

Derrida Animal Ethics

by

Ryan C. P. Fics

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Religion

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

Copyright © 2014 by Ryan C. P. Fics

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i-ii
Introduction.....	iii-ix
Chapter One: Sovereign Thinking.....	1-20
Chapter Two: <i>un fois pour toutes</i>	21-42
Chapter Three: to live the death of the other.....	43-69
Chapter Four: Response and Responsibility.....	70-88
Bibliography.....	89-93

Acknowledgments

A few evenings ago I sat down at my desk in my apartment, almost fully packed, everything tucked away in bags and boxes ready for my move to Atlanta, and as I sat there in silence, walls empty, the sun slowly on its descent, its rays beaming just over the trees in the back alley that my fifth floor apartment overlooks, I found myself staring quietly at a bright blank page, marked by the silent rhythm of an appearing and disappearing cursor and wondering to myself what I could possibly say about those (friends, colleagues, and family) who helped me with this project, helped me better understand how to write in general. At a loss for words, I felt a strange panic, perhaps even a desire to just write something, anything at all that might convey the gratitude and thanks that I feel for the wonderful encouragement and support that I have received from friends, family, and mentors who helped me through this busy, humbling, and adventurous process. With stuff cluttered all around me, I thought to myself, “I am moving. Not just away from here, but even right now, as I sit still in this chair. I am moving. There are things inside of me, things from the exterior that have made their way inside that move me.” “I have been moved,” I think to myself, “at one time or another, by many who cared enough to help me through this process, and I will carry them with me.” And so I wish to extend a great many thanks to a lot of animals (humans and non-humans), all of whom I cannot mention here, for helping me with my thesis.

The lessons that I have learned over my years in the Department of Religion at the University of Manitoba go well beyond the borderlines of a classroom, department, or institution. I want to thank the entire department, especially Ian Whicher and Heidi Marx-Wolf, for their very kind support and wise advice. I also wish to thank the members in the student group UMRSA for our weekly meetings. The events we planned and our weekly social interactions reach far beyond

conventional collegiality. I have made very meaningful friendships because of this group and would like to extend a thank-you to Lilian Marshall, Heather Penner, Ted Malcolmson, and Adeana McNicholl for always lending an ear to listen, for the good food, beverages, and stories we have shared. I also want to extend a very special thank-you to Adeana for her challenging questions, kind support, encouragement, and for being a great source of inspiration for the Second Chapter of my thesis.

Many thanks to the students and staff working at *Mosaic, a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*. Words are insufficient for conveying how appreciative I am for the many joyful experiences I had while working at *Mosaic*. To my dear friend Matt Sheedy, a very warm thanks for your great humour and undying study-ethic. Without our study routine, wonderful and challenging conversations, I would not have finished my thesis on time. A great thanks also to Shephard Steiner for his precise suggestions and for agreeing to be on my committee, to Saad Khan for his encouragement and kindness, to Rose Fiorillo, Anita King, and to everyone involved with helping create opportunities for me to move on, and for helping me grow in ways that for a long time I was convinced were not possible. For I had been told many times by different educators while growing up that I was not university material, and that higher education was not for me. And so I have been moved by many people, but most especially by my advisor, Dawne McCance, for her positive encouragement. I cannot thank you enough for being so kind and understanding, for working so closely with me, and for helping me better understand how to read and write.

Most of all I want to thank my cat Osho for keeping me company during long hours of reading and writing, my two older brothers, Morgan and Kristian, without whom this project would not be possible, and my mom for always being so open, understanding, and supportive of my pursuits. Thank you for always believing in me.

Introduction

As I have already attempted to imply in a very subtle way during my acknowledgments, if there is one thing I can say and elaborate, it is that for me, the education that I have received, and my thesis, have been non-other than a lesson on writing.¹ As the title of my thesis suggests, *Derrida Animal Ethics*, focuses on “the animal question” in the works of French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). While much of Derrida’s earliest published writings (1967) may seem to focus strictly on language, speech, and writing, one thread of my thesis shows that, for Derrida, the question of language, of speech, and of writing, have always remained fundamentally tied to *animality*. “The question of the living and of the living animal,” Derrida explains in an interview with Elisabeth Roudenisco, “will always have been the most important and decisive question. I have addressed it a thousand times, either directly or obliquely, by means of readings of *all* the philosophers I have taken an interest in.”

In many places, Derrida has stated that the question of the animal is, for him, the most important question upon which all great questions depend. For avid readers of Derrida it came as a great surprise that he would claim that from the beginning, “the animal question” has been a central theme throughout his work. Indeed, for many, Derrida’s focus on “the animal question” began to appear in his writing sometime during the 1980s alongside the hyper-mediatization² of images, articles, documentaries, law cases about animal cruelty, the development of animal rights groups (such as PETA and Mercy for Animals), and the emergence of diverse philosophical,

¹ This introduction was originally presented at the beginning of my thesis defense, June 24, 2014. At the request of internal committee member Dr. Heidi Marx-Wolf, it has been slightly edited and turned into the introduction of my thesis. Originally, Chapter One, “Sovereign Thinking,” was written as both the introduction and the First Chapter.

² My understanding and use of this term is based on the way Akira Mizuta Lippit defines and discusses media and art in his very informative book *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife*, which is a probing exploration of the figure of the animal in modern culture and different mediums of media (cinema, photography, advertisements, etc.).

feminist, or rights based (deontological) approaches to this topic. Therefore, while it is the case that many may think that Derrida's claim about addressing "the animal question" since his earliest writings in 1967 is mere hyperbole, beginning with my First Chapter, one thread of my thesis attempts to show that perhaps it is the case that there is more merit to this claim than many scholars in animal ethics, philosophy, and other related fields, have led on and, perhaps, would like to admit.

As a starting point then, this gave me cause for recourse, and to reread Derrida's earliest writings, some of which are *Of Grammatology* and *Speech and Phenomena* (both published in 1967 alongside *Writing and Difference*), in order to reconsider not only what "the question of the animal," the concept of *animality*, and other related filiations of this phrase holds for deconstruction, and Derrida's work, but also for ethics, philosophy, religious studies, and the social sciences and humanities more generally.

For today, a decade after Derrida's death, the emerging and diverse field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS)³ is rapidly growing and is marked by approaches to animal ethics that stem from an array of fields, from architecture and geography, to sociology and disability studies (among others).⁴ Long before it was fashionable to do so, however, from his earliest published works (*Of*

³ While there are different approaches to CAS, some which advocate a certain form of activism and veganism, and others which found themselves in a certain tradition or movement of thinking, my understanding of CAS is framed and influenced by my advisor Dr. Dawne McCance, and her book, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*. State University of New York Press, 2013. Although my thesis was not written as a survey, introduction to, or analysis of CAS, it attempts to carefully draw out certain themes and concepts, such as language, life, death, and "rights" (for example), that remain fundamentally attached to, and influenced by, a way of thinking that Derrida deems "the metaphysics of presence"—a problematic way of thinking about "the animal question," which is tied to ideas about cognitive, or cerebral capacities, inheritance, entitlement, ownership, and "rights" (as discussed in Chapter One). McCance's book, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*, provides many good ways for readers to exit the terrain of "entitlement," "presence," and "rights," and also provides readers who are interested in this topic with a different approach that gets to the heart of many issues that are still pervasive in CAS, and other fields interested in "the animal question."

⁴ For example, see the following: feminism, *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*; sociology, *Animals and Sociology*; architecture, *Architecture, Animal, Human: The Asymmetrical Condition*; philosophy, *Philosophy and Animal Life*; religion, *Food for the Gods: Vegetarianism and the World's Religions*; disability studies, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species*; literature, *The Lives of Animals*; and, cultural studies, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*.

Grammatology 1967) to his last seminars *The Beast and the Sovereign Volumes I and II* (2002-2004), Derrida had been addressing “the animal” in philosophy and other literature, for nearly 40 years, directly and obliquely, in order to shake the foundations of a certain kind of humanism that has been pervasive in the history of Western philosophy, theology, political and juridical writings, since the time of Plato and Aristotle.

As I attempt to explain in Chapter Two, unlike most of his contemporaries—the structuralists and post-structuralists who privilege language as the spoken word, or the logos as the defining accomplishment of “man” (from Aristotle to Descartes, and from Descartes to Sassure, Lacan, and Heidegger)—Derrida is invested in understanding a form of language that has no origin. Derrida’s reconfiguration of language as not being restricted to phonetics, would predate the problematic and traditional opposition of speech and writing, and of speech over writing, in a fashion that simultaneously draws out the limits of how “Speech” and “Writing,” as concepts, have been configured and give the illusion of man’s ascent up out of nature, as ruler over “the animal,” as is depicted in many of the writings in the history of Western metaphysical literature.

Philosophical discourse on animals, not only from Plato and Aristotle, but more particularly from Descartes on, involves the reduction of non-human animal species to a singular being, “the Animal,” which reacts rather than responds, does not have the cognitive ability to initiate, is poor in world, as Heidegger says, and is not a living being in the proper sense because it cannot signify. “The Animal” is named but is incapable of naming; it is spoken of without the ability to speak, is known and mastered without possessing the possibility of its own forms of knowing and mastering. By and large, “the animal” is treated as an object of reflection, analysis and control, a medical test subject, but never as a subject capable of reflection or analysis. It is

commonly referred to as a brute, incapable of learning, of recognition and response, and functions only on instinct, an auto-mechanism of impulse solely driven by its own passions and desires.

Linking many important canonical writers in the tradition of Western pedagogy and epistemology to a certain lineage of Cartesian thinking about being, Derrida's concern about the figure of the animal in this tradition centers on a tripartite structure wherein both the animal and the divine, both subjects of analysis for him, are situated outside the law. They are *ex lex* (outlaws). And the figure of "man" reappears, again and again, in many different writings at the centre of this structure as law-maker, enforcer, and changer. While Derrida's analysis of this structure is rich, and comprised of many layers, I focus only on three different dimensions of his analysis throughout this thesis. Each are connected, and each in need of more critical attention—a task that I tried to take up in my thesis, which is also a task that I hope I can continue to devote time to in years to come.

As I understand it then, three important concerns for Derrida are as follows: first, he is concerned with how, in the history of Western metaphysics, the human is divided; that is, "the human" is both divine (rational/reasonable) and animal (irrational and wild); yet, is always depicted as drawing near to divinity, therefore placing man in a privileged position above and in control of the animal, of all animals, and of "the animal" in man. Second, as my Second Chapter explains, he is concerned with the ways in which all differences between animals, including humans, are elided in onto-theological and philosophical creations of the generalized category "the animal"—an abstraction that neutralizes any particularity of differences between animals. Finally, Derrida is concerned with why "the human" is always understood as a particular type of human; that is, generic man, assumed to be the model of sameness, the norm from which others deviate—

the white, European, economically autonomous, rational, able-bodied heterosexual male, or *pater familias*.

