



A Two-Day International Conference on 'Thinking Other-Wise': Posthumanism and Human-Animal Studies

03-04 April 2025 ** Hybrid Mode ** Bankura University

**Abstract Submission Deadline Extended
28.03.2025**



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***"Redrawing the Lines Between
Human and Animals"***

03.04.2025 | 9 pm IST



Roberto Marchesini
Philosopher and Ethologist
Director of School of Human-Animal Interactions,
Center for the Study of Posthumanist Philosophy,
Bologna, Italy

"Animal Ontology"

03.04.2025 | 1:30 pm IST



Niki Young
Lecturer,
Department of Philosophy
University of Malta

***"A Posthuman Reading of
Alphonso Lingis"***

04.04.2025 | 1:30 pm IST



Susan McHugh
Professor and Chair of English
University of New England
NSW, Australia

***"Posthumanism and
Human-Animal Studies"***

04.04.2025 | 11:30 Am IST



Convener
Sukhendu Das,
Assistant Prof. of English,
Bankura University

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Concept Note & CFP

‘Thinking Other-Wise’: Posthumanism and Human-Animal Studies

“The animal, what a word!” exclaims Derrida in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (original French title, *L’Animal que donc je suis*). Like many of Derrida’s expressions, this phrase carries multiple valences with ironic nuances. Animals appear in multiple forms across all provinces of human life—from animal farms to pet shops, from slaughterhouses to zoos, from fairy tales to dreams, from religion to everyday language. Despite their ubiquitous presence, Western philosophers have rarely engaged with the animal question seriously. This irony is particularly striking.

Humanist positionings of the animal question in western philosophical and cultural traditions are predominantly governed by Cartesian (dualistic) ontological distinctions between *res extensa* (corporeal substance) and *res cognita* (mental substance). While *res extensa* is ascribed to ‘the animal’, *res cognita* is exclusively reserved for ‘the human’. This ontological distinction, based solely on rationality, language, consciousness, soul and technological ability, is not only problematic but also exclusionary. This exclusionary politics of western philosophical system started with Socrates. Philosophers have their menageries of philosophical animals— Diogenes’ famous dogs, Plato’s wolves and dogs, Aristotle’s elephants and bees, Schopenhauer’s poodles, Wittgenstein’s lions and dogs, Heidegger’s bees, Derrida’s cat, and Haraway’s eclectic menagerie. Yet, the edifice of Western philosophy, with a history spanning over 2,500 years, remains fundamentally anthropocentric. However, moments of disruption to this framework have emerged through the works of Copernicus, Darwin, Freud, and Haraway, each challenging human exceptionalism in distinct ways.

Derrida’s intervention in the animal questions marks a significant rupture in Western thought on human-animal relations. The French title of Derrida’s work plays on the double meaning of the French phrase “que donc je suis”, which can be translated as both “The animal that I am following” and/or “The animal that therefore I am”. Apart from his ironic slant to Descartes, Derrida hints at our entangled evolutionary traits with other animals. Anat Pick echoes Derrida’s views when she argues that “[b]eing human is grappling with what is inhuman in us.” Here, the ‘inhuman’ is presumably animal, which always remains a silent referent to the human, and vice-versa. The question of the animal and the question of the human share a relationship of complementarity. Derrida employs the French neologism ‘animot’ which combines both ‘animaux’ (animals) and ‘mot’ (word). ‘Animot’ is a homophone of ‘animaux’. Derrida critiques the reduction of all animals to a monolithic category.

Western philosophy's 'anthropological machine', as Agamben points out in *The Open: Man and Animal* (2004), is a disruptive conceptual, cultural and political apparatus that constructs and perpetuates an unethical and ontologically flawed human-animal divide. Placed within Agamben's broader critique of sovereignty and biopolitics, the anthropological machine serves as a tool of power to control and categorize life. It operates by 'animalizing' certain aspects of humanity or 'humanizing' animals. The machine produces and perpetuates the logic of 'bare life' ('zoē' in *Homo Sacer*) – life bereft of agency and rights. The animal, along with certain group of people (e.g., refugees, slaves, minority groups, colonized peoples) who are deemed 'subhuman' represent a form of 'bare life'. Agamben suggests that 'threshold' or 'zone of indistinction' creates a liminal and ambiguous space where the *zoē-bios* dualism and many such binary distinctions become blurred and precarious. The chief goal of Agamben's messianic philosophy is to 'jam' the anthropological machine, thereby putting an end to the politics of human-animal division. Despite lingering anthropocentrism in Agamben's oeuvre, the speculative concept of 'Bestia Sacer' (a provocative extension of Agamben's idea of 'Homo Sacer'), along with his notions of 'form-of-life' and 'the open', hint at opening up a fluid space of potentiality and interconnectedness that precedes human-animal distinction.

