

# SPEAKERS & LECTURES

## NON-HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN: ON ANIMALS, MONSTERS AND OTHER OTHERS

International Conference On Philosophy and Experimental Theory

4 – 5 March 2025

Gosposka and Križevniška Halls  
Gosposka 16  
Ljubljana, Slovenia

### DAY I (MARCH 4TH 2025)

#### FIRST PANEL 10:15 – 12:00

*chair: Adam Potts (Newcastle University, UK)*

I.

ROK BENČIN

Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

*The Transcendental Between “All Too Human” and “Non-Human”*

The turn towards the non-human in recent realist and materialist theoretical currents signals the notion of the transcendental as one of its philosophical casualties. Since Quentin Meillassoux’s call to “relinquish transcendentalism,” the concept has often been regarded as an “all too human” category to be dispensed with. This paper, however, proposes a different approach, questioning whether the heterogeneity of the non-human might instead serve as a marker for reconfiguring the transcendental. To pursue this, the paper draws on Alain Badiou’s *Logics of Worlds*, where the transcendental is stripped of any ties to subjectivity, and the philosophical legacy of Jakob von Uexküll’s Kantian-inspired biological theory of surrounding worlds, which explores the transcendental subjectivity of animals. By engaging these perspectives, the paper aims to reconsider the transcendental beyond the limits of possible (human) experience.

Rok Benčín, PhD is a Research Associate at the Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC

SAZU). He teaches at the ZRC SAZU Postgraduate School and the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana. He has held seminars at the University of Paris 8 and the University of Applied Arts Vienna. His research focuses on the relations between aesthetics, ontology, and politics in contemporary philosophy. His book, *Rethinking the Concept of World: Towards Transcendental Multiplicity*, was published in 2024 by Edinburgh University Press.

II.

MICHAEL LEWIS

Newcastle University, UK

*The Animal’s Charm and the Fossilised Dialectic*

The animal, like nature, has been described as being confined to the bad infinite of endless repetition. It is said, from the standpoint of human reason, and dialectical reason in particular, to remain unable to raise itself to the level of the true infinite, which incorporates difference into this sameness in the form of progression: in short, it never reaches the level of history.

But how are we then to account for the *charm* of these animals who repeat the same functional gesture day after day for an entire lifetime?

In order to think this charm, we need to put some questions to the dialectical idea that animals are imperfect versions of human beings — living and breathing concepts, embodiments of Reason, to be sure; but barely aware of the fact, with humans superadding that awareness and thereby becoming both the ‘perfect animal’ and surpassing animality at the same time.

The animal is something like a fossil within the dialectical process, and in order to be able to think the animal’s charm, and that means the especial character of the bad infinite which its behaviour embodies, the dialectic must fossilise itself. This talk will attempt to demonstrate something of what that might mean.

Michael Lewis, PhD is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and General Editor of the *Journal of Italian Philosophy*. He is the

author of *Heidegger and the Place of Ethics, Heidegger Beyond Deconstruction: On Nature, Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing, The Beautiful Animal: Sincerity, Charm, and the Fossilised Dialectic, The Elision of an Alternative: Philosophy, Biopolitics, and the Virus*, co-author of *Phenomenology: An Introduction*, and co-editor of the *Bloomsbury Italian Philosophy Reader*. He was educated at the University of Warwick and the University of Essex. He has worked at the University of Sussex and the University of the West of England. He is currently working on two monographs, one on philosophical anthropology and the other on the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben.

III.

MARJETKA GOLEŽ KAUČIČ  
Institute of Ethnomusicology, ZRC SAZU

*Reversal Othering as a Cultural Discomfort through the Analysis of the Novels Gulliver's Travels (Book IV) and Under the Skin*

In this paper, we will discuss the concept of reversal othering based on critical animal studies discourses, the concept of the reversed world, and imaginative counter-discourses. This reversal was historically (16th and 17th centuries, and in vernacular culture) thematized in artistic representations of violence, social organization, societal systems, political relationships, as well as gender and species relations. We will focus on the human-animal relationship, where the social and moral roles of the everyday world are reversed, creating cultural discomfort. Through the analysis of the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift and the novel *Under the Skin* (2000) by Michel Faber, we will explore questions about normality, social constructs, and even the illusion of reality, through representations of the objectified human and the subjectified animal. By engaging with the imaginative reality of a reversed world, we challenge traditional hierarchies inherent in anthropocentric worldviews, anticipating ideas and values that should hold importance in contemporary society, particularly the ontological and real equality of non-human and human entities.

