In the past decades, the natural sciences have gained greater insight into capacities among other-than-human animals that had, traditionally, been attributed to human animals alone, such as intelligence, agency, and culture. Moreover, Indigenous perspectives on the constitutive relationships and interdependence between human and other-than-human entities are gaining greater public attention.¹

Philosophers have discussed some of the implications of these scientific insights. Martha Nussbaum characterized non-human animal life as one of the “frontiers of justice” western philosophy has not yet reckoned with and expanded the capabilities framework to non-human animals.² Other philosophers have contributed to an amicus brief supporting chimpanzee personhood.³ Beyond non-human animals, Suzanne Simard has documented how trees communicate via their mycorrhizal networks⁴, Michael Marder has published a “philosophy of vegetal life”⁵, and various places around the world have assigned personhood to rivers.⁶

Philosophy of education has not yet discussed the human boundaries of the field in depth. Some have considered human relations to non-human animals⁷, but most posthumanist work in education has been more interdisciplinary (e.g., “environmental humanities” and education). Moreover, Indigenous perspectives have not yet received much uptake in mainstream philosophy of education, and whether posthumanist and Indigenous ontologies can and should be bridged is an open question in discussions about decolonizing posthumanism.

However, there is a rich field of inquiry for philosophers of education from many philosophical approaches and schools of thought. For example, is education, by definition, a concept that pertains to human beings only and would we fall into a conceptual abyss by expanding education and educability beyond human animals? Or might we think of some other-than-human life forms as capable not just of teaching, learning, and being trained, but as educating and being educated? What kinds of moral perception and educational experience would be required to change our relations with the other-than-human world? And how can we conceive of “education” following radical ontologies that position humans as merely one node in an agentic network including also other-than-human entities?

Accepted papers will be workshopped during a series of collaborative sessions with the other contributors throughout the day on March 6, 2025, before the annual PES conference in Baltimore begins that evening. The revised papers will then be considered for publication in a special issue of Educational Theory. The pre-conference workshop presents a unique opportunity to engage with colleagues, with the goal of creating a shared intellectual conversation around the proposed theme. That is why we call these special issues “symposia” and not just a collection of individual papers. Hotel accommodation for the night of March 5 and all meals during the March 6 workshops will be covered by the journal.

Paper proposals (1000 words, excluding references) are due on September 16, 2024. These will undergo an anonymous review process and authors will be informed if their proposal has been accepted for the pre-conference workshop by October 11, 2024. Final drafts of the papers will be due about a month before the event. Authors not selected for the workshop will be encouraged to submit papers or works-in-progress sessions to the general PES conference.
Submit proposals to: rmt@illinois.edu