



# **Earth Jurisprudence: Building Theory and Practice**

Australia's Third Wild Law Conference  
16-18 September 2011  
Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

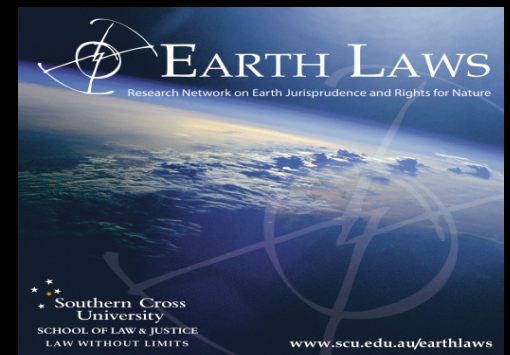


# Gaining Ground: Towards a Discourse of Posthuman Animality



## *A Geophilosophical Journey*

Anne Schillmoller



*'At the beginning of a journey, when you are about to cover strange territory, you are always ignorant.'*



Krim Benterrak, Stephen Muecke and Paddy Roe,  
*Reading the Country*, (Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 1984)



# ***Departure Zone: Human Sovereignty***

Liberal humanism is 'sovereign and untroubled'



## ***Departure Zone : Biopolitical Power***

The exercise of biopolitical power separates political and human life from the life of the animal and is 'the power to rule over life itself'.





## ***Departure Zone: Negotiating Being***

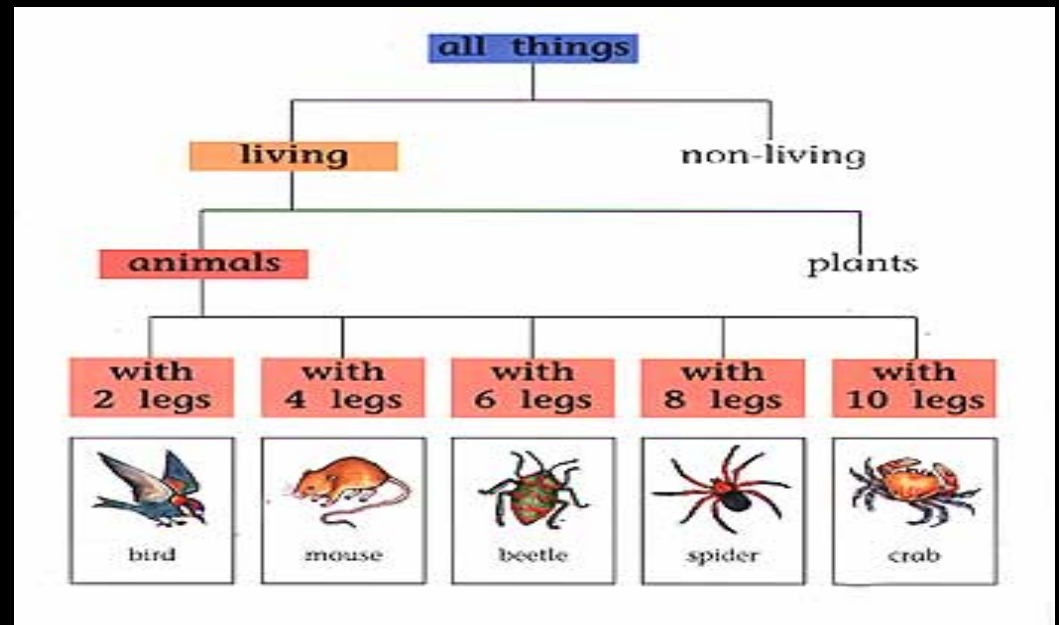
Ontology is not an innocuous academic discipline, but in every sense the 'fundamental operation in which anthropogenesis, the becoming human of the living being, is realized.'



# *Departure Zone: Representing Animality*

That there exists no extra textual field of reference by which the agency of animality might be understood by human biopolitical actors

That textuality cannot be divorced from historical, social and political processes









**Representation**

**Biocentrism**

**Dualisms**

**Anthropocentrism**

**Biopolitical power**





***'Here be Dragons':* Posthuman redux**





# *Itinerary: Mapping the Terrain*

To confront the ways in which 'life' itself is represented, and in the process, 'incessantly confront power's strategies'



# *Itinerary: Mapping the Terrain*

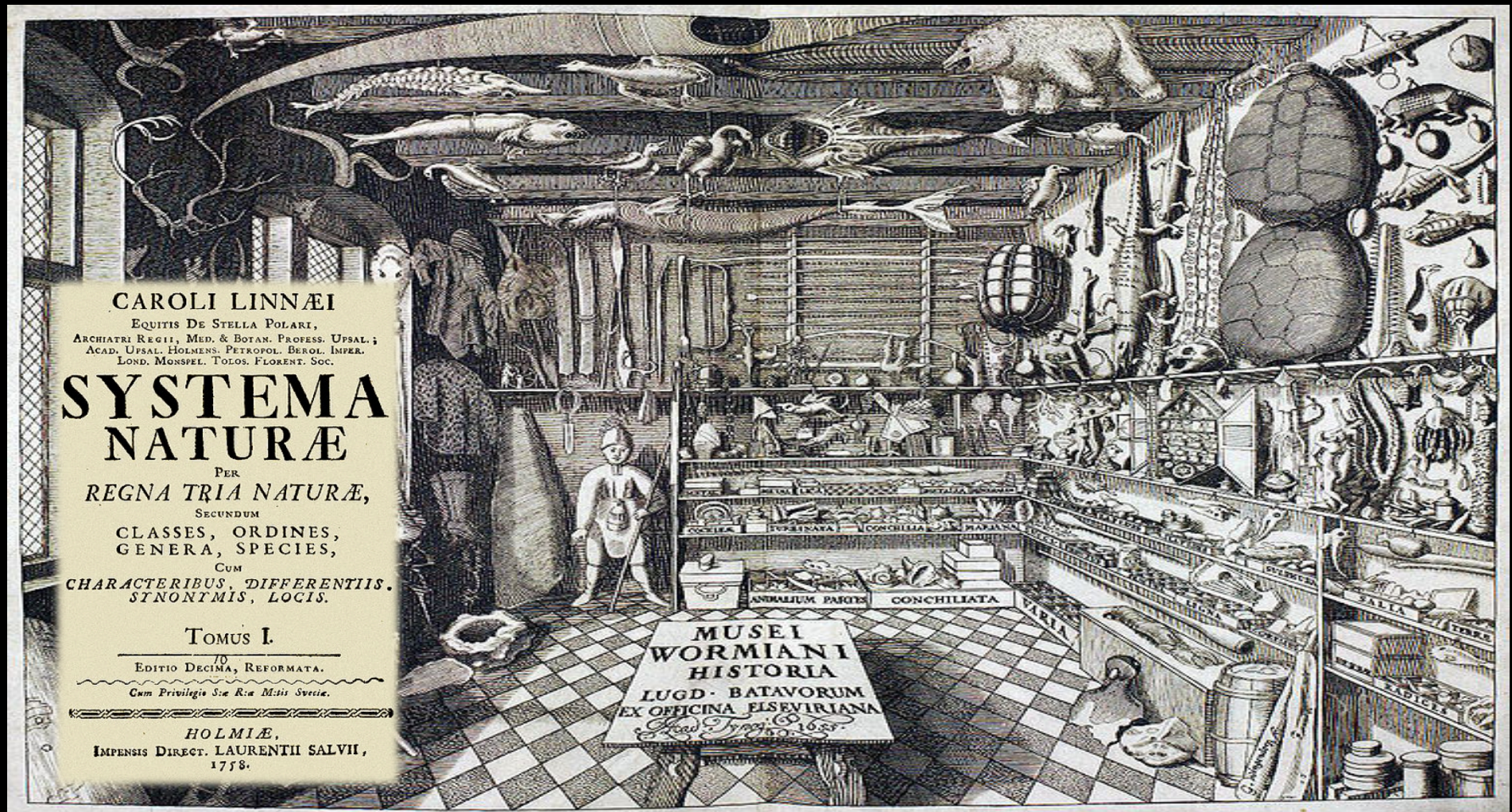
To challenge anthropocentric conceptions of animality





## *Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain

# To interrogate biocentrism and speciesism





# *Itinerary*: Mapping the Terrain

To 'trouble' the sovereignty of liberal humanism



## *Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain

To locate topographies where the conditions of *creaturely life* may be conceptualised in relational and non anthropocentric terms





## *Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain

To articulate possibilities for a reciprocal ground of animality, a non hegemonic conceptual frontier within which the sovereign terrain of liberal humanism yields to networks of alliances and reciprocities among human and other animals



## *Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain

To highlight the undecidability of species boundaries





## *Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain

To identify terrain capable of unsettling the notion of the human as ontologically non animal



## *Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain

To identify alternative ways by which animality might be conceptualised and represented





## *Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain

To contribute to emergent conversations  
which expose the erasures of the  
humanist disavowal of animality

**43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Wyoming County 4-H**  
**Meat Animal Auction**  
**ONE NIGHT ONLY!**  
**Wednesday, August 17, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.**  
**Wyoming County Fairgrounds - Dairy Barn Arena**

- Auction Order -  
**125 Hogs \* 22 Lambs**  
**14 Dairy Steers \* 12 Beef Steers**

All animals will be **SOLD LIVE**  
Free Trucking Available to Local Meat Packers.

A photograph showing three men standing next to a large brown pig. The man on the left is wearing a tan shirt and glasses. The man in the middle is wearing a green shirt and a baseball cap. The man on the right is wearing a plaid shirt. The pig is large and brown, with a purple tag hanging from its ear. The background is a green wall with some text partially visible.

## ***Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain**

To gesture towards possibilities for a discourse of animality which avoids the haunting spectre of humanism





## *Itinerary:* Mapping the Terrain

To assess whether philosophy can provide us with the concepts we need in order for our thoughts and practices to 'proceed otherwise' in relation to animals: ones which stand apart from traditional conceptions of animality and of the human-animal distinction.