Marjetka Golež Kaučič, PhD is a Principal Research Associate at the Institute of Ethnomusicology Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia and was from 1994-2015 its head. The focus of her research today are broader folklore studies, animals in Slovenian, European and World folklore, literature (zoofolkloristics, ecocritic, critical animal studies) and culture. She is a Full Professor in Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, and teaches the courses: »Slovene folk songs and literary poetry - folkloristic and intertextual viewpoints« and »Ecoculture: Studies of Animals and Nature in Folklore, Literature and Culture». She is a principle investigator of the research project »Thinking Animals«. She has published scholarly monographs titled *Folk and Literary: Two Faces of Creativity* (2003), *Slovenian Folk Ballad* (2018), »*The Man is the Worst Beast*«. *Animals in Folklore, Literature and Culture* (2023) as well as a number of articles and papers in Slovenia and abroad.

#### SECOND PANEL 12:15 – 14:00

*chair: Tadej Troha (Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU)*

I.

VORANC KUMAR  
Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU

*The Making of The Other: Rousseau, Čapek and the Flood*

By interweaving the reading of Rousseau's works of political philosophy and Karel Čapek's science fiction novel *War with the Newts*, I will present an outlook on nature as a place of figural production. The history of philosophy provides us with a multitude of figures of the Other: the animal, the slave, the woman, the monster, the machine, to name but a few. They confront the concept as an empirical archive – a philosophical figure presents itself in and together with its milieu – and thus open up the space for the figure of man, which is unlike those of the Other, a conceptually empty space that takes up figures of the Other in order to make its milieu out of them, instead of having its own. While animals and monsters have their own respectful nature that binds their lives to their environment and

therefore, they always know what to do or how to act, man is alienated from both his nature and his environment and therefore remains, today perhaps more than ever, stranded before the question: “What is to be done?”

Voranc Kumar is a PhD candidate at the Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU. His research focusses on the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the consequences of Enlightenment and the consequences of Enlightenment for contemporary thought. His latest paper *Thinking the Machine: Supplement, Mimesis, Metaphor* was published in *Filozofski vestnik*, Vol. 45 No. 2 (2024): *Conflicts: Aesthetics and Politics / Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy / Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy*.

II.

ALEŠ MENDIŽEVEC  
Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

*After Human: What of Subjectivity When Man Merges With Machine?*

In the mid-1940s, just after World War II, a handful of scientists set out to infuse life into machines, making them flexible, capable of learning, and adaptable to their surroundings. Their model was the human being itself. However, when this technology—based on the notion of information and feedback loops—materialized, it became unclear which served as the model: the human for the machine or the machine for the human.

By the late 1990s, this blurred distinction between humans and machines was labeled as the beginning of 'the becoming of the posthuman,' as it transformed the notion of the human subject. Yet the future of the posthuman itself became divided between the posthuman and the transhuman—between 'the end of the human' and 'the all-too-human.'

How, then, should we understand the notion of the subject, caught in this split?

Aleš Mendiževc, PhD is a researcher at Institute of Philosophy ZRC SAZU. In his research he focuses on the field of ontology, political philosophy and technology. His work is centered around the concept of contingency and explores its potentialities in political theory and its role in different sciences (primarily in

theory of information and cybernetics). In recent years he is exploring the contemporary phenomenon of posthumanism (in connection to postmodernism and neoliberalism) and its relation with technological development in 20th century.

III.

PETER KLEPEC  
Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

*On Monsters, Horror and Monstrosity in Politics*

One of the most common methods of political propaganda is to denigrate, deny, or dehumanize political or military opponents. Political propaganda often manipulatively incorporates monsters into its fantasies, fears, and ideologies, either to marginalize opponents or to portray certain social groups as dangerous, powerful, and cunning. Today's political landscape is no exception, as we will show through some examples of populist politics.

Peter Klepec, PhD works as Research Advisor at the Institute of Philosophy at Research Centre of Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU), Ljubljana, Slovenia. He is author of numerous philosophical articles and three books (in Slovenian): *On the Emergence of the Subject* (ZRC, Ljubljana 2004), *Profitable Passions. Capitalism and Perversion 1*, (DTP, Ljubljana 2008) and *Matrices of Subjection. Capitalism and Perversion 2*. (DTP, Ljubljana 2019).

### THIRD PANEL 15:30 – 17:15

*chair: Peter Klepec (Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU)*

I.

