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Guest Editor:

Stephanie Eccles
University of Waterloo

Anthony J. Nocella II, Ph.D.
St. Cloud State University

Kim Socha, Ph.D.
Normandale Community College

Special Issue:

Transcripts of 2nd Annual Engaging with Eco-ability Conference

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Introduction

Name: Stephanie Eccles
Title: Undergraduate Student
Affiliation: University of Waterloo
Location: Waterloo, Canada
Email: eccles.steph@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Green Theory & Praxis Journal* includes the webinar proceedings from the *Second Annual Eco-Ability Conference* presented through Critical Animal Studies and Binghamton University of New York, on July 26, 2014. The conference's intention was to build upon the burgeoning exploration of an eco-ability approach and praxis. Before the chapters are introduced, it is important to tend to some housekeeping and explain the benefits of an online conference. Holding conferences online embodies an attempt of ensuring accessibility and is environmentally-conscious of the energy, time, money and other aspects of holding an in-person conference. Webinars present a platform where anyone can access the conference, present, and even more so participate in an ongoing conversation. The chat boxes also include emoticon features allowing participants to gauge how others feel, akin to the idea of watching the faces and body gestures in real-time presentations. Moreover, the conference is a time for leading scholars and activists to come together to share research ideas and questions and even perhaps

find potential areas of collaboration. Below are the raw transcripts that accompany the published presentations that can be found on YouTube.

The eight presenters (Gregor Wolbring Ph.D. is not featured in this proceeding) covered vast subjects such as solidarity, temporality, neurodiversity, and critical race theory, thereby attesting to the very real intersectional analysis possible with an eco-ability approach.

The first presentation was ‘The spectrum of perceptions and cure oppression’ by tina cubberly, a radical feminist and straight edge animal rights and justice activist who has Asperger’s syndrome. Her voice was invaluable as she spoke about her experiences with the mental health industry and medicalization model of disability. Her scrapbook style performance reading of journal entries demonstrated her radical critique of the world that prefers to create barriers and cures for those who deviate from the norm which is applicable to both human and non-human animal existence.

Building onto cubberly’s manifesto is Joe-Lesson Schatz, Ph.D. with the presentation ‘Animal advocates being allies and in solidarity with those with disabilities’. Schatz poignantly articulates the distinctions between being in coalition, in solidarity and being an ally of people with disabilities and non-human animals. At the core of these relationships is the issue of how to preserve and amplify voices that are often invalidated and quieted.

With Anthony J. Nocella II, Ph.D., again the theme of carving out a space for communication by people with disabilities and nonhuman animals is considered in ‘Movement of oppressors: An eco-ability perspective on narcissism and the savior mentality in animal advocacy’. Nocella’s presentation is important as it highlights core concepts to an eco-ability approach and includes multiple examples of oppressive and exclusionary practices by animal rights activists that cauterize the already tumultuous relationships amongst social justice activists. Nocella leaves us with uplifting words reminding us that total liberation is possible, but it requires us to first broaden our circles of inclusion.

The next presenter, Lauren O’Laughlin, is a Ph.D. student at the University of Washington. O’Laughlin, in their presentation ‘Animal prosthesis as a site of transspecies intimacy: Que(e)ryingtime’, reflected on Zoop, a little goat who got a prosthetic leg after frostbite left her limb rendered. Zoop offers an interesting case of transspecies intimacy. Moreover, disability witnessed in nonhuman animals and humans typically renders them unproductive and as things to prevent from happening again. Examining the values ascribed to bodies based on where they fall along the normative continuum provides a springboard to build bridges between radical disability and animal liberationist activists.

Zach Richter, an independent-scholar activist with dys-fluency, unsettles the common statement of bodies as impenetrable in his presentation ‘Lived objects: Prosthetics, agency and the question of object-oriented ontology with an ecological disability studies framework’. Richter propels the idea that people with disabilities and nonhuman animals transgresses neat spaces, thus stretching the possibility for agency to be projected and witnessed.

The next presenter is Ian Erik Smith, an independent-scholar who challenges the notion that

primitive anarchism is ableist in his presentation, ‘Civilization will stunt your growth: Defending primitivism from accusations of ableism’. Smith argues that contrary to the critiques of well-intentioned activists, primitive anarchism injects an utmost obligation of care to allow for all people and nonhuman animals to flourish. Smith prefers to charge civilization as in fact responsible for creating narratives of normatives, restricted movements and erecting both physical and mental barriers for all abilities to flourish.

Last but not least, Kim Socha, Ph.D., argues for animal liberationists to sophisticate their arguments and knowledge of non-sentient life such as plants in ‘What about the plants?: Integrating ecology into eco-ability’. Socha offers an honest comment on the deficient attention within the eco-ability movement to articulate the environment properly into works generated thus far. Socha offers the key word of domination to ground the eco-ability approach that brings together disability, nonhumans and the environment.

The presenters offered challenging ideas, critiques and new directions for the eco-ability movement. The 2nd annual Eco-Ability conference both redressed current tensions while simultaneously demonstrating the constellation-nature of the approach by highlighting new areas of research. Below are the raw, slightly edited transcriptions from the second annual eco-ability movement.



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The Spectrum of Perceptions and Cure Oppression

Name: tina cubberley
 Title: Independent Scholar-Activist
 Affiliation: N/A
 Location: Dublin Ireland
 Email: cubberlt@tcd.ie

Keywords: Ableism, Patriarchy, Anti-Psychiatry, Deaf Community, DIY Culture

THE SPECTRUM OF PERCETIONS AND CURE OPPRESSION

Them. I begin with three dedications. Not in order of importance. To Nome Lam who's given me so much inspiration; her ideas about DIY culture and her interpretation of the non-linear narrative have helped me create this presentation. To everyone who is oppressed, not only by ableism or speciesism, but by all oppressions. Anyone who has ever been defined as other and felt the pain, exclusion, loneliness and violence in that definition. My journey is your journey and my struggle ends only when yours is over and won. And thirdly, to a person who has helped me and supported me more than anyone in my struggle to look beyond patriarchal and ableist understandings of myself to understand who I really am as an individual and a justice activist. I know it is a cliché to say it, but you know who you are. Thank you. By way of an introduction, I guess the best way I can describe what I'm going to do is kind of like an audio scrapbook. This presentation is mainly composed of adaptations of journal entries and my commentary on them, *thus it is completely incoherent but intentionally so*. I also want to say this is very personal and

difficult to read, so it may be difficult to listen to as well, so please be aware of that and take care of yourself.

Meet a young woman in a psychiatry hospital. She is sitting on the floor in a small room where every movement is muffled by the padding that covers every surface. But she isn't moving at all anymore. She is thinking about the walls around her. There the walls inside her mind made real. She can touch them, or kick them and hurt her toes with her own insignificance and utter powerlessness. They enclose her, impregnably and indifferently fade her black and down. They are an eyeless presence, a somehow taunting symbol of her rapidly shrinking world. To give into them would be so much like the sun falls down. She rests her head on her knees and closes her eyes. Of course the walls are still there. Their silence is a self-satisfied silence of all those who are powerful as they watch those who are helpless. They have no need to justify themselves, to apologize, or to explain. They leave her alone with herself; her own perspective eats her up. The perspective is the world's perspective. Don't touch anyone you will hurt them, things will go wrong, betrayal, heartbreak, disaster are inevitable. The question is not if, but when. And what is the logic of this warning: stop tying, stop struggling, no one understands or wants you how you are. Sink, be absolved.

What is it about walls like that make you want to kick them? It's annoyingly predictable. Is it the secret subconscious knowledge that if enough people kick them for long enough and hard enough they really would fall down. What would happen next? Have we been hoping from perch to perch in our cages for so long that we've forgotten how to use our wings? How would we live without the violence of walls in a world set free? If it weren't for the walls, what is happening to me and everyone here would be their problem. They couldn't forget about us anymore, they would have to meet us and listen.

Oppression is a story of walls. It is made up of walls, of chains, or barbed wire. It is a world view built on exclusion. In the hospital, surrounded by diagnoses and theories and interpretation of the bored gaze or resentful stare; the woman writes nobody knows who I really am. She pauses for a moment, feeling the emptiness beneath her anger. Then writes, I'm not even sure I do.

A moment from a movie I watched with my sister: A young woman says to the guy she's in love with, you're the coolest person I've ever met and you don't even have to try. He replies, "I try really hard actually". I hated the movie but that one line broke my heart because I know what it's like to spend all day, every day, around people who are your closet friends and they don't notice, have no idea how hard you are trying. And the harder you try, the more you screw things up and it's always your problem not theirs. And on the rare occasion you actually get something right, when you feel yourself connecting with someone and it's so amazing to have a glimpse of people, and why people bother with this at all and you feel like jumping for joy and you realize they are already turning away. Because this is normal for them. And this is what normal does: it stamps on all your achievements, your moments of triumph; there is always something better that is beyond your reach, there has to be. If it wasn't for the glittering mirage of normal on our horizon we might begin to believe in ourselves. And this is the violence pretending it is possible to define someone else's subjective experience and as both ableism and speciesism and indeed all oppressions do, to defy it as worthless. This is the violence of this mundane act of exclusion.

In a culture made out of death, being sick is the healthiest response there is. It is either that, or become a part of their pathology. Oppression is a pathology from which we are all in recovery. This is cure-oppression. If we can't be cured we wait for normality to assign us a purpose or simply put us in one of its rubbish dumps. It is because of cure-oppression, the need to change, to be accepted, or understood, or valuable. The definition of herself as a problem, of her every experience as pathology that the young woman wrote in her diary that one of her goals, one of the things that would make her happy was get better and learn how to make and keep friends. Her only hope of finding friends was to get better. To change everything about herself, to camouflage the dissonance of her perspective so successfully that people would no longer turn away in nervous or disdainful comprehension. People would embrace the things in which she learned to hide herself. And maybe, deep inside where the real version of herself was hiding, she would feel it and be less alone; she would be accepted. She didn't fully realize at the time that she would be dead as well.

Looking back at that young woman from where I am now, I don't understand her because she doesn't yet understand herself but I recognize her and I recognize the defenses that made her armor. Mistrust forms a cage around her, she is terrified of loving; it will anger her to a world she hates. She is desperate to be loved.

This is how Audre Lorde's mythical norm works. Normal is a disguise. No one is like this person but we all have to pretend like we are or submit to the rules and worldview and version of reality created by those who pretend most successfully. We define nothing. Not even what we believe in, how we feel about our body, what we get to dream about. Our stories are silenced. The world that we still secretly believe that we could have created together are shattered. Like reflections in water that were so solid that you could have stepped into them. When a stone is thrown the reflections never look quite the same again. The social construct of normal is that stone. Because of that stone, the young woman writes in her diary, I wish I was somebody else, anyone would do. I wish I was different, I wish I was dead.

I am an x-ray, a collection of bones, an empty cage of ribs without a heart. An anatomical jigsaw that makes no sense. When they made me they forgot that you need a purpose to live. My soul is scar tissue around my heart. I am a black hole. People's good intentions, and false concern, curiosity and shock get lost on me. I swallow atonement and forgiveness is for breakfast and slowly starves to death. I have no memory of shining in my own small corner of the universe before I forgot I was a star, before I turned inside myself and swallowed all my light. I am an exile. My touch brings a contagion of truth. I have stepped across the border into the country of lost souls, who've stuck their finger up at salvation for its price tag and clichés and comforts and chains. Who demanded things like love and understanding and pain that doesn't have a movie script? They wanted to be heard so much, they wanted to be touch and be touched without fear. They dreamed and imaged and fought with their fingers that bled to the bone and they ended up there. Where their songs go unheard and the silence bursts eardrums and hopelessness whispers from the walls as they close in. Here, you can walk forever without knowing where you're going, without getting anywhere.

I am invisible but there is no lie big enough to hide me. They offered me medicine but I saw it

was poison relabeled but ended up drinking it anyway. And they didn't know what to do about my choice, they didn't know how to write what happened next, it wasn't a part of their story so they wrote me out. I am a footnote you can read if you look closely. But my story has become alive now, only I can tell you the unsettled version that was erased.

Two definitions. Sentience: having a subjective experience of the world around you, having your own unique world, having a story. Oppression: when these stories cease to matter.

The young woman walks through the automatic doors at the psychiatric hospital in the glaring sunshine. She stands still with the realization that she is still a prisoner and still surrounded by prisoners.

Inside me, despair had a strange determined hopefulness laying around. There is so much still to be done. And here is the power that I have protected from, I think, I feel, I remember. These things make resistance. The world is afraid of me for a very good reason.

Kay, this is the last part, the final picture in the scrapbook. Um, so before I tell you the story that ends this, I have one message. Which is my both my own message and behalf of everyone who is oppressed and anyone whose experienced the violence of exclusion. And it's this: forget everything you think you know about us, because nobody except us can know our own truths. There are as many ways of being as there are beings. And there are as many versions of beauty as there are searching for the beautiful. This makes me smile.

So the story, the story begins a few days ago when the young woman, who became me, was sitting in the park. And she was sitting beside a greyhound called Sami, who was lying beside her. And a woman walked into the park pushing a wheelchair with a little girl in it who was perhaps 8 or 9 years old. And they stopped walking in a patch of sunlight, right across the path from me, and the little girl gets out of the wheelchair and she, she just starts running around in circles and dancing. Like she flings her arms wide and she just feels, how amazing it is to move and feel the sun and be alive. And I watch her, and I see other people watching her.

I see people walking past and I wonder if they grope through their stifled minds for a definition or a label to define her, so they can be condescending and so they can turn away and discount her, discount whatever she is feeling as unimportant or non-existent, so they can feel pity instead of wonder. And I think of how I tried so desperately, so constantly for years to relate, to understand, to impersonate, to take part. Because I thought I could be hollow inside and it would be alright. I could survive or continue to exist or whatever this not living is called, so long as someone cared about me. All the mess of nerves and contradictions of defenses have hid me and all my starving and exhaustive hope. And all that time, I could have been dancing in the sun.

So I watch her, and Sami lays beside me and she is watching too. And I feel like she is perfectly contented. And I share my world for a moment with these two beings, and their calmness and joy. And I feel the vastness of a world made up of infinity of perspectives. And I think about the possibilities what respect for all of them might bring. That struggle is before us; right now we have a fragment of the piece. Thank you, bye.



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Animal Advocates Being Allies and in Solidarity with those with Disabilities

Name: JL Schatz, Ph.D.

Title: Lecturer, Director of Debate

Affiliation: Binghamton University

Location: Binghamton, NY, USA

Email: debate@binghamton.edu

Keywords: Ally, Ableism, Coalition, Disability, Ecoability, Solidarity

ANIMAL ADVOCATES BEING ALLIES AND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

I was brought into the eco-ability movement and disability studies about a year and a half ago. I joined from an academic perspective after realizing the intersections between disability studies and animal liberation. One of the things that is interesting to me is that while I have become increasingly involved in conversations around eco-ability from an academic perspective, it is a movement that I have yet to join in from an activist perspective. This is interesting to me because one of the things that we talk about when we talk about animal liberation is that animal rights movements are one of the few initiatives that are led by the oppressors. As Anthony Nocella II explained at the 1st Annual Eco-Ability conference, this is an important point since, as the oppressors, we should never try to speak for the non/human animals even as we try to organize to support them. What that means to me from the context for disability studies is to realize that as I

theorize about organization, that theorization should not eclipse the disability leadership and activism that's on the ground.