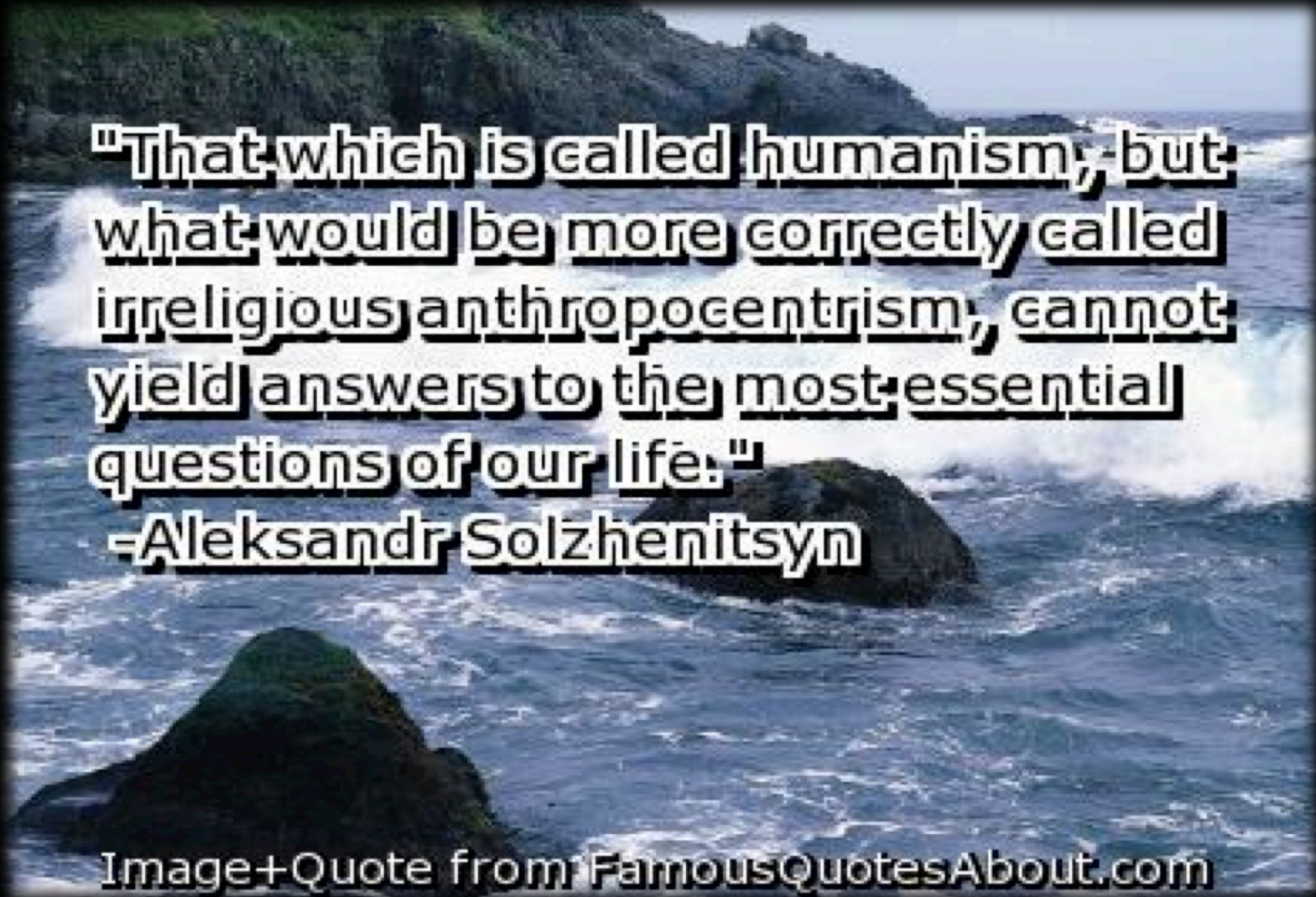




***Rationale***  
**The**  
**marginalisation,**  
**exploitation and**  
**mistreatment**  
**of non human**  
**animals is a**  
**‘necessary’**  
**consequence of**  
**humanism.**







**"That which is called humanism, but what would be more correctly called irreligious anthropocentrism, cannot yield answers to the most essential questions of our life."**

**-Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn**

Image+Quote from [FamousQuotesAbout.com](http://FamousQuotesAbout.com)



# Ontological and epistemological dualisms

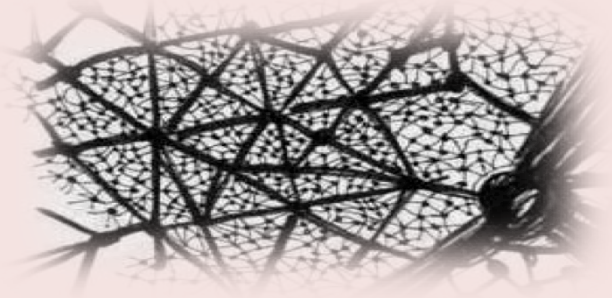
Human animal	Nonhuman animal
Dwells in the world	Inhabits an environment
Dies	Perishes
Moral capacity	Amoral
Aware of mortality	Unaware of mortality
Inner theatre of representations and mediations	Unmediated relationship with the 'real'
World forming: <i>weltbildend</i>	Poor in world: <i>weltarm</i>
Culture	Nature



# *Methodology: Geophilosophy* 'Lines of Flight'



# Geophilosophy



A philosophy *in and of* the earth.

A rhizomatic approach which facilitates an exploration of undecidable topographies and explores the entangled flows , grids, and spaces of the world.

Redefines the utopian structure inherent in most philosophies in a geographical context

Identifies and performs the multiplicity within which entities are embedded.

Attempts to facilitate modes of 'becoming' to destabilise the identity and unity of humanist ontology.

Deconstructs and reconstructs socially constructed binary oppositions between human and nonhuman animals.



# **'Wilderness' Ontology**

## **A decentralization and multiplication of perspectives which:**

Deconstructs and reconstructs socially constructed binary oppositions between human and nonhuman animals

Illuminates other dominator hierarchies such as those between 'culture' and 'nature', 'civilization' and 'wilderness' as part of a transformative project to transcend such binaries with a view to the development of inclusive eco-centric perspectives.

Assumes that humans are not *sovereigns* of being, but are *among* beings with no particularly privileged place.

Conceived not as the *absence* of humans but in terms of a flat plane of being where humans are among beings without enjoying any unilateral, overdetermining role.

# II

## *Landscape:* The Road Travelled

A photograph of a person walking away from the viewer across a vast, undulating landscape of sand dunes. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong silhouette of the person and casting long, soft shadows across the dunes. The sky is a warm, hazy orange. The overall mood is contemplative and solitary.

Limited by their anthropocentric origins, no human discipline will be able to provide a comprehensive account of animal *being*, nor of animal *life*.



# Addressing a Legacy of Neglect

An explicit concern with, and sensibility towards, non human others has never been a significant concern for majority world philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

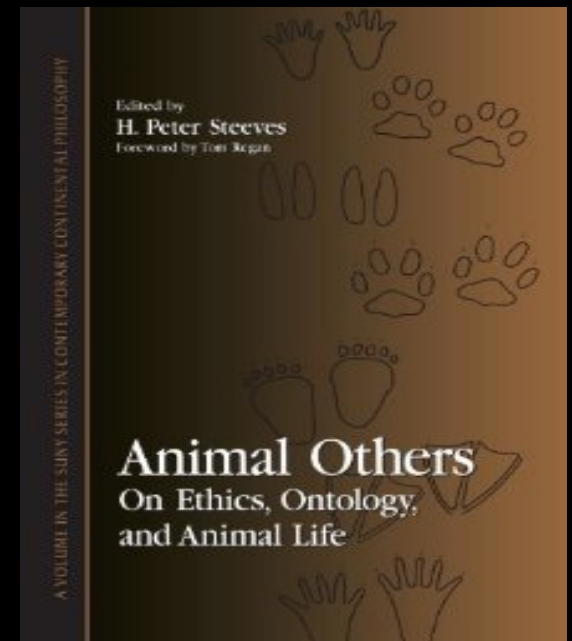
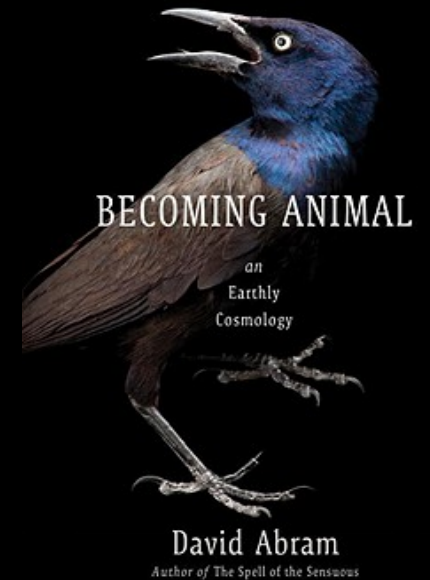
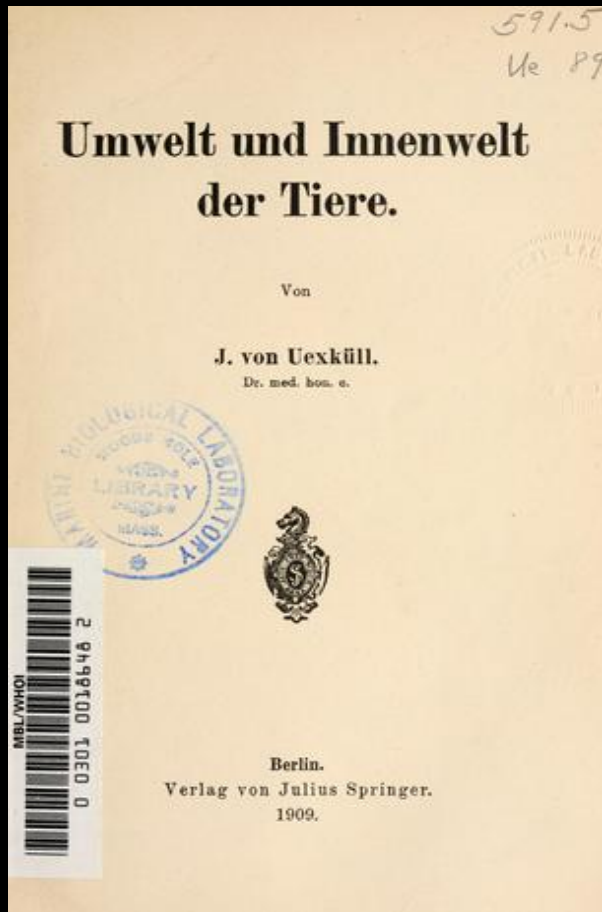
The end of humanism, is an 'apocalyptic shibboleth', one which has 'become a self-defeating utterance amid a discourse that has said hardly anything about animals'.

'Philosophy in general has never quite known what to do with nonhuman animals or where to place them on the conceptual map.'