JAROSLAV ŠVELC  
Charles University, Prague

*Player vs. Monster: Video Game Monsters as Computational Others*

Based on Švelch's recent book *Player vs. Monster* (MIT Press 2018), this paper will examine the representation of monsters in historical as well as contemporary video games. While many scholars of horror and

religion conceptualize monstrosity as a sublime, unknowable quality, video games often portray monsters as predictable targets of player action. The paper will trace the history of this kind of representation to the origins of the “player vs. environment” model of gameplay, popularized in the 1970s by the tabletop RPG game *Dungeons & Dragons* (1974) and the arcade game *Space Invaders* (1978). It will argue that video games follow the “ontology of the enemy” introduced by cybernetics and historicized by Peter Galison. As such, they represent an otherness that is defined by hostility and predictability. Driven by algorithm encoded by game software, video game monsters often exhibit repetitive, machine-like behavior that follow existing game design conventions – and therefore we can call them *computational others*. While acknowledging the appeal of such simplistic representations, the paper will also explore how the medium can present more nuanced depictions of monstrosity.

Jaroslav Švelch, PhD is an associate professor of media studies at Charles University, Prague. He has published work on history and theory of computer games, and on humor in games and social media. In his first monograph *Gaming the Iron Curtain: How Teenagers and Amateurs in Communist Czechoslovakia Claimed the Medium of Computer Games* (MIT Press, 2018), he traces the hidden histories of home computing and gaming in the former Soviet bloc. His most recent book *Player Vs. Monster: The Making and Breaking of Video Game Monstrosity* (MIT Press, 2023) offers a cultural history and a critique of monstrous antagonists in computer and video games. Starting in 2025, he will be heading an ERC Consolidator Grant on indexical representation in video games and VR.

II.

ALEŠ BUNTA

Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

*Overman, All-Too-Human, and the Case of Bloodborne*

In the prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche introduces the famous metaphor of man as “a rope stretched between the animal and the overman—a rope over an abyss.” While the beast pulls the rope in this

metaphor, what truly hinders humanity from reaching the overman, according to Nietzsche, is not the remnants of instinctive animality—which he often suggests we should embrace—but rather the burden of the “all-too-human” aspect of human nature itself. This paper first explores the complex tension between the concepts of the overman and the all-too-human in Nietzsche’s philosophy. In the second stage, it draws parallels with the enigmatic video game *Bloodborne*. Although the game’s cryptic and hallucinatory narrative has invited numerous interpretations in search of its “true meaning,” one theme appears evident: *Bloodborne* is a story of an attempt to attain the overman—one that has seemingly gone horribly wrong. The higher establishment of the *Healing Church* in the fictional city of Yharnam has been conducting experiments using the “ancient blood” of a god-like being, apparently slain in obscured past. Yet, instead of creating a superior race, these experiments result in the inhabitants of Yharnam becoming trapped in an unending cycle of degeneration, transforming into beasts rather than transcending their humanity. Nonetheless, despite this seemingly endless descent into degeneration, perhaps the most striking aspect of *Bloodborne* is its pervasive sensation of dizzying height.

Aleš Bunta, PhD is a Research Associate at the Institute of Philosophy ZRC SAZU who specialises in Nietzsche's philosophy, its relation to German Idealism, its echoes in contemporary philosophy and the wider relevance of Nietzsche's ideas and concepts. His extensive corpus of research is also devoted to the problem of the Cartesian cogito, in particular the question of so-called anticipations of the cogito in St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. He also addresses topics such as stupidity, perversion, life in the age of contemporary technologies, and comic art. His research is characterised by his involvement in interdisciplinary research: among others, he has worked with physicists on the perennial philosophical problem of the (non-)existence of the void, and has been involved in a project to assess the impact of neuroscientific discoveries in the field of law.

III.

ADAM POTTS

Newcastle University, UK

*Non-Human Frequencies*

In Apichatpong Weerasethakul's 2021 film *Memoria*, the protagonist Jessica is disturbed by an inexplicable sound she hears in the night. It disturbs her so much that she goes in search of it, even trying to describe it to a sound engineer in the hope he might replicate it. The sound reoccurs later multiple times, each time unmooring Jessica further from our world and closer to something that can only be described as non-human.

Imaginations of the non-human are part of the architecture of Apichatpong's films; although fascinated with personal memory, local history, and folklore, part of the histories he calls upon are strange, inspired by things like local ghost stories. This dimension of his films has been theorised, but little has been done to think of it in terms of sound. This paper will do precisely this – showing how *Memoria* depicts a non-human dimension through sound. This will be done not through a simple application of theory, but by creating what Daniela Cascella refers to as “resonant frequencies” (2017, 65). These frequencies will see *Memoria* discussed in proximity with Eleni Ikoniadou's concept of “unsound” — sounds emanating from the “Cthuluesque, non-human forms of life” (2017, 252) — and Maurice Blanchot's appeal to sound at moments of diminished vision.