Whether unconsciously or not, in the onto-theological, politico-juridical history of Western metaphysical thinking, the human as male has been conceived by many as self-made, self-sustaining, and self-regulating—a being of pure presence. As Derrida points out in many places, the rights of man, the dignity of the human subject as a white-Eurocentric heterosexual male, has only ever been possible through the denigration of certain humans (women, homosexuals, ethnic minorities, the insane, criminals, refugees, and those deemed intellectually and physically disabled) to what is considered to be the lowly, world-poor realm of “the animal.” The violence that humans enact on animals, not just hunting, domestication and consumption of animals, but also experimentation and the enactment of rights onto the animal along with the use of animals as allegories for the human, remain points of ethical and ontological obligations for change. Regardless of what many have argued about deconstructive thinking, that it is nihilistic, unethical, not political, and irresponsible, etc., I have tried to show, especially in Chapters Two and Three, that Derrida’s focus on animality argues, and by its very argumentation performs, a new kind of thinking about ontology and ethics that have profound implications in a very practical way on an institutional level; that is, educationally and juridico-politically.

Derrida’s radical rethinking of language does not mark the end of thinking about this topic, but rather marks a certain portion of a very long and continuous process of rethinking concepts that are passed on to us in various ways, education only being one variable of this process of inheritance. While often complex and at times frustrating, Derrida’s work provides many avenues for change, and for rethinking many of the concepts we have inherited from previous generations. If there is any frustration with the way Derrida writes, it is most likely because, as I understand it,

his writing takes on the form of his conceptualization of “life,” as it is informed by the life sciences of genetics, biology, and chemistry. For Derrida, then, “life” is scattered across species in written form. As genetics insists, life is “written” or is comparable to a text that is the DNA code, AGCT, etc. Derrida gives a growing attention to life as a process that *records* information rather than *produces* it. As such, the “external” becomes the “internal,” thus reversing the way man has been depicted in Western metaphysical philosophy; that is, as a being that receives rather than produces, that comes after, rather than comes before, that follows, rather than leads. Therefore, differing from a certain traditional understanding of language as logocentric, and phonocentric, (the privileging of a disembodied reason as the spoken word), Derrida pinpoints and challenges the basic assumption that non-human animals exist for our benefit because they cannot speak, or say-so otherwise. This is an argument that stems from the Western Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian-Islamic milieu and it still prevails in Western juridico-political law systems today.

These traditions, and the figures that have helped sustain them over millennia, in one way or another, are all committed to the notion that animals may signal but they have no signs, that they may act but they have no interior thought process, that we can know them but they cannot know us, that they are spoken of but are incapable of speech. Those who advocate this kind of thinking, share a kind of phenomenology that privileges subjectivity, consciousness, the present, and the symbolic as strictly human traits/characteristics. They share an assumption that all animals are separated from “the human,” a “person,” or subject, because “the animal” is always couched in a certain kind of existence of not having, or not being able—a fundamental lacking, which situates development, progress, politics, and culture, solely to the cognition of man. However, one of the tasks of deconstruction is not to give back to animals what philosophy and other fields have stripped from them (a face, death, language, cognition, the ability to suffer, etc.); but rather, it is

to question whether “man” *possesses* these characteristics and attributes that he says the animal lacks. What does it mean to have something (such as a right)? To possess it? To carry it? Do we actually have the attributes we make-up and say other beings do not have? Do we actually possess these things in the way we claim to possess them? Do we really have the capacity to understand language, “the animal,” or the secrecy of the other and the experience of death, “as such”? Are humans not just as vulnerable as all other species? I attempt to pursue these questions, among others throughout my thesis, especially Chapter Three.

In “Violence Against Animals,” Derrida says that a certain philosophy of right and of human rights still depends on repressive gestures about animals. This is precisely what I hope to focus on in the future. It is at the heart of any rethinking of the individual (political, democratic, and legal), as well as of any rethinking of the ethical subject or self. While Derrida is sympathetic to such proclamations as the *Universal Declaration of Animal Rights* (made public in 1989 by the International League of Animal Rights), he calls, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, for a much-needed critique of “rights” because it is this very concept that has “determined a certain concept of the subject, which, while founding law and right, will have led at the same time to the denial of all rights to the animal, or rendered radically *problematic* any declaration of animal rights” (88). As indicated in my Fourth and final Chapter, according to Derrida, the concept of “right(s),” as fundamentally tied to language and what it means to respond, is still determined by the idea that the human has the power to declare, dictate, and govern. This perspective still prevails in many disciplines that approach “the animal question” and it is my hope that sometime in the near future I can help contribute to this topic in a very careful, critical, and responsible way.

Sovereign Thinking

The living present arises on the basis of its non-self-identity, and on the basis of the retentional trace. It is always already a trace. This trace is unthinkable if we start from the simplicity of a present whose life would be interior to itself. The self of a living present is originally a trace.¹

Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975)² is described on its back cover as a “ground breaking work” that “awakened millions of people to the existence of ‘speciesism,’ our systematic disregard of nonhuman animals” that inspired “a worldwide movement to transform our attitudes to animals and eliminate the cruelty we inflict on them.” In *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics*, Singer refers to his form of utilitarian ethics as “another Copernican revolution,”³ explaining that his utilitarianism “will be, once again, a revolution against a set of ideas we have inherited from the period in which the intellectual world was dominated by a religious outlook.”⁴ Declaring speciesism to be an ethics that emerged from the Judeo-Christian tradition, Singer claims to have developed a non-speciesist, and therefore

¹ Derrida, Jacques, *Voice and Phenomena: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Leonard Lawlor (Northwestern UP 2011), 73. Cited hereafter as *Voice*.

² Singer, Peter, *Animal Liberation* (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd; Reissue edition 2009). Cited hereafter as *Liberation*.

³ Singer, Peter, *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics* (St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 189. Cited hereafter as *Rethinking*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

secular, way of ethical reasoning that does not reiterate “the old ethic.”⁵ While his wish to introduce a new way of thinking about the lives of non-human animals is praiseworthy, it is my contention that Singer’s model of ethics only appears to escape the confines of the logic that he contests and is indicative of what Jacques Derrida, in *Voice and Phenomena* and *Of Grammatology* (among other works), identifies as the problematic of “the metaphysics of presence.”

Beginning with Derrida’s discourse on the history of the concept of presence in Western metaphysics, I proceed in this chapter by engaging in a brief, but close analysis of the two leading animal ethics scholars, Peter Singer and Tom Regan.⁶ These scholars, I will argue, are illustrative of “a metaphysics of presence.” In the final stages of this chapter, I argue that Derrida’s notion of “the trace” provides animal ethics with a way to exit the terrain of oppositional thinking and the metaphysics of presence.

The Metaphysics of Presence

In 1967, Derrida published *Voice and Phenomena*, *Of Grammatology*, and *Writing and Difference*. *Writing and Difference* is a collection of essays written on diverse topics and figures; *Of Grammatology* responds to “the age of Rousseau” by introducing a nuanced conception of “writing”; and *Voice and Phenomena* engages Edmund Husserl’s early 20th century philosophical movement: phenomenology. All three books announced a new philosophical project called “deconstruction.” While all three works are important for understanding the novelty of Derrida’s thinking for animal ethics, this first section will focus primarily on *Voice and Phenomena* where Derrida argues that Husserl’s “phenomenology belongs to classical ontology” and “confirms also

⁵ Ibid., 187.

⁶ My analysis of Singer and Regan follows and builds on Dawne McCance’s analysis in *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*. State University of New York Press, 2013.

the classical metaphysics of presence.”⁷ Although this phrase has been the site of much controversy⁸ because it seems to homogenize the history of Western philosophy, it is justified in so far as the history of Western metaphysics can be understood through a schema of derivation. A schema of derivation follows the inheritance, modification, and (re)distribution of certain classical values, principles and concepts in order to outline a general understanding of metaphysics. This general understanding involves five characteristics or traits: decision, desire, will, closure, and security. Derrida’s general concept of metaphysics (as derived from these characteristics in the history of Western philosophy), involves a complex explanation about how they relate to each other. However, as Leonard Lawlor states so clearly in the introduction to his translation of *Voice and Phenomena*:

First, it includes a decision as to how to answer the question of the meaning of being. That answer is presence. *Second*, from that answer, a desire flows, a desire for presence. *Third*, in order to fulfill the desire, the will is required. The will wills certain means to the purpose of fulfilling the desire. *Fourth*, the willing of these means (techniques aiming at mastering repetition) makes a circle: what was intended at the beginning is found at the end.⁹

These general concepts suggest that the metaphysics of presence is, according to Derrida, “the closure of metaphysics.”¹⁰

The closure of metaphysics means that the decision contains in advance the final conclusion. In this closed-off system no new solution can be introduced so that one can fulfill their desire to live in pure presence. According to Lawlor, “on the basis of Derrida’s translation of Husserl’s German term ‘Bedeutung’ (meaning) as ‘vouloir-dire’ (rendered [...] as ‘wanting-to-

⁷ Derrida, Jacques, *Voice and Phenomena: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, trans. Leonard Lawlor (Northwestern UP 2011), 22. Cited hereafter as *Voice*.

⁸ Lawlor, Leonard, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Indiana UP, 2002), 25.

⁹ Lawlor, Leonard, “Translator’s Introduction: The Germinal Structure of Derrida’s Thought,” *Voice and Phenomena* (Northwestern UP, 2011), xv. Cited hereafter as “Introduction.”

¹⁰ *Voice*, 44.

say'), it is clear that voluntarism, 'voluntaristic metaphysics,' is at issue."¹¹ This voluntarism involves then, as Lawlor suggests, the "mental" faculty that calculates means and ends. The means being the desire to limit the relationship between self and object and the end being that the sign or object functions as nothing more than a way for presence to return back to itself. According to Derrida, in Husserl's phenomenology, language (particularly the sign) is apprehended from the knowledge we have of ourselves in self-presence. The decision, therefore, is based on the assumption that we know who we are because we seem *to be* present to ourselves. Although the foundation for this thinking is rooted in the works of Plato and Aristotle, where speech is given priority over writing,¹² the inward turn towards the subject in modernity came to fruition in the seventeenth century with René Descartes (1596-1650).

In his *Meditation on First Philosophy*, in order to determine the meaning of being, Descartes decides, "I am thinking, therefore I exist"¹³; or simply, "I think therefore I am." Five years after publishing his *Meditations* (1641), in a letter to the Marquess of Newcastle (and again three years later in a letter to Henry More), Descartes discusses and dismisses what he considers

¹¹ "Introduction," xv.

¹² For instance, see Derrida, Jacques, "Plato's Pharmacy," trans. Barbara Johnson, *Dissemination* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1981), 61–171; and, Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff in *Plato: Complete Works* (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1997), 506-558. Hereafter as *Phaedrus*. In "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida studies Plato's *Phaedrus* where Socrates degrades writing. In Plato's text, a hierarchy unfolds wherein speech, according to Socrates, comes before writing and writing, because it is secondary and involves the body as well as gestures of the hand, is defined as "a pharmakon." In Attic Greek, (φάρμακον) pharmakon can mean poison, medicine, or magic potion. In this particular dialogue, Phaedrus brings a written copy of his speech to his meeting with Socrates because he has not yet memorized it. The problem of writing, in a sense, has already emerged in this text because it is closely linked with the problem of memory. Oration, according to Plato's Socrates (who never wrote), is the best way to preserve memory because it is associated with the immediacy of thought. As is argued by Socrates in this dialogue, "writing will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own" (*Phaedrus* 551-552). Indeed, "writing" Socrates asserts, is not "a potion for remembering, but for reminding" and, in form, is merely "the appearance" (φαντασία) of wisdom, not reality (552). Writing is therefore a poison that dilutes pure thought (an idea that we will have recourse to throughout this thesis). This dualistic hierarchy, speech/writing, mind/body, remedy/poison, real/virtual, etc., which stems from Plato's conceptualization of writing, still seems to structure many discourses in animal ethics.

¹³ Descartes, René, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selection from the Objections and Replies*, ed. John Cottingham, (Cambridge University Press; 1 ed., 1996), 68. Cited hereafter as *Meditations*.

to be the unsophisticated perspective about what distinguishes man from animal in the works of Michel de Montaigne and Pierre Charron:

Montaigne and Charron may have said there is more difference between one human being and another than between a human being and an animal; but there has never been known an animal so perfect as to use a sign to make other animals understand something which expressed no passion; and there is no human being so imperfect as not to do so, since even deaf-mutes invent special sign to express their thoughts. This seems to me a very strong argument to prove that the reason why animals do not speak as we do is not that they lack the organs but that they have no thoughts. It cannot be said that they speak to each other and that we cannot understand them; because since dogs and some other animals express their passions to us, they would express their thoughts also if they had any.¹⁴

A little further on in this letter Descartes argues that “the animal” does not have “an immortal soul like us.”¹⁵ By identifying speech as a mechanism that reveals the part of the soul which harbours thought, Descartes divides the world into living (immortals) and mechanical (mortal) beings. Many of Descartes’s writings, most specifically his *Meditations*, are about how to discern what being is, what constitutes a life, and what it means to live. As it can be inferred from his letter, according to Descartes, the essence of man lies in his ability to think. *Res cogito*, pure immaterial thought, is detached from *res extensa*: the material or bodily realm. In its many forms, this dualistic way of thinking spawns a hierarchical mind/body, intelligible/sensible, subject/object, life/death, mortal/immortal opposition. This method of binary thinking leads Descartes to divide the world and its beings into two categories: those that can think and those that cannot. In *Discourse on Method*, he argues that “the natural movements which express passions and which can be imitated by machines as well as by animals,” should not be confused with “real speech” which originates from the pure thought of the human soul.¹⁶ As a material thing, unable to think

¹⁴ Descartes, René, *Philosophical Letters*, trans. and ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 270. Cited hereafter as *Letters*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Descartes, René, *Discourse on Method*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch. Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 140. Cited hereafter as *Method*.

and determine that it is alive, Descartes suggests in his unfinished work *Description of the Human Body and All its Functions*, “the animal” is nothing more than an object, or mechanical being.¹⁷

Dividing the world between the material mechanical, animal body (*extensa*), and the immaterial mind or soul that, as he writes “does not require any place, or depend on any material thing,”¹⁸ Descartes attests that man alone has a mind and is a rational, self-aware, and self-determined thinking being. To illuminate that this dualistic way of thinking still holds sway in phenomenology, Derrida begins with what the twofold sense of the word “sign” holds for Husserl’s philosophy.¹⁹ He notes that Husserl makes a conceptual distinction in the use of the word sign as a form of expression (*Ausdruck*) and indication (*Anzeichen*).²⁰ For Husserl, Derrida argues, expression (*Ausdruck*) and indication (*Anzeichen*) are both signs but the latter is a sign without meaning or sense:

Now, according to Husserl, there are some signs that express nothing because these signs carry—we must still say this in German—nothing that we can call *Bedeutung* or *Sinn*. This is what indication is. Certainly indication is a sign, like expression. But it is different from expression because it is, in so far as it is an indication, deprived of *Bedeutung* or *Sinn*; it is *bedeutunglos*, *sinnlos*. Nevertheless it is not a sign without signification. Essentially, there cannot be a sign without signification, a signifier without a signified.²¹

The term expression (*Ausdruck*), for Husserl, holds within it an ideality about lived experience that is fundamentally “tied to the possibility of spoken language.”²² A sign, according to Husserl, holds

¹⁷ Descartes, René, *Description of the Human Body and All of its Functions*, ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch. Vol. 1. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 317. Descartes explains this while giving an account of a vivisection that he practices on the body of a live dog: “If you slice off the pointed end of the heart in a live dog, and insert a finger into one of the cavities, you will feel unmistakably that every time the heart gets shorter it presses the finger and every time it gets longer it stops pressing it.”

¹⁸ *Method*, 27.

¹⁹ *Voice*, 15-17. Derrida states that “Husserl begins by pointing out a confusion. Within the word ‘sign’ (*Zeichen*), always in ordinary language and occasionally in philosophical language, are hidden two heterogeneous concepts: that of *expression* (*Ausdruck*), which we often mistakenly hold as being the synonym for sign in general, and that of *indication* (*Anzeichen*)” (15).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.* 15.

²² *Ibid.*, 18.

meaning only in so far as it can be expressed, or projected outwards in an act of speech. As a result, the indicator (the object that one speaks about) gains meaning, comes into being, or becomes alive, only through the subjects signification of an object. An object, according to Husserl, has virtually no impact on the speaker until one brings it to light through signification, or the act of speech (as the title *Voice and Phenomena* implies).²³

Husserl's understanding of lived experience, Derrida argues, is based on a fallacy. For Husserl's phenomenology represents a form of self-proximity that is generated in hearing-oneself-speak, giving the impression that one is actually able to immediately hear-oneself-speak. In the illusion of this immediacy, being becomes conceptualized as an immediate presence, or absolute ideality of pure thought that can be presented to one's self through speaking about objects. According to Derrida, however, the falsity of this way of thinking can be identified in the expression of such statements as "I am":

The *I am*, being experientially lived only as an *I am present*, presupposes in itself the relation to presence in general, to being as presence. The appearing of the *I* to itself in the *I am* is therefore originally the relation to its own possible disappearance. *I am* means therefore originally *I am mortal*. *I am immortal* is an impossible proposition.²⁴

As explained above, because a subjective lived experience is always conditioned by mortality, Derrida argues that being ought to be thought in relation to its eventual, but unpredictable death.

One of the ways Derrida continues to develop his critique is by focusing on the idea of retention in Husserl's philosophy. According to Derrida, Husserl contradicts his understanding of

²³ The first English translation of *La Voix et le Phénomène* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), was done by David B. Allison as *Speech and Phenomena* (Evanston, Ill. : Northwestern UP, 1972). Leonard Lawlor's translation marks a notable difference in how he thinks the title, and other aspects of the work, should be represented based on his interpretation of Derrida's philosophical understanding of *voix* in Husserl. As the title of this book suggests, the voice has the power to make things visible or appear *as they are* in front of us. This understanding comes from the Greek φαίνόμενον (phainomenon), or from the verb φαίνειν (phainein) which, in the plural "phenomena" means to show, shine, make appear, or make visible (coupled with voice would mean to make visible through the experience of speaking). This discourse on priority of speech in philosophy and other literature will lead Derrida to problematize the relationship between "man," "world," and "the animal" throughout many of his works.

²⁴ *Voice*, 46.

the “living present” because he describes instants of absence that flair up in the experience of the immediacy of the “now.” This flash of absence, like the brief moment of darkness that we experience while blinking, suggests that a division takes place internally. Therefore, due to this division the immediacy of hearing-myself-speak implies already within it an other, former “me” which differentiates me (as speaker) from myself (as hearer). This moment, which Derrida describes as “a blink of an eye”²⁵ prevents one from hearing, seeing, even feeling, one’s self “as such,” or as one really is. According to Leonard Lawlor in *This is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida*:

For Derrida [...] the touching-touched relation is a variant of the seeing-seen relation because in vision there is always spacing. When one hand touches the other, even in prayer, the coincidence of the touching-touched is only ever imminent, fusion only ever about to happen or arrive. It is as if in the gathering of the fingers, there is a gouged-out eye that forbids the gathering of being into any ‘as such.’²⁶

The spacing that Lawlor alludes to here, which occurs between the clasping of one’s-own-hands, flairs up between each breath and word that is written or spoken, or between each heartbeat. For Derrida, perhaps absence represents the possibility of death living in the presence of the present. The problem of the metaphysics of presence, according to Derrida, is that it presupposes an understanding of being as a fully present thing, and conditions our understanding of human life as indefinite or in relation to something infinite. Husserl’s understanding of being, then, is based on a fallacy because it does not consider the relation between being and mortality. This way of thinking, I will soon argue, still determines the way many animal ethicists think about “the human” (subject) and “the animal” (object).

The Ethics of Utility

²⁵ Ibid. 49.

²⁶ Lawlor, Leonard. *This Is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (Columbia UP, 2007), 63. Cited hereafter as *Sufficient*.

In *Animal Liberation* (1975), Peter Singer begins his discourse about the suffering of animals by returning to what he considers to be the works of the founding figures of the “reforming utilitarian school of moral philosophy.”²⁷ From John Locke,²⁸ Jeremy Bentham,²⁹ and Henry Sedgwick (among others), Singer outlines what he considers to be the classical model of utilitarian ethics. According to Singer, one axiom that all ethicists³⁰ must agree on is that “Ethics takes a universal point of view.”³¹ While this does not mean that “a particular ethical judgment must be universally applicable,” it does mean “that in making ethical judgments we go beyond our own likes and dislikes”³² to what he deems “the universal aspect of ethics.”³³ Singer claims that no theory has ever deduced “an ethical theory from the universal aspect of ethics,” yet he claims that the one model that draws nearest to “the universal aspect of ethics,” is an ethics of utility.³⁴

In *Practical Ethics*, Singer argues that in order to make ethical decisions one must act *as if* one could do so from within “a complete ethical vacuum.”³⁵ In this vacuum, Singer explains, “I am, we might say, in a pre-ethical stage of thinking” and the only thing to consider is “how my action will affect my interests. [...] At this pre-ethical stage, *only* [Singer’s emphasis] one’s own interests can be relevant to the decision.”³⁶ Utility ethics requires that decision-making ought to originate from a person in an entirely detached space of pure thinking. And once one has fully accounted for their own interests, in order to make this decision as fair as possible, one “is required

²⁷ *Liberation*, 5.

²⁸ Lock, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford UP, 2011).

²⁹ Bentham, Jeremy, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Prometheus Books, 1995).

³⁰ Singer, Peter, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge University Press; third edition, 2011) 11. Cited hereafter as *Practical*. Singer states that he really does mean *all* ethicists when proceeding to make reference to such figures and scholars from Moses to Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Adam Smith, John Rawls, all Marxists, Jürgen Habermas, Jean-Paul Sartre and others.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

to take account of the interests of all those affected by my decision” and, in the process of making the decision, “choose the course of action which has the best consequences, on balance, for all affected.”³⁷ This consequentialist approach invokes the principle of equality that Singer outlines in his *Animal Liberation*. Referring to Bentham and Sedgwick, Singer explains that the principle of equality is based on the axiom that “the interests of every being affected by an action are to be taken into account and given the same weight as the like interests of any other being.”³⁸ Equality, however, does not necessarily require equal treatment; rather, what equality requires, “is equal consideration of interests.”³⁹ Beginning with the axiom of only taking into account one’s own interests and then combining it with Bentham’s principle of equality he concludes that despite:

other ethical ideals—like individual rights, the sanctity of life, justice, purity and so on—which are universal in the required sense, and are, at least in some versions, incompatible with utilitarianism [...] we very swiftly arrive at an *initially* [Singer’s emphasis] utilitarian position once we apply the universal aspect of ethics to simple, pre-ethical decision making.⁴⁰

This initial “universal” utilitarian position begins with a decision that presupposes an understanding of being as presence. As I will explain, the decision to begin this way is driven by Singer’s desire for presence; that is, it is driven by the desire to return to itself. The relationship between self and other is already pre-determined and contingent upon a principle of sameness. In this way, Singer’s model is a closed system. As he argues in *Practical Ethics*, “If we are to be persuaded that we should go beyond utilitarianism and accept non-utilitarian moral rules or ideals, we need to be provided with good reasons for taking this step further. Until such reasons are produced, we have some grounds for remaining utilitarians.”⁴¹ At this point, I will continue to argue that Singer’s model is driven by a desire for presence by asking who, or rather what,

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Liberation*, 5.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Practical*, 13.

⁴¹ Ibid.

according to Singer's principle of equality, is defined as a *being able* to be affected by the universalization of one's self-interested decision? Which beings count when one attempts to account for the interests of all those affected by their decision? A first answer to this question may be found in how Singer defines a person.

Who is a Person?

In *Rethinking Life and Death*, Singer refers to the legal definition of a person⁴² and explains that the English word "person" comes from the Latin *persona*, "which initially meant a mask worn by an actor in a play, and later came to refer to the character the actor played."⁴³ Tracing this term from the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, whom Singer claims defined *persona* as "the role one is called to play in life," he writes that *persona* was "taken up by early Christian thinkers" in 325 C.E. at the Council of Nicea where they settled the issue of the doctrine of the trinity (the relationship between God as Father, God as Son, and God as Holy Spirit) by agreeing "that the trinity is one substance and three persons."⁴⁴ Adopted by later writers, such as the sixth century philosopher Anicius Manlius Severinus Boëthius and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), "person" began to have significant relevance of utilitarianism, Singer claims, only with John Locke.

Singer notes that, to Locke, a person, "is a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places."⁴⁵

In addition to Locke's definition, Singer explains that because a person has a clear conception of

⁴² Black, Henry, Campbell, *Black's Law Dictionary: Definitions of the Terms and Phrases of American and English Jurisprudence, Ancient and Modern*, 9th ed. (West Publishing Company, 2011), 1376. Although Singer does not actually cite *Black's Dictionary*, he modifies the legal definition in order to contest what he considers to be the speciesist perspective advocated by animal rights writers such as Tom Regan. In Singer's view, the legal definition of a person is speciesist. His utilitarian approach is an attempt to extend the legal definition of a person to certain kinds of non-human animals which, based on the standards of his own model, would exclude some humans from being "persons" (as I will later show).

⁴³ *Rethinking*, 180.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 182.

itself as itself, a person is self-reflexive which involves having “a clear conception of the past and (possible) future.”⁴⁶ In *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*, he summarizes this definition by classifying a person as a being that can demonstrate “the mental capacities of normal human adults.”⁴⁷ This utilitarian modification establishes criteria that privileges only those beings whom, Singer writes in *Animal Liberation*, demonstrate “the capacity for suffering and enjoyment” which, he also claims, “is a prerequisite for having interests at all, a condition that must be satisfied before we can speak of interests in a meaningful way.”⁴⁸

Deriving his criterion from the pages of Bentham’s *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, where, in addressing the issue of animal cruelty in eighteenth-century England, Bentham writes “The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?”⁴⁹ Singer sets out to prove that, despite what prior philosophers have argued,⁵⁰ certain kinds of animals surely do have the ability to suffer.⁵¹ Contesting Ludwig Wittgenstein’s argument “that we cannot meaningfully attribute states of consciousness to beings without language,” Singer maintains that while “language may be necessary for abstract thought [...] states like pain are more primitive, and have nothing to do with language.”⁵² Attempting to break with this tradition of thinking, Singer asks: since animals lack language and cannot express their suffering verbally, how can we determine whether they have the ability to suffer?⁵³ To answer this question, he offers a new criterion for how to measure suffering.

⁴⁶ *Liberation*, 6.

⁴⁷ Singer, Peter, *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave* (Wiley-Blackwell; second edition, 2005), 6. Cited hereafter as *Defense*.

⁴⁸ *Liberation*, 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Here, Singer refers to Descartes.

⁵¹ *Liberation*, 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Arguing that while we can never really “know, with absolute certainty,” whether animals can actually suffer or not because “pain is a state of consciousness, a ‘mental event,’ and as such it can never be observed,” he states that “our close friends feel pain just as we do” because “our friends are beings *like us*, with nervous systems *like ours* that can be assumed to function as *ours do* and to produce similar feelings in similar circumstances” (italics mine).⁵⁴ According to Singer’s utilitarian principle of equality, only those beings that draw closest to “the mental capacities of normal human adults”⁵⁵ *have the ability* to suffer and can be recognized as persons. This perspective suggests that the only beings that suffer are those that are most like mentally normal human adults. And, indeed Singer argues that animals suffer only in so far as we can determine that they suffer. Similarly, in *The Case for Animal Rights*, Tom Regan attempts to redefine the legal definition of a person, as Singer does, in order to extend inalienable rights to certain kinds of animals.

According to Regan, nonhuman animals are “subjects-of-a-life”⁵⁶ in so far as they are “mentally normal mammals of a year of age or more”⁵⁷ and can demonstrate that they have “beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future.”⁵⁸ Both approaches, that of Singer and that of Regan, have influenced, and continue to influence, the emergence and policy of such animal rights and activist organizations as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA).⁵⁹ Both

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁵ *Defense*, 6.

⁵⁶ Regan, Tom, *The Case for Animal Rights* (University of California Press, 2004), 53. Cited hereafter as *Rights*.

⁵⁷ Ibid., xvi.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 81.

⁵⁹ For instance, visit PeTA’s website, where Peter Singer’s’ book *Animal Liberation* is not only discussed and explained, but also advertised and sold: <http://www.peta.org/about-peta/learn-about-peta/ingrid-newkirk/animal-liberation/>. Also, see Michael Spectre’s article “The Extremist: The Woman Behind the Most Successful Radical Group in America,” in *The New Yorker* (April 13, 2003), 52-67. In this interview, which took place over the course of six months via E-mail correspondence, phone, calls and one to one interviews, Ingrid Newkirk, the founder and president of PeTA, explains how Singer’s book influenced her decision to found PeTA, and represents the kind of philosopher she follows (60). This article can be found online at Michael Spectre’s website where it can be viewed in PDF. The following webpage is a link to the PDF: <http://www.michaelspecter.com/2003/04/the-extremist/>.

determine that the only animals that count are those with nervous systems and cerebral capacities “like ours.”⁶⁰ While Regan and Singer claim that their models are non-speciesist, they centralize, each in his own way, what they consider to be a mentally normal human as the standard by which all other beings are to be measured in order to determine which lives are valuable and which are not.⁶¹ According to Singer, however, what distinguishes utilitarianism from Regan’s approach is that it:

legitimately hold[s] that there are some features of certain beings that make their lives more valuable than those of other beings [...] A chimpanzee, dog, or pig, for instance, will have a higher degree of self-awareness and a greater capacity for meaningful relations with others than a severely retarded infant or someone in a state of advanced senility.”⁶²

Therefore, according to Singer, “killing a defective infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person. Very often it is not wrong at all.”⁶³

As I have attempted to show, the models advocated by Singer and Regan represent a form of what Derrida calls the “metaphysics of presence.” Each scholar, in his own way, places at the centre of his model a presupposed idealization about what constitutes an “I,” subject, or person. The ideality of the “person” defined by standards and criteria established by Singer and Regan,

⁶⁰ *Liberation*, 11. Singer writes that only animals with nervous systems that “evolved as our own did” count for ethical consideration. This neglects to take into consideration the complex and unique socialization process that not only each species, but each singular animal, whether human or non-human, takes part in. This is a topic that I take up further in my next chapter on the importance of Derrida’s conception “singularity.”

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19. In *Animal Liberation*, Singer writes, “To avoid speciesism we must allow that beings who are similar in all relevant respects have a similar right to life—and mere membership of our own biological species cannot be a morally relevant criterion for this right.” Singer asks his readers to imagine an infant that has been born with “irreparable brain damage” that cannot be supported financially by the parents of the infant or the government. He explains that, regardless of the request of the parents, the doctor legally cannot end the life of the brain damaged infant and, therefore, in this respect, the law reflects the view that “the life of every human being is sacred” (18). On the same page, Singer then argues that while “Adult chimpanzees, dogs, pigs, and members of many other species far surpass the brain-damaged infant in their ability to relate to others, act independently, be self-aware, and any other capacity that could reasonably give value to life,” people who would object to the killing of the brain damaged infant would not object to the killing of non-human animals because, “the only thing that distinguishes the infant from the animal, in the eyes of those who claim it has a ‘right to life,’ is that it is, biologically, a member of the species *homo sapiens*, whereas chimpanzees, dogs, and pigs are not.” Even “with the most intensive care possible,” Singer argues, “some severely retarded infants can never achieve the intelligence level of a dog.”

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Practical*, 138; *Liberation*, 18-19; and *Defense*, 6-7.

fits Derrida's definition of sovereignty—a locus of undivided power or force authorized by itself to make its own law and to use force for its own self-interest.⁶⁴ Based on unqualified, intuitive, and imagined criteria, these standards are problematic because they represent a formula for calculating the value of a life and thus seeks to determine who counts and who does not. They not only neglect the contextual complexity of differences between species and the way they relate to their environments, but also divide all the beings of the world in to two categories—those who have these capacities and those who do not. In order to move beyond this either/or form of thinking, the last section of this chapter outlines Derrida's theory of “the trace.” Thinking through the trace, I argue throughout this thesis, involves a thorough recasting of the concept of “humanity” that is a less anthropocentric account of the differences between humans and other species.

Trace and Interpretation

In “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” Derrida explains that “From Plato and Aristotle on, scriptural images have regularly been used to *illustrate* the relationship between reason and experience, perception and memory. But a certain confidence has never stopped being reassured

⁶⁴ For instance, see Derrida's essay “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Social Sciences and Humanities,” in *Writing and Difference* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 351-371 (*La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines*), which is a lecture presented at Johns Hopkins University on 21 October 1966 by Derrida. It was published in 1967 as a chapter of *L'écriture et la différence* (*Writing and Difference*). In “Structure, Sign, and Play” Derrida discusses how philosophy and other social sciences are invested in structuralism, a form of analysis which understands individual elements of language and culture as embedded in larger structures. This epistemology, he contends, is still dependant on abstract, metaphysical concepts that are limiting or constricting. The focus of Derrida's text revolves around Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose structuralist anthropology analyzed the relationships between elements of cultural systems such as mythology. Although Derrida admires the serious measure of reflexivity that structural analysis offers, he argues that it is still too rigid in its approach to identifying the meaning of the relationship between structures and, therefore, neglects or narrows the possibility of identifying the free play involved in how things relate to each other. In particular, he accuses structuralist scholars, such as Ferdinand de Saussure (who argued that phonetic speech is identical with thought, a contention that Derrida engages more directly in *Of Grammatology*, for instance see pp. 27-55), of constructing and maintaining a “center” which governs a structure but remains unrelated to it, and does not engage in play. In many of Derrida's writings, this center is identified as a “God” like figure which signifies a certain logic of sovereign violence, as I will discuss later in Chapter's two and three.

by the meaning of the familiar term: writing.”⁶⁵ In his exploration of the meaning of the psychic trace in Freud’s work, Derrida finds a concept that, he says, departs from the conventional understanding of writing. From Freud’s *Project* (1895) to his essay “Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad” (1925), Derrida explains, Freud struggles to articulate a model of the psyche. Along the way, Derrida notes, “All the mechanical models will be tested and abandoned until the discovery of the *Wunderblock*, a writing machine of marvelous complexity, into which the whole of the psychical apparatus will be projected.”⁶⁶ While Freud is not immune to falling back into old patterns of thinking about writing,⁶⁷ Derrida foregrounds Freud’s understanding that, “A trace as memory is not a pure fraying that might be retrieved at any time as a simple presence, it is the impalpable and indivisible difference between frayings.”⁶⁸ Therefore, Derrida writes, “psychical life is neither the transparency of meaning nor the opacity of force but the difference in the exertion of forces.”⁶⁹ And in these differences Derrida suggests, we may begin a reinterpretation of the relationship between lived-experience, perception, and memory as what Freud refers to as “deferment”:

In accordance with a motif that will continue to dominate Freud’s thinking, this movement is described as the effort of life to protect itself by *deferring* a dangerous cathexis, that is, by constituting a reserve (*Vorrat*). The threatening expense or presence are deferred with the help of fraying or repetition.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Derrida, Jacques, Mehlman, Jeffrey, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” in *Yale French Studies* No. 48, French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis (Yale UP 1972, 74-117), 75. Cited hereafter as “Writing.” Accessed on web 17/09/2013 at: <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2929625?uid=2&uid=4&sid=21104179325543>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Derrida explains that Freud understands psyche as a presence, or virginal blank slate. He argues against this by claiming that the psyche, as Freud had described it earlier on in his works, is a space that is already contaminated by representation, deferral, difference.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 78.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 79.

Derrida suggests that the movement of a deferred affect⁷¹—perhaps what can be understood as a subtle lagging or delay that inheres in life—implies not only that “the idea of a first time,” or “initial impression” become enigmatic; but also, that “death,” its very possibility, is “already at the origin of a life.”⁷² As he explains in *Of Grammatology*, life is already constituted by the trace structure of memory which is, in its very fabric, imprinted via the inheritance of malleable genetic coding, complex cell-divisions, chemical formulations that are vulnerable, and modifiable, and an “origin” that can never be located. The plasticity that constitutes the fabric of the trace, “permits difference between space and time.”⁷³ Indeed, according to Derrida in “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” “Life must be thought of as trace before being may be determined as presence. This is the only condition on which we can say that life *is* death.”⁷⁴

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida explains that, for him, the term trace was crafted from a certain number of contemporary discourses. He writes that “the word trace establishes the clearest connections with them and thus permits me to dispense with certain developments which have already demonstrated their effectiveness in those fields.”⁷⁵ Foraging this concept from Emmanuel Levinas’s critique of ontology in “La trace de l’autre,” and reconciling it with Heidegger’s discussion on intention, precisely where each scholar comes up against its limit, Derrida explains that his attempt is to get “beyond Heideggerian discourse,” in order to undermine “a certain ontology which, in its inner most course, has determined the meaning of being as presence and the

⁷¹ I thank Dr. Nicholas Royle at the University of Sussex for turning my attention towards the concept of deferred affect in a conversation we had after being fortunate enough to take part in interviewing him during his visit to the University of Manitoba where he was invited to give a lecture and seminar by Dr. Dawne McCance, Editor of *Mosaic, a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*. This interview and an article written by him, which both circle around different issues concerning anthropocentrism, can be found in *Mosaic, a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*, Vol. 47 No. 1, March 2014.

⁷² “Writing,” 79.

⁷³ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, ed. and trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Hopkins Fulfillment Service; Corr. edition, 1998), 66. Hereafter as *Of Grammatology*.

⁷⁴ “Writing,” 80.

⁷⁵ *Of Grammatology*, 70.

meaning of language as the full continuity of speech.”⁷⁶ Crafting the trace from certain aspects of Levinas, Heidegger, “Nietzschean and Freudian discourse,” as well as from scholars in biology,⁷⁷ Derrida explains that by virtue of its form, the trace deconstructs the traditional definition of consciousness by making “enigmatic what one thinks one understands by the words ‘proximity,’ ‘immediacy,’ ‘presence,’ (the proximate [*proche*], the own [*propre*], and the pre- of presence).”⁷⁸ Perhaps, then, we may think of Derrida’s notion of the trace as somewhat chimerical in nature, and thus conditioned by the form that it takes.

In ancient Greek mythology, a chimera is a monstrous fire-breathing creature, usually depicted as having the head and chest of a lion and goat, with the tail of a dragon or serpent. This mythological beast, which is the offspring of (Gaia’s monstrous son) Typhon and Echidne in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, derives its form from the complexity of the different animals in it. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida explains that “chimerical will be my address and I shall gradually explain the reasons for it.”⁷⁹ It is precisely in thinking through the trace in its chimeric form that Derrida returns to Bentham’s question, where he claims that contrary to what many think, it is not Bentham’s question that “changes everything”; rather, it is “the form of this question” because “The question is disturbed by a certain *passivity* [...] The word *can* [*pouvoir*] changes sense and sign here once one asks, ‘Can they suffer?’”⁸⁰ This interpretation derives from Derrida’s understanding of the relationship between perception, memory, and experience as conditioned by a certain multiplicity of fraying which occurs through the impressions that come from our encounter with others.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Derrida Jacques, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham UP, 2008), 42. Cited hereafter as *Animal*.

⁸⁰ *Animal*, 27.

Continuing with this explanation, Derrida notes that the form of the question does not reiterate knowing “whether the animal can think, reason, or speak, etc., something we still pretend to be asking ourselves (from Aristotle to Descartes, from Descartes, especially, to Heidegger, Levinas, and Lacan”;⁸¹ rather, the question takes the form of a response. Or, as Derrida puts it, “it bears witness manifesting already, as question, the response that testifies to a sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able.”⁸²

Conclusion

By interpreting Bentham’s question, “Can they suffer?” as a response, Derrida interrupts the utilitarian and rights based discourses on the suffrage of animals and reopens the question of being in a different way. While Singer describes a person as a being with the capacity to recognize itself as itself, we might say “as such,” Derrida interrupts the vision or conception of what it means to be a “person.” He does this by recognizing a kind of spacing or trace that marks us in our relation to animals as beings who are lacking a certain capacity to grasp, gather, and understand not only one’s self as one really “is,” but also “the other” *as such*. Therefore, in reinterpreting Bentham’s question through trace thinking, Derrida provides us with a notably different approach for redefining many of the motifs, some of which we will take up later in this thesis, that stem from the one-way directionality of the traditional relationship (addressing as opposed to being addressed, for example) between humans and other animals.

If the movement of this thesis must be thought as if it were progressing forward to get beyond mind/body thinking, it only does so, at least in an epistemological sense,⁸³ by attempting to

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ *Voice*, 88. Here I am referring to Derrida’s note near the end of *Voice and Phenomena*: “As for what ‘begins’ then ‘beyond’ absolute knowledge, *unheard-of* thoughts are required, thoughts that are sought across the memory of old signs. As long as difference remains a concept about which we ask ourselves whether it must be thought from presence or prior to it, it remains one of these old signs. And it tells us that it is necessary to continue indefinitely to interrogate presence within the closure of knowledge. It is necessary to hear it in this way and otherwise—otherwise, that is,

maintain that, as Derrida suggests in *Of Grammatology*, “progress consists always of taking us closer to animality while annulling the progress through which we have transgressed animality.”⁸⁴

What might the relationship between transgressing, annulling and progressing hold for animal ethics? And how might we avoid binary thinking? Such are the questions that we will continue to work through in the next chapter and throughout this thesis.

within the openness of an unheard-of question that opens itself neither onto knowledge nor onto a non-knowledge as knowledge to come. In the openness of this question, *we no longer know*. This does not mean that we know nothing, but that we are beyond absolute knowledge (and its ethical, aesthetic, or religious system), approaching that on the basis of which its closure is announced and decided. Such a question will be legitimately heard as *wanting to say nothing*, as no longer belonging to the system of wanting-to-say.”

⁸⁴ *Of Grammatology*, 203.

Chapter 2

un fois pour toutes

“Recently I fell in love [...]” Derrida explains in an interview with Antoine Spire, “[...] I fell in love with the French expression *un fois pour toutes*—I think it’s untranslatable, but never mind. This expression states in a highly economical way the singular event and the irreversibility of what or who only comes about or comes along once, and thus is repeated no more.”¹ Rachel Bowlby, the translator of this passage, which is taken from the interview “Others are Secret Because They Are Other” (in *Paper Machine*), writes in an endnote that the French expression *un fois pour toutes* if translated literally, means, “one time for all (times)”; roughly equivalent to the English idiom ‘once and for all.’”²

What should be understood from this phrase “one time for all time(s)” or, “once and for all”? And why should it bear any significance for both “the question of the animal” in Derrida’s work and the ethical issues we face in human-animal relations? Although scholars such as David Wood, Matthew Calarco, and Leonard Lawlor (among others) have praised Derrida’s efforts to rethink the concept of *animality* in philosophy, their assessments of his work do not come without warning

¹ Derrida, Jacques, *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, California: Stanford UP 2005), 137. Cited hereafter as *Paper*.

² *Ibid.*, 200.

about the “risks” of deconstructive thinking for human-animal relations. Taking Derrida’s notion of singularity (a filiation of the phrase *un fois pour toutes*) as their point of contention, Wood, Calarco, and Lawlor argue that deconstructive thinking is not useful for providing ethical solutions to the problems we face in human-animal relations. Because I find Derrida’s notion of singularity to be a crucial concept for thinking critically about animal ethics, this chapter sets out to explain how Derrida’s engagement with the works of Martin Heidegger (prior to teaching at École normale supérieure (ENS), as discussed by Edward Baring in *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945-1968*), influenced Derrida to reconfigure his understanding of “the human.” His engagement with Heidegger, I will argue, helped Derrida to avoid the kinds of reductionisms that political philosophy was formulating during the early 1960s.

In the final stages of this chapter, I follow the development of Derrida’s thinking of singularity from *Of Grammatology*, and “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority,’” to *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Along the way, I explain that during Derrida’s early reading of Heidegger, he began working through Heidegger’s notion of *animality* as part of his broader project to deconstruct the “metaphysics of presence.”

Derrida’s *Animality* in Contemporary Philosophy

In *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal From Derrida to Heidegger*, Matthew Calarco writes that “among the literally tens of thousands of studies on Derrida published in the past three decades, the number of pieces devoted solely to the question of the animal in his work can be counted on ten, perhaps fewer, fingers.”³ Indeed, since the publication of Calarco’s book in 2008, very few scholars who focus on human-animal relations and ethics, have dedicated their time to exploring this theme in Derrida’s oeuvre. However, among those who have engaged Derrida’s

³ Calarco, Matthew, *Zoographies: the Question of the Animal From Heidegger to Derrida* (Columbia UP, 2008), 103. Cited hereafter as *Zoographies*.

writings on *animality*, the majority have expressed a concern about the possible limitations of deconstruction for animal ethics. They ask whether Derrida's critique of "the modern subject," autonomy, and anthropocentrism can lead to anything more than what has been branded as irresponsible vigilant criticism. For instance, in "*Comment ne pas manger – Deconstruction and Humanism*," David Wood states that deconstruction is "a practice of vigilance" that "cannot, as such, become some sort of alternative ethical seal of approval."⁴ Criticizing Derrida for over complicating the human-animal divide, Wood explains that Derrida reverts "to the very humanism he has tried to outflank."⁵ Wood's perspective emerges from his contention that Derrida's deconstructive approach lacks "action," which is, according to Wood, the most integral component of both "the ethical and the political."⁶ Overall, in Wood's own words, "Derrida's contribution here [to the question of the animal] is negative, nihilistic. Deconstruction is the death of the subject, the death of politics, and the utter irresponsibility of thought."⁷

Wood does not stand alone in his assessment of Derrida's work on *animality*. For instance, Calarco takes a similar position in *Zoographies* when he discusses the concept of singularity in Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Calarco argues that "Derrida's insistence on maintaining and reworking the human-animal distinction is profoundly mistaken."⁸ He asserts that Derrida's emphasis on the importance of "abysses" and "ruptures" is irrelevant and leads Derrida to discuss arbitrary issues and provide false solutions to problems that do not matter. In his conclusion, Calarco leaves his readers with the following remark:

⁴ Wood, David, "*Comment ne pas manger – Deconstruction and Humanism*," in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life* (State University of New York Press, 1999), 32. Wood discusses Derrida's interview with Jean-luc Nancy in "'Eating Well,' or The Calculation of the Subject" and argues that "Derrida fails deconstruction at a critical moment and the question of a humanist teleology hangs, if not over deconstruction, over Derrida's failure of nerve," 20. Cited hereafter as "*Comment*."

⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Zoographies*, 148.

Derrida's thought on animals appears to proceed as a solution to a false dilemma. We are presented with only two options: either we think of human beings and animals as separated by a single indivisible line (classical philosophical discourse) or we efface the distinction between human and animal altogether and risk lapsing into a kind of reductive homogeneity (biologicistic continuism). His solution to this false dilemma is to maintain human-animal differences by refining, complicating, and reworking the human-animal distinction.⁹

While Wood and Calarco express genuine concern about how useful Derrida's concept of singularity is for addressing "the question of the animal," overall they neglect to consider Derrida's discussion of singularity as it relates to his broader project in addressing "the metaphysics of presence." Their neglect to take the broader goals of Derrida's project into consideration leads them to misinterpret and reduce the complexity of this concept's meaning and its importance for the development and trajectory of Derrida's work on *animality*. As I will explain, the stakes of Derrida's discourse on this topic, its implications for Derrida, deconstruction, ethics, and philosophy in general, are high and profound.

The Young Derrida

In *This is Not Sufficient*, Lawlor takes a more informed approach to Derrida's work on *animality* by situating him in the geo-political context of post-cold war Europe. Academically, Lawlor explains that from 1965 onwards, Derrida became more and more involved in challenging the ideals of Platonism alongside other scholars, such as Gilles Deleuze¹⁰ and Michael Foucault,¹¹ who, following the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and others, attempted to reverse the hierarchies established in Plato's philosophy.¹² While these intellectuals had developed different methods for

⁹ Ibid., 149.

¹⁰ For instance, see Deleuze's "Renverser le platonisme," in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 71, no. 4 (October-December 1966): 426-438.

¹¹ For instance, see Foucault's "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," in *Dits et écrits*, vol. I, 1954-1975 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 663-678 or in English as *This Is Not a Pipe*, trans. James Harnes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

¹² Lawlor, Leonard, *This Is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2007), 28-37. Cited hereafter as *Sufficient*.

conducting critical research, they shared common theoretico-political goals. In *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945-1968*, Edward Baring explains that in 1964, when Derrida at the request of Louis Althusser returned to École Normale Supérieure (ENS) to teach the History of Philosophy as the new *agrège-répétiteur*, much had changed. Communism was becoming politically important again. The political goals of the Soviet Union had become questionable in the eyes of young intellectuals in and around France and as a result, the younger generation of students at ENS looked for guidance “from the fresher revolutionary struggles of Vietnam, Latin America, and increasingly, China: Castro, Che, and Mao replaced Stalin, Khrushchev, and Thorez in the youthful communist imagination.”¹³ After student protests in the late 50s and early 60s, the mandate of ENS as an institute dedicated solely to teaching had changed. It was redefined in the Decree of October 3, 1962 which states that ENS is “an establishment of higher education [...] destined to prepare for teaching and for *research*.”¹⁴ According to Baring, “the decree ensured support for new research groups and seminars, and vastly increased the number and scope of learning opportunities for the students.”¹⁵ With this reorientation, ENS began to produce what many considered to be the most exciting philosophical research of the 60s. Students found themselves astounded by the variety of courses and seminars offered. From the study of Marxism with Althusser, to deconstructing metaphysics with Derrida and investigating the unconscious with Lacan, students had access to taking courses with some of the most prestigious thinkers of their time, including: Georges Canguilhem, Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Badiou, Michel Serres, and Jacques Bouveresse.¹⁶ Under the guidance of these intellectuals, ENS became a center for the emergence

¹³ Baring, Edward, *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945-1968* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 262. Cited hereafter as *The Young Derrida*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 264 (Baring’s emphasis).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

of a new French philosophy known as “structuralism.” Along with combined political and institutional changes, “the ENS of the 1960s housed a politically radical generation of students” who became increasingly receptive to Althusser’s theoretical project against the Soviet Union’s endorsement of what they deemed “a new stage in history: a ‘humanism’ under the slogan, ‘All for Man.’”¹⁷

According to Baring, Althusser sought to position himself against the Soviet Union’s newly endorsed Humanist Marxism and criticized it for being influenced by an old metaphysical tradition which claimed that “the forces of production were linked by a common metaphysical attempt to understand history as the development of one particular narrative”—Man.¹⁸ Baring writes that, for Althusser:

Marx’s key discovery from 1845 was not the inversion of Hegel’s dialectic, as party theorists asserted, moving from an idealist to a material core, but rather a rejection of any single unified dialectic at all. Monocausal economic explanations (as in the Stalinist model) or the simplistic story of human alienation in capitalism (as in humanist Marxism) were not long sufficient; Althusser regarded both as overly reductive and urged the consideration of a more complex, or ‘over-determined,’ dialectic, the result of the interaction of many layers of ideology and society, as well as economic forces. [...] In Althusser’s view, only by rejecting the ideological and distorting the idea that there was one dominant motor of historical change, whether Man or the forces of production, could Marx formulate the object of his science: history in all its complexity. Antihumanism then was a necessary precondition for science, providing the theoretical rigor that was essential to the success of the communist movement.¹⁹

Under the guidance of Althusser’s antihumanist philosophy, the norms of ENS had shifted towards a more communist atheism that based itself in the sureness of science which, according to Ann E. Kaplan in *The Althusserian Legacy*, led many at ENS to become suspicious of Derrida’s focus on phenomenological, transcendental, and ontological questions.²⁰ However, Derrida’s work on

¹⁷ Ibid., 266.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 267.

²⁰ Kaplan, E. Ann, *The Althusserian Legacy* (New York: Verso, 1993), 186. Cited hereafter as *Althusserian*.

deconstructing metaphysics during this time period helped to settle the nerves of many at ENS and became a common ground that influenced the formation of “Groupe Spinoza.”²¹

Comprised of over fifteen students and professors, Groupe Spinoza formed an alliance known as the “Front de Libération Philosophique,” which recruited philosophers from different theoretical backgrounds, all of whom eventually came to be known as the “neo-structuralists.” According to Baring, “the obvious partners in such a front were [...] Lacan, Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida, whose philosophy provided valuable intellectual resources for the criticism of humanism.”²² However, many in this group still remained suspicious of Derrida’s focus. In the biography *Derrida*, Benoît Peeters records a letter that Derrida wrote to Althusser in September 1964, before taking up his position as *agrège-répétiteur* at ENS. In that letter, Derrida writes that although he felt close to the kind of antihumanism that Althusser was proposing, overall he felt “that other—non-Marxist—premises could govern this antihumanism.”²³ Reflecting on this letter, Baring suggests that “It is not entirely clear what Derrida meant by these non-Marxist antihumanist premises, whether they were Althusser’s own, or whether Derrida was suggesting a different theoretical foundation.”²⁴ Speculating on what Derrida could have meant, Baring goes on to write something interesting: “a look at Derrida’s own intellectual itinerary, however, suggests that he was referring to Martin Heidegger.”²⁵ In his chapters, “Humanist pretensions: Catholics, communists, and Sartre’s struggle for existentialism in postwar France” and “The God of mathematics: Derrida and the *Origin of Geometry*,” he explains that in the period preceding 1964,

²¹ *The Young Derrida*, 274. According to Baring, Groupe Spinoza may have experienced some “late-night raids by the forces of order,” as indicated by a number of documents he found that were inexplicably “covered in muddy boot prints.”

²² *Ibid.*, 274.

²³ Peeters, Benoît, *Derrida* (John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2012), 187. Peeters cites Derrida’s letters from September I, 1964 as found at L’Institut mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC), Paris. Cited hereafter as *Derrida*.

²⁴ *The Young Derrida*, 268.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Derrida had already engaged the interpretation of a certain kind of humanism in Heidegger's philosophy. Derrida mediated Heidegger's notion of ontological difference with certain Christian philosophies that demanded recognition of the limitations of human knowledge in their arguments against advocates of science as a totalizing epistemology. Through this bifocal view, Derrida sought to problematize what he considered to be humanist onto-theological discourses, such as the existentialist humanism launched by Jean-Paul Sartre.²⁶ According to Baring, Derrida refused to dismiss Judeo-Christian philosophy entirely. His resistance to the radical atheism evoked by Althusser distanced him from the political aims of Althusser and others in Groupe Spinoza and at ENS. As Baring explains, the problem that Althusser and others saw with the different kinds of humanism(s) being worked out by Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan "was that they placed a theoretical revolution above the political one. As Michel Tort suggested in a note from late 1967 that refers explicitly to Derrida, certain 'theoretical enterprises repress the political scope of their work.'"²⁷

The more Derrida worked with the writings of Husserl and Heidegger, the more Althusser and other members of Groupe Spinoza became suspicious of the kind of humanism he was crafting. Baring writes that, "the emphasis on the ontological difference, as Derrida would later suggest, made his antihumanism, at the very least, ambiguous."²⁸ In addition to this, according to Baring, Derrida was still translating *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine* up until the mid-60s, and in courses such as "Transcendental" (1961-62), the centrality of the concept of "Man" occupied Derrida's thinking as "Ek-sistence," and therefore, historical.²⁹ Baring suggests that for Derrida, what made man historical and distinguished him from other beings was "the ability to transcend any particular

²⁶ Ibid., 21-48, 146-183, and 268-269.

²⁷ Ibid., 275.

²⁸ Ibid., 272.

²⁹ Ibid., 273.

determination.”³⁰ Due to his continued engagement with Heidegger’s work, Baring notes that, “Derrida was regarded as particularly dangerous, at least from the perspective of the Groupe Spinoza. They worried that his philosophy, might easily, ‘in the near future, serve as the ideological cement to humanism.’”³¹ However, what Groupe Spinoza and others familiar with Derrida’s work during this time period could not anticipate is that Derrida’s engagement with Heidegger led to his encounter with the configuration of “animality.”

Repeatedly referenced in Derrida’s career, the work of Heidegger and his configuration of “the animal,” not only helped Derrida turn away from a certain kind of humanism advocated by many at ENS around 1965, but also helped him begin thinking through “animality” as a concept. This challenged the confidence philosophers had about man’s superiority over nature. As I explain in chapter one, animality appears very early on in his work—at least as far back as *Of Grammatology*. According to Lawlor, as a thinker involved with overturning the hierarchies of Platonism (as evidenced in *Of Grammatology*, *Voice and Phenomena*, and *Writing and Difference*), in 1967 Derrida had developed a genealogical method of analysis which became popularly known as “deconstruction.” Thus, while deconstruction has been misread and misrepresented as antihumanist and nihilistic, what many scholars have not considered is that Derrida’s aim, especially from his 1967 writings onwards, was to question, challenge, and reconfigure the foundations of what it means to be “human,” at least obliquely, through the concept of “animality” found in the tradition of Western metaphysical thinking.

Derrida’s project of deconstructing onto-theology and “the metaphysics of presence” involves a rigorous form of meticulous interpretation and genealogical analysis that seeks to explain and better understand how theory and politics inform and relate to each other. In *Spectres*

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 275. Barring quotes from “Groupe Spinoza,” ALT₂, AII-03.12, sheet 4.

of Marx, he discusses the condition of the nation state, the future of Marxism since the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), and the importance of certain aspects of Marxian analysis and critique. In an interesting passage before his discussion of a “New International” to come, Derrida iterates that in returning to themes about “new world orders,” “the end of history,” “debt,” concepts of “community,” etc. (as we must), we ought to “pass over in silence, as low as possible to the earth,” and recognize “the return of an animal: not the figure of the old mole [...] nor of a certain hedgehog, but more precisely of a ‘fretful porpentine.’”³² In *The Uncanny*, Nicholas Royle interprets this remark as Derrida’s way of expressing his “regret for not speaking of the animal.”³³ However, in *not speaking* of “the animal,” Royle contends, the form of Derrida’s writing in *Spectres of Marx*, responds to “the animal question,” which is detectible in his “‘working definition’ of the New International.”³⁴ The New International, Derrida explains:

[...] is a link of affinity, suffering, and hope, a still discreet, almost secret link, as it was around 1848, but more and more visible, we have more than one sign of it. It is an untimely link without status, without title, and without name, barely public even if it is not clandestine, without contract, ‘out of joint,’ without coordination, without party, without country, without national community (International before, across, and beyond any national determination), without citizenship, without common belonging to a class.³⁵

As Royle goes on to write in his chapter “Mole,” “The New International, I would like to suggest, is not separable from the question of ‘so-called “animal life.”” If there is a New International, it is not human, or at least not confined to the human.”³⁶ Therefore, while political themes may not seem immediately present in Derrida’s work, perhaps it is because, as Royle suggests, they are expressed through the form that his writing takes on. Thus, while the concept of singularity may

³² Derrida, Jacques, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (Routledge; first ed, 2006), 116-117. Cited hereafter as *Spectre*.

³³ Royle, Nicholas, *The Uncanny* (Manchester University Press; First Ed., 2011), 249. Cited hereafter as *Uncanny*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Spectre*, 85.

³⁶ *Uncanny*, 249.

seem self-evident and obvious to many readers, what must be taken into consideration when reading Derrida is the form this concept takes, which is one that is inseparable from connected concepts (such as, “subject,” “self,” “person,” “event,” “decision,” “limit,” “border” and so forth). In other words, the reason why scholars such as Calarco and Wood mistakenly accuse Derrida of being nihilistic and antihumanist is because they neglect to consider how his discussion of certain concepts relate to, and inform, other concepts.

For “once and for all”

In a much more conscientious approach to how Derrida responds to “the animal question,” Lawlor begins his discussion of Derrida’s work by asking a simple, yet profound and important question: “What is a singularity?”³⁷ From Deleuze who defines a singularity as a “boiling point,” to Foucault who claims that “it is a statement,” Lawlor explains that for Derrida, “A singularity is an event, a ‘once and for all.’ It is a discontinuity. A singularity is irreplaceable, and there can be no substitute for it, as Derrida would say.”³⁸ As Lawlor suggests, Derrida’s thinking of singularity, especially in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, considers an individual life (human or non-human) as irreplaceable and unique. Praising Lawlor’s attempt to build on this concept in order to bring a more active voice to “the question of the animal” in philosophy, in *Derrida And Our Animal Others: Derrida’s Final Seminar, “The Beast and the Sovereign,”* David Farrell Krell writes that he is “full of admiration” for the way Lawlor comes up with a seven step recipe that “will satisfy no one who cooks by the book, but [...] will inspire those who read the book and then face the reality of what is in the larder and the refrigerator, the reality of what one has to work with before the company arrives.”³⁹ As Krell suggests, Lawlor’s attempt to offer a solution to the current

³⁷ *Sufficient*, 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Krell, David. *Derrida and Our Animal Others: Derrida’s Final Seminar, “The Beast and the Sovereign”* (Indiana University Press, 2013), 151. Cited hereafter as *Animal Others*.

problems we face when encountering “the animal” is admirable; yet, it does not come without offering words of caution against deconstruction.

Like Wood and Calarco, Lawlor suggests that while Derrida’s conception of singularity is helpful, Derrida’s attack on the human-animal divide, involves certain risks. He writes that “On the one hand, an attack on the anthropological limit could amount to *reducing* the human *down* to the animal, *down* to the biological, *down* to irrational instincts and forces [italics mine].”⁴⁰ Lawlor claims that this entails the risk of biologism; that is, “the risk of a direct attack on the difference between animals and humans.”⁴¹ He continues by stating that “if one *raises* animals to the level of humans, or if one *lowers* humans to the level of animals, one ignores the difference that requires living beings to be treated in a variety of ways [italics mine].”⁴² On the other hand, according to Lawlor, “because of the problems with biological continuism, one could go in the opposite direction and make the limit between the human and the animal once again oppositional,” a move that, Lawlor states, involves the problematic notion of reducing all beings into two categories – human and non-human animals.⁴³ Therefore, “to avoid or at least negotiate with these risks provides the only means to determine something like a sufficient response to the violence humans wage against animals.”⁴⁴ Seeking to negotiate a space between not only the two risks outlined above but also between what Lawlor deems the undecidability of deconstruction in Derrida’s discourse and the sort of prescription advocated by Singer’s utilitarianism, Lawlor states that his approach to the question of the animal occupies “a space between undecidability and prescription,” between “saying almost nothing (at times, undecidability sounds to me when uttered by

⁴⁰ *Sufficient*, 25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

‘Derrideans’ like a *flatus vocis*) and saying too much (laws for the treatment of animals, laws of vegetarianism, for example).”⁴⁵ Although I am sympathetic to the urgency with which Lawlor writes, and to the way he has attempted to position himself, it is my contention that he misconstrues Derrida’s thinking of singularity and, in doing so, reinscribes a structural way of thinking about animals that involves gestures of elevating “the human” above “the animal” due to his prescribed positioning and defining “man” as the elevated “rational” animal and the non-human animal as “irrational” and more lowly.

This language of oppositions—up and down, above and below, rational and irrational, ascent and descent—belongs to the traditional metaphysical and onto-theological model of thinking about animals. As David Farrell Krell explains in his article “The Way Back Down: Paul Klee’s Heights and Depths,” “Ascentionalism is as visible throughout Western art as it is palpable in traditional philosophies of nature.”⁴⁶ In “Letter on Humanism,” Martin Heidegger states that thinking in our time is “on the descent from metaphysics.”⁴⁷ Krell takes this statement up and relates it to Derrida’s efforts to remind us of “the uncountable *differences* among living things.”⁴⁸ Interpreting Derrida’s efforts as a certain descensionalism that, “for Derrida, would resist all forms of ascensionalism *and* human exceptionalism,”⁴⁹ Krell writes that the way back down, “as Heidegger puts it”:

[...] has to do not only with contemporary and romantic philosophers but also with what we presume to be the most metaphysical of metaphysicians. Consider Plato and Plato’s *Republic*, in which the way *up* the divided-line from mere images to knowledge, requires a movement back down the line, just as the philosopher who exits from the cave on an upward journey to the sun will have to make his or her way back down into the cave. [...] The more one studies the great figures and the great texts of metaphysics, the more this resistance to sheer ascent emerges, and the more it seems

⁴⁵ Ibid., 108-109.

⁴⁶ Krell, David, “The Way Back Down: Paul Klee’s Heights and Depths,” in *Research in Phenomenology* (Volume 43, No. 3, 2013), 332. Cited hereafter as “Back Down.”

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

that at least on occasion philosophical vision is all about taking the plunge.⁵⁰

Like the resistance Sisyphus endures while pushing a heavy bolder up a steep hill only to fall from exhaustion and descend again before attaining freedom from his impossible task, “the way back down” is related directly to the theme of animality in Derrida’s work. What scholars such as Wood, Calarco, and Lawlor have not taken into account is not only Derrida’s conception of singularity, but also his approach to the question of the animal. For Derrida, “the question of the animal,” and the figure of “the animal,” represent such an “occasion,” or *event*, in the history of philosophy where “The experience of the seeing animal, of the animal that looks at them, has not been taken into account in the philosophical or theoretical architecture of their discourse.”⁵¹ Derrida claims that philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, Levinas, and Lacan (among others),⁵² never drew up “any systematic consequence from the fact that an animal could, facing them, look at them, clothed or naked, and in a word, without a word, *address them*.”⁵³ It is in the gesture of an address, and the configuration of who or what is deemed to be able to give an address and therefore elicit a response, that Derrida finds himself circling around constantly, asking “*who I am*—and who I am (following) at the moment when, caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, for example, the eyes of a cat [...]”⁵⁴ In “Derrida’s Flair (For the Animals to Follow...)” Michael Naas explains that when Derrida is reflecting on his encounter with his cat:

The gaze of the other, in this case the animal other, is thought in relationship to the genesis of shame or modesty as well as the culture and technics of clothing. What happens, Derrida asks, when a philosopher lets himself be gazed at naked by a cat and then tries to think this experience philosophically? This scene of a human being *first*

⁵⁰ Ibid., 334.

⁵¹ Derrida, Jacques, *The Animal That Therefor I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham UP, 2008), 13. Cited hereafter as *Animal*.

⁵² For instance, see Derrida, Jacques. *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume I*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. University of Chicago Press, 2010.

⁵³ *Animal*, 13.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 3.

looked at, rather than looking, an object for the gaze of another, rather than a subject whose gaze seeks to see and to know the object before it, sets the stage for the rest of the book and accounts for many of its methodological reversals.⁵⁵

According to Naas, Derrida's task is to rethink the experience of being gazed upon by animals "philosophically"—something he claims has never been done in the history of philosophy. "The animal" has never been thought of as a subject, "a who," or a being with the capacity to address "the human."⁵⁶

Despite what scholars such as Wood, Calarco, and Lawlor claim, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida is not attempting to erase the limit between humans and animals. Rather, he is attempting to redefine this limit so that the projections of past philosophers, who attribute to "the human" the capacity to speak of "the animal" *as if* s/he could actually view or understand the world from the perspective of "the animal," are not reiterated. Thus in order to interrupt this philosophical tradition by marking the fact that no philosopher has ever protested the singular limit that is "the animal" (all animals) "as such," Derrida invents the French word *animot*. According to Marie-Louise Mallet, when spoken, this word "has the plural *animaux* heard within the singular, recalling the extreme diversity of animals that 'the animal' erases, and which, when written, makes it plain that this word [*mot*] 'the animal' is precisely only a word."⁵⁷ According to Derrida, the word *animot* is a word that is meant to remind us that the French and English word "animal is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other."⁵⁸ Therefore, when caught by the gaze of the other, one must consider the possibility that:

⁵⁵ Naas, Michael, "Derrida's Flair (For the Animals to Follow...), in *Research in Phenomenology* Volume 40 (2010), 225. Cited hereafter as "Flair."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ "Preface," in *Animal*, x.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

It is *not just* a matter of asking whether one has the right to refuse the animal such and such a power (speech, reason, experience of death, mourning, culture, institutions, technics, clothing, lying, pretense of pretense, covering of tracks, gifts, laughter, crying, respect, etc.—the list is necessarily without limit, and the most powerful philosophical tradition in which we live has refused the ‘animal *all of that*). It *also* means asking whether what calls itself human has the right rigorously to attribute to man, which means therefore to attribute to himself, what he refuses the animal, and whether he can ever possess the *pure, rigorous, indivisible* concept, as such, of that attribution.⁵⁹

Despite what some scholars have claimed, Derrida’s thinking of singularity, which considers an individual life (human or non-human) irreplaceable and unique, is radical and challenges the reductive binary system of classifying *all* species members under the categories “the Animal” or “the Human.” Thinking about animals under such labels neglects the diversity and differences that exist among and between species. Therefore, in problematizing, dividing, and multiplying the purity and indivisibility of the “concept” of the singular line between humans and animals, Derrida also problematizes the idea that a concept, such as “event,” “decision,” “the animal,” “the human,” “solution,” “problem” and so on, can be crafted by “man” in such a way that it can stand as a unified, pure, and exclusively graspable by man, “as such.” This way of reasoning instantiates an auto-affective logic of anthropocentrism. In response to this logic, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida writes that his purpose is to “put into effect another logic of the limit.”⁶⁰ “*Limitrophy*,” Derrida writes, “is therefore my subject”:

Everything I’ll say will consist, certainly not in effacing the limit, but in multiplying its figures, in complicating, thickening, delinearizing, folding, and dividing the line precisely by making it increase and multiply. Moreover, the supposed first or literal sense of *trephō* is just that: to transform by thickening, for example, in curdling milk. So it will in no way mean questioning, even in the slightest, the limit that we have had a stomachful of, the limit between Man with a capital *M* and Animal with a capital *A*.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Rather than a single line distinguishing “the human” from “the animal,” multiple lines are drawn to account for differences of degree that cannot be fully grasped in their entirety. This reconfiguration of the limit allows Derrida to argue that there is indeed “a discontinuity, rupture, or even abyss” between not only humans and animals but between all organisms.⁶² Thus, while “the animal” has been configured by philosophy as “the absolute” or “wholly other,”⁶³ through Derrida’s reconfiguration of singularity, all beings—human or non-human animal—take on this traditional definition of being “wholly” other. Therefore, by no longer drawing a single line between “the human” and “the animal,” Derrida writes that one must also develop “another ‘logic’ of decision,” of what it means to give an address, “of the response and of the event,” a logic, Naas explains, “that would cause us to rethink the ‘historicity of ethical, juridical, or political responsibility, within another thinking of life.’”⁶⁴ In other words, the concept of singularity for Derrida, is *not just* about multiplying a line, and calling into question its imagined indivisibility and purity, it is also about taking the plunge, as Krell explains, and developing another logic of the limit in order to break new ground.

Taking the Plunge

To plunge, as the mole or earth-worm that Derrida refers to in many places,⁶⁵ emphasizes the importance of how one approaches “the question of the animal.” In *Derrida and Our Animal Others*, Krell provides an elaborate discussion and analysis not only of Derrida’s final seminar but also of his engagement with “the question of the animal” in Western philosophy and literature. He writes that, “Derrida’s inquiries into ‘animality’ from start to finish [...] challenge the confidence philosophers always seem to place in the specifically human capacity to *respond* and to be

⁶² Ibid., 30.

⁶³ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁴ “Flair,” 234. Quoting Derrida in *Animal*, 126.

⁶⁵ *Animal*, 37.

responsible rather than merely to *react*.”⁶⁶ Indeed, in the *Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida states that his purpose is *not* to reclaim what many in the Western canon have denied to animals (death, language, imagination, friendship, culture, a face, etc.) but rather, to question the assertion that “the human” subject properly possesses the qualities that many philosophers have ascribed to “the human” so as to grant it privileges and powers that it does not actually have. Thus, the concept of “right(s)” and “justice” become an interesting place of analysis for Derrida, when examined through the way philosophy has crafted the animal since Plato and Aristotle. While Derrida is sympathetic to such proclamations as the *Universal Declaration of Animal Rights* (made public in 1989 by the International League of Animal Rights), he calls in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, for a much-needed critique of “rights,” because it is this very concept that has “determined a certain concept of the subject, which, while founding law and right, will have led at the same time to the denial of all rights to the animal, or rendered radically *problematic* any declaration of animal rights.”⁶⁷ According to Derrida, the concept of “right(s)” —the idea that the human has the power to declare, dictate, and govern—prevails in all disciplines that approach “the animal question.”

In “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority,’” Derrida explains that “singularity” (among other concepts), is “at least obliquely,” a discourse “on justice.”⁶⁸ The term “obliquely” is important here. He states that “what is now called Deconstruction, while seeming not to ‘address’ the problem of justice, has done nothing but address it, *if only obliquely*, unable to do so directly” (italics mine).⁶⁹ What can be meant by the expression to give an oblique address? Perhaps it is the case that an address is *not just* an address; that is, perhaps an address is always, at

⁶⁶ *Animal Others*, 12.

⁶⁷ *Animal*, 88.

⁶⁸ Derrida, Jacques, “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority,’” trans. Mary Quaintance in *Cordozo Law Review*, No. 5-6, Vol. 11 (July 1990), 929. Cited hereafter as “Force of law.”

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 935.

least in some way or form, a response. Derrida argues that if one can think of an address also as a form of response, to do justice to a topic (such as justice), one is obligated to proceed “obliquely” in order to avoid proceeding unjustly; that is, by acting *as if* one could actually address justice directly, or “as such.” By acting as if one could actually speak of justice “as such,” one proceeds from an assumed, or self-designated position of authority which attributes itself the unfounded “right,” power, or capacity to be able to interpret, translate, and