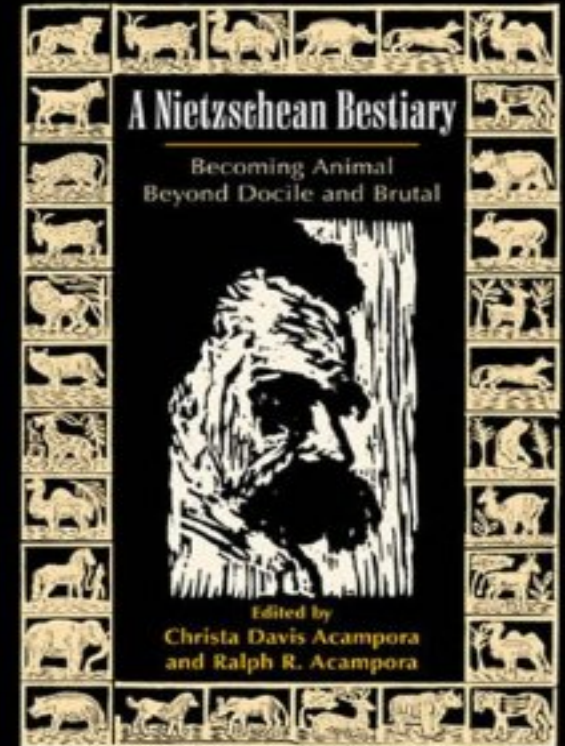
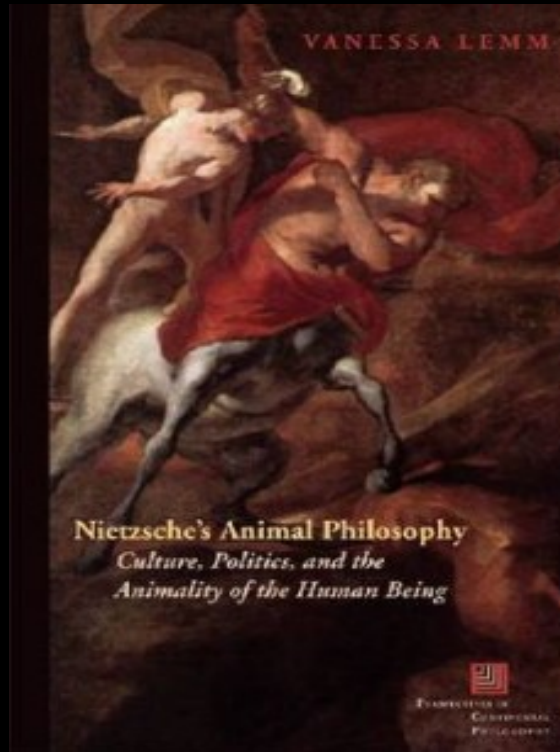
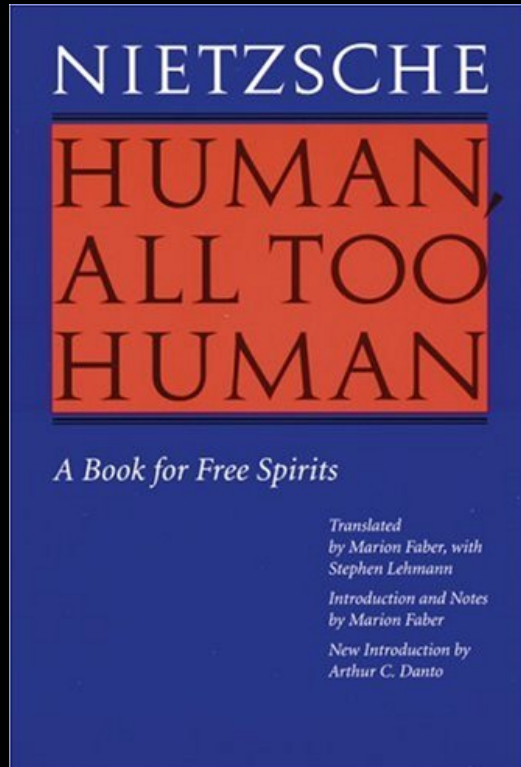
Peter Atterton and Matthew Calacarco (eds),  
*Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*,  
(Continuum, 2004) xvii

# ***Phenomenology and Ontology:*** Exploring the lifeworlds of non human animals





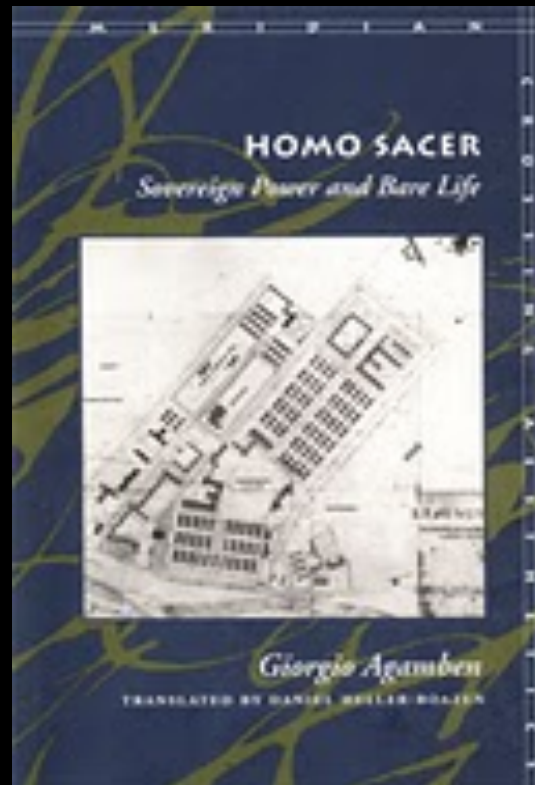
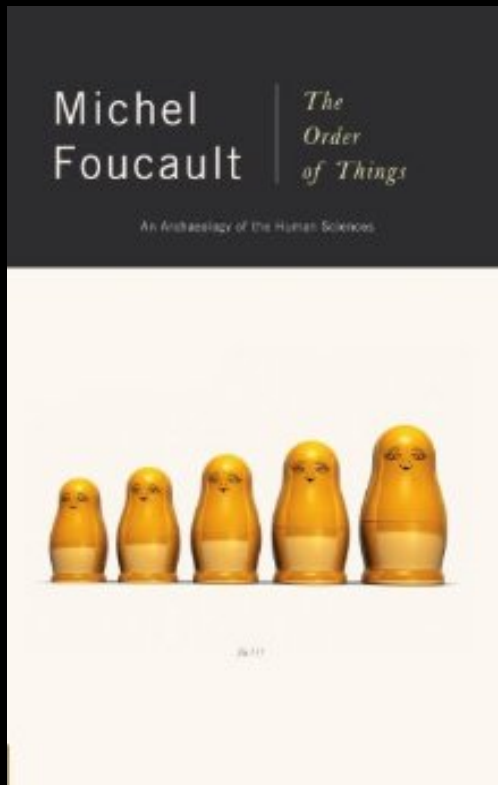
# *A positive biopolitics?*



The continuity between human and animal life as a source of resistance to the project of dominating and controlling life-processes.

## ***Biopower and Human Sovereignty:***

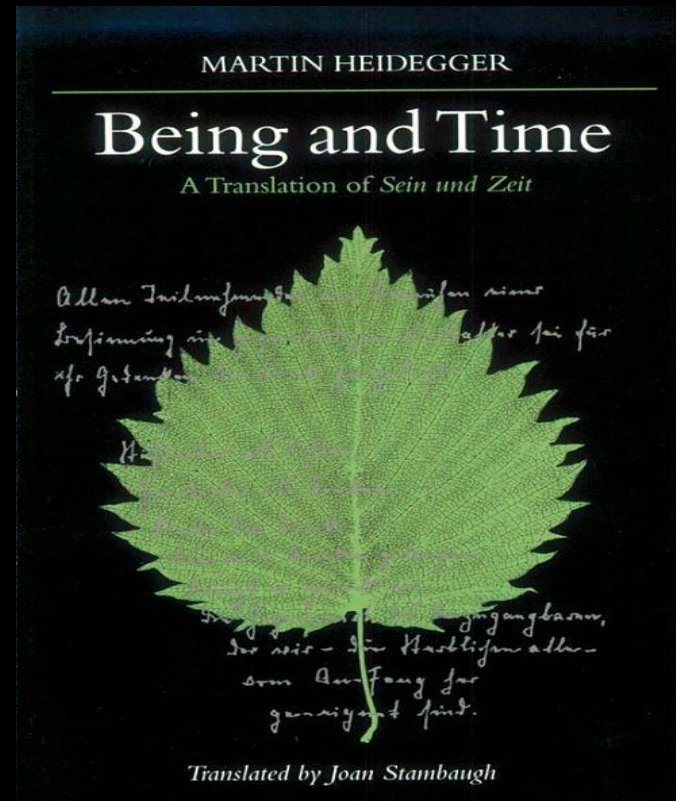
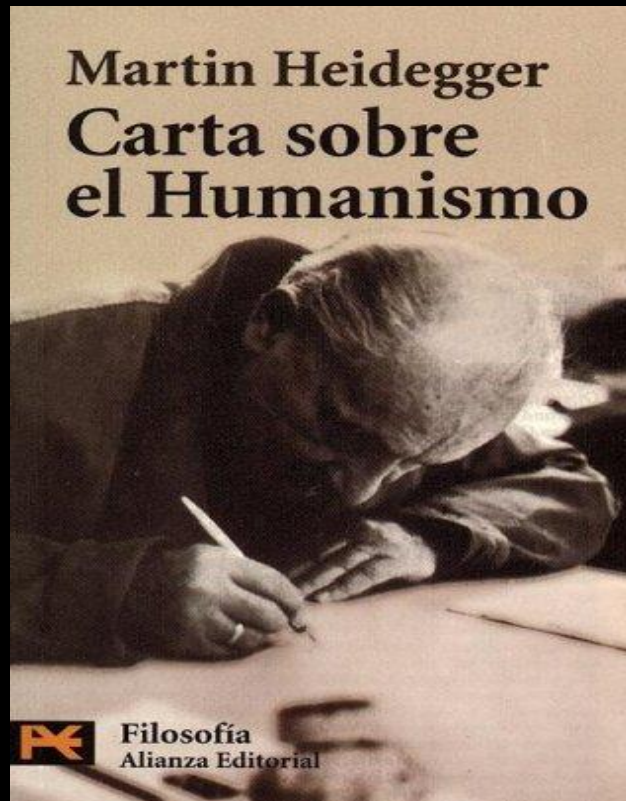
Creating and maintaining the status of 'the human' by a violent destruction and disavowal of 'the animal'.