While clearly everyone is always already disabled to some extent in different contexts, and everyone will eventually become disabled as they age, this does not mean that everyone should just whimsically adopt the identity of disability and join the movement.

By acknowledging that we will all inevitably become vulnerable ... [theorists] maintain a rigid distinction between the (currently invulnerable) able and the vulnerable disabled. On one level, as Fiona Kumari Campbell (2009) has argued, this distinction implicitly devalues disability, even as it embraces its inevitability (p. 13). At the same time, this devaluation masks the more radical revelation that the "able" depend on the disabled for their identity as superior (Braswell 2013).

Acknowledging this does not mean we should deny the social constructions that have gone into building up concepts such as ability privilege. Nor does it mean that we should ignore the disabilities we all have to varying degrees in life. However, what it does mean is that as someone who hasn't identified as disabled for most of his life, it is important that as I learn about my own disabilities in relation to other abilities, I shouldn't co-opt that identity and claim a place of leadership within activist circles. To be an ally, I first must listen and understand. Only then can my own vulnerabilities not depend on the disabled for their identity for me to have the ability to speak.

At the same time, I feel very close and connected with people who do identity as disabled because I think that there is an importance of linking up different forms of struggle with one another and understanding how oppressions are connected. No doubt, "we can see the urgent need for a new kind of intersectional analysis to address how these categories have often formed mutually constitutive frameworks in support of-or in resistance to-dominant social, political, and economic structures of power" (Samuels 2014, 17). It is from this departure point that is the groundwork of my essay, that I begin theorizing about how to be an ally within the disability studies movement. This is a very different question than to ask what disability studies means in an academic sense or asking what we can do in order to tangibly change material practices. Instead, it's to ask what it means to be an ally and when is it time not to lead.

Being an ally is very different than being in coalition or in solidarity with someone. And while they are similar, there are important differences. When someone is in a coalition, they agree not only to work for the same ends but also agree on the tactics and the means to go about doing it. So coalitions are often temporary arrangements between different groups of people in different organizations that come together to achieve an objective through a unified means to achieve that objective. Once that objective is achieved, the coalition often begins to fracture as they begin working on other objectives that diverge. Of course, many coalitions stay together longer than realizing a single objective. However, this only occurs when they are able to continue working together for other initiatives through agreed upon tactics. This is often the case when coalitions form around objectives that aren't entirely permanent but need continual activism to not lose the gains made in a single campaign.

Distinct from coalitions, solidarity is a coalitional practice where people sign on and essentially sacrifice their own ideas or avenues of resistance for those people they are in solidarity with. For instance, for a white person to be in solidarity with Black Power movements, it means that, regardless of one's own (white) thoughts on how race and racism should be addressed, the individual's (white) agency should be entirely sacrificed to the Black individuals who are actually organizing. To be white and to be in solidarity means not being a leader and taking over the megaphone from those I am in solidarity with since my role is to listen and follow. In short, this is very different than being in coalition where one's voice is not entirely sacrificed since everyone's ideas help create an agreed upon agenda. Put simply, "A good politics of solidarity does not assume limits or set expectations ahead of time, but only in the process of interactions. Communication is key" (Schalk 2013).

Being an ally is different than both being in coalition and standing in solidarity with someone. The reason is because being an ally means that, while the goals that should be achieved at the end are the same, the diverse ways of realizing the objectives are oftentimes distinct. People have all different agendas, different ideas in order to figure out the way in which modes of resistance should be engaged, the way that resistance should be sequenced, and the ways that activism can work. When one is an ally with someone, these things do not have to be agreed upon but rather can be pursued simultaneously in conjunction with one another since the ultimate end point of social justice and liberation is the same. In this way, diverse groups can do what works best for them in order to make advancements while not undermining other subaltern struggles that just see a different path for change.

Some people within both the animal liberation and the animal rights movement think reformism is beneficial. Others within both those movements think that it is destructive. At the same time, both the animal liberation and animal rights movements there are disagreements over how to go about advancing tactics. This is why these two movements and the factions within them often cannot work in coalition with one another because they are diametrically opposed in how their strategies towards animal resistance should be engaged. However, they can be allies with one another because the goals of both are the same—which is to advance the cause of non/human animals in order to lessen the impact of the oppression that they face. As a result, they can be allies because they're working towards the same goal even if their tactics are often contradictory with one another. This can be productive insofar as the people within these movements continually strive to do more in their activism and relations with one another.

Bringing this back to the topic of this essay, to be an ally as someone who doesn't identify as disabled there is an importance to be able to link up the struggles I care deeply about with struggles of disability. In this sense, there is a need to figure out ways in order to challenge things like ability privilege, while at the same time not necessarily entirely sacrificing one's own thoughts about how these things should be engaged. In this instance of speciesism and ability privilege, these linkages are all but apparent. "Animals are clearly affected by the privileging of the able-bodied human ideal, which is constantly put up as the standard against which they are judged, justifying the cruelty we so often inflict on them. The abled body that ableism perpetuates and privileges is always not only nondisabled but also nonanimal" (Taylor 2013). Sadly, not all approaches to animal liberation and animal rights movements pay attention to these

connections when they utilize concepts such as “healthy eating” and stereotypical models of beauty. This is not to say people should give up talking about “health” altogether when advancing veganism. However, it is to say that people who do use such concepts must be aware of how these ideologies intersect with other constructions of ability privilege.

The question of “health” serves as a perfect example of why it is essential to advance a concept of ally versus coalition or solidarity. People within disability studies often criticize vegan and vegetarian movements precisely because of their promotion of animal-free alternatives as the choice that is correct for one’s health, and it is better for this. I’m not just thinking of things like PETA’s blatantly offensive “got autism” campaign, which is not really based in science or how autism is constructed. I’m also thinking of the way eating vegetables is intrinsically healthier than eating saturated-fats from McDonald’s. While claims like these are often scientifically sound, they still deploy normative concepts of the body that assumes a universal able-bodied individual who has equal access to healthy vegetarian and vegan alternatives.

The fact is that ethical discussions about eating animals are permeated with sexist and racist perspectives that have operated as normative. Disability and disabled people have also largely been left out of these conversations, and ableism has similarly been rendered as normative and naturalized. The disability community has had a challenging relationship to the animal rights community, as epitomized by continued debates involving philosophers like Peter Singer, whose works have denied personhood to certain groups of intellectually disabled individuals. But even in less extreme ways, disabled individuals and the various issues that affect us have largely been left out of the animal welfare and sustainability movements, whether because of the movements’ obsession with health and physical fitness or a lack of attention to who has access to different kinds of educational and activist events. (Taylor 2013)

Certainly I am not innocent of this criticism since I often utilize notions of “health” to convince people to give up eating non/human animals. At the same time, this is ground I am unwilling to cede because many of the people I engage with choose to go vegetarian or vegan because of the health benefits. To not talk about “health” because it subscribes to notions of “health” that might be normative destroys an avenue for resistance that I think is important to be able to advance forward. However, to be an ally it means that I must take seriously the criticism that people who identify with disabilities have to say about this approach.

To do so, this means that I can’t just disregard their criticism as not making sense or being irrelevant or incorrect. Rather it means that I have to take seriously their comments so that when I do talk about what it means to be healthy as a vegetarian or as a vegan, that those things aren’t forgotten about. As a result, when I have these conversations now, I recognize that there isn’t a single mode of being healthy but rather a concept that is constantly evolving and means different things for different people from different places. And so being an ally means that when engaging in conversations over health, I can adapt those tactics to the individuals I’m interacting with so that I don’t center a universal understanding of health but rather a contingent model. Thus, it becomes possible to use tactics such as “health” to advance animal liberation without perpetuating the ableism that traditionally comes along with such concepts. This best advances

strategies that can be useful in certain places at certain times with particular individuals in ways where we can interlink struggles against oppression. From here we can realize how:

Eating certain food leads to better abilities, but not everyone has access to this food. Clean water leads to better abilities, but not everyone has access to it. And when some modify their bodies and add to their abilities not everyone will be able to follow suit. 'Enabling' enhancements will lead to ability inequalities for those who do not have access to them or who choose not to modify their bodies. Which ability inequality will be seen as inequitable is still debatable. As the right to water was just labeled a human right one could say that clean water access inequality is also inequitable. (Wolbring 2012)

Again, this means that we must forefront a question of tactics instead of a singular cohesive strategy in order to formulate productive concepts of being an ally with others. This also means that one does not necessarily have to give up the path that they think is important for advancing a form of agenda that they think is important as long as it doesn't undermine or get in the way of the other agendas.

To be clear, this means that when groups do things like PETA's "got autism" campaign, that does not qualify of being an ally with people within disability studies because it doesn't approach it as a tactic to be used in conjunction with fighting ability privilege. Therefore, such campaigns don't work towards the same endpoint and, in fact, actually undermine the ability for disability studies to advance. In short, as an ally, it is not an excuse to entirely disregard other movements for social justice simply because you are not in coalition or solidarity with someone. Being an ally does require compromising. However, that compromising doesn't require one to give up on the entirety of one's goals since the tactics we deploy are, after all, always already temporary.

As case in point, when it comes to language choices in relation to disability, to say "stand in solidarity" already assumes a certain ability privilege in its very terminology. There are many numbers of other examples of ableist language. Regardless of the specific example, in terms of being an ally when language choices become offensive to individuals, it is crucial to modify one's language, as opposed to being defensive or marking excuses. Discourse matters. And, while it's impossible to refrain from offensive discourse in every possible situation, there is always the ability for allies to do better in promoting inclusive language. Word choices are not integral to any tactic but could hold the potential to undermine progress if those choices force others away. To be willing to change our words and not the fundamentals of our arguments is at the center of ally politics since it allows for a fluidity of exchange.

In turn, I make sure that the way I talk about health does not subscribe to a singular form of what constitutes a healthy body when promoting vegetarianism and veganism as a health-initiative. Instead, I make the pitch tailored to the individual who I am dealing with and what they would understand to be a healthy body or lifestyle. In doing so, I'm careful not to promote the ability privileges associated with BMI indexes so that I can criticize universal concepts of "health" even while advancing the argument. And so these are things that are examples of how someone can be an ally while still remaining true to one's own desire for resistance and change. In the case of discursive criticisms, it is easy to change the language one uses while keeping the tactics in the

same.

In a recent example, when people criticize Weird Al's music video for using the word "spastic," instead of defending his language choices, which like a lot of musician artists do, he immediately apologized for it. He claimed that he didn't know that that term carried a negative connotation for people with disabilities and he subsequently disassociated from that terminology. In my mind, this is an example of where Weird Al became an ally with people within disability studies because there was an immediate awareness that because he does not identify as having a disability that he should listen and default to people who do identify that way. At the same time, he did not immediately give up on his music. Instead he performed a corrective gesture that fostered positive media attention for people to become aware of ableism within the music industry at large. Put plainly, to be an ally requires an honest effort to truly listen and understand the types of things that are being taught by people who are actually in those movements. This doesn't mean giving up those things you think are important to advance what you care deeply about; but it does mean there has to be an honest effort to listen and adapt one's campaign and language around those we desire to be allies with.

Integral to this notion of being an ally understands that all oppressions are fundamentally interconnected. As a white male, I have a lot of privileges that are associated with that. But in addition, I am what most people in society would consider fully abled-bodied, which has a whole host of other privileges that are associated with that. And with privilege comes responsibility; but also privilege means that one has an obligation to use those privileges in order to undermine the structures that are in place that enable the privileged to be privileged over other individuals. And so by understanding how oppressions are interconnected from a privileged standpoint, it's important to recognize that my own objectives or what I think is most important to be achieved is an objective or a form of achievement that comes from a privileged understanding of how the world operates.

This gets back to why it's important for people in my social location to listen in order to keep their privilege in check, but that privilege can also be used to challenge the various forms of oppression that are interconnected with one another. I don't think that animals are more important than people, but at the same time, I don't think that people are more important than non/human animals because we all are essentially animals. What is important though is that when engaging with different groups with different identities that what comes to the forefront needs to be able to adapt to the conditions, movements, and people with which I surround myself. In the end, my privileged perspective is not what exists at the forefront of what I do, but rather is a part of what I do in being an ally by listening to those others who actually participate within the struggles that I think are absolutely crucial in order to promote social justice.

And so to be an ally to people with disabilities means not only listening to what they mean or what they care about in terms of language but also what they take as productive avenues of resistance. This means taking them at their word and seriously assessing what that means to be a lifelong ally and advance a form of understanding of animal liberation that doesn't come at the expense of it. It means we must come up with campaigns that promote veganism and vegetarianism as healthy not to the detriment of people who may be "fat". Campaigns like PETA's "get rid of the blubber" is both offensive and undermines things that would actually

promote a worldview that would not have a “fatness” as being an automatically negative connotation. By doing these sort of things, there could be a form of animal liberation that is theorized that does not base itself off of ability privilege that directly undermines the struggle of those who are disabled.

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Movement of Oppressors: An Eco-ability Perspective on Narcissism and the Savior Mentality in Animal Advocacy

Name: Anthony J. Nocella II, Ph.D.

Title: Senior Fellow

Affiliation: Dispute Resolution Institute, Hamline Law School, Hamline University

Location: Saint Paul, MN, USA

Email: nocellat@yahoo.com

Keywords: Ecoability, Racial Justice, Disability Justice, Environmental Justice

**MOVEMENT OF OPPRESSORS: AN ECO-ABILITY PERSPECTIVE ON
NARCISSISM AND THE SAVIOR MENTALITY IN ANIMAL ADVOCACY**

Hello and thank you so much for allowing me to present at the 2nd Annual Eco-ability conference, and thank you so much Mike and Joe for organizing it and all the presenters, as well as the attendees; it is wonderful and the medium for presenting allows people from all over the world to present which is very, very exciting.

I am going to be presenting on “Movement of Oppressors: An Eco-ability Perspective on Narcissism and the Savior Mentality in Animal Advocacy,” and I am really excited about the presentations that have already gone on. There is so much to contemplate and new ideas are always arising in environmental studies, environmental ethics, Critical Animal Studies, and disability studies. They are all new fields that are growing and putting them together will result in rich information and perspectives developing for years to come.