Adam Potts, PhD is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Newcastle University. His major research interests are the philosophy of Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, aesthetics, sound studies, and the philosophy of music. He has published on a range of topics including noise, listening, issues related to the practice of writing about sound, and Blanchot's philosophy in relation to sound and music. He is the sole editor of *Sonic Encounters with Blanchot* — an edited collection of essays that explores the latent and explicit sonic content of Blanchot's work. Currently, he is exploring the themes of hope and chance as a way of understanding Blanchot's literary and political “project”, and as a

way of thinking about experimental creative practice.

PRE-SCREENING 17:30 – 18:10

I.

MARISA ŽELE

Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

»*Maybe...a little blood...«: On Nosferatu, Dracula and Ill Omens*

This paper will be an attempt at a content analysis of *Nosferatu* (1922), an unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), focusing on the ill omens introduced at the film's outset that foreshadow its conclusion. The analysis will explore the vampire as a non-human, animalistic figure within popular culture, examining its relationship to themes of death, the body, and premonition.

Marisa Žele, PhD is a Research Assistant at the Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU. Her research focuses on the historical and epistemological conditions of ideas, which she considers the centre of her studies, within their respective histories and their relation to philosophy. The topics she explores often touch on interdisciplinary research, such as the concept of the end, mediaeval epistemology and eschatology, trickery, the history of the natural sciences, literature (specifically science fiction) and the history of monstrosity, with a particular interest in European conceptions of the Other. Her main areas of research are epistemology, ontology, post-structuralism and freudian psychoanalysis. Her most recent publication is a paper entitled *The Case of Euphonia: The Voice of “The Wonderful Talking Machine” and the Horror of the Artificial Man* published in *Filozofski vestnik* Vol. 45 No. 2 (2024): *Conflicts: Aesthetics and Politics / Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy*.

II.

LOVRENC ROGELJ

Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

*The Symphonic Nosferatu*

This paper will serve as an introduction to the screening of the silent film *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922). The film's

subtitle itself suggests a formal affinity between its narrative structure and the symphony, one of the central musical forms of Classicism and Romanticism. Accordingly, the discussion will focus on the musical dimension of *Nosferatu*.

Hans Erdmann's original score was unfortunately lost, resulting in the film being accompanied for many years by newly composed or improvised musical arrangements. However, in 1995, Gillian Anderson and James Kessler succeeded in partially reconstructing Erdmann's music. Their reconstruction was based on a handbook of film music co-authored by Erdmann, as well as on two versions of the *Fantastic-Romantic Suite*, which Erdmann had composed as a "summary" of the film's original music.

Building on this achievement, the paper will explore the film's formalist aspects. Particular attention will be given to structural elements that reflect form of symphonic movements, as well as to the leitmotifs associated with individual characters and their emotions. Additionally, the analysis will highlight the directorial mastery of F. W. Murnau, who, through the expressive resources of cinematic language, translated the sonic qualities of moving images into the silent film medium.

Lovrenc Rogelj is a Junior Researcher at the Institute of Philosophy at ZRC SAZU and a PhD student at the ZRC SAZU Postgraduate School. His research focuses on the concept of standardization in relation to the theory of the commodity form, specifically the peculiarities of the production and consumption of goods created through so-called artistic means, brands as a philosophical and sociological problem, and the overall concept of commodities within the framework of the cultural industry. He also has a special interest in the epistemology of music scholarship.

#### FILM SCREENING 18:30

*Nosferatu: The Symphony of Horror* (1922), directed by F.W. Murnau, written by Henrik Galeen, starring Max Schreck, Gustav von Wangenheim, and Greta Schröder, cinematography by Fritz Arno Wagner, produced by Prana Film, 94 min.

*Nosferatu* (1922) is a seminal silent horror loosely based on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The film follows the eerie story of Count Orlok, a vampire who travels to a small German town, bringing death and destruction. Through its expressionist visuals, haunting atmosphere, and pioneering use of shadows, *Nosferatu* explores themes of fear, otherness, and the supernatural. Its portrayal of the vampire as an unsettling, animalistic figure became iconic, influencing the portrayal of monsters in popular culture. The film is a cornerstone of the horror genre and a masterclass in silent cinema's ability to evoke terror through imagery.

#### DAY 2 (MARCH 5TH 2025)

##### FIRST PANEL 10:15 – 12:00

*chair: Jelka Kernev Štrajn (Independent Researcher)*

I.