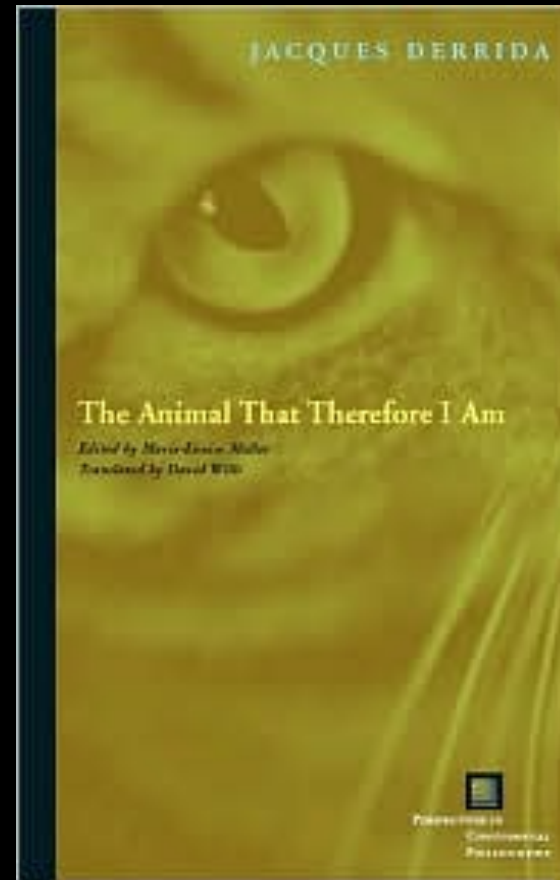
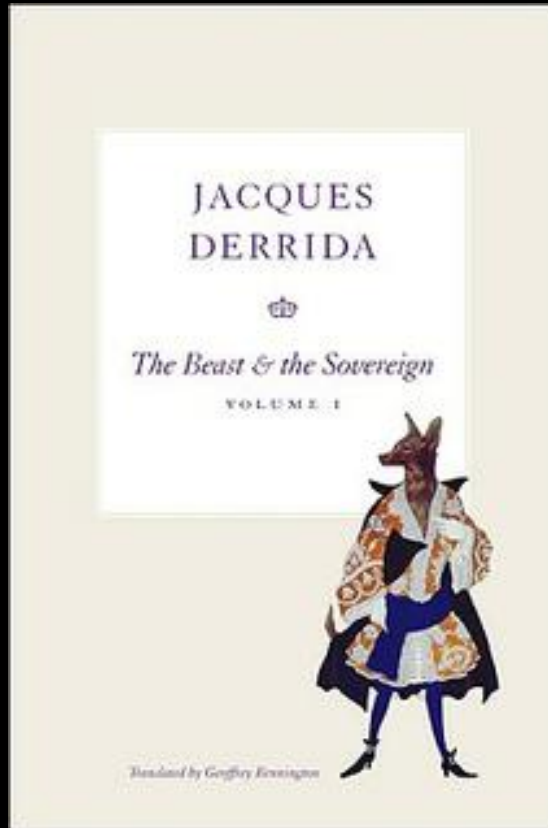
# *Interrogating Humanism (1)*

An analysis of animality directed to understanding the uniquely *human* relation to world.



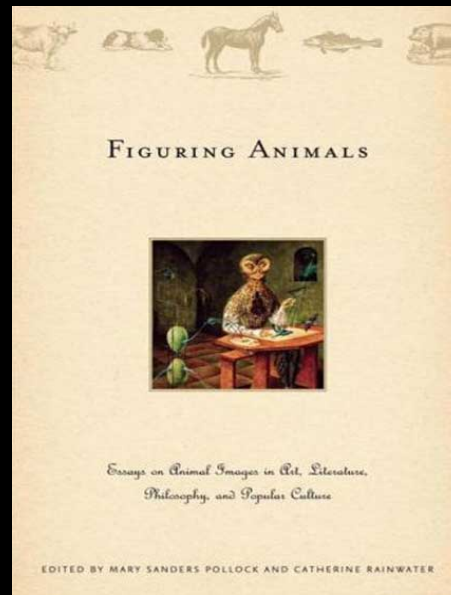
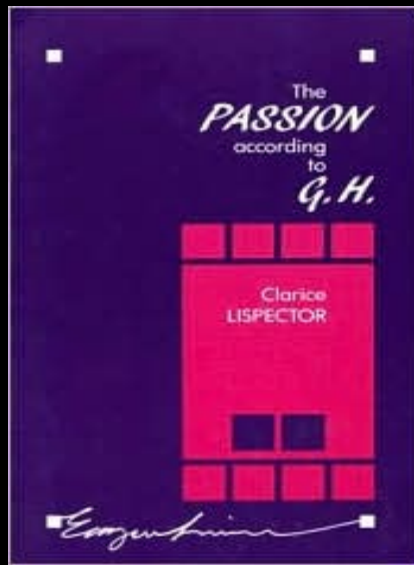
## ***Interrogating Humanism (2)***

Western subjectivity maintains the status of the 'human' by a violent abjection, destruction and disavowal of the 'animal'.

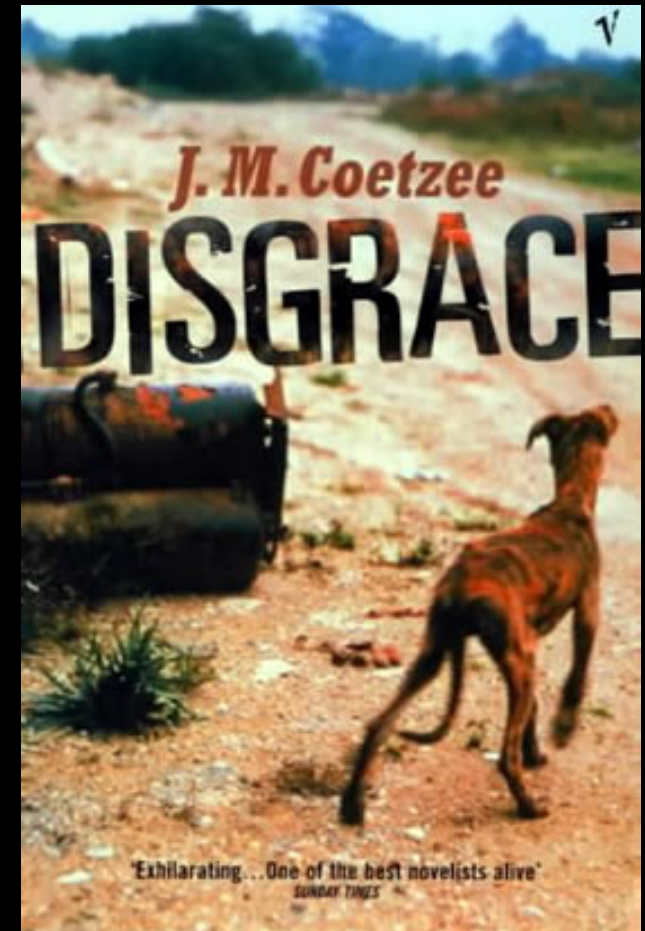
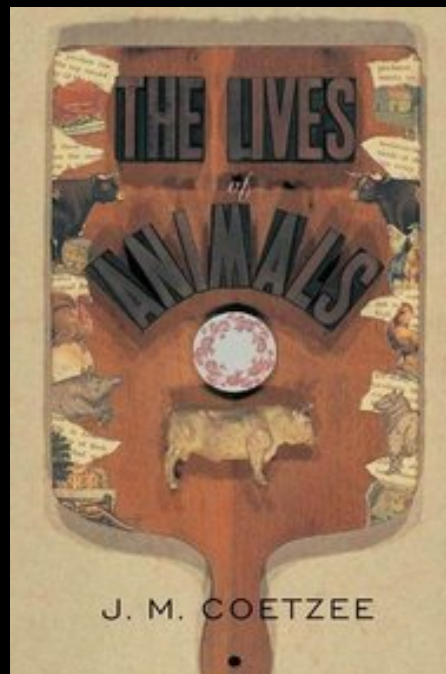
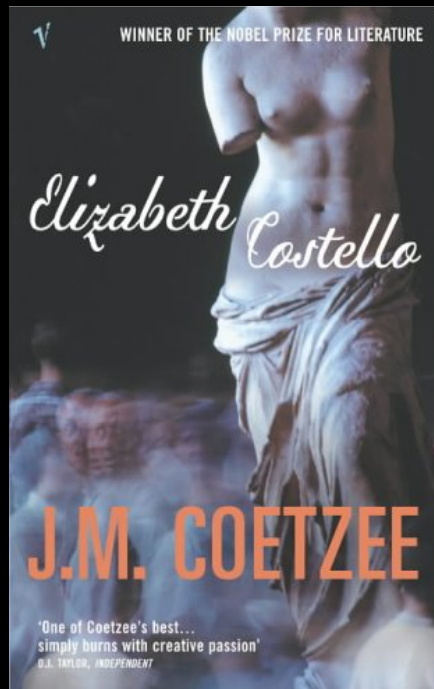


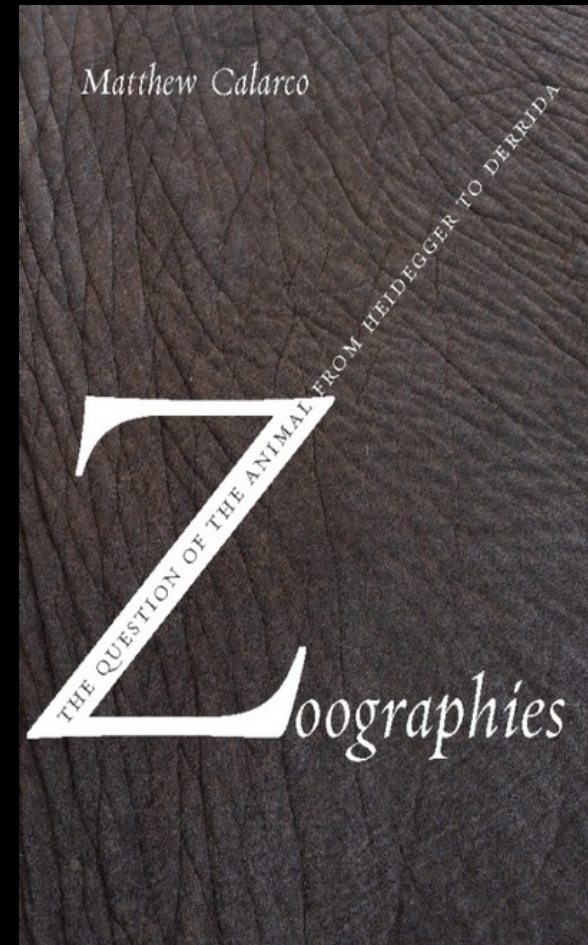
*'The troubling stakes' of bestiaries are located at the origin of philosophy.'*





