

## Animal Performance Philosophy 6 Microlectures & A Conversation

### panel

*What would it take to be open to the possibility of animals as philosophers, performance-makers and audiences? How might performance philosophy inhabit a zoocentric rather than anthropocentric ethos? How might we practice an ethical performance philosophy for animals (rather than using animals in performance or as an unthinking object of knowledge)? How might we perform the extension of performance philosophy to include non-human animals as equals?*

Both philosophy and theatre & performance have already been located as participants in the wider 'animal turn' across the disciplines, including the emergence of Animal Studies as an independent interdisciplinary field. Building upon the insights and debates within feminist, poststructuralist and postcolonial critiques of power/knowledge relationships, Animal Studies includes the ongoing investigation of how the academy might 'give voice' to the difference of nonhuman animals 'without appropriating or distorting it' (Weil 2010: 4). As is well known, Western philosophy has a long tradition of reinforcing human exceptionalism on the grounds of a supposedly exclusive capacity for rational thought, manifest in language. In turn, new rights have often been claimed for certain types of animals according to the degree to which they are judged to meet the criteria of this dominant norm for what counts as 'human'. Likewise in prominent Performance Studies literature, a prejudicial definition of proper performance as 'self-conscious behaviour' as distinct from behaviours judged to be 'automatic' or 'instinctive' has been used to include primates, but exclude other 'lower order', nonhuman animals from the broad-spectrum of performance (Schechner 2003). In contrast, an Animal Performance Philosophy might be one that aims to genuinely think alongside nonhuman animals (as already thinking in their 'own' ways) rather than asserting a transcendent authority over them as the mere objects of knowledge. Or again, it could be one that seeks to find ways to inhabit a 'felt knowledge of "unknowing"' to nonhuman animals that might qualitatively expand our concepts of performance, philosophy, thought and the human in particular contexts (Ó Maoilearca 2009: 211).

This session on Animal Performance Philosophy will be in two parts of equal length.

**Part I** will encompass a series of 6 'microlectures' by the contributors, accompanied by images and objects, exploring the idea of an Animal Performance Philosophy.

**Part II** will be an open conversation on these questions between the contributors and whoever attends the session, facilitated by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca.

**Preparation for attending the session:** Participants who are planning to attend are warmly invited (but not required) to bring with them to the session, 1 object and 1 image in response to the questions above. Images need to be in a physical form that can be placed in the room for others to see: a postcard on the wall, an iPad on the floor..

### Bio:

Dr. Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca is a performance philosopher. She is based at the University of Surrey in Guildford, UK, where she is Reader in Theatre & Performance and Director of the Centre for Performance Philosophy. Laura is a founding core convener of Performance Philosophy, and a co-editor of the Performance Philosophy book series and journal. She is currently working on a monograph with the working title *Performance Thinks: Theatre, Philosophy and the Nonhuman* which draws from François Laruelle's notion of non-philosophy in order to critique authoritarian gestures within extant philosophies of theatre and performance, and to explore the idea of a 'performance philosophy' as one that seeks a more egalitarian relation to artistic and nonhuman ways of thinking.