MAJA PETROVIČ-ŠTEGER

Institute of Anthropological and Spatial Studies, ZRC SAZU

*"Other to Oneself": An Anthropological Reading of Immersion and Comparison as a Therapeutic Practice*

Anthropologists characteristically investigate phenomena through active immersion in their objects of study, their cross-cultural comparison and juxtaposition (Holý 1987; Strathern 2004; Candea 2018). The discipline seeks to contribute to knowledge by tracing and reinforcing the transformation between subject and object (Wagner 2018). This paper considers the critical and creative potential of another putative immersion and transformative comparison -- that of versions of the self in mostly transpersonal therapeutic practice, in which the known self of the practitioner is brought into encounter with an archaic, residual or projected version of it. The search for a different form of self often involves a specification or recalibration of scales. My paper will offer an analysis of the experience of people who actively seek to "meet themselves", to engage with and illuminate parts of themselves that are otherwise felt as alien, spectral,

disturbing, unacknowledged or forgotten. These people refer to “other selves within their own psyche,” as they access them through non-ordinary states of consciousness and in encounters with the transpersonal, intergenerational and transgenerational transmissions of past material. There is a belief on the part of practitioners and therapists that these encounters open up possibilities for a better understanding of the Other in one's own psyche, for a revisiting of one's own unexplored possibilities, even for the resolution of trauma. The paper attends to the affective undercurrents of such practices of “self-searching”, and seeks to shed light on how immersion and comparison as intellectual and also embodied activities proceed as a distinctive practice of self-scaling.

Maja Petrović-Šteger, PhD is a social anthropologist who has conducted research for over twenty years in the former Yugoslavia, as well as in Tasmania and Switzerland. Her scholarship has attended to a variety of contexts in which bodies – living, dead, or in the form of medically usable remains – have attracted political, legal, scientific or artistic attention. With a corollary interest in how anthropology can illuminate our understanding of the mind, she has further examined psychological and military concerns with mental health, mental hygiene and neuro- security. Her latest projects consider how is time (the past, the present and the future) imagined and dealt with in situations crying out for radical restitution and healing. Focusing on visionary and imaginal practices in Serbia, the research inquires into how individuals and groups understand their mediation of sociohistorical change. Maja is a Research Fellow and Associate Professor at the ZRC SAZU.

II.

JACOB PARKIN  
Newcastle University, UK

*It's in the Trees, It's Coming: Post-Deconstruction, Teratophillia, Theories of Love*

My paper reads monstrous romance as a problem for philosophy. Beginning with the monstrous love object as a commodity,

I argue for a cultural preoccupation with monstrosity as an object of affection. In disparate genres, the monster is subordinated to cultural fantasies about love. In contrast, for Derrida the monster is definitionally unassimilable, as it is precisely the moment of assimilation which leads to losing monstrous status. The monster in Derrida is structurally similar to the undeconstructable justice as any attempt to deconstruct or actualise it hits a limit.

Justice, however, is preoccupied with the incalculable and the universal, making a direct connection between justice and love problematic, particularly love aimed at such a singular object. Agamben and Badiou provide post-deconstructive theories of love, reworking the relationship between singularity and universality. Both philosophers read the love object as effacing the boundaries between singularity and universality, as either the one becoming two or whatever being, accounting for the monster in an anti-fetishistic manner. However, they suture its singularity to a general erotic project. Monstrous love is reduced to communication. My own attempt to move beyond this impasse is a return not to numeration, but the problematic of writing and communication in early Derrida.

Jacob Parkin is a PhD candidate at Newcastle University, supervised by Tina Chanter, Daniel Koczy, Robbie McLaughlan, and David Rose. Jacob's thesis centres on the relationship between deconstruction and modernist literature as theoretical and literary avant-gardes, focusing on their mutually compatible representations of disability. Their research focuses on deconstruction, its predecessors, and its inheritors with a broader interest paid to its connection with political theory, aestheticism, disability studies, queer theory, and philosophy of biology. They have presented papers on disability and deconstruction, the use of deconstruction in posthumanism, and Malabou and Laruelle's post-deconstructive accounts of autism.

### III.

JOVITA PRISTOVŠEK  
Institute of Culture and Memory Studies,  
ZRC SAZU

*Gaze, Race, Threshold*

In 1997, Jacques Derrida, at the third Cerisy-la-Salle conference devoted to his work titled “L’Animal autobiographique,” described the *passion of the animal other* with the following words: “As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called animal offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself.” Derrida speaks of a configuration of thinkers who see without having been seen with the eyes of someone who would force them to recognize that it is about them, that they are affected. And he speaks of the symptom of concealment that we should decode. This paper addresses what Brian Carr calls the “threshold of the human” and the ways in which it is constantly re-articulated to question the specific forms that the Western (auto)fiction of the idea of the “human” takes.