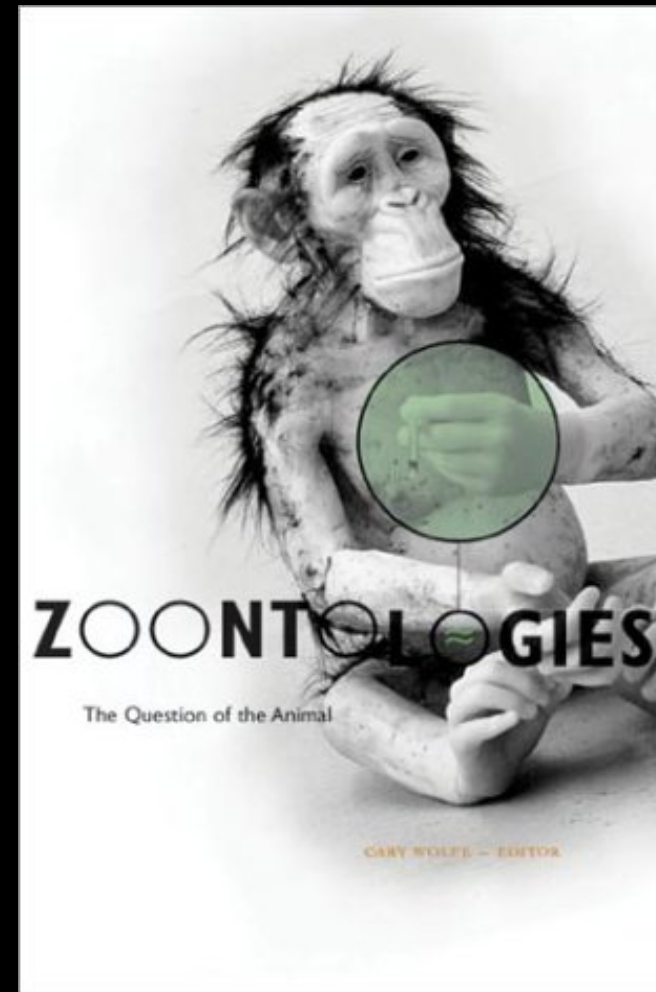
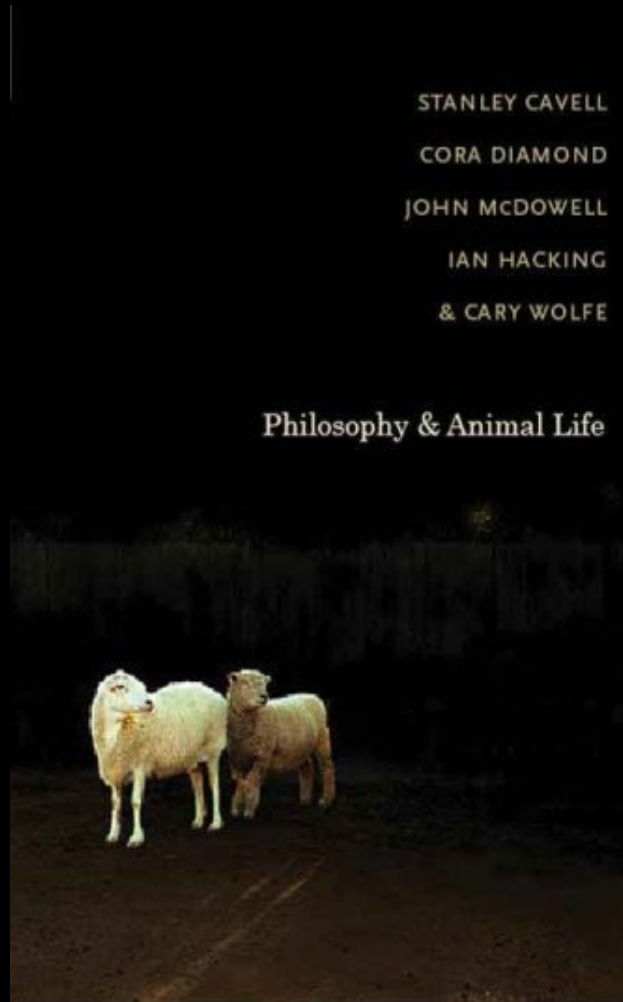
***The literary imagination:***  
Thinking a way into the life  
of animal others





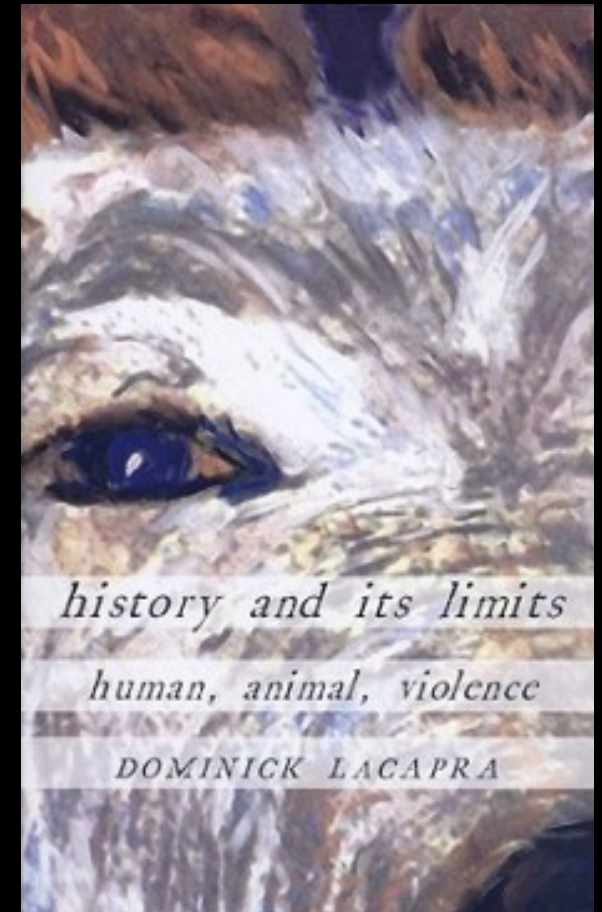
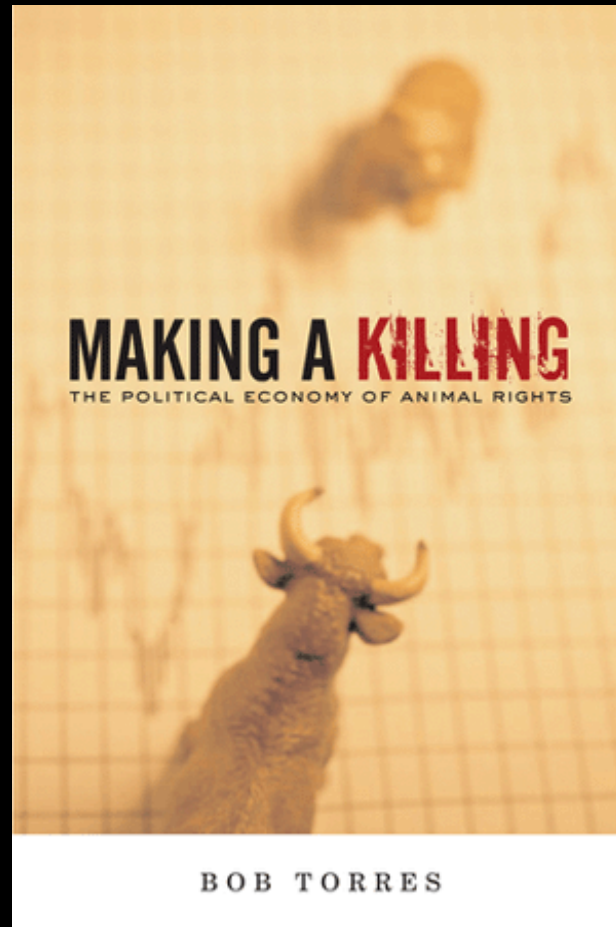
***Interrogating Humanist Orthodoxy:***  
 Extending the posthuman project





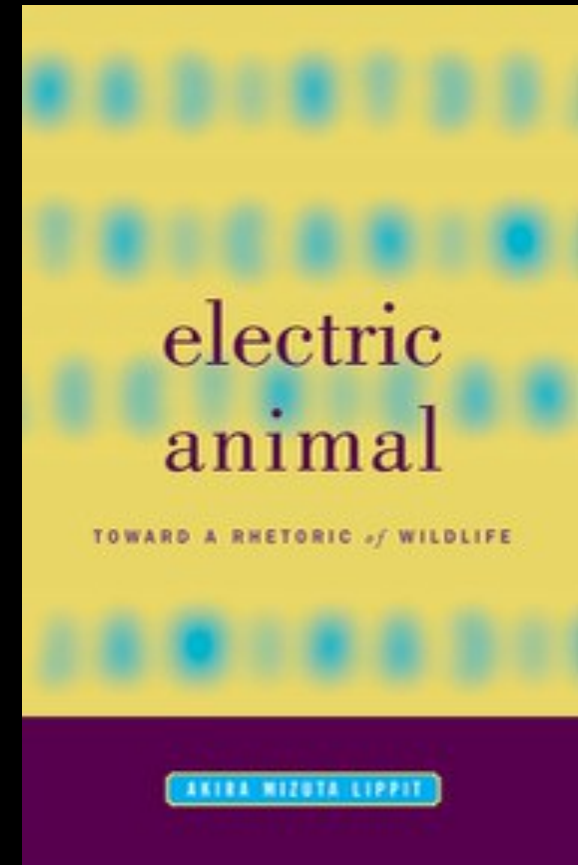
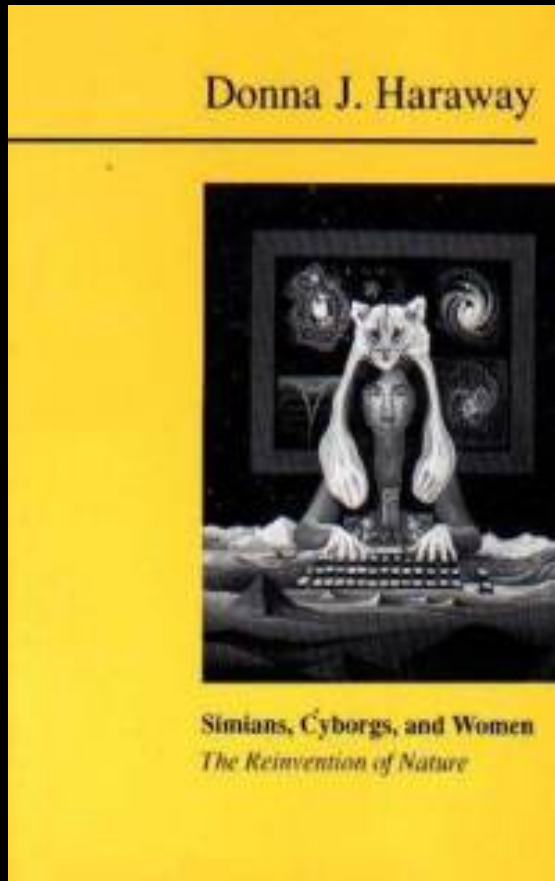
## ***An Ethics of Animality***

A fundamental reevaluation of what it means to be human.



***A political ecology of animality***





***Transhumanism:***  
**Interrogating nature, wilderness and 'life' itself**

# III

## *Morphology:*

### **Beyond Sameness and Difference**



Remaining vigilant to the hazards of  
difference and of identity.



Human and nonhuman animals do not encounter one another in a static, hierarchical binary relation, but engage in interactive processes of both *harmony* and of *conflict*.

