

JCAS Volume 12, Issue 3, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ISSUE INTRODUCTION	1-3
ESSAYS	
The Cost of Compassion: The Impact of Welfare Reforms on the Profits of Animal Factories and the Retail Price of Animal Products	
Norm Phelps	4-26
<i>Geschlecht</i>, Speciesism, and Animal Rights in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch	
Sean Kelly	27-49
Suffering Humanism, or the Suffering Animal	
Sean Meighoo.....	50-74
Refusing to Speak: The Ethics of Animal Silence and Sacrifice in Coetzee and Derrida	
Sundhya Walther	75-96
Yoruba Ethico-cultural Perspectives and Understanding of Animal Ethics	
A.O. Owoseni and I. O. Olatoye	97-118
REVIEWS	
Film Review: <i>The Ghosts in Our Machine</i> (2013), Bullfrog Films (theater edition: 92 minutes, classroom edition: 60 minutes), directed by Liz Marshall	
Steve Kaufman	119-121
Book Review: <i>We Animals</i> (2013)	
Kathryn Asher	122-129
JCAS: Submission Guidelines	130-131

Volume 12, Issue 3
2014

Issue Introduction

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ISSUE INTRODUCTION

While this summer issue of *JCAS* is not focused on a special topic, the five articles assembled in these pages all participate in the ongoing discussion of intersections and divergences between animal rights and animal welfare discourses in animal ethics, often interrogating the roles of animal suffering and human compassion in constructing the status of nonhuman animals. Are the two orientations—rights and welfare—compatible and even mutually reinforcing, or do they inevitably work at cross-purposes? And if both discursively resolve to questions about the ethics of human relationships to nonhuman animals, what exactly are the real and ideal positions of humans in these relationships? What moral responsibilities do such relationships confer upon human beings? What sacrifices might they demand? And how and to what extent is it possible for human animals to escape an andropocentric worldview in the conduct of these relationships?

The first article to take up such questions in this issue is “The Cost of Compassion,” in which Norm Phelps analyzes the economic impacts of several proposed farmed animal welfare measures on animal factories and retail prices. Focusing primarily on the elimination of gestation crates for sows, battery cages for laying hens and waterbath stunning of broiler chickens prior to slaughter, Phelps uses data from agricultural economists to refute the claim that such welfare measures can actually increase farm profits. Instead, he argues that by passing the added costs of improved animal welfare on to consumers of meat, producers and processors will gradually make meat-eating a less attractive option for increasing numbers of customers; as consumer demand

for meat products declines, fewer animals will be subjected to the intolerable conditions of factory farming. Consequently, Phelps maintains, seemingly small welfare improvements may indirectly serve the larger cause of animal liberation rather than merely assuaging the collective conscience of the meat-eating public.

The next article, Sean Kelly's "*Geschlecht*, Speciesism, and Animal Rights in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch," conducts an analytical survey of the 19th-century Galician author's literary works, focusing on the intent behind von Sacher-Masoch's use of the term "*Geschlecht*," generally translated into English as "sex," but carrying in German the broader meaning of "species" or "type." Kelly argues that human-animal relationships in von Sacher-Masoch's stories, set in a moral universe of *Krieg der Geschlechter*—warfare and struggle among "types"—, offer a useful theory of animal rights grounded in the possibility of friendships across the species divide. Interspecies relationships in these stories, Kelly concludes, model animal rights not as legal protections for nonhuman animals but rather as human responsibilities to effect positive changes in the lives of animals, largely through human education guided by the purpose of making animal exploitation unnecessary.

The next two essays, Sean Meighoo's "Suffering Humanism, or the Suffering Animal" and Sundhya Walther's "Refusing to Speak: The Ethics of Animal Silence and Sacrifice in Coetzee and Derrida," both examine the moral significance of nonhuman animal suffering. Through an analysis of Peter Singer's and Jacques Derrida's uses of Jeremy Bentham's famous assertion that nonhuman animals' moral standing is grounded in their capacity to suffer, Meighoo argues that although Bentham ushered in a radical revision of humanism by replacing the capacity to reason with the capacity to suffer as the core component of moral subjectivity, the inclusion of nonhuman animals in the moral universe of humanity occurs on strictly anthropocentric terms. Meighoo leaves us with the unanswered question, "Is the suffering subject of ethics fundamentally human?"

While Walther provides no final answer to this question, her analysis of Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* and Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* and *Disgrace* suggests that there is no way out of our ethical andropocentrism. She rejects Elizabeth Costello's interpretation of animal silence in Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* as a form of active resistance to human domination, using Derrida's lectures and Coetzee's *Disgrace* to demonstrate human appropriation of animal silence in a "sacrificial economy."

Finally, Olatoye Olufemi's and Owoseni Adewale's "Yoruba Ethico-cultural Perspectives and Understandings of Animal Ethics" questions the Western conceptual division of animal ethics into the separate camps of animal rights and animal welfare by examining the Yoruba concept of animal ethics encoded in oral texts and cultural practices. Concluding that the Yoruba culture of Nigeria does not recognize or uphold the rights/welfare divide, they call for more human cultural diversity in the global conversation about the ethics of human-nonhuman animal relations.