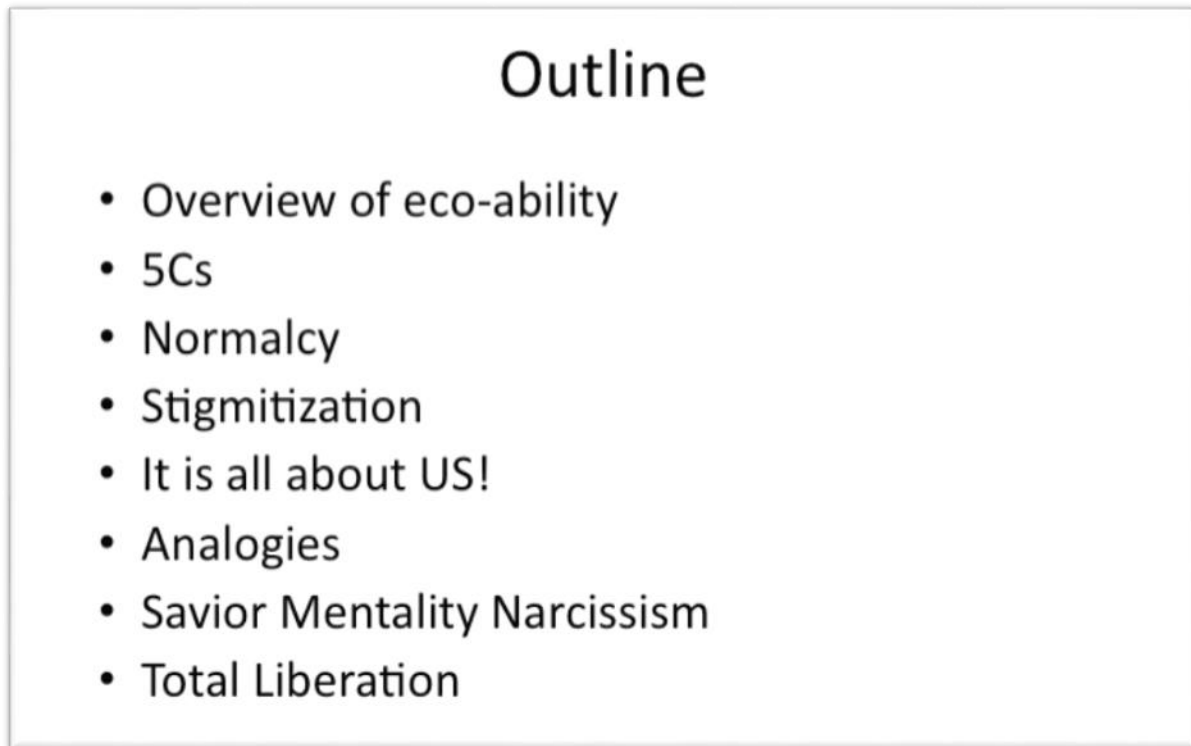


Image 1. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II



Above is an outline of my presentation, and I am going to be speaking about Eco-ability from my perspective. Eco-ability brings environmental, animal and disability justice and liberation together. Justice is addressing a wrong in our society while liberation is addressing the

confinement of a group or individual. An individual who liberates a monkey from a zoo is liberating that animal, but they may not be addressing the systematic issues and exotification of the zoo or trying to close it down; they might just be interested in liberation of that particular monkey.

I want to speak about justice and liberation under the umbrella of peace studies.

Image 2. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

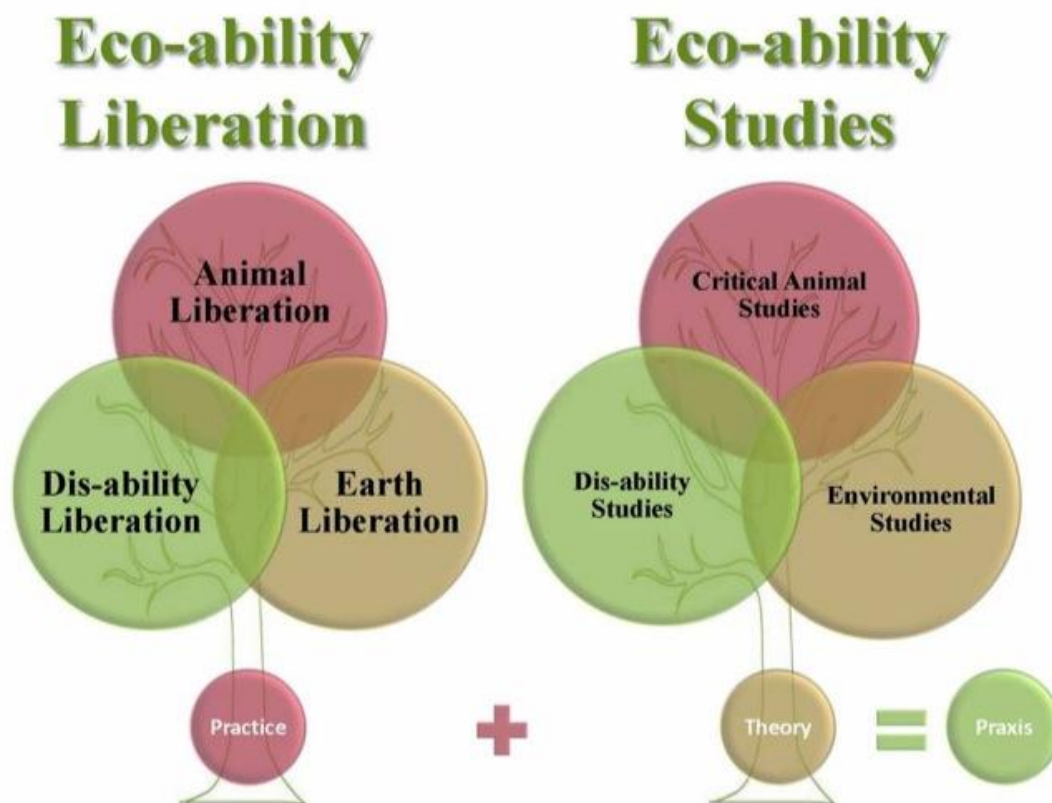


Here are some ideas that you may have seen before in a different presentation I've done. Eco-ability values difference and diversity, not equality; equality means "same" and same and equal are socially constructed measurements to perpetuate normalcy. Normal is seen as one side of a coin and abnormal is the other. The "normal" are typically in elite positions of domination and the oppression while the "abnormal" are typically marginalized, oppressed and dominated. So the concept we are trying to develop is very inclusive for total liberation, focusing on

intersectionality. A lot of men in our movement praise total liberation but are very opposed to intersectionality. The term “intersectionality” comes from Kim Crenshaw and other women of color and queer women of color looking at the experiences of racism and sexism. So total liberation is the theory, but to experience that theory is intersectionality. We need total liberation as well as intersectionality to inform one another.

I am interested in techno-digital justice and how technology is all around us—from the stick that we use for baseball, to the stick we use as a cane, to a wheelchair. There’s a very fine line when we use technology and when we don’t use technology and how can we challenge the exploitation of nature and the destruction of nature and animals when technology is developed through the medical or military-industrial complexes.

Image 3. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II



Eco-ability is against ableism, speciesism, and ecocide (the destruction of the environment).

Image 4. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

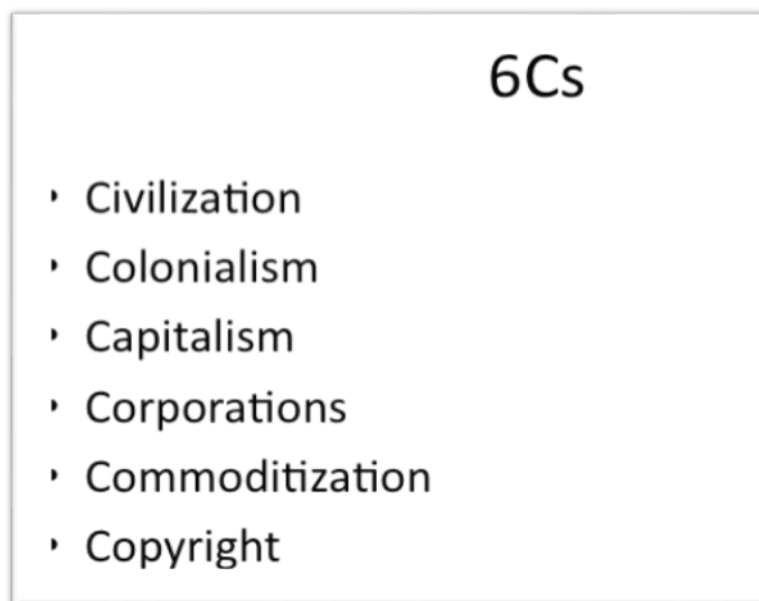
When addressing speciesism, ableism and civilization, we need to really start talking about normalcy, which is the theory behind civilization, and I'll be talking about civilization. While primitivists have a good analysis of civilization, environmentalists and animal advocates have never really addressed the complexities and importance of why we should critically examine and dismantle the concept of normalcy, which disability studies has done repetitively.

Image 5. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II



Disability has a kind of invisible hand. Whatever one wants to oppress, one must first stigmatize, and the stigmatized typically have a disability label from not being intelligent, to being crazy, to the other disability labels. This is oppression: the invisible hand that is placed by the oppressor first to stigmatize, then to marginalize, then to incarcerate, then to experiment on, then to kill.

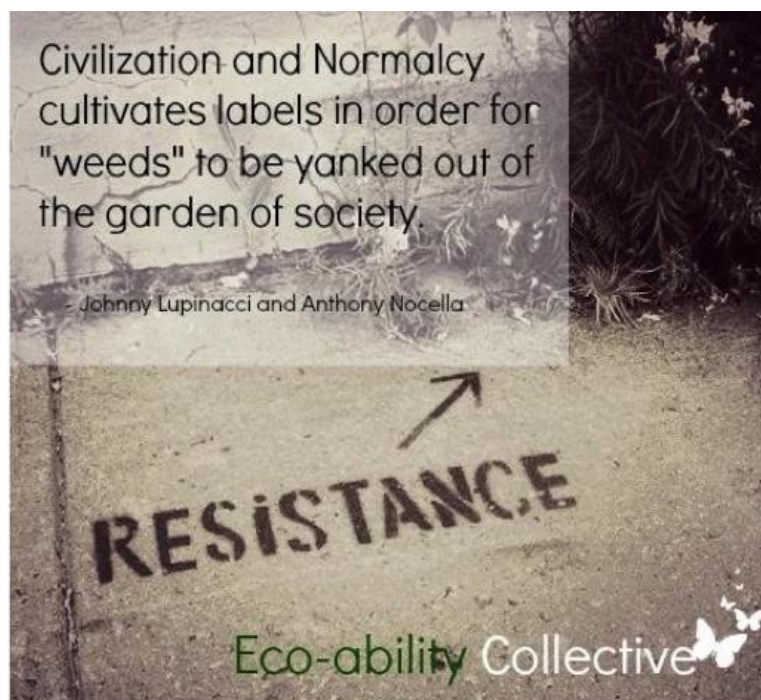
Image 6. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II



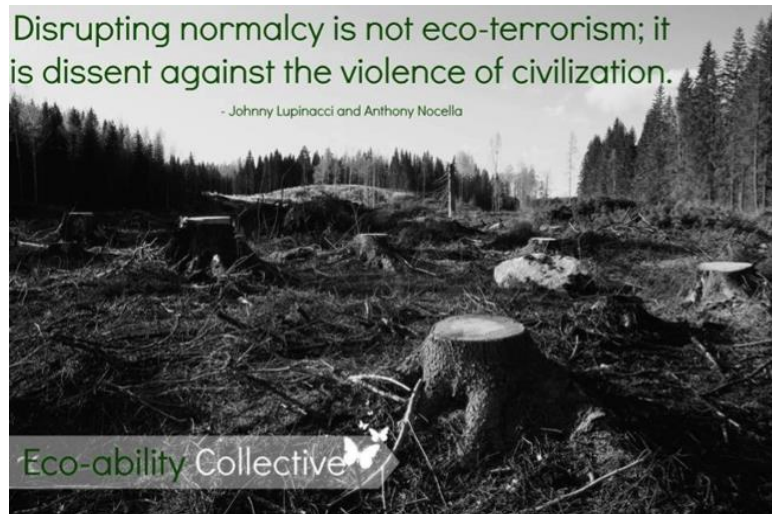
With the six Cs, I look at normalcy in/as civilization. First we have to divide ourselves from nature, and then we divide ourselves from people, which is colonialism. Europe is different than Africa, Asia, and South America. Once we have separated ourselves, capitalism takes over and assigns value to everything that exists. Thus, those who are normal, civilized, and Christian have a higher innate value than the non-colonial, non-white, savage, and disabled.

We now have a reason to exploit people, which requires people and groups to do the exploiting. So we create corporations that are within one's nation-state or transnational corporations that are in multiple nation-states. From that, we take items, traditions, cultures, and norms and we seize them as our own for profit. This called commodification. And then what we do, like Monsanto, is copyright everything from seeds, to culture, to music, sounds and beats, to language and food so that people cannot steal those things. So those are the six Cs of normalcy that we have to address.

Image 7. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II



Johnny Lupinacci and I tried to address disability studies and the radical environmental discourse and look at the conflicts within them to see how we could resolve those conflicts. Civilization and normalcy cultivate the labels in order for weeds to be yanked out of the garden of society. In sum, weeds are the abnormal.

Image 8. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

Here is another slide we created—“Disrupting normalcy is not eco-terrorism”—so those who resist, who protest etc.— “dissent against the violence of civilization.” So civilization is the reality, while normalcy is the theory.

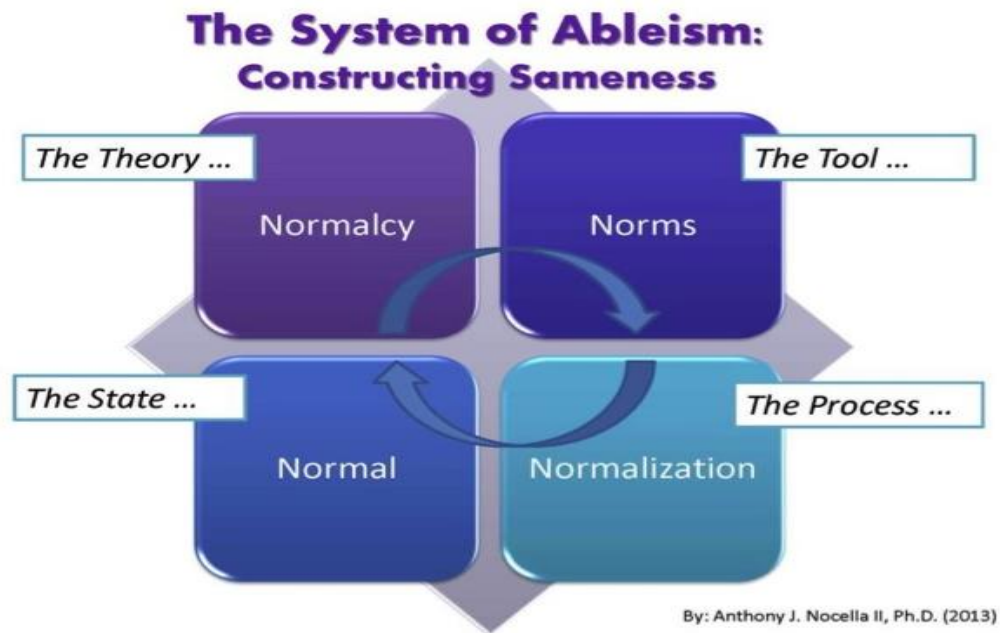
Image 9. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II used image from www.reddisability.org.uk

Capitalism reinforces normalcy; it is very individualistic and competitive; it's about efficiency.