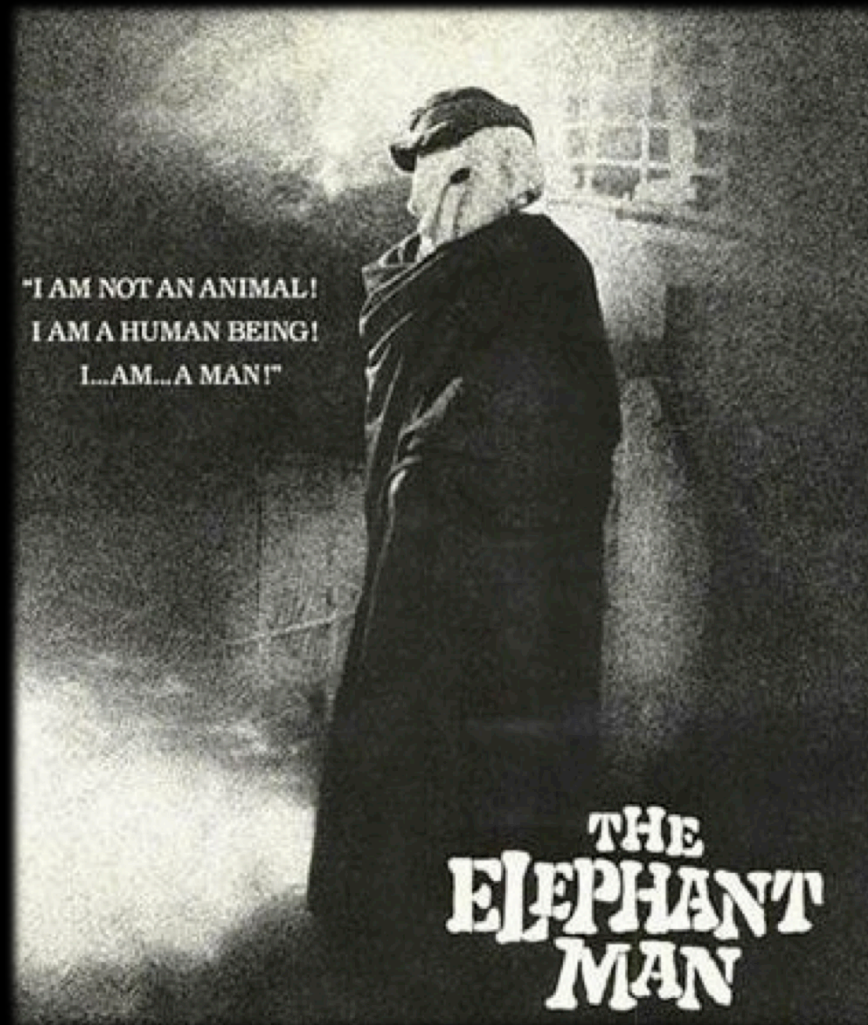


The assimilation of animals into a pre-existing humanist narrative may result in the 'humanisation' of animals through anthropomorphism...





...or the 'animalisation' of humans through speciesism.

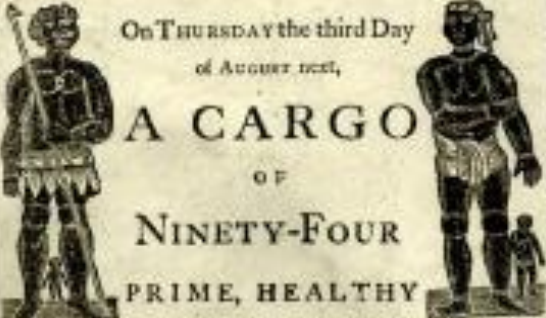


Charlestown, July 24th, 1769.

TO BE SOLD,

On THURSDAY the third Day  
of AUGUST next,

A CARGO  
OF  
NINETY-FOUR  
PRIME, HEALTHY



NEGROES,

CONSISTING OF  
Thirty-nine MEN, Fifteen BOYS,  
Twenty-four WOMEN, and  
Sixteen GIRLS.

JUST ARRIVED,  
In the Brigantine DEMBIA, *Francis Bare*, Master, from SIERRA-  
LEON, by  
DAVID & JOHN DEAS.

## ETERNAL TREBLINKA

OUR TREATMENT OF ANIMALS  
AND THE HOLOCAUST



CHARLES PATTERSON

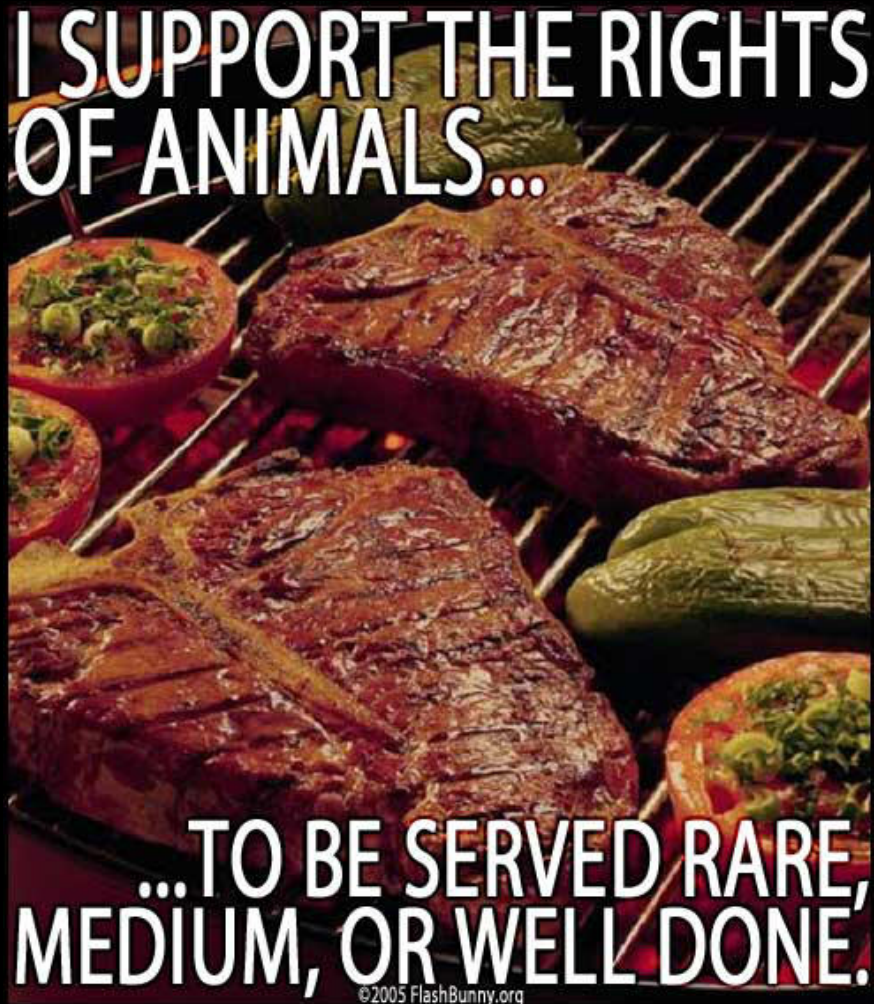
Foreword by Lucy Rosen Kaplan, Esq.



Attempts at common identification in which the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman are collapsed, might represent a facile gesture of dominance...



...while a focus on difference rather than identity may reflect a profound anthropomorphic disrespect.





Can we locate middle ground between a humanist view which recognises the **otherness** of nonhuman animals in which they are regarded as raw material for the satisfaction of human needs and desires, and extreme forms of naturalism which focus on nonhuman animals' **sameness** to humanity.





Because 'we' humans are unable to avoid the limitations of our own human perspective, at the most we can only 'polish an animal mirror to look for ourselves.

-Donna Haraway



# IV

## *Threshold:*

### Obligatory Passage Point

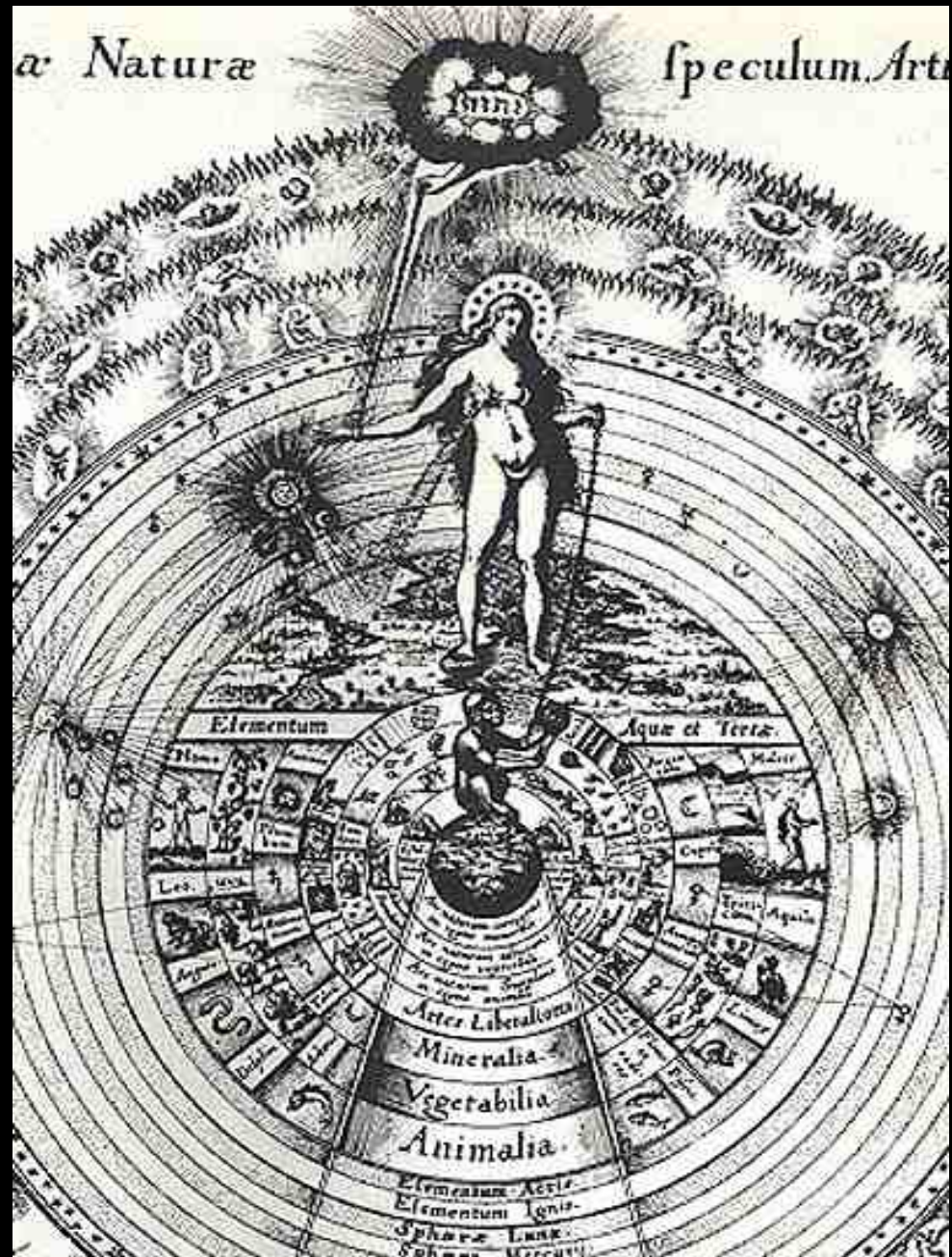




The conceptual separation of animal from human as a form of 'originary ban', an exercise of biopolitical power which enables the human animal to exclude other animals from the life of the polis.

