series with the publisher Rodopi, including the formation of an international interdisciplinary editorial board for the series. Helena Pedersen (Malmö University, Sweden); and Vasile Stanescu (Stanford University, USA) have taken a lead here as Senior Editors.

Thirdly there has been an impressive overhaul of the ICAS web presence. The main site remains at <http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org/>. There is an ICAS blog (<http://libnow.org/>) which is headed by Sarat Colling (the Editor and Founder of Political Media Review). Whilst the journal web-site is available here <http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org/JCAS/current.htm> also there is an active ICAS present on Facebook with a group and blogger page, and MySpace. Other developments include the launch of a CAS film series at Brock University, Canada.

Two ICAS conferences shall take place in 2010 – including the first to happen outside North America (Liverpool, UK April 23<sup>rd</sup>), with the location/venue of the North American conference TBC. The groundbreaking Minding Animals conference which took place in Newcastle, Australia during July 2009 was attended by several CAS

scholars (for example Carol Gigliotti, Richard Twine, Vasile Stanescu & Sherryl Vint) and provided an unprecedented opportunity for networking, discussion and the overconsumption of vegan food. A second Minding Animals conference will take place in Europe in the summer of 2012. So, you have time to both think up panels, and to start saving! CAS is growing on an international level beyond ICAS with working groups, student organizations, conferences, film and lectures series at other universities. At SUNY Cortland, USA in the Spring of 2010 there will be a CAS Lecture Series.

Finally, we have also introduced a new membership scheme for ICAS. A nominal donation of \$20 will allow you voting rights at the annual election of the 'Board of Directors', and a say in the future direction of ICAS. Donations will be used for maintaining costs of outreach material, hosting conferences and other events, websites, listserves, keeping the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* free, and publishing other important CAS publications. Please join up by following the instructions found here: [www.criticalanimalstudies.org/?page\\_id=331](http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org/?page_id=331)

There are numerous other ways to get actively involved with the Institute and critical animal studies. ICAS has compiled a very useful '20 ways to help ICAS' on the blog. We are constantly on the lookout for new publicity ideas, sources of funding, ideas for potential initiatives, assistance with our web-site and with our newsletter. To find out more about CAS philosophy please visit the theoretical principles on the 'About' page of the ICAS website.

- **ICAS Board of Directors**

## **EDITORIAL**

This issue of the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* (JCAS) covers an impressively broad range of themes and subjects, all of which are firmly positioned within the burgeoning literature focused in and around critical animal studies. Following on from the ICAS Report, I will use this space to offer a brief insight into the central topics that form the individual focus of the essays, book reviews and film reviews.

In the opening essay, "The Animal Voice behind the Animal Fable", Naama Harel addresses the representation of nonhuman animals in popular fables. In the discussion that follows, Naama draws on a wide range of literature to demonstrate exactly how and in what ways these representations offer authentic and critical insights centred around animal behavior and the (negotiated, problematic) relationship between humans and other animals. Significantly, this line of argument runs firmly against the current grain of thinking which dismisses the dominant representations of animals in animal fables, by condemning them as yet another form of exploitation by humans. To support her argument Naama weaves into her discussion a range of examples which includes reference to Aesop's fables and Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The result is an extremely engaging and persuasive series of arguments, which ultimately end with the conclusion that fables can - and do - encourage multilevel representations of other animals; representations that can be used to understand them, without nullifying them.

Zipporah Weisberg's essay, "The Broken Promises of Monsters: Haraway, Animals and the Humanist Legacy", is highly impressive on many levels. Ambitious in scope and content, the essay explores the arguments that are made by Donna Haraway, a leading feminist theorist. In particular, the essay concentrates on Haraway's contribution to the depoliticized approach that characterizes much of the mainstream animal studies literature. Zipporah builds an emotive yet clear-sighted essay which embraces a wide range of violent practices against animals including animal experimentation, genetic engineering, dog breeding and training, killing animals for food, and hunting. Zipporah's contextualisation of these practices draws on a range of dominant discourses, including

(but not limited to) the sado-humanist project of domination, anthropocentrism, and Levinasian ethics. This in turn leads to an excellent and important discussion focused on the ethico-political implications of the development of OncoMouse™. The central conclusion - which seeks to reconcile the discussion at hand with the broader implications for Animal Studies - is devastatingly simple and straightforward.

"The Great Unity: Daoism, Nonhuman Animals, and Human Ethics" serves as an excellent introduction to the many animal-friendly teachings that lie at the heart of Daoism. In her essay, Lisa Kemmerer develops an accessible and engaging discussion which considers that the treatment of animals (and nature) is not merely of passing interest to Daoist teaching on philosophy and morality, but fundamental to it. Crucially, the relationship between humans and other animals should not be perceived as hierarchical and exploitative (as it has been in much of the mainstream teaching steeped in the Judeo-Christian tradition). Rather the relationship is much more equitable and reciprocal, as evidenced for example in the way nonhuman animals can teach human animals important things about themselves (*jian*). Moreover, all life is subject to the same wider and timeless forces that culminate in the rhythms of life that are part of a much greater (eternal) transformation. Ultimately Daoist teachings exemplify the highest universalistic ethics: do not kill or harm any living being. This ethic has significant implications for the way (most) people live their lives today, and with respect to the way they (ab)use other animals in particular. Lisa's essay ends on a passionate and rational appeal for animal activists to look more deeply into their religious traditions to discover animal friendly teachings, and use this to draw strength, direction and inspiration from.

This JCAS issue also includes the publication of an extended essay by David Sztybel, titled: "Normative Sociology: the Intuitionist Crisis and Animals as Absent Referents". This essay is the first of two parts focused on animals and normative sociology. The decision to formally include one *extended* essay (up to 15,000 words) per issue is, I believe, a constructive and important one, not least in that it permits a more full-blooded consideration of relevant and important issues. At the heart of David's first essay is the challenge to distinguish between positive normative sociology and negative normative

sociology, with the wider aim of harnessing a normative sociology. Responding to this, David constructs a series of wonderfully clear, critical and persuasive lines of argument that address an extremely wide and broad literature. The essay critiques a range of influential approaches (such as ethical relevatism, critical theory, discourse ethics, structural-functionalism, and Marxism) and individuals (including Horkheimer, Comte, Durkheim, Mead, Marcuse, Parsons, Marx, Gramsci, Adorno, Harbermas, and Nibert). The result is an impressively robust sociological foundation from which David will then build on in the next issue of JCAS.

Following the extended essay, we are pleased to be able to publish Lisa Kemmerer's thoughtful and considered book review of "Aftershock: Confronting Trauma in a Violent World: A Guide for Activists and their Allies" by Pattrice Jones, published in 2007. Sarat Colling and Anthony Nocella II review the activist film "Behind the Mask" (2006), which includes a discussion centred on the ways in which this film effectively challenges and undermines the popular public perception that those who take direct action to help animals are terrorists. Finally, Nicole Pallotta reviews the documentary film "Winged Migration" (2001). In her review, Nicole notes that while she is not without reservations about the execution of the film, the filmmakers' overarching goal (not least in transforming birds from objects into *subjects*) is admirable, and important.

I hope that you will get a great deal from engaging with the themes, arguments, and conclusions that are proposed in this issue, and that you can meaningfully use this information to help make an effective, positive and lasting difference.

- **Dr. Richard J White, Editor-in-Chief**