Image 10. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II with cover of *Green Anarchy* Issue #22

There are some really good things about the anti-CIV, or the green-Prim, primitivist perspective which oppose technology. A lot of technology is not useful, like the military and medical industrial complexes, but the technology that assists those with disabilities are fairly small and we aren't going to be closing down civilization anytime soon, so why burn the bridge if we don't need to? I don't want to get into the Oppression Olympics, but individuals with disabilities comprise the largest group of oppressed people in the world because they span all different identities: race, class, age, gender, sexuality. So people with disabilities need to be in this conversation and you can't say well 'just pull the plug' like John Zerzan said in Toronto. I think what he should have said in Toronto when somebody asked him what do we do with people on technological devices to keep them alive, "That's a hard question. I think we should sit down with people with disabilities and really have a deep conversation about that."

Some who oppose civilization also oppose transgendered identities because many who are transgendered want to undergo surgical body modifications. Then, of course, we have Lierre Keith and Deep Green Resistance (DGR), which notes that they do not support transgendered identities and sees it as comparable to a poor person saying he is poor person's body with a rich man's mind. This is a simplistic and ineffective analogy and also offensive to the transgender community.

Image 11. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

Here is the theory of normalcy. Norms which exist in society are as seemingly simple as going to work, getting on a bus, taking a shower, brushing your teeth, etc. All of these activities are perpetuated as being normal, so we forget that not everyone can easily do them.

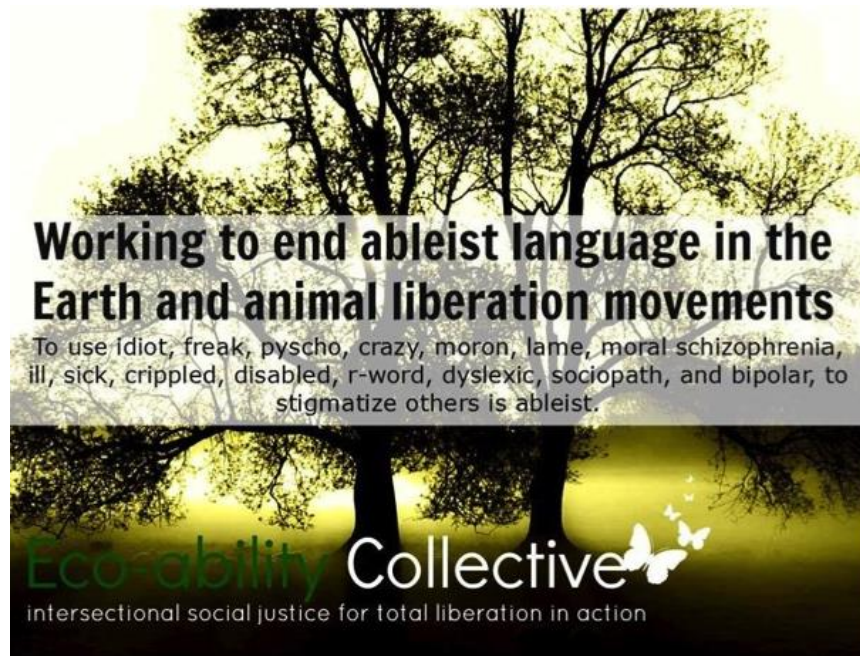
A prime example of “normalcy” implemented in Western society is the Holocaust. Those first targeted, tested on, and killed were those with mental and physical disabilities.

Image 12. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II



This slide above considers the prison system, including the death penalty, which has historically reinforced eugenics and medical experimentation.

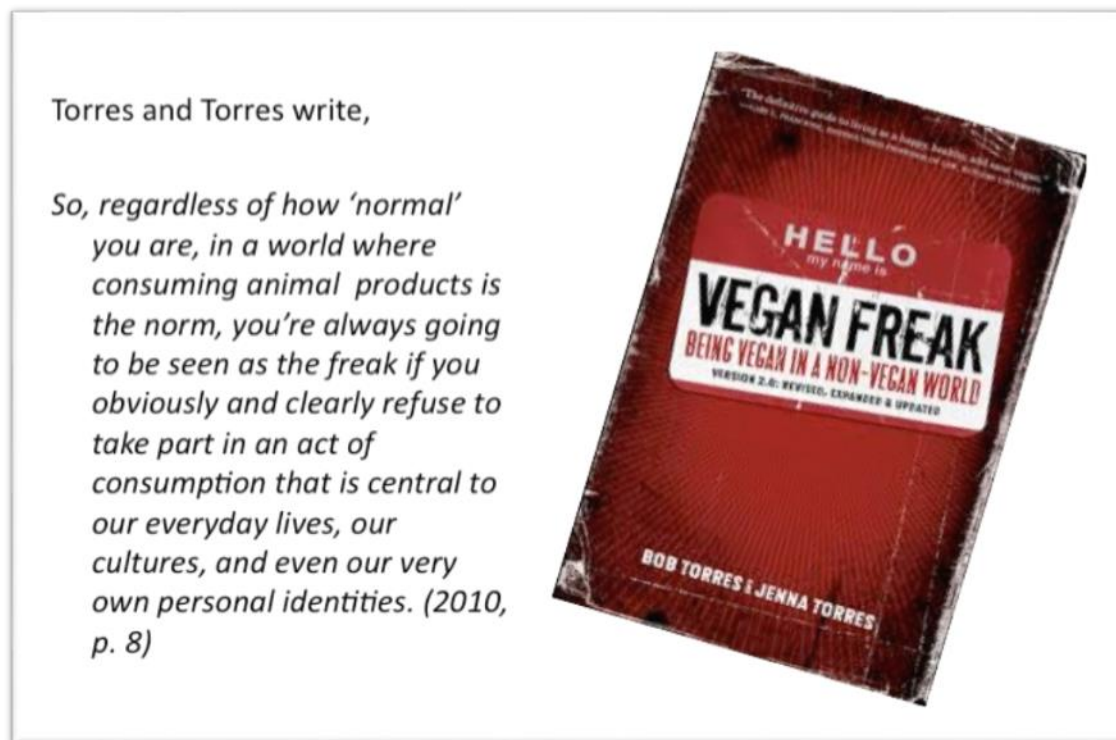
Further, the medical industrial complex has developed procedures so individuals can abort fetuses that will likely grow into children with disabilities or birth defects. The medical and commercial industries state that an unhealthy baby is the abnormal baby; healthy babies have desirable “normal” bodies without defect or disability.

Image 13. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

The animal advocacy movement must start challenging the ableist language and images that it often uses to make its points. Lauren O’Laughlin and Marie Houser, feminists and queer theorists, have started examining the exploitation of nonhumans with disabilities whose images are posted all over Facebook to evoke both pity and smiles amongst viewers. Such images also arise on blogs and in videos, resulting in a sort of nonhuman disability pornography.

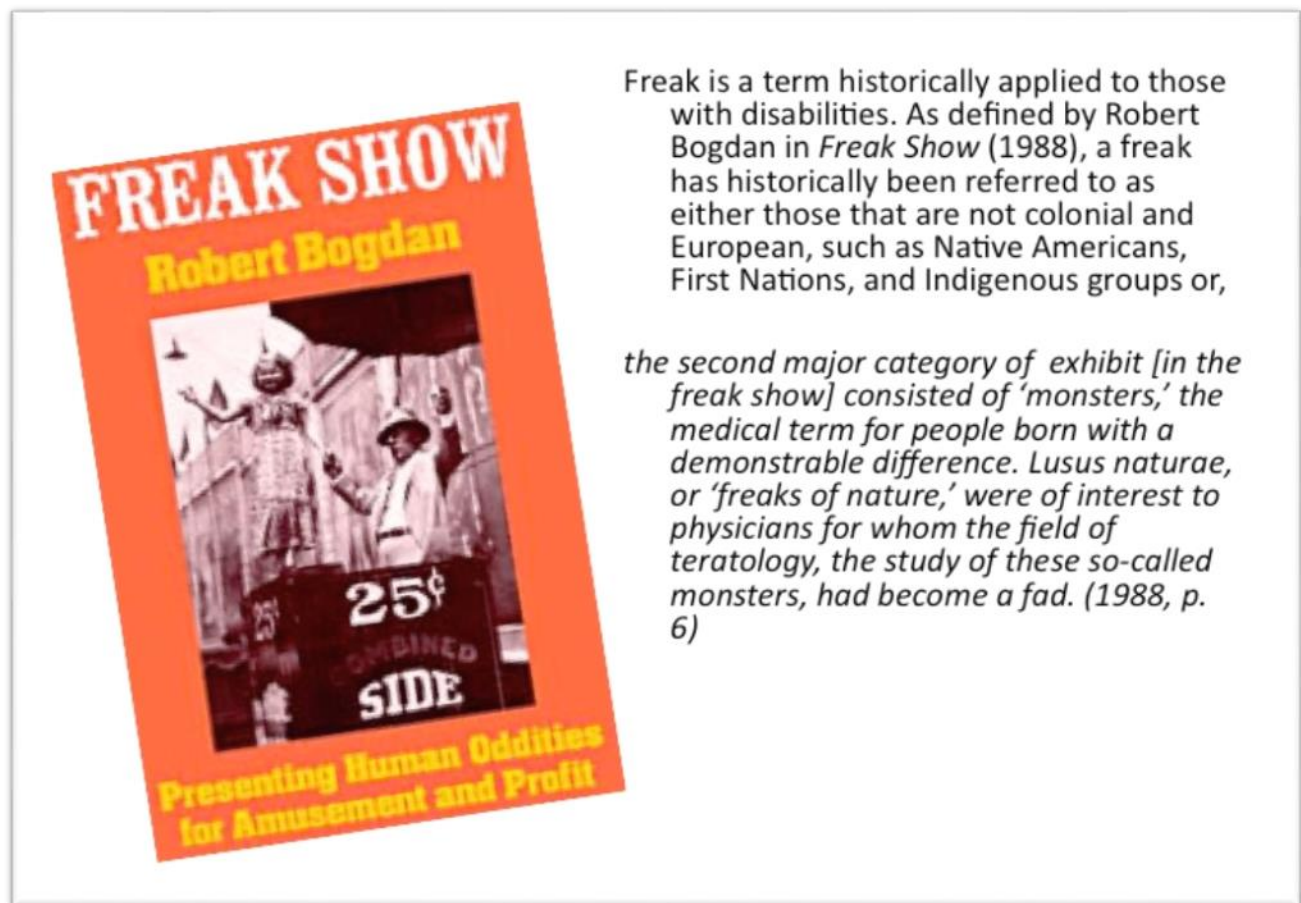
This imaging and objectification is not coincidental, and it is notable that mainly women, not men, have most ardently begun to articulate the problems with such images. Why women? Why feminists? Because they’ve experienced objectification firsthand on a more regular basis than men.

Image 14. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II and cover of *Vegan Freaks* (2010)



Here is an example of ableism in an otherwise decent book. The problem is the title itself: *Vegan Freak*. Torres and Torres write that regardless of “how ‘normal’ you are in a world where consuming animal products is the norm, you are always going to be seen as the freak if you obviously and clearly refuse to take in apart in an act of consumption that is central to our everyday lives, our culture and even our very own personal identity”. And this is very true, but we also have to challenge their word choice from a disability and lens.

Image 15. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II and cover of *Freak Show* (1988)



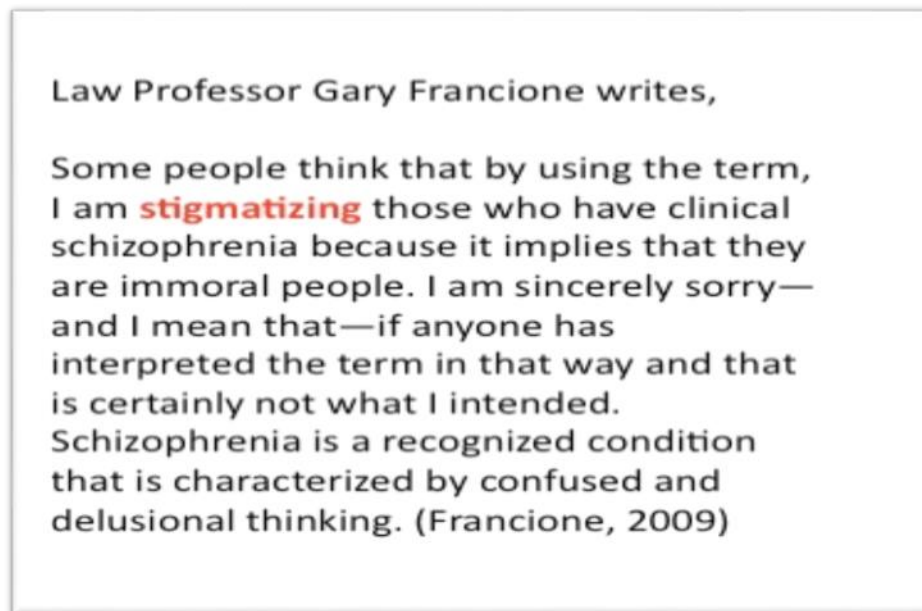
So, you may ask, what is wrong with the word “freak”? As Robert Bogdan explains in *Freak Show*, there are two types of freaks: Native American, First Nation, and indigenous groups, and those that are “the monster in freak shows and circuses”. In other words, freaks are any who have bodies that differ from the Euro-centric ideal of normal.

Image 16. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

Law Professor Gary Francione writes,

Some people accuse me of confusing **moral schizophrenia** with multiple/split personality ... When I talk about moral schizophrenia, I am seeking to describe the delusional and confused way that we think about animals as a social/moral matter. That confusion can, of course, include conflicting or inconsistent ways of looking at animals (some are family members; others are dinner) but that does not mean that I am describing a classic split or multiple personality. Our moral schizophrenia, which involves our deluding ourselves about animal sentience and the similarities between humans and other animals, and an enormous amount of confusion about the moral status of nonhumans, is a phenomenon that is quite complicated and has many different aspects. (Francione, 2009)

And then there is Gary Francione, whose work is important in many ways. However, he has become well known for this concept of ‘moral schizophrenia’, based on the idea that if one claims to love animals but also eats them, they have a split personality (which is also known as dissociative identity disorder, not schizophrenia). Regardless of Francione’s misunderstanding of basic psychology, ‘moral schizophrenia’ is a negative rather than uplifting term, and, of course, he opposes those who eat meat and test on animals. Therefore, he is stigmatizing those who have certain mental disabilities as less than and immoral. When called out on his use of the term, Francione did not apologize as much as he justified (see below). He is not the only one to do this. I am using Francione as a prominent example of many who use ableist terminology without critical thought.