*'The caesura between the human and the animal passes first of all through man.'*

Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, (Stanford University Press, 2003) 16





The determination of the border between human and animal, is a 'fundamental meta-physico-political operation in which humanity is decided upon and produced.'



V  
*Boundary:*  
Troubling Humanism





# What's wrong with rights?

The readiness of some animal advocates to resort to liberal humanism as a chief point of reference for animal interests, embraces a tacit assumption that change regarding animals is to be found in existing (humanist) legal and political institutions.

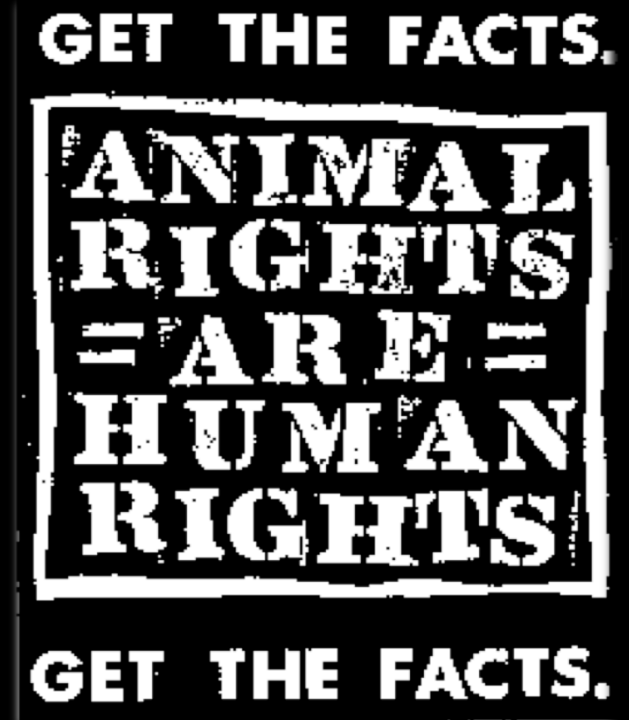
Pro-animal discourse may have the effect of extending and deepening liberal humanism and of reinscribing the humanism it ostensibly attempts to unsettle.

Animality discourse should function as a direct challenge to liberal humanism and the metaphysical anthropocentrism which underlies it.



# Extending liberal humanism to nonhuman animals: A form of anthropocentrism

Animal rights discourse is often predicated in an ethics of 'the same' which fails to consider the ontological differences and structural asymmetry between human and non human animals





# VI

## *Topology:*

### Sacrificial Ground

The continued existence of the 'human' depends to a significant extent upon the sacrifice of the 'animal'





The exclusion of the animal is constitutive of the human community.

Being *human* in a fundamental sense, means '*not-being-animal*'





# Carnophallogocentrism

Western subjectivity has maintained the status of the 'human' by a violent abjection and disavowal of the 'animal'. The sanctity of the human depends upon its difference from animals and the material reinstantiation of that exclusion through practices such as meat eating, hunting and medical experimentation.

-Jacques Derrida



The most haunting presence of the animal is always with reference to human subjectivity, in consequence of which the animal participates in a 'sacrificial economy' in which it becomes 'spectral', always remembered in absentia.





VII  
*Hinterland:*  
Posthumanism





The differences between and among animals are more diverse and significant than any megadivide between (or foundational trauma separating) human and animals.

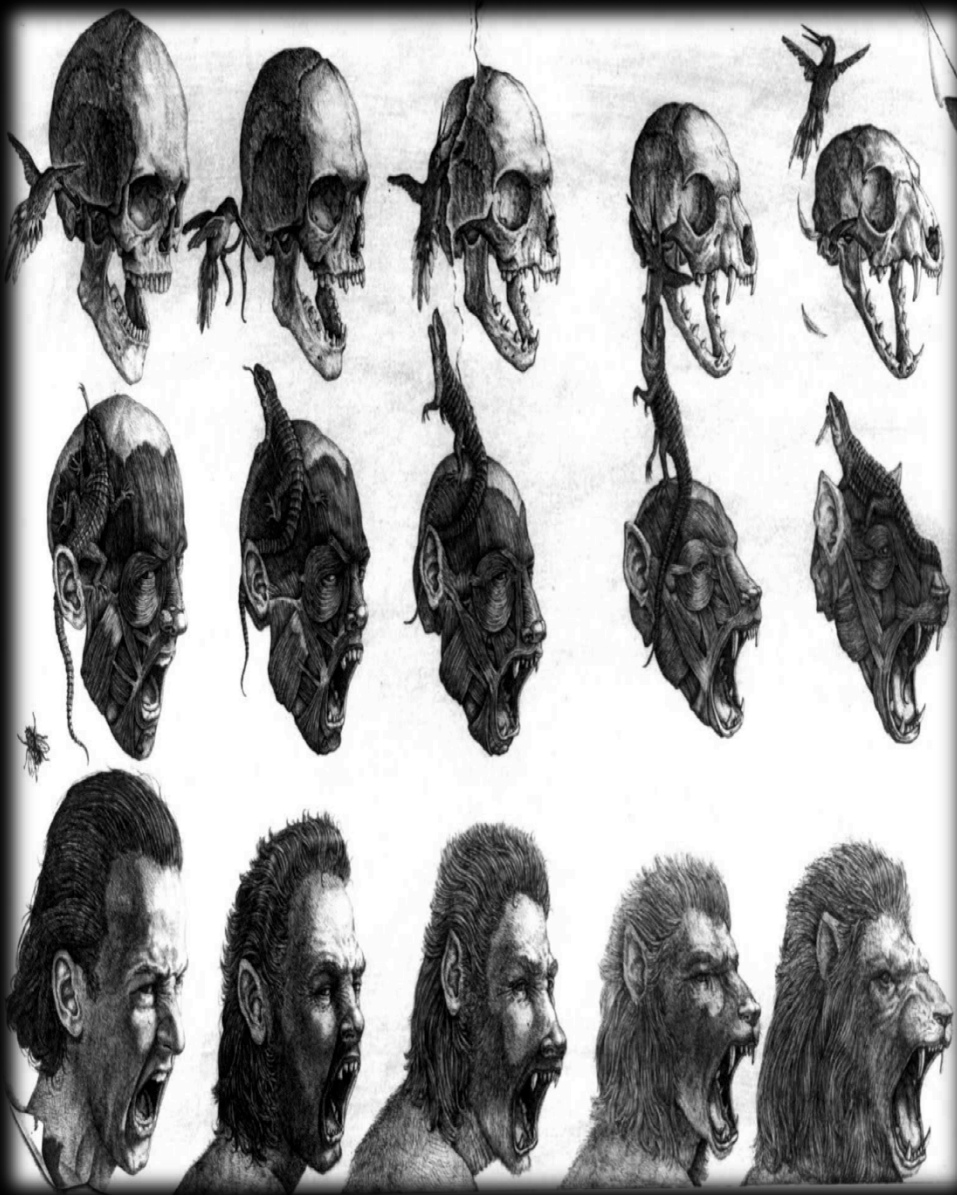




One should not envision the human and the animal as two circles that are either separated by a gap/divide or intersecting with a shared portion forming a zone of indistinction.

Rather, the two are superimposed like tectonic plates with multiple, variable and unpredictable, movements between and within them.





# Posthumanism

A 'non sovereign zone of indifference' within which life may be conceptualised and represented.

An area of 'virtual indetermination' and 'absolute indistinction' within which neither human nor animal life is found, only 'bare life'

A space where the border between the human and the nonhuman animal may be reactualised.



VIII  
*Habitat:*  
Lifeworld



Southwestern University  
BROWN SYMPOSIUM XXX

# Umwelt:

## Exploring the \*Self-Worlds of Human and Non-human Animals

Self-World of the  
Weddell Seal  
*Leptonychotes weddellii*

Vision, hearing, and touch are the primary senses defining the self-world of the Weddell seal. Its visual world consists of blurred shapes in shades of black, white, and gray. This unfocused world is compensated by its ability to detect movement under extremely low light. The seal's auditory world is rich consisting of numerous trills, chirps, whistles, growls, meows, and knocks. Such sounds provide information about breathing holes, offspring, and mating opportunities. Vibrissae or whiskers detect movement in the water with a sensitivity that can indicate the recent passing of a fish. These sensory systems and physiological adaptations allow the seal to dive as deep as 1800 feet and stay submerged for more than 80 minutes.

"In 1934, Jacob von Uexküll asserted that to truly understand the behavior of another animal one must enter that animal's 'Umwelt' or self-world. To illustrate this approach, von Uexküll asks readers to walk out into a garden and 'slow, in fancy, a soap bubble around each creature to represent its own world, filled with the perceptions which it alone knows.'"

**April 3-4, 2008**

Alma Thomas Theater  
Fine Arts Building

[www.southwestern.edu/brownxxx/](http://www.southwestern.edu/brownxxx/)

## Umwelt

Each entity has its model of the world, including all the meaningful aspects of that world for that entity such as water, food, shelter, potential threats and navigational points of reference

The subjective universe of each organism will be determined by its uniqueness and its history.