Jovita Pristovšek, PhD is a Research Assistant at the Institute of Culture and Memory Studies, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, and a postdoctoral researcher at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Her most recent publications include the special issue of *Filozofski vestnik* entitled “The Body in the Field of Tensions between Biopolitics and Necropolitics: Analyzing the Future of the Prosthetic Body in the 21st Century” (2023; co-edited with Marina Gržinić), *Political Choreographies, Decolonial Theories, Trans Bodies* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023; co-edited with M. Gržinić), *Re-Activating Critical Thinking in the Midst of Necropolitical Realities: For Radical Change* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022; co-edited with M. Gržinić).

### SECOND PANEL 12:15 – 14:00

*chair: Rok Benčin* (Institute of Philosophy,  
ZRC SAZU)

#### I.

MARINA GRŽINIĆ MAUHLER  
Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

*Humans Deemed Disposable: Necro-Capitalism Unleashed*

This paper seeks to draw boundaries between the human and the non-human through a philosophical analysis of “necro-governmentality,” which constructs a heightened form of otherness imposed upon people deemed disposable. By examining how otherness transforms individuals, groups, or even entire nations into “the monstrous” or “the non-human,” the paper explores how these classifications shape global realities. In conflicts such as Gaza, otherness is often weaponized, enabling violent treatment by associating certain groups with animalistic or monstrous traits and thereby justifying actions that deviate from normative standards. A similar example can be seen in the film, specifically in Agnieszka Holland’s *Green Border*, which depicts the perilous forests—the so-called “green border”—between Belarus and Poland. Here, refugees from the Middle East and Africa struggle in a no-man’s-land that exposes both the darkest and most compassionate facets of “humans.” In Poland, the film sparked intense backlash from nationalist elements within the government, suggesting an unwillingness to confront the lack of accountability by Poland and the EU toward refugees, as exposed by the film. This orchestrated refusal of responsibility highlights the alarming effects of contemporary necro-capitalism unleashed within the EU and worldwide.

Marina Gržinić, PhD is a Principal Research Associate, Professor at ZRC SAZU, Institute of Philosophy, Ljubljana, and a tenured Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. She has lectured at the Centre for Global Studies and the Humanities at Duke University, UCLA, the University of San Francisco, and the Merz Academy in Stuttgart, among others. Her interdisciplinary insights have enriched academic discussions at IMI Osaka, the



Haute école d'art et de design in Geneva, and Roosevelt Academy in the Netherlands, bridging academic, activist, and artistic communities globally.

II.

BRANISLAVA VIČAR

The Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor

*“She had the human look of a domesticated animal”*: Challenging the categories of “human” and “nonhuman” in Agustina Bazterrica’s *Tender is the Flesh*

In her dystopian fiction *Tender is the Flesh*, Agustina Bazterrica portrays a world in which industrial human-farming has become the norm and cannibalism has been legalized. She frames the production of human meat as a proto-capitalist economic activity, casting capitalism in its globalising, corporate form as the underlying cause of the economic, social and ecological crisis. In the novel, the concept of cannibalism functions as a means to challenge the porous boundaries between bodies and the environment, bringing attention to the corporeal connection to global economic, industrial, and environmental systems.

The paper focuses on the figure of Jasmine, i.e., a female, raised on industrial farm for meat, and gifted to the main protagonist Marcos to butcher or for raising. As animals have been eradicated from the anthropogenic landscape, farm-raised humans have taken the position previously assigned to animal others. The character of Jasmine brings together the human, less-than-human (i.e., domesticated animal for Marcos) and mass-produced consumer product, reduced to the materiality of its edible body. In this sense, her character not only exposes modes of capitalist exploitation and gender-based violence but exposes the instability of the human/animal dichotomy.

Branislava Vičar, PhD is an Associate Professor of the Slovene language at the Department of Slavic Languages, Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor, Slovenia. She was also head of the department from 2019 to 2023 and is currently the coordinator for the postgraduate program Slovenistic Studies there. Her research interests include critical discourse

analysis, critical animal studies, sociolinguistics, queer linguistics and multimodality. Her recent publications include papers on reflections of anthropocentrism, conceptualisations of queer and animal subjectivities and transgender-inclusive language. She edited the monograph *Pojmovanja živalskih smrti: antropocentrizem in (ne)možne subjektivitete* (*Conceptualizations of Animal Deaths: Anthropocentrism and (Im)possible Subjectivities*, Annales ZRS, 2020).