Image 17. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

Above is Francione's response to accusations of ableism. There is a well know Irish Proverb: The road to Hell is paved with good intentions. But rather than justify our misguided good intentions, we must listen to and be an ally of those who are oppressed, Joe Leeson-Schatz ably notes. We have to begin to *listen*, rather than assume we understand the needs of the oppressed. And this is what the title of this paper is about, about the oppressors leading the movement.

We must ask ourselves what will lead to real animal liberation. Are we really doing what the animals want? We can certainly suppose. I think they would probably not want us to go to the government and ask for larger cages. I think they would want to do more radical and extreme actions so they can be free more quickly, but most are not going to jeopardize their freedom for them, so we have to own the reality that we are not going to do *everything* in our power to liberate the animals. Rather, most of us do what we can until it jeopardizes our freedom and comfort.

Animal rights activists have the ability to act for or leave the movement at any time because we are not being oppressed in the same way as those for whom we fight. And when oppression and repression of activists do occur, many people leave the movement. We saw that in 1990's when

activists were being repressed, arrested and incarcerated. While many are still involved despite that repression, others just left and are now meat eaters, milk drinkers, and disengaged from any social movements. A person with disabilities does not have such leeway to leave a movement that fights for their rights.

Image 18. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

Peter Singer writes in his book, *Rethinking Life and Death*,

To have a child with Down syndrome is to have a very different experience from having a normal child. It can still be a warm and loving experience, but we must have lowered expectations of our child's abilities. We cannot expect a child with Down syndrome to play the guitar, to develop an appreciation of science fiction, to learn a foreign language, to chat with us about the latest Woody Allen movie, or to be a respectable athlete, basketball player or tennis player.

We have another person who has done a lot for the animal liberation movements, but he's made himself an enemy of the disability movement. Consequently, if you say "animal rights" to people with disabilities who know anything about animal rights, they will be suspicious because of Peter Singer. Singer supports often deny that he has said anything against those with disabilities. The book excerpt above puts that argument to rest for reasons that clearly do not need to be explained.

Singer is perpetuating the concept of normalcy, and for him, Down syndrome isn't normal. See the quote above, one with which I take umbrage. I was in a school for youth with physical and mental disabilities, and I observed, firsthand, children who had Down syndrome playing the piano, drums, and violin. So, Peter Singer is wrong about that, as he is also wrong about their athletic ability, for I have seen students with Down syndrome engaging in sporting activities.

Singer is a philosopher who based his specious conclusions on supposition; he's not a psychologist, medical doctor, or teacher, and he believes that those with Down syndrome are viable medical testing subjects for the betterment of society—that is a utilitarian perspective.

Image 20. Designed by People for the Ethical Treatment of the Animals (PETA)

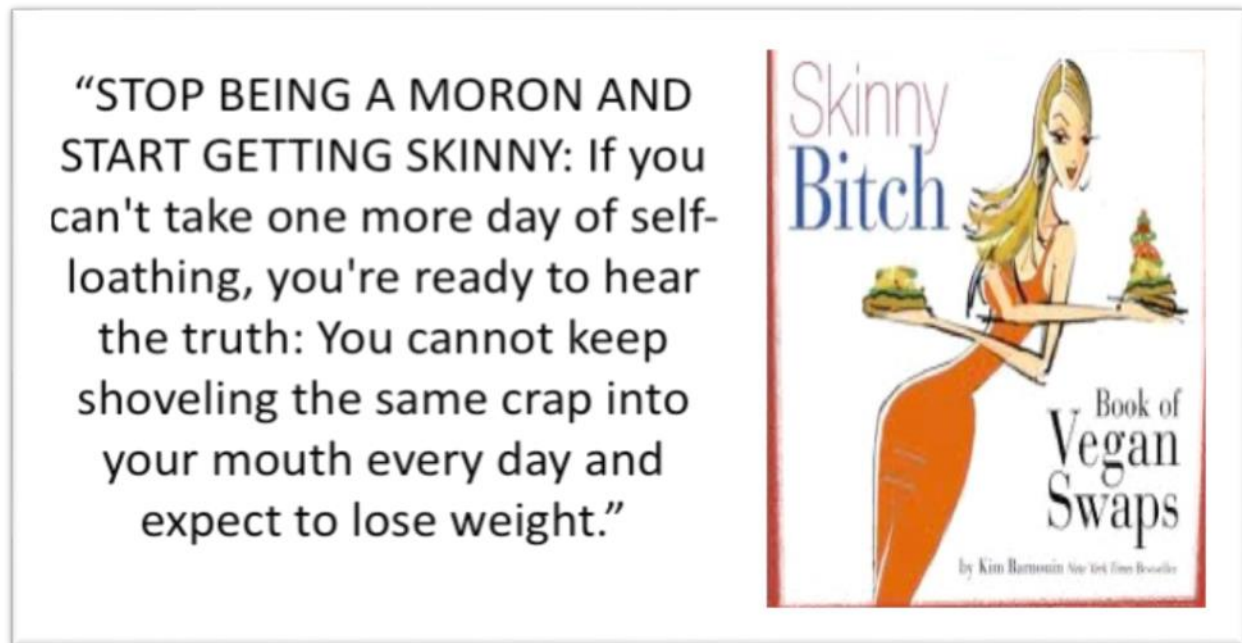


As another example, PETA perpetuates normalcy and tries to challenge what is normal by making veganism fit that criteria. In contrast, they say that drinking cow milk could lead to autism, which is not normal and something to be avoided from their perspective. First, that statement is false. Second, autism is nothing to be ashamed of and should be embraced rather than treated as a vile epidemic to conquer.

Why do we have to be normal? Why can't everyone be different; that is beautiful and representative of an ecological society that is in balance when everyone is independent and different. A very weak society is where everything is "normal" and the same.

So, don't drink milk, as PETA would say, so that you don't have disabilities. Further, if you don't drink milk or eat meat, then you will be skinny and sexy, which is another attempt to define normalcy and desirability.

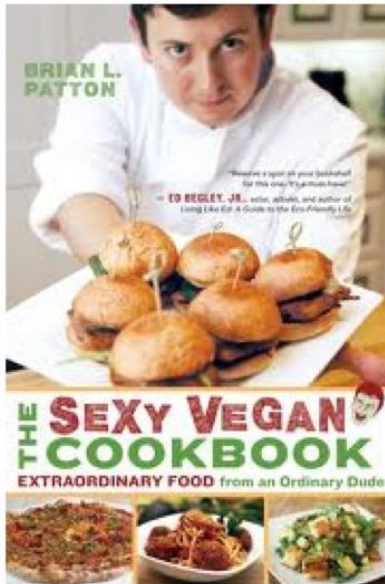
Image 21. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II and cover of *Skinny Bitch* (2005)



We can now move to targeting based on gender, which also includes ableism (re ‘moron’). Women are to be skinny and men to be bulky (in the muscular sense) to be masculine.

Again, we need to really understand that eating a vegan diet is not about being healthy, looking good, or being sexy. It is an ethical and moral decision and we need to step back and complicate the discourse rather than just giving out literature that says, “Be Sexy. Don’t eat meat.” The literature should say, “Be Ethical. Don’t eat meat.” That’s what we need to start emphasizing.

Image 22. Cover of *The Sexy Vegan Cookbook* (2012)



The sexy symbol of going vegan/vegetarian is played out. Look at PETA's use of Pamela Anderson, which is an airbrushed image of a woman who has had plastic surgery. That image does not depict the outcome of going vegan. Consequently, Anderson is not normal or natural. In contrast, PETA offers whale analogies to demonize people who don't meet consumer culture's weight standards.

Image 23. Designed by People for the Treatment of Animals (PETA)

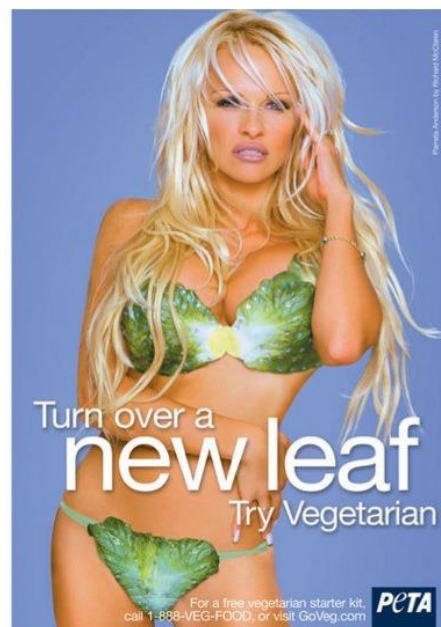


Image 24. Designed by People for the Treatment of Animals (PETA)

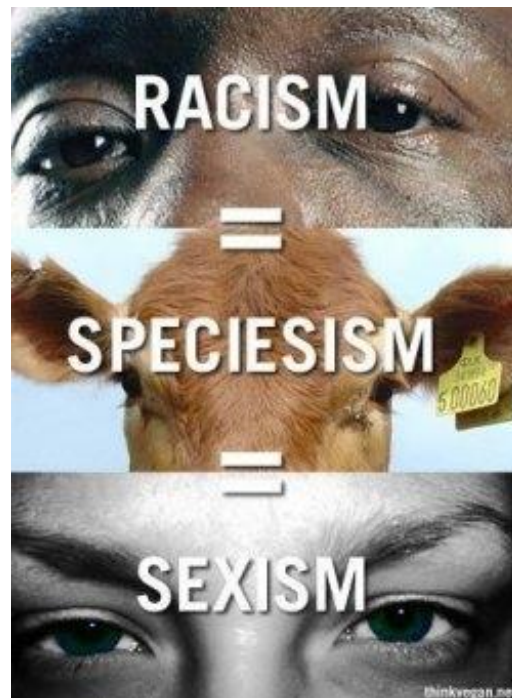


Image 25. Designed by V Girls / V Guys



Here is another image of muscular men and women who are also vegan. I have met some of them, and they are nice people, but their bodies should not be the point of veganism. Veganism is about not harming animals.

Image 26. Designed by thinkvegan.net



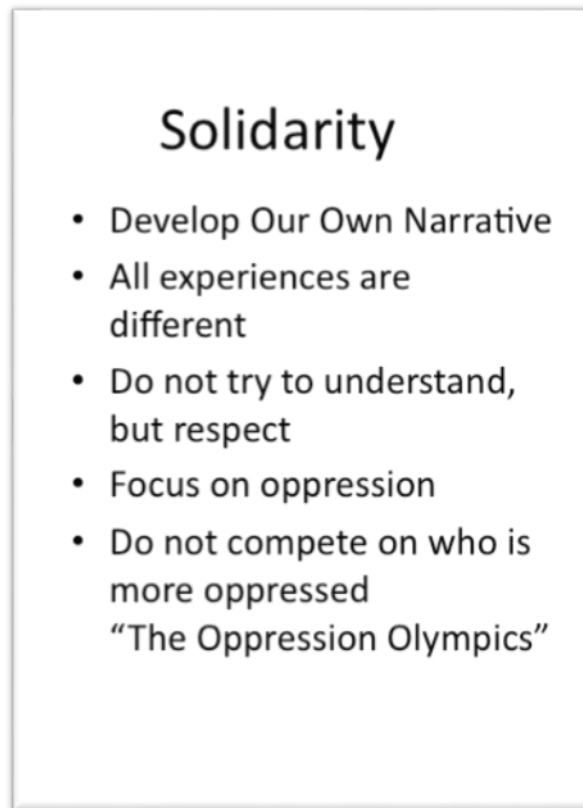
Holocaust analogies are also common in the movement, but the Holocaust is different than the slaughter of animals. The American slave trade is different than elephants exploited in a circus. We can never fully understand another's oppression. Therefore, we should try to sympathize, and value, engage, and learn about that experience, but we cannot understand what it means to hold an identity different than our own. We cannot have experiences we have not had.

Racism doesn't equal speciesism; speciesism doesn't equal sexism. As noted, "equal" is a socially constructed measurement. Racism entails specific experiences, as does speciesism and sexism. Therefore, we shouldn't make these broad statements even though they are very easy and may sway people to our side. What's missing here is articulation of a moral/ethical philosophical theory. Analogies such as those mentioned also offend a great amount of people, such as those from the Jewish community, people of color and women.

The savior mentality also arises when we take pictures of ourselves with goats, chickens, pigs, etc. Are those images really about the animals, or are they saying, "Look at what I did today. I am better than you." I am like Brad Pitt, Madonna, etc. saving youth from Africa.

The disability community does not want pity. The concept of pity is a very philosophical term where you belittle an individual and reinforce ideas about their inferiority while believing yourself superior and of the dominant group.

I also think there is a problem with the term "special," as in the Special Olympics. What makes them so special? Isn't everyone special? The concept of "special" is very much like "pity" because we see others as having disabilities, which make them less than. Pitying someone means they aren't up to your level and don't deserve to live in a normal society. Normalcy is the framework of pity.

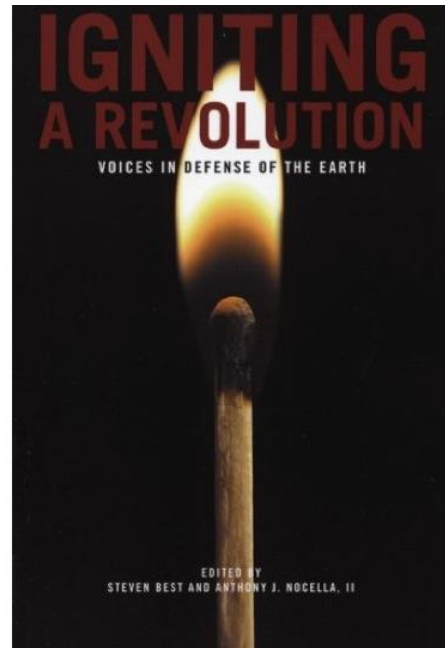
Image 27. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II

Solidarity is about respect. It is not about focusing solely on another's oppression. We also shouldn't compete when it comes to oppression; otherwise, we engage in the futile Oppression Olympics. We need each other, and every experience is very valuable. As Black Panther Fred Hampton would say: "Yellow power for yellow people; Brown power for black people; and White power for white people." I believe in power for all people.

Image 28. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II with *Igniting a Revolution* (2006) book cover

Fighting for Total Liberation

Unity
Accountability
Responsibility
Holistic
Radical



We must start fighting for total liberation, unity, accountability, responsibility, and a holistic and radical approach to these things. For example, I co-edited a book collection called *Igniting a Revolution* that brought different movements together through concepts of total liberation and intersectionality. Thank you so much. I really enjoyed presenting.

Image 29. Designed by Anthony J. Nocella II



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Animal Prostheses as a Site of Transspecies Intimacy: Que(e)rying Time

Name: Lauren O'Laughlin

Title: Doctorate Student

Affiliation: Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies Department, University of Washington

Location: Seattle, WA, USA

E-mail: lnolaugh@u.washington.edu

Keywords: Critical Animal Studies, Transspecies Intimacy, Disability, Temporality

ANIMAL PROSTHESIS AS A SITE OF TRANSSPECIES INTIMACY: QUE€RYING TIME

As the small brown goat ran to greet us, she hobbled upon a metallic leg that began just above her left knee. The Farm Sanctuary coordinator began to speak: "Zoop is unique. We found her earlier this year just a few miles from a slaughterhouse and she was walking on her knees due to a nasty case of frostbite. We tried to save Zoop's front legs, but we weren't able to keep them both. But she's got a prosthetic leg now and she's happier than ever. She loves jumping up and giving farm visitors 'high fives' with her forehead." Almost on cue, the little goat reared up on her hind legs, waving her prosthetic leg up in the air and twisting her head toward me, eagerly awaiting a pat on the head.

As I responded to her 'high five' request with an equally eager pat, I reflected on how unusual this situation was. How few farm animals are given a second chance to live out their lives in a sanctuary? How few animals are deemed important enough to merit care for their so-called

disabilities. Like other instruments of care, animal prostheses delineate intelligible bodies from those that are unintelligible, to borrow Judith Butler's language. Attending to human-animal relations in the U.S. reveals that we extend subjectivity to specific animals (usually domesticated pets such as cats and dogs) by naming them, caring for them and recognizing them as individuals. There are cats and dogs with prostheses but there is no discussion of commodified farm animals with disabilities being cared for, largely because farm animals are seen as not just incapable of suffering but as disposable. These beings are rendered into what Jacques Derrida calls *animots*, a play on the French words "animal" and "word," implying that animals have merely become abstract representations of animality rather than seen as unique individual lives (2002). This is akin to what Giorgio Agamben calls "bare life:" life that is no longer grievable (1995).

Though numerous activists, scholars, and non-profits have drawn attention to the ubiquity of physical trauma in the U.S. agriculture industry for non-human animals and veterinarians have started discussions of proper pet prosthesis care, there is a dearth of literature on the specific ways that prostheses for farm animals change human-animal relations. Sunaura Taylor's work bridges her own experience with arthrogryposis with that of the suffering of farm animals to emphasize the interconnectedness of animal and human precarity (2011). The recent "eco-ability" literature emerging from the Institute for Critical Animal Studies has opened important avenues for discussion, but has since focused on the role disability plays in human subjects in environmental and animal justice work (2012). Despite the growing field of interest at the intersection of animality and ability in the U.S., there remains little work addressing the unique role that care for non-normative farm animal bodies plays in reframing the conversation about animals.

I would like to argue that the implementation of prosthetic limbs for animals constitutes a unique language of transspecies intimacy that recognizes the shared precarity of animals, both human and non-human. Applying time as an analytic to this relationship, we can see that this language subverts normative understandings of time for otherwise commodified animals (in other words, animals used for food or entertainment) by interrupting commodified time. Following Elizabeth Grosz, prostheses do not just constitute inanimate objects that we apply to the body (though I focus primarily on these in this paper), but animals and humans can become prostheses for one another (2005). By focusing on the moment of initial implementation of a literal prosthesis, we can see how humans and animals develop a transspecies prosthetic relationship. I close this paper with a reminder that critically engaging transspecies intimacy means an ongoing commitment to decolonize our minds of normative time. I maintain that understanding how we relate to animals with disabilities helps us to think about how we discuss disabilities in humans. It is for this reason that this work is pertinent to thinking about feminist and queer iterations of animal justice. When thinking about intimacy with animals, I refer not only to close bonds and connections. Like David Eng, I redefine it away from the sexual and romantic relations that mark the so-called liberal individual, which reinforce a clear divide between the bourgeois home from the world of culture, work and society (2010). Intimacy is polyvalent and often simultaneously rife with violence and affection. Furthermore, when I write about transspecies intimacy, I am referring not just to intimacy between different species, which would more aptly be called "interspecies intimacy." Instead, transspecies intimacy redefines the very boundaries of what each species

contains, troubling, in this case, the already leaky borders of what constitutes human versus animal.

At the core, implementing prostheses demonstrates a radical shift of focusing on what is important for *the animal as a grievable subject*. Unlike animal biotechnologies such as bovine growth hormones that improve the long-term investment of livestock or the development of fluorescent proteins inserted into zebrafish (dubbed “GloFish”) to make them more aesthetically pleasing, prostheses signify a commitment to reducing suffering for the animal. Articulating animals’ ability to suffer is to link their precarity with that of humans, articulating a shared ability to suffer. As Butler writes in *Precarious Life*, “[t]he body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency... In a way, we all live with this particular vulnerability, a vulnerability to the other that is part of bodily life, a vulnerability to a sudden address from elsewhere that we cannot preempt” (2004, p. 26, 29). The fact that farm animals are prescribed prostheses based off of human prostheses (and often manufactured by the same prosthetists) signifies the vulnerability and “shared embodied finitude” which is not species-specific (Stanescu 2012, p. 568). Following Robert McRuer’s *Crip Theory*, we are all simultaneously approaching and embodying disability (2006). Able-bodiedness is always in the process of trying to approximate an unattainable ideal and always failing (2006, p. 9). It is this inevitable failure of able-bodiedness that bonds all creatures, not just humans and animals deemed “disabled.”

Prostheses as signifiers of the recognition of animal sentience, as intelligible subjects, interrupt normative time in order to honor the animal’s grievability. This is significant because farm animals’ lives in the U.S. are typically measured in discrete time increments. Five years is the maximum lifespan of a dairy cow in industrial farming according to the EPA (2012), 42 days makes a broiler chicken mature enough for slaughter (Dozier et al. 2010), 14 hours is the number of artificial daylight hours necessary for layer hens to maintain maximum egg production (LSU Ag Center), and the list goes on. Many commodified animals are measured in this way in terms of the normative value they can produce when alive (milk, eggs, etc.), and when this drops below a certain amount per unit of time, their productivity is converted to meat.

When commodified animals slow down production, they are quickly killed and disposed of. For instance, federal regulations about slaughter methods proscribe that non-ambulatory cows should not be consumed given the association of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (known as “Mad Cow Disease”) with mobility issues. Instead the non-ambulatory cow or steer should be stunned on the transport vehicle and “disposed of” (American Meat Institute 2010, p. 28). Not surprisingly then, because the end product is compromised in the event of physical exhaustion or trauma, most discussion of livestock disability is articulated in terms of prevention. Given the way that farm animals are fed, treated and housed, however, developing a mobility problem is quite common. It is for this reason that addressing disability in commodified animals is a truly radical act that works against the grain of capitalism. After all, there is no room for a long-term care model in a system that has specific time expectations for its laboring subjects.

There are eerie parallels to the discussion of disability in humans as something to be prevented rather than cared for in the present. Geographers such as Michael Dorn and Carla C. Keirns assert that modern public health is seemingly irrelevant to people with disabilities since its

services such as campaigns for injury prevention are intended to prevent disability rather than actually address the physical and emotional needs to those already living with disability (2009, p. 107). If we consider that everyone will face changes in their bodies and abilities, as Robert McRuer (2006) writes, why is the focus on othering if not ignoring the subjects who are already disabled? Dorn et. al elaborate that the United States National Health Interview's door-to-door surveys starting from the late 1950's were largely focused on assessing the total number of days of work lost to sickness and the amount of use of medical services rather than the specific lived experiences of the individuals in particular (2009). This is a trend that can be traced through the present day. The presumption here is that all bodies, both normatively abled and not, should aim to accomplish the same amount of work in a given day. But recognizing the violence of this expectation and offering commodified animals and laboring humans disability care permits the slowing down of time and the re-examining of what sort of labor these bodies *should* do.

In this way, the institution of prostheses troubles the equation of non-human animals with laboring subjects in order to create new iterations and understandings of time. Elizabeth Freeman asserts that time can encourage new ways of relating to each other and even new forms of justice that subvert the "chrononormative" and "chronobiopolitical" (2010, p.10). These moments of transspecies intimacy afford non-human animals what José Esteban Muñoz calls a *futurity*, and what Alain Badiou refers to as the "thing-that-is-not-yet-imagined" (2009, p. 21). After all, the present is not enough, according to Muñoz: "It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations" (2009, p. 27). Similarly, animals with disabilities are denied a present in the contemporary agriculture structures. To render these animals as having potential and a future is to radically rethink the way that disability has been understood as a kind of "mishap" to be prevented in future generations.

Moreover, implementing prostheses in animals can be a queer site of transspecies intimacy because it is often a process that requires constant maintenance. In other words, implementation of a prosthetic device for Zoop requires ongoing veterinary visits to assess the life of the prosthesis, as well as the more basic care process of putting on and taking off the prosthesis for her. On a more frequent basis, caring for an animal with a limb prosthesis means regularly assessing the animal's skin for signs of bruising or bleeding at the site of the prosthesis. Limb prostheses are sometimes embedded with pressure-sensitive foam to assess if the prosthesis is putting high levels of pressure on the animal's body and, consequently, must be examined periodically for discoloration. Because the care for many animals with disabilities is not just ephemeral but continuous, prosthesis care acts as a kind of fermata, extending the time of connection between animals and their caretakers and signifying a commitment on the part of humans to the animals' wellbeing and recognition of their grievability.

Although there is radical potentiality in building the kind of transspecies intimacy that I have just discussed, it is important to note that there is no *pure* space of intimacy, both in humans and animals, and thus there is no *pure* instance of queering time for animals. Both in humans and non-humans, infantilizing discourses often surround disability in ways that reinstitute normative time despite their best efforts to avoid doing so. This can emerge in seemingly innocuous things such as having the reflex to coo at cute videos of animals successfully walking with a prosthesis or describing Zoop as "inspirational," as a number of fans did. The moment we infantilize

animals with disabilities by virtue of comparing them to normative members of the same species, we demonstrate that we are deeply entrenched in straight time, work time, normative time. The Squeaky Wheelchair blogger calls this “inspiration porn,” which constitutes:

allow[ing] disabled people to become a commodity, shared, tweeted, emailed, and cooed about for the sake of a public that wants to be “inspired” by them, to see their everyday accomplishments and participation in life as an uplifting exception and not a rule. Using people with disabilities as “heartwarming” stories when they accomplish the same feats as their non-disabled peers implies a glaring lack of expectations for them (2013, October 27).

Although she writes about humans, fetishizing non-normative animal bodies is a slippery slope to fetishizing and infantilizing non-normative human bodies. Both Zoop and many other animals with prostheses are portrayed as strong and heroic for the moments they are able to pass as able-bodied or to accomplish tasks that able-bodied subjects can accomplish.

To queer transspecies intimacy is to recognize that fetishizing animals and normalizing them despite their non-normative bodies, as well-intentioned as it may be, runs the risk of reproducing a hierarchical relationship between humans and animals and reinstituting normative time. At the core, building transspecies intimacy with animals with disabilities is an important issue for feminists. In a society where commodified animals are worked to the bone, often literally, pausing and recognizing the different abilities of animals is crucial if we are to think more broadly about what justice might look like. To truly foster transspecies intimacy we must recognize that animal and human oppressions are synergistically interconnected or, to follow Clare Kim and Carla Freccero, are “crossings and entanglements [that] profoundly shape our ways of being in the world” (2013, p. 461). The way we treat animals often has so much to say about the way we treat other humans. We are, after all, animals, too.

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Lived Objects: Prosthetics, Agency and the Question of Object Oriented Ontology within an Ecological Disability Studies Framework

Name: Zach Richter

Title: Independent Scholar-Activist

Affiliation: Did I Stutter - didistutter.org

Location: Chicago, IL, USA

Email: cyruscyruscyruscyrus8@gmail.com

Keywords: Dysfluency, Neurodiversity, Ableism, Queerness, Neuroqueer

LIVED OBJECTS: PROSTHETICS, AGENCY AND THE QUESTION OF OBJECT ORIENTED ONTOLOGY WITHIN AN ECOLOGICAL DISABILITY STUDIES FRAMEWORK

Hi, so I'm Zach Richter and my presentation is called 'Lived objects, prosthetic agency and the question of object-oriented ontology with an ecological disability studies framework.' I am going to start by saying the main theorists I'm using for this work are Karen Barad, Sara Ahmed and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Barad, whose book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* is really important to the new field of critical object orientation, uses Niels Bohr to consider the entanglement of matter. What is interesting from an ecological disabilities framework is her use of the image of a blind person who is feeling the world with a cane (an idea from Bohr's writing also) to think about objects and the entanglements of the social within the object and tie in the co-entanglement of matter. And it is very important to her to theorize what she calls "a gentle realism" in order to ascribe a greater degree of agency to objects and to question the cut which cast subjects and objects as separate and not inter-related.

Some of us are already familiar with Sara Ahmed's work with queer phenomenology; she posits the table as kind of a centering device for the family as part of the idea of heteronormativity that comes from queer theory. The table is interesting to think about because it is an object that has kind of the social forces of heteronormativity embedded within it; this family table is an object which we regard as physical, but it has this social and political power, and it gets that partially from its spatial effort of directing a parallelism between the power of the patriarchal center and the more passive feminine and child but partially from how it centers the subject. So this is an object we are living through, and that gets me to my presentation, which is the lived object.

In Barad's work, we hear intentionality may be more attributable to a complex network of human and nonhuman agents including historically successful material conditions, and the phenomena are the ontological inseparabilities and entangled interactive agencies that are ontologically primitive relationships and interacting forces which transcend boundaries. Once more consider the example of the blind person who is traversing a space with their cane; Barad's focus is how the texture of the surface the blind person is traversing sticks out to them, and that for her is an example of intra-action between object and subject.

But I would like to take the thesis a little bit further in order to suggest that Barad isn't taking into consideration the moment in which there's kind of an ambiguity for the blind person when it is not clear what is happening to them and they get kind of confused. So when we take into consideration that ambiguity, we are forced to think about how real and how consistent that texture is, and we know the texture is not always present, that there must be an effort of reaching out, of feeling out to feel that texture. And so what I would posit is that the prosthetic device of which is used to feel, which in this case is the cane, is an object that is lived through—it is a lived object. And that object is kind of this place where the entanglement plays out to a greater degree than the texture of this outer world. So I am contradicting Barad here, which leads me to explore Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Barad refers to Merleau-Ponty a lot. He was Foucault's teacher, and as a Marxist phenomenologist, he helps to reveal the ideological outlines set out to interpret and make indistinct phenomena into a set view of reality. Merleau-Ponty uses the concept of horizons to map out the limited and inter-related nature of a given type of perception. Within the Merleau-Pontian viewpoint, phenomena are horizontally separated into separate sense types that share information. But when specific sense types flood, the formerly solid lines become translucent. So, Barad's thesis asks for that line to no longer be a solid line and so for us to recognize that horizons are inherently porous, that the entanglement means that multiple areas of sensation collude and that horizontality becomes lost to multi-directional entanglement. And what that suggestion is, is that there's muddledness to the world generated partially by the interaction between spatial and tactile forms of sense data from multiple sources. And so we get this other element of the prosthetic, of the objects that we live through.