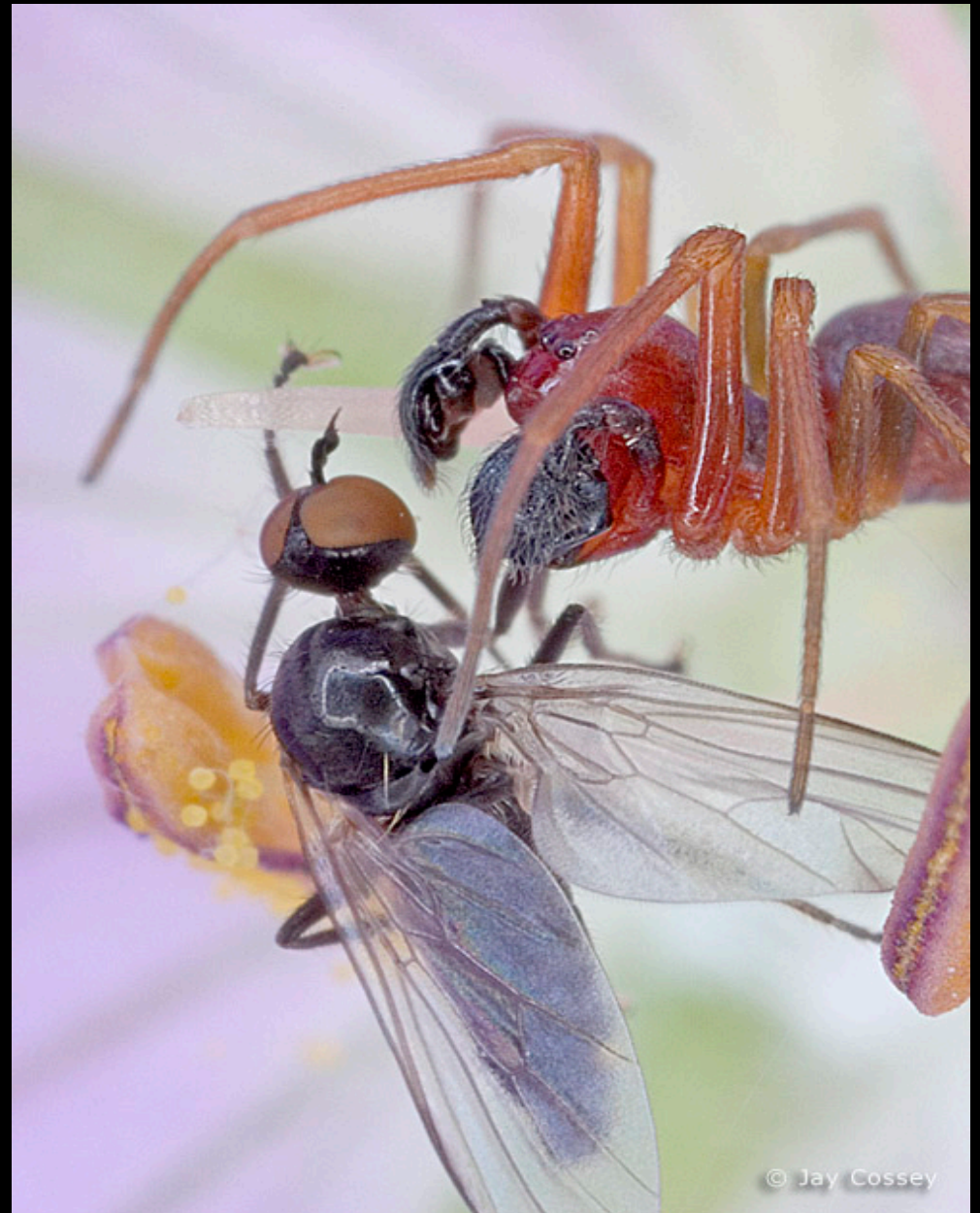
There is an infinite variety of perceptual worlds and any belief in a single unitary world in which all living beings are situated is illusory.

-Jacob von Uexküll



*‘The spider knows  
nothing about the  
fly.’*

Jakob von Uexküll cited in Giorgio  
Agamben, *The Open: Man and  
Animal*, Stanford University Press,  
2003 41



# Is the being of nonhuman animals beyond human comprehension?

'No method exists which will permit us to extrapolate to the inner life of a bat from our own case.'

-Thomas Nagel





There is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another'. The burden of feeling for animals must be placed on something other than our rational facilities since 'reason is the being of human thought... not the 'being of the universe.'

-Elizabeth Costello



Any discussion of non human animality will be reduced to the paradigms of human thought and any attempt to envisage phenomena without the human gaze is an inherently empty gesture since 'unavoidably, in our eyes, the animal is in the world like water in water.'

-Georges Bataille





**‘In the zoo, the view is always wrong.’**

- John Berger



While animals and humans share 'essential being', all our efforts to transcend ourselves in acts of total identification with animals will ultimately fail. No matter how hard we may try to imagine non human being, we will always be condemned to meet our own projections.





*IX*  
*Horizon:*  
**Embodiment and Precarious Life**



While human and other animals may not inhabit identical lifeworlds, nor share the same perceptual world, what they share is the condition of *precarious life*.



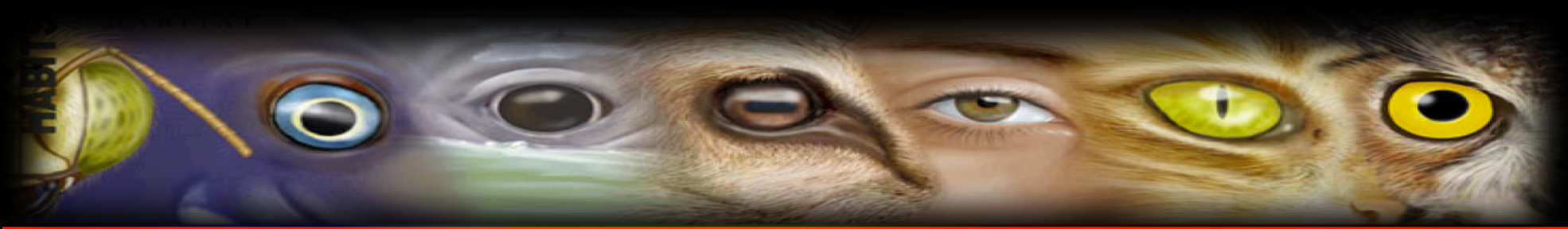


We must attend to the role that the living body, the body of flesh and blood, plays in the constitution of our concepts.

The awareness we have of being a living body carries with it, 'exposure to the bodily sense of vulnerability to death, sheer animal vulnerability, the vulnerability we share with them.'

-Cora Diamond





If humans share a condition of precariousness, with one another and with non human animals, then this constitutive feature of being undoes the conceit of anthropocentrism.

Judith Butler

We should respond to animals as our 'fellows in mortality, in life on this earth.'

Jacques Derrida

'The accomplishment of humanity lies in 'learning to meet the other and to welcome them in their difference, to be reborn thus in a fidelity to ourselves and to this other.'

Luce Irigaray

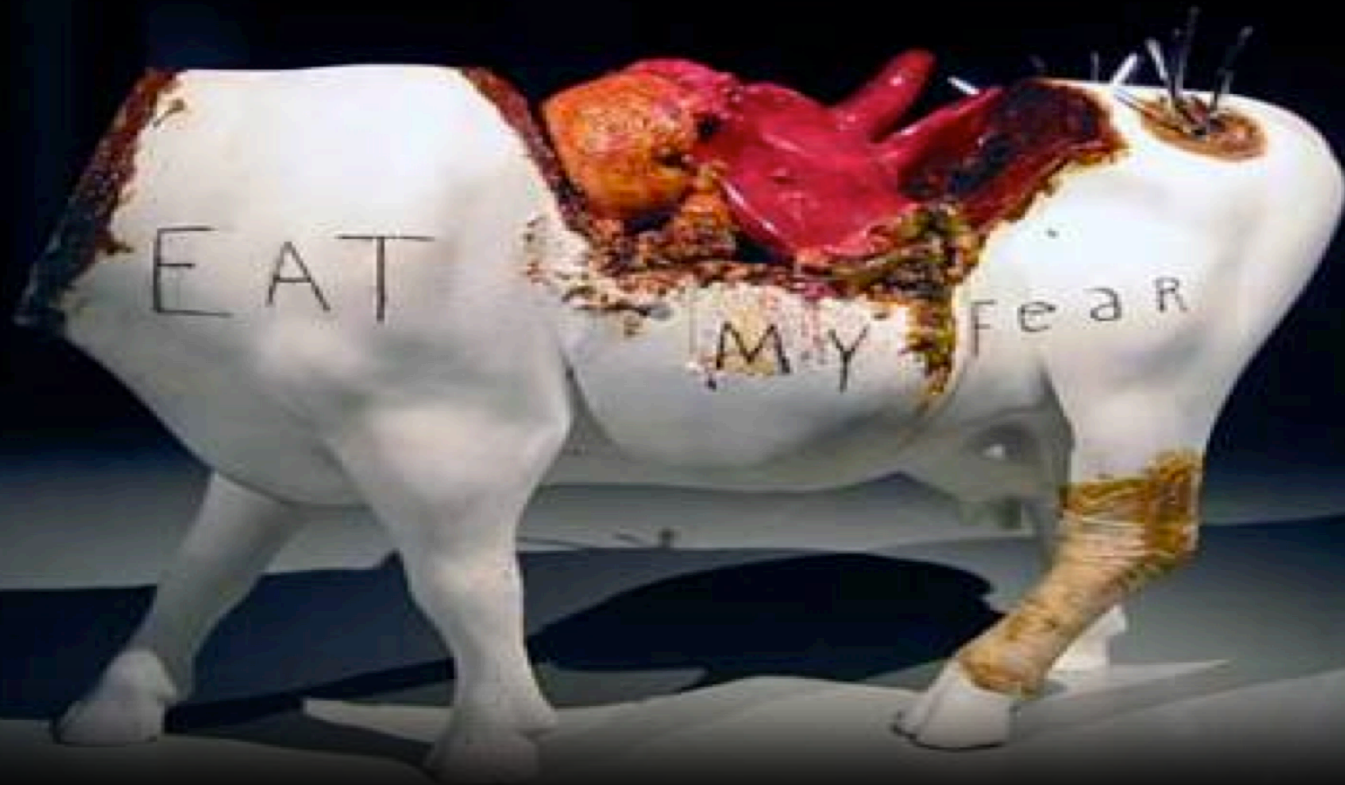


X  
*Frontier:*  
**Becoming Animal**



‘The agony of the rat or the slaughter of a calf remains present in thought not through pity but as the zone of exchange between man and animal in which something of one passes into the other.’

-Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, ‘Becoming Animal’





Becoming animal' means that one body perceives, abstracts, and then uses the affects of a different body in concert with its own.

Alcyone 'becomes bird' by entering into an alliance with winged creatures. The effect of this alliance draws Alcyone into a process of becoming *other* than what she is, creating a new conception which recasts the significance of the human.

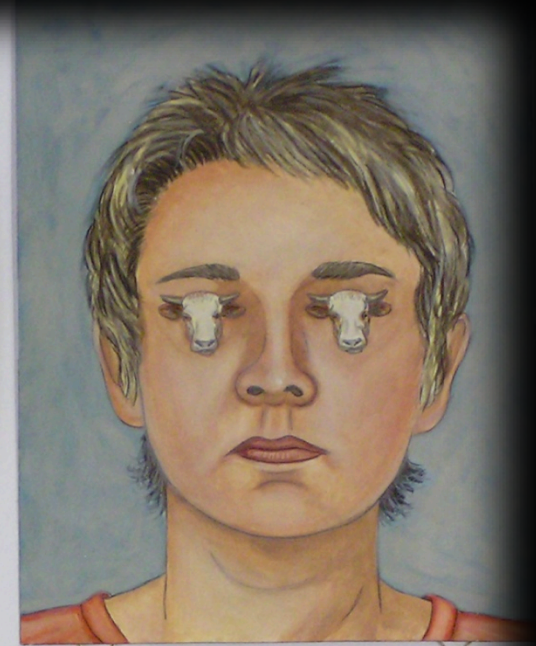


*XI*  
*Wilderness:*  
**Journeys End**





**Attempts to imagine animal others reveal the dilemma of the human mind trying to think outside of itself.**



**The human and the animal are always on an undecidable threshold with respect to one another, one that is being continually contested and negotiated.**





Humans are enclosed within an inner theatre of representations and mediations, in which they are forever mapping and codifying object domains ... a defensive gesture which fulfils a human desire for mastery and possession.





## Humans: ~~Animals~~ Nonetheless



**Humanism not only depends upon the viability of the opposition between humans and other animals but additionally on the belief that humans, in some basic and not simply contingent sense, are not animals.**