Donna Haraway's radical reconceptualization of rigid human-animal relationships culminates in her ideas of inter/companion-species entanglements, interspecies becoming, relational and situated ethics, ethics of 'response-ability', and the entanglement of technology, animals, and humans. While Agamben realises that '[t]he animal-man and the man-animal are the two sides of a single fracture, which cannot be mended from either side', Haraway suggests the importance of 'staying with the trouble' (which refers to her 2016 eponymous book) rather than seeking solution or salvation. For her, 'Staying with the trouble' is not escapism or a failure to respond planetary crises; rather, it is a strategic response to unprecedented planetary crises, which entails reorienting our relationship with the world, 'making kin' across species boundaries, accepting precarity as part of ethical living, and fostering interspecies 'response-ability'. "Staying with the trouble", as she asserts, "requires learning to be truly present [...] as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings." Haraway critiques speciesism and recognizes animal agency. In *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003), she argues that humans and animals are partners in becoming and co-shape each other through daily interactions. Like Derrida and Agamben, Haraway's ideas help posthumanists reframe the animal question beyond the human-animal divide, overcoming reductive categorizations of the anthropological machine.

Cary Wolfe reconceptualises human-animal relations at the intersection of posthumanism, Niklas Luhmann's autopoietic systems theory, biopolitics, and the ethics of vulnerability. Wolfe critiques traditional ethics for being tailored to 'all-too-human' values and exclusivity. He calls for a radical posthuman ethics of multispecies entanglements that includes animals, technology and ecosystems, moving beyond traditional human-centric, legalistic, and utilitarian models.

What would posthumanist engagements with the animal question entail? The theoretical frameworks of Derrida, Agamben, Haraway, and Wolfe, discussed above, have suggested what it might become. Literature, art, film, and philosophy open the way to fostering an inclusive and trans-species ‘ecology of selves’ (Eduardo Kohn), challenging our anthropomorphic approaches to creatural life. ‘Making kin’, as Haraway suggests, across species lines could help liberate animal from the grip of anthropocentric.

This conference seeks to promote dialogues at the intersection of posthumanism and human-animal relations. We invite abstracts, proposals, and panels submissions on (but not strictly limited to) following areas:

- § Nomenclature and its Discontents: Animal Studies or Human-Animal Studies or Critical Animal Studies?
- § Can the Animal Speak?
- § Jamming the Anthropological Machine
- § Posthumanist Ethics of Multispecies Entanglements
- § Posthumanist Turn to Animal Philosophy
- § Haraway’s ‘Companion Species’
- § ‘Making Kin’ in the Anthropocene
- § Continental Philosophers on Animal Question
- § Philosophy of Animal Cognition and the Challenge to Human Exceptionalism
- § Creaturely Poetics: Narratology Beyond Human
- § Biopolitical Critique of Industrial Animal Farming
- § Bionarratology and Reimagining Human-Animal Entanglements
- § Interrogating Anthropomorphism in Literature and Visual Media
- § Multispecies Storytelling in Performance Art and Theatre
- § Speculative Fiction and Postanimalism
- § Technoanimalism: Cyborgs, AI, and Animal-Machine Interfaces
- § Animal Autobiographies and Framing Nonhuman Narration



- § Animal Rights Activism Beyond Anthropocentric Jurisprudence
- § The Role of AI-Generated Animal Art
- § The Ethics of Animal Representation in Popular Culture, Literature, Cinema and Digital Medias
- § Indigenous Cosmologies and Multispecies Coexistence
- § Speculative Posthumanism and the Future of Animal Life
- § Synthetic Biology, CRISPR, and the Future of Animal Life
- § Blue (Post)humanities, 'Oceanic Posthumanism', and Ethics of Marine Life
- § Animal Extinctions in the Anthropocene
- § Animal Archives: Recovering Nonhuman Histories

References:

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- . *When Species Meet*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- . *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke UP, 2016.
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- . *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame*. The University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- . "Thinking Other-Wise: Cognitive Science, Deconstruction and the (Non)Speaking (Non)Human Subject". *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World*, edited by Jodey Castricano, Waterloo ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008, pp. 125-143. <https://doi.org/10.51644/9781554580774-007>

Key Facts and Necessary Information:

§ **Abstract might be sent to crpbku2.0@gmail.com within 28.03.2025**

(Participants are advised to send an abstract of about 200 words and a short bio-note in single word file. 'CRP Conference Submission 2025' should be mentioned in the subject line of Gmail.)

§ **Registration Form (Mandatory):** <https://forms.gle/uoRS2C9RNdwuAift5>

§ **Time & dates of the conference:** 03-04 April 2025; 11 am to 5 pm IST

§ **Registration Fees:**

Faculty Members: 2500 INR

Researchers: 1500 INR

Students (UG & PG): 500 INR

Participation Fees: 500 INR

International Participants: 50 USD for Faculty Members; 30 USD for Researchers & Students (UG & PG)

(Registration fees cover conference kit, tea, snacks, working lunch on both days. It does not cover accommodation cost.)

Accommodation: AC room: 1000 INR/Day; Non-AC room: 500 INR/Day (This rate chart is for sharing basis. Participants seeking accommodation are requested to email beforehand and confirm their participation.)

§ **Fees Payment Options:**

G-pay/PhonePay/Patym: 9832850405

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§ **Publication Prospect:** Select papers will be considered for the July issue (2025) of ***Entanglements: Journal of Posthumanities*** (www.entanglements.in) after double-blind peer review process. However, discretion and recommendation of the peer-board will be considered final in this case.

§ **Awards:** Based on the recommendations of session chair/moderators and members of the organizing committee, two best paper awards will be announced in two categories – (a) Research Scholars (b) Graduate Students (UG & PG)

§ All queries relating to conference might be directed to the email id mentioned above.

Contact No: 9832850405 & 7363819487

