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Special Issue:

Transcripts of 2nd Annual Engaging with Eco-ability Conference

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Introduction

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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.