There is agency in making the effort to feel, in extending, to use one more of Barad's examples, the arm to feel and move in a specific manner. Starting on the left, for instance, or starting on the right, implies personal agency on the part of the cane user; it implies an agency about the world, what would be called a non-linear orientation. So with the lived object we recognize this place which is liminal space in which multiple agencies are intermingling, multiple forces of agency,

multiple intentionalities are kind of colliding. We have to imagine that a limb or an arm or a prosthetic arm or a conjured item of speech is prosthetic in that it enables the subject, this thing between the self and outer world, the ego and the self, is touched and effected by the environment and by the agency of the human body. And you know they feel the objects act as kind of outer extensions of one's agency in that they are limited in that same way that one's agency would be limited.

We get this because there's this stigma that's not only given to the person but to the limb or aspect of your person that seems out of order; that limb is targeted by ablest limitation and stigma. And I like to use an example which fits a current effort that I'm working with, which is dis-fluency.

The stutter is kind of a prosthetic in that it's a part of the person that is stretching out, but the stutter itself is the cut between subject and object as well, in so far as it is interpreted as a sign of weakness morally or psychologically. We see the cut, in terms of the stutter, as separating the stutter from the stutter-er and that's because the stutter as a part of the body, as a thing put out from oneself, has its agency taken up by the world of ablest social meaning in terms of its unfinishedness, in terms of its unevenness. The stutter itself, the moment of dis-fluency in speech, or the knarred limb in the case of physical disability, or the cane for a blind person—these extensions of disability are themselves objects, but in a sense that they are viewed as external from what is normal, and when a subject finds these objects extended onto them, there is a reaction of pushing away.

We also see this in the case of a cage or in the case of a dirty floor. The object has social assumptions projected upon it by the public world of social meaning, and so when we see theorists like Ahmed noting how the table is situated in this heteronormative way against queer people and how it can be used in a misogynist way against gendered people, there's a battle being waged to kind of liberate the lived object and reflect upon that object's role in collective material consciousness.

Likewise, an eco-ability framework would aim to liberate the parts of the animal from being seen as tools, so we see vegans and other animal rights activists repudiating products made with meat because of this knowledge that, in a sense, those objects are made through cutting, and through being cut away from the subject they are imbued with a social meaning of exploited use, and that they are (or were once) part of the independent agency of the animal is disregarded.

Similarly, we see disabled people pushing for things like Mad pride or pushing for wheelchairs to be regarded as objects which are needed and useful but are not bound to the person; and acceptance of a prosthesis is shown as not wanting to hide or cover these disabled parts. So, in these cases, battles for animal rights or disability rights are being waged on/in the constitution and the make-up of the object itself. There is kind of a paradox that an object can be both used as an outer sphere by a collective social concern and also used by an agency in terms of the material navigation of objects. But that paradox can work with this phenomenological theory about the horizon in the sense that the connection between the object to the person and of the object to an environment can be viewed as more inconsistent. This scholarly project exists to critique some efforts in poststructuralist new materialism which would understand objects and effects as

completely separate from movements for identity and movements for equal rights and movements against capitalism. That they would aim to skew these kinds of pieces of reality into an inter-subjective interplay and place them into a symbolic economy in a Lacanian style but at the same time forget the political situatedness of the object in the collective unconscious and that if an object has a meaning projected upon it, such a meaning would not be inseparable from dominant meaning systems that would align it either within neoliberal schemes of identity or in resistance to them and that objects are in fact battlegrounds between a collective agency which would disavow them and a personal agency which acts through them.

And so it is a problem to me when critical object-orientation or a recent poststructuralist material theorizing misses or evades the multiple agencies present in the object. I think that Ahmed does very well with the example of the table which reveals the sense in which the phenomena of the table is over taken by the phenomenon of the family which uses it as a gathering point. And in the conversation about objects, I would hope that more people involved in eco-criticism, people involved in critical animal studies as well as people involved in disability studies and critical disability studies make an effort to retake objects as part of their struggle and make efforts to challenge this trend which Barad occupies toward viewing objects as completely separate from these struggles and trying to use her idea that objects have an acting agency.

That is to say that merely saying the object has a texture and acts on its own is not enough. It is acting on its own as well as being acted through both by a wider social culture and individual agents which materially pushes through it, or touch it, or must use it. So we get this understanding, as I'm ending my presentation, that the object is beset by a multiplicity of forces which are all acting through it and acting in it and acting with it. And so its agency is not alone, but its agency is kind of being pulled back and forth in two to three different directions. I will finally add that we have to consider the extent to which objects can be used for a disability agenda which would argue that everyone is using objects to extend their will, and used within an animal agenda, we would consider the sense in which animal objects still retain an animal agency. Thank you.



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Civilization Will Stunt Your Growth: Defending Primitivism from Accusations of Ableism

Name: Ian Erik Smith

Title: Independent Scholar-Activist

Affiliation: Uncivilized Animals - www.uncivilizedanimals.wordpress.com

Location: Eugene, OR, USA

Email: ianeriksmith@yahoo.com

Keywords: Ableism, Primitivism, Anarchism, Domestication, Disability

CIVILIZATION WILL STUNT YOUR GROWTH: DEFENDING PRIMITIVISM FROM ACCUSATIONS OF ABLEISM

Introduction

Anarcho-primitivism is frequently described by its critics as being incapable of providing sufficient accommodation for people with disabilities; it purportedly “requires a non-disabled body for its ideal society” and is thus viewed as an inherently ableist position (Ben-Moshe, Nocella, & Withers, 2012, 216).

I will argue, on the contrary, that anarcho-primitivism advocates a society that would provide for the fullest flourishing for people with a diverse range of abilities and that civilization itself acts as a disabling force. It is civilization that effectively stunts our growth and renders many of us disabled; it is civilization that narrows the range of our senses, shrinks our world and our horizons, and denies us the opportunity to experience the full use of our bodies.

The standardization of mass society necessarily defines an increasing number of people as “disabled” if they do not fit a narrowly prescribed form. The “normal range” of human variation

is being shrunk and those outside of this range are stigmatized, pathologized, medicated, and manipulated. The civilized solution to living with people of different abilities is to treat large segments of people like broken clocks in need of new parts or regular servicing. This approach is in accordance with the standard operating procedure of civilization to understand every human problem as a technical problem; it allows us to discharge our responsibility to care for those around us by developing new products, offering new services, and building new infrastructure. The need for relationships is erased. In this way, civilization allows us *not* to care for others who may need assistance, which is to say, it allows others not to care for us when we need assistance. The civilized solution to accommodating people with a diverse range of abilities is worse than the perceived problem. The solution is runaway technological escalation with a trajectory that is currently rushing toward transhumanism. It is a hatred and a disgust not strictly for disabled bodies but for physical bodies as such.

The Accusations of Ableism

Anthony Nocella has the first and the last word in *Earth, Animal, and Disability Liberation: The Rise of the Eco-Ability Movement*, a book he co-edited with Judy K.C. Bentley and Janet M. Duncan. In the Introduction to the book, Nocella claims that “green anarchists view people with disabilities as a liability to a self-sustaining community” (Nocella, Bentley, & Duncan 2012, xvi). And in his concluding chapter, Nocella says that “green anarchists and primitivists argue that those who have disabilities, identified as the weak of society, will die off because of their lack of ability to survive in nature independent of technology and other people.” He claims that “green anarchists are advocating for a survival-of-the-fittest approach” and that “[t]hey promote a society that would fail to meet the needs of people with disabilities.” (Nocella 2012, 245).

A.J. Withers, probably the most vehement voice in *Earth, Animal, and Disability Liberation*, has said that “disabled people are incompatible with the primitivist ideal,” that “anarcho-primitivism is fundamentally disableist,” and that “this oppressive ideology cannot be reconciled with notions of social justice” (Withers 2012, 121). Reaching a crescendo, Withers warns: “The primitivist ideal is one where disabled people have been killed...We need to be eliminated in order to create their Utopia” (Withers 2012, 120).

The ableism charge of Nocella and Withers is a variation on a theme. It is a filled-in-version of a vitriolic charge made by the likes of Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin that anarcho-primitivists are genocidal either in intent or practice. Chomsky has said of anarcho-primitivists that “what they are calling for is the greatest mass genocide in human history.”

Dulled Senses, Diminished Bodies

Ecophilosopher David Abram has asserted that “[a]part from eating and breathing, the senses are our most intimate link to the living land” (Abram 1997) and warns of a “civilized distrust of the senses” (Abram 1988). Either through the atrophy that comes with neglect or the everyday injury that is nearly unavoidable in civilized society, the full range of human ability has been truncated and our senses diminished; abilities that were commonplace are now exceptional or even altogether absent. It is nearly impossible to escape civilization unscathed; civilization itself disables.

Consider vision: myopia (or nearsightedness) has been found to occur at rates ranging between 0% and 3% in hunter-gatherer populations with most instances being fairly mild. More severe cases may be limited to one in one thousand. But “when normal environmental conditions associated with modern civilization are introduced into the hunter gatherer lifestyle,” rates of myopia can rapidly swell to levels on par with western populations within a single generation (Cordain, 2002). For a comparison, in 2010 the National Eye Institute reported a rate of myopia in the United States of 23 percent and anticipates that it will continue to rise for the foreseeable future. This has been partially attributed to excessive “near work” (things like reading, screen time); our horizons have narrowed from looking out across savannas to straining to read illuminated screens.

Researchers in Australia recently discovered that “screen time has a potential adverse influence on retinal microvascular structure” (Gopinath, et al. 2011, 1233). While it has been well-known that sedentary behavior and screen time is associated with cardiovascular disease, the Sydney researchers found that such behavior negatively affects even the microvasculature of the eye and therefore may result in impaired vision. Interestingly, children who spent more time outdoors showed less narrowing of the retinal arterioles. But physical activity alone reportedly does not fully account for this finding as engaging in indoor sports did not provide the same benefit as outdoor activity.

Not only have our lifestyles and our eyes changed but the surrounding environment has as well: “only 40% of Americans live where it becomes sufficiently dark at night for the human eye to make a complete transition from cone to rod vision” (Longcore, T. & Rich, C., 2004, 192). That means, for many of us, our eyes are only operating within an artificially narrow range; this is akin to not being able to fully extend one’s limbs.

Consider mobility: In *Energy and Equity*, Ivan Illich has explained how the modern traveler has been “deprived of the use of his feet” meaning that walking is often no longer a feasible option; planes, trains, and automobiles have scattered people across vast distances and have erected physical barriers in the way of the pedestrian (Illich 1974, 48). Illich is concerned with loss of opportunity to use one’s feet and how technological development has made feet inadequate, whereas anthropologist Tim Ingold explains how footwear physically alters the feet in ways that diminish ability. He states that “the human foot, with its relatively immobile big toe, has all but lost its original prehensile function” (Ingold 2004, 317). In contrast, the more often bare feet of indigenous peoples are said to “pick over the ground with an almost manipulative precision” (Ingold 2004, 334).

One important point made by disability rights activists is that disability is not strictly defined by the presence of bodily impairment. Rather, disability is often imposed on individuals by society. Mass society is necessarily standardized society where the normal range of human variation is artificially narrowed.

This pathologizing of natural human variation is evident in the recent controversy surrounding the recently released DSM-5. Critics argue that DSM-5 “will worsen diagnostic inflation, increase inappropriate treatment, create stigma, and cause confusion among clinicians and the public” (Frances, 2005). The DSM largely exists to attach labels to people, to classify and

categorize, and with each new version, what passes for “normal” or even “healthy” shrinks. People in ever greater numbers are steered toward treatment.

But there is a certain arbitrariness as to what qualifies as normal. This is one of more important contributions made by disability rights activists. Even an emotionally charged diagnosis such as schizophrenia and the lived experience of hearing voices need not be understood as pathological or as requiring professional treatment. Oryx Cohen has pointed out that symptoms associated with psychosis are experienced by approximately 1 in 10 people over the course of a lifetime and that this is roughly on par with rates of left-handedness. Cohen has argued that it is often the very act of labeling experiences such as hearing voices as symptoms, as pathological, and as evidence of a disease that is at least partially what makes such experiences dangerous; people are convinced by those in positions of authority that something is deeply wrong with them (Levine, 2013).

Lacking these professional classes and these diagnostic categories becomes a strength for those living outside of civilization. One cannot simply be dismissed as schizophrenic or as sick or as crazy but rather must necessarily be treated as an individual; furthermore this isn't “treatment” in the professional sense of the word but rather care from one's peers.

Personal Identity: Identity Politics

While I present the above in defense of anarcho-primitivism and to suggest that it offers the greatest prospect of a society that makes possible the fullest flourishing, it is likely that it will not assuage the critics. Indeed, it runs the risk of provoking greater condemnation. The difficulty with the previous section for those within the newly emerging eco-ability field and for at least some disability rights activists is that it portrays disability as generally negative and as something to be avoided if possible. To portray any form of disability as negative is to seemingly set oneself up for accusations of ableism; it is interpreted as not wanting “those people” to exist.

The mistake being made is that such critics view eliminating (or reducing the frequency of) disability as equivalent to eliminating a particular type of person or a whole population of people. To say:

“Lower rates of disability are preferable to higher rates of disability”

is interpreted as:

“A world with fewer disabled people is preferable to a world with a greater number disabled people”

which, in turn, is taken as being morally on par with statements such as:

“A world with fewer black people is preferable to a world with a greater number of black people.”

“A world with fewer gay people is preferable to a world with a greater number of gay people.”

While the last two statements are clearly abhorrent, the first statement—the expressed desire to reduce disability rates—is not. It is a grave mistake to treat these statements functionally equivalent. A better way of understanding the first statement would be to treat it as on par with:

“A world with fewer assault victims is preferable to a world with a greater number of assault victims.”

The intention is not that assault victims need to be eliminated or that there is no place for “these people” in the world or that they need to die for anyone’s political ideal to be realized. The point is that a world with less instances of assault is to be preferred. If we can prevent assault then we ought to do that; preventing assault isn’t to be understood as preventing a particular type of person from coming into existence.

Another way to explain this is that disability should not be construed as a necessary component of one’s personal identity; rather it is contingent. To use a personal example, if Charcot-Marie-Tooth were eliminated prior to my having been born, it doesn’t mean that I would have never come into existence; it means I would have come into the world without that particular ailment. I would have been benefited not harmed.

This mistaken way of understanding disability has several very serious consequences. It’s effectively precludes taking steps to prevent various afflictions, it unfairly stigmatizes women who opt to abort afflicted fetuses, and could be reasonably extrapolated so as to oppose almost any public health measure.

An Obligation to Care: Division of Labor is Not Mutual Aid

I have argued that anarcho-primitivism provides for the fullest flourishing of people with a wide range of abilities and that civilization disables people either through brute physical impairment or by artificially narrowing the range of normal human behavior. Nonetheless, this does not remove the necessity to provide and receive care. As people inevitably differ in their abilities, everyone will need assistance at some point in their lives, including when they are very young, when they are elderly, and to different degrees and in different contexts during all other life stages. As disability and/or eco-ability activists have pointed out, “disability...should be perceived as a normal state of affairs” (Ben-Moshe, Nocella, & Withers, 2012, p. 211). Normal, at least, in the sense that all lives will experience disability and all lives will involve caring for others.

We have an obligation to care for others. I hope this general statement can be widely agreed upon. It is an open question and a matter of dispute as to what this obligation requires of us and how we satisfy this obligation. The obligation to care, for example, does not necessarily trump an obligation to refrain from harming others. Our desire to care for others may be impeded if the only means available to us imposes a great cost on others. For example, I should not harvest the organs from an unwilling healthy person to care for several others. So there are limits on what steps we may take to care for people. It is the same logic that compels many to oppose animal experimentation even in instances where some benefit may result.

But critics have somehow managed to confuse civilization's division of labor with anarchism's mutual aid. For example, A.J. Withers asks: "What, then, happens to disabled people when technology and division of labor are gone? Many disabled people rely on mutual aid and forms of assistance from others...the dissolution of labor roles...would mean that many disabled people would die" (Withers 2012, 119).

Division of labor is the active deskilling of a population and, in many ways, makes mutual aid impossible. The deskilled often have little to offer outside of a highly specific context and even within that context what they can offer is often commodified rather than freely given. Doctors and therapists dispensing medications and treating schizophrenics are not engaged in mutual aid regardless of the treatment outcomes. Division of labor serves capital, whereas mutual aid serves people; they are nearly opposites. In fact, those subject to an aggressively applied division of labor could themselves be fairly described as disabled. Simon Fairlie (2012) has described himself as "dystechnic," suggesting a lack of certain skills and abilities.

There is also compelling evidence in the fossil record of the earliest humans caring for the sick and disabled in their communities. In their book *The Wisdom of the Bones*, paleoanthropologists Alan Walker and Pat Shipman describe the unearthing of *Homo erectus* remains belonging to an individual 1.7 million years ago who had a severe condition resulting in painful, debilitating blood clots. This individual would necessarily have to have been cared for by others. They would have been dependent on others to bring food and water as well as protect from other threats such as wild animals. Walker and Shipman write that "[h]er bones are a poignant testimony to the beginnings of sociality, of strong ties among individuals" (Walker & Shipman 1997, 167).

Similarly, Neanderthal specimens have been discovered that show signs of osteoarthritis. Ronald Wright argues that these "severely crippled individuals...had evidently been supported for years by their community" (Wright 2005, 20).

It should also not be overlooked that many nonhuman animals also care for their sick and disabled; Marc Bekoff has discovered that some even honor their dead. The obligation to care for others, the sick, disabled, or elderly, can and has been met outside the confines of civilization and without corresponding technological apparatus.

Magic Words and Promissory Notes

Nocella, Bentley, & Duncan (2012) rightly acknowledge that "[t]he unchecked desire for technology can be a slippery slope, that can cause a destructive rippling effect" but support the use of "renewable eco-technology and non-polluting resources" (p. xvii-xviii). They seemingly consider it possible to preserve all the advantages and benefits offered by technology while dispensing with all of the negative aspects. It's a desire for perpetual motion or perhaps cold fusion or nuclear power's promise of energy "too cheap to meter." The "eco-" prefix is used as a magic word to rhetorically split the good from the bad; it is a promissory note suggesting that we'll somehow fix these problems in the future.

Unfortunately, the good and the bad are inherently linked and consequently represent a package deal. Anarcho-primitivists need not deny that civilization is capable of offering conveniences or

that particular technologies can indeed be life-saving. But the whole project is either accepted or rejected *in toto*; it is not possible to cleanly cleave the good from the bad, the benefits from the harms. Rather, one must assess where the preponderance of consequences lie.

Nocella, Bentley, and Duncan (2012) advise that because of the environmental cost (which must be understood to include the suffering and premature death of humans and nonhumans), technology should only be used for worthwhile purposes such as advancing social justice and not for frivolous reasons. They, like so many others, presumably want to preserve medicine but dispense with mining, retain the internet but subtract Angry Birds, keep Skype but only for our conferences.

To Infinite and Beyond! Transhumanism

Anarcho-primitivists are criticized for promoting a society that would not include purportedly empowering technologies such as highly sophisticated wheelchairs, elevators, and cars. The risk is runaway technological escalation. Every proposed technological advance is likely to benefit someone in some way even if the net effect is harmful toward the biotic community as a whole. The identified benefit can then be used to suggest that the development must necessarily be pursued while the harm is placed out of sight or possibly addressed with the promissory note of fixing it later. Current projects being pursued include exo-skeletons for those unable to walk, brain-controlled artificial limbs, and ingestible computers.

The lead developer of ReWalk, a robotic exo-skeleton designed to be worn by paraplegics, has argued that such technology will soon be understood as basic care explaining: “If you’ve had your leg amputated above the knee, is there debate about whether you need a prosthetic? There really isn’t” (Lapowsky, 2014). Likewise, he anticipates a time when the need for exo-skeletons is not a matter of discussion.

The destination of the runaway train is transhumanism. Eventually to be embodied, to be corporeal, and to be mortal will be viewed as disability. Ultimately, it may be argued that escaping our bodies altogether is necessary to overcome ableism. The only truly able-bodied will paradoxically be those who have escaped their bodies. To be an animal is to be disabled. Transhumanist Zoltan Istvan has said “we didn’t evolve through billions of years to remain animals.”

In that vein, Istvan (2014) has argued that failing to support research into radical life extension should be considered criminal manslaughter and has wondered when such an offense will be legally prosecuted. Istvan believes that opposing such research (or simply refusing to allocate vast sums of money toward it) is to take on the responsibility of all who die (regardless of how or when they die). Istvan and many of his transhumanist colleagues argue that it is death we must overcome. Istvan is not an aberration, his project is the logical endpoint of civilization.

Conclusion

While anarcho-primitivism has been accused of being inherently discriminatory—indeed, even genocidal—and ableist to the core, the reality is just the opposite. Anarcho-primitivism provides for the greatest level of flourishing for people with a range of abilities. Civilization presents itself as the solution but fails to acknowledge its role in contributing to the problem. Civilization knocks people down and then sells them crutches, it takes out their feet and sells them wheels; for every person it assists, it poisons many others.

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What About the Plants?: Integrating Ecology into Eco-ability

Name: Kim Socha, Ph.D.

Title: English Professor

Affiliation: Normandale Community College

Location: Bloomington, MN, USA

Email: kimberlyannsocha@gmail.com

Keywords: Ecoability, Animals, Disabilities, Plants

WHAT ABOUT THE PLANTS?: INTEGRATING ECOLOGY INTO ECO-ABILITY

Hello, this is Kim Socha. I would like to thank the organizers of the 2nd annual Engaging with Eco-Ability conference and also those presenting and listening in. It is a pleasure to be sharing my work with you today. I have a short piece entitled “What about the Plants: Integrating Ecology into Eco-Ability.” As a contributor to the first book on Eco-Ability and co-editor of the special issue on Eco-ability for the *Journal of Critical Animal Studies*, I have noticed the difficulties some scholars, not all, appear to have when integrating the environment proper, what I will call “green nature,” into their work. The correlations between human and non-human animals with disabilities seem a more natural fit for some, relegating plants, trees, mountains, oceans etc. to the margins of the theoretical perspective.

Indeed, when co-authoring both the book chapter with Dr. Deanna Adams and the journal introduction with Drs. Joe Lesson-Schatz and Judy K.C Bentley, we felt a need to both defend and find the right words to align the environment with human and non-human animal issues. For example, in the book chapter “Shocking into submission: Suppressive practices and use of behavioral modifications on non-human animals, people with disabilities and the environment,”

Adams and I note the following in the first paragraph: “behaviour modification techniques used to train dogs to stop barking, stay and roll-over are the same used in the modification of behavior in students with disability.”

Although these methods may not seem directly applicable to the natural environment, we argue that the same Western-colonial mindset of controlling that which deviates from mainstream expectations and desires underpins the attempt to dominant nature as well. In the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* special issue introduction, Joe, Judy and I explain that although the environment is generally not seen as a marginalized group in the anthropocentric and even nonhuman-centric sense, considering our current ecological crises, the living world we term nature is certainly a casualty of unbridled technological advances. And we further state this caveat in the introduction; with a few negligible exceptions, environmental issues do not factor highly into the special issue.

To be sure, we are pleased with the variety of essays amassed for the journal issue, but at the same time, we saw a need to look forward to developing discussions in scholarship about eco-ability that *thoughtfully* integrate environmental issues into this growing intersectional field. So that’s really what I’m trying to do with this presentation: to argue that we need to be more thoughtful and deliberate with our integration of ecology into the area of eco-ability. I don’t have all of the answers at this time, but I want to offer some suggestions for how we can do that.

To provide an example of human dominance over green nature, I want to share a passage from the chapter “Shocking into submission” because it demonstrates the ways in which the environment’s supposed unruliness results in human attempts to keep it at bay. Mechanisms are used to control children with disabilities and domesticated animals. For instance, shock collars are used in both cases. Adams and I argue that aside from the obvious environmental devastation that humanity now faces, there are more subtle ways that the natural environment is shocked into submission. However, because supposed non-sentient life does not react with sound or movement that humans can perceive, the correlations between sentient and non-sentient existence are often ignored.

However, industrial society controls nature in other ways by attempting to integrate it into its environs of construction, steel, glass and concrete. (These foundations of industrial society come from nature as well, everything does, but I’m not yet prepared yet to address that paradox, at least not in this presentation.) Thus we have green spaces in urban and metropolitan areas and expertly constructed landscapes within suburban developments, golf courses, resorts and college campuses. But rather than successfully integrating green nature into our mechanized culture, I see such constructs as examples of what I term “symbolic nature” indicating images of an untouched wilderness ironically crafted by human hands as works of art, as opposed to living ecosystems.

In sum, although shocking living beings into submission may seem relegated to animals and non-humans, this happens with green nature too. Consider the green spaces constructed in urban-metropolitan environments, as noted above. Other examples are the weed killers humans use to prevent nature from springing up through cracks in our sidewalks and pesticides that are sprayed

on plants to prevent other organisms from eating human food-sources. These are a couple issues with which I think Eco-ability should become more engaged.

I admit, as an animal activist, it is much harder to feel sympathy and passion for non-animal beings, and perhaps that is why it is more difficult to integrate environmental concerns into Eco-ability with the same fervor one does for non-human animals and human beings with disabilities.

In one way, the reason is quite simple: the environmental is not sentient, although it teems with sentient life, and thus cannot suffer physical pain and psychological torment. *Or can it?*

This brings me to the second part of my talk, one that should be a growing interest to animal and environmental activists: the question of sentience among organisms not of the Animalia Kingdom. Most animal activists have heard tongue-in-cheek questions about plant sentience within their animal advocacy, and while it is tempting to dismiss this red herring question out of hand, I believe we need to give it more serious thought and develop more sophisticated responses to the query, although it is most often asked within indifference by those who are hostile to veganism. But within our responses, we can craft avenues for integrating the seemingly non-sentient environment into a holistic Eco-ability theory that benefits both animals and the planet.

I should begin by stating that I am not of the mind that plants feel pain. However, I absolutely believe that they are alive, of course, respond to stimuli, and have a desire to flourish, among other amazing abilities best left to a botanist to explain. In addition, I am open to exploring any trustworthy material to prove my conclusions on plant sentience incorrect; however, none currently exist that I have come across.

During my vegan outreach, I invariably encounter the plant sentience question and it is almost always asked by one who thinks it is all a big joke or that s/he has found a way to make the vegan seem or feel unethical after all. In other words, they don't really care about plant sentience. They just want to poke fun at and cause the vegan to stumble for answers to their queries.

I, as do others in this position, usually respond with the answer that plants have no central nervous system nor fight or flight response mechanism that most pain feeling organisms have. Indeed, pain and terror, when looked at from a certain perspective, are actually gifts allowing one to flee predators. As such, it would be a foul trick of evolution to develop a group of about 300,000 living species of plant who are subject to the same psychological and physical pain that animals can experience without any ability to flee their environments or empirically response that they do not wanted to be so treated.

I usually respond to the diversionary plant question by saying if one is worried about eating plants because they possibly feel pain, stop eating meat because animals unquestionably feel pain. Further, meat-eaters are responsible for more plant deaths in their lifetimes because of the amount of plant-foods fed to "food" animals before slaughter. That response is usually enough to shut someone up, but as activists, we should aim higher than shutting down arguments. Rather, we should be able to engage in real discussion about the ecological world as an entity worthy of our attention and compassion.

Recently, a study was published reporting that plants can hear themselves being eaten. Both this report and others of its kind are usually simplified and result in articles that take such findings and come up with titles such as the most recent I saw: “Nice try vegans, plants can actually hear themselves being eaten.” One such article begins with the admonishment: “Vegetarians get off your high horse.” It is tempting to dismiss such responses as guilty omnivores blowing off steam or standard attacks by those who say vegetarians and vegans are ethically self-righteous, and admittedly some are, but I don’t believe that to be the case for each and every vegan.

However, I argue that we need to develop a more deliberate ethical model surrounding plant life to learn about the lives of plants, to not laugh at or shy away from studies of this kind that arise which argue for or try to prove plant sentience. As I currently see things, plants absolutely do have a desire to flourish, but that doesn’t necessarily indicate the ability to feel emotion or physical distress. Still, as proponents of Eco-ability, it bequeaths us to understand and respect non-animal life as a living embodiment that does not have to be anthropomorphized to be of relevance.

In closing, I do want to ask a few questions that arose from me when considering the content of my presentation. I hope others will consider them, although they certainly do not have to be addressed during this conference.

The first question is based on the premise of my presentation: What is the cause of that disconnect between humans with disabilities, non-human animals and ecology? Why, when I was editing the special issue of *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, did nature receive such scant attention?

The other question I want us to consider is based on the idea that most anything that deviates from the norm in contemporary Western society is often posed as inferior, and I think that applies to nature as well, and it kind of reinforces that binary theory (the binary of nature versus culture, as if the two are not interrelated). Now this is a binary that springs from continental rationalist philosophy which looked at nature as something fascinating but also to be feared and controlled. And to anthropomorphize this issue for a moment, think about Europeans coming to what they termed the New World, what we currently term North America. They looked at Native peoples in much the same way as nature: as inferior but also fascinating, something to be feared and also something to be controlled.

And then the final question is something I also touched on in my presentation, which is how far do we go in framing Eco-ability as a theory or practice? How far we do go integrating the realities of the natural world such as plants, trees, mountains and oceans? Do we acknowledge such ideas? What place do they have in the field of Eco-Ability? I guess the question is: Do we as scholar-activists owe it to Eco-Ability to understand more about the natural world, to go beyond our presumptions of what (who?) is capable and not capable of feeling? Thank you for your time.