III.

MAŠA BLAZNIK

Independent Researcher

*Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Animal Slaughter: The Embodiment of Necropolitical Dystopia*

Maša Blaznik will present the paper that she wrote in collaboration with Tomaž Grušovnik, PhD that was published under the same title in *Journal of Animal Ethics* Vol. 14, Iss. 2 (November, 2024).

Artificial intelligence and robotics have revolutionized slaughterhouse operations, allowing collaborative robots to reduce the physical and moral stress on butchers. However, animals remain an “absent referent” in the process, and the development of artificial intelligence in this field continues the trend of moral distancing present in killing. This dystopian scenario, in which machines endlessly breed and kill animals, and in which the avoidance of moral responsibility is aided by artificial intelligence so that effectively no one has to bear the burden of blame for their deaths, is a manifestation of the triumph of necropower.

Maša Blaznik, BSc (Hons) is a psychologist and independent researcher based in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her work focuses on the intersection of violence, empathy, and societal norms. She examines the normalisation of violence in society, with a particular focus on harm toward non-human animals and children, structural and cultural violence, and the interplay between violence and empathy in the context of the climate crisis and societal well-being.

### THIRD PANEL 15:30 – 17:15

chair: *Branislava Vičar* (The Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor)

I.

JELKA KERNEV ŠTRAJN  
Independent Researcher

*The Playfulness of Non Human Animals as Tropological Gesture*

This paper is part of a more extensive work in which I study the representation of animal figures in literature. It is not possible to discuss this concept without simultaneously delving into the metaphorical dimension of language, as these issues are inseparably linked. For this reason, the primary thesis of the article asserts that the relationship between an actual non-human animal and its forms of appearance in literature is, in each case, metaphorical. I therefore explore the extremely diffuse field of animal metaphor, at which point it is essential to consider the thesis of a non-human animal as the first metaphor. This thesis is, of course, productive, but here I focus on a much more recent and audacious thesis: that animals are not merely subjects of rhetorical operations, but are also, as actual living beings, active producers of rhetorical figures. Consequently, the rhetorical and, thus, the metaphorical dimension of their language is infinitely older than human language in all its forms. This compels us to consider the myriad attempts to resolve the primordial riddles surrounding the emergence and development of human language. Yet this article chooses a different path: the path toward demonstrating that the tropological language of non-human animals can significantly illuminate our understanding of non-human subjectivity in language and literature.

Jelka Kernev Štrajn, MS is a literary critic, theorist, and translator from Ljubljana. Focusing on the theory of tropes, feminist theory, animal studies, and eco-criticism, she has authored treatises in these areas, published in the journals *Primerjalna književnost*, *Delta*, and *Literatura*, as well as in various monographs. In her work, she primarily relies on approaches developed by contemporary semiotics, as well as philosophical texts by Deleuze and

Guattari and their theoretical legacy. For many years, she has commented on contemporary Slovene literature, especially poetry, in the literary supplement of the Slovene newspaper *Delo*. She is the co-editor and co-author of the monograph on ecocriticism, *Ecology Through Poetry*, which was published in 2012 by the Sampark publishing house in Calcutta. In 2009, she published a book titled *The Renaissance of Allegory* (ZRC SAZU). Kernev Štrajn is a member of AILC/ICLA and a member of ICA. Currently, her main interest lies in the representation of animals in literature.

II.

FAHIM AMIR  
University of the Arts, Bremen

*Marcuse, Freedom, Nature*

The talk explores the role of animals in the philosophical work of Herbert Marcuse, situating his thought within broader discussions of freedom and nature in critical theory. At the end of the 1960s, Herbert Marcuse was asked by a journalist what historic task should be addressed after the liberation of society. He replied: 'Liberating the animals, of course.' Taking the quote as a starting point the talk examines Marcuse's critique of advanced industrial society and visions of emancipatory praxis, focussing on the mostly overlooked undercurrents of his engagement with questions of the non-human world.

Fahim Amir, PhD is professor of philosophy at the University of the Arts Bremen (Germany). Amir's research areas are the thresholds of naturecultures and urbanism, art and utopia, and questions of coloniality, cohabitation and transculturality. Amir co-edited "Transcultural Modernisms" (Sternberg Press, 2013) and wrote the afterword to the German translation of Donna Haraway's "Companions Species Manifesto" (Merve, 2016). His book *Schwein and Zeit* [Being and Swine. The end of nature (as we knew it)] has received many awards and has been translated into English (Between the Lines, 2020), Persian (Elm, 2021) and French (Editions Divergences, 2022). The Portuguese edition, published by the Center for Logic, Epistemology and History of Science (Unicamp, São Paulo), is expected 2025.

### III.

VESNA LIPONIK  
Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

#### #TeamGodzilla

In the paper, we utilize two absolute anti-nuclear classics of all time, the novellas *Godzilla* (1955) and *Godzilla Raids Again* (1955) by Shigeru Kayama to focus on the possibilities of thinking not only in the usual way about animals in conflicts but about animals *as* conflicts. Godzilla is not merely a nuclear allegory, and as such a personification, an embodiment of a conflict, but also an “allegory” of animal resistance, an embodiment of another, more underlying conflict, with all its necessarily (non-)allegorical implications. Our aim is to explore this view of Godzilla in the context of recent discussions in animal philosophy, namely the concept of animal resistance. We will investigate the relationship between animal victimhood and resistance, thereby identifying a not-so-novel phenomenon: animals *as* saviours.

Vesna Liponik works as a Junior Researcher at the Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana and is a doctoral candidate at the Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU. For her Master's thesis *Anthropomorphisation: a critical analysis of a (non)trope*, she won the Nahtigal Prize for the best final thesis. She edited a special issue of *Anthropos: Journal of Philosophy and Psychology*, titled “Animal (Dis)entangled or towards 'A New Form of Civilization'” (2023). Her research interests range primarily across the fields of literary theory, queer theory, the transformations of the concepts of human and animal in relation to political philosophy and aesthetics. She published two poetry collections, *roko razje* (Eats away the hand) in 2019 and *Jabk* (Apples) in 2023, with ŠKUC-Lambda.

### PRE-SCREENING 17:30 – 18:00

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms (1953)

TADEJ TROHA  
Institute of Philosophy, ZRC SAZU

#### *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms: A Palaeontologic Emergency*

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms (1953) is one of the pioneers of a genre that responded to a then-recent and unprecedented threat—the development of nuclear weapons, which suddenly cast humanity in the role of an agent capable of shaking the very foundations of human existence. Once the possibility of manipulation at the subatomic level was unlocked, the consequences became unpredictable. It was no longer just about an unprecedented force of surface destruction but about the destabilisation of what had seemed an eternal foundation. This destabilisation is represented in the film as the rupture of an ostensibly eternal and unbreakable ice sheet, which preserves beneath it a biological past—a living time that has been left behind and is typically accessible only indirectly, solely in the form of fossils, objects of paleontology. The intervention at the subatomic level creates a loop in the arrow of time—bringing into the present the Rhedosaurus, a figure of relentless, undead destruction. A creature long confined to the fossil record—now fueled by nuclear experiments—proves entirely immune to conventional countermeasures. To undo these effects, the very nuclear arms that awakened it must be deployed once more, rendering the final *The End* sign deeply ambivalent. And yet, this film is not interesting merely as an allegory of the unintended consequences of technological development—in this regard, it was undoubtedly surpassed by Ishirō Honda's *Godzilla* (1954), released just a year later. Perhaps even more intriguing are its unintentionally—or perhaps deliberately—comic moments, where the discipline of paleontology, confronted with an emergency, leaps into a parody of forensic science.

Tadej Troha, PhD is the Head of the Institute of Philosophy at ZRC SAZU. His research focuses on Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, particularly metapsychology, group psychology, and the history of psychoanalysis, as well as political philosophy, ethics, the challenges of the climate emergency, and the study of modernist literature. He lectures at the Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU and the Department of Educational Sciences at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.

### FILM SCREENING 18:30

*The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), directed by Eugène Lourié, written by Lou Morheim, starring Paul Hubschmid, Paula Raymond, and Cecil Kellaway, cinematography by Jack Rabin, produced by Warner Bros., 80 min.

*The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953) is a classic American science fiction film. The story centers on a prehistoric, radioactive sea creature awakened by nuclear testing in the Arctic, which then wreaks havoc on New York City. As the monster emerges from the depths, it embodies the fears of atomic age science and the destructive power of humanity's own inventions. Featuring groundbreaking special effects for its time, the film explores themes of human hubris, nature's revenge, and the terrifying consequences of nuclear technology. The film is an early example of the "monster movie" genre and a precursor to the more famous *Godzilla* (1954), directed by Ishirō Honda, which would go on to shape the kaiju genre and popular culture.

Organisers: Vesna Liponik (ZRC SAZU) and Marisa Žele (ZRC SAZU)

Institute of Philosophy ZRC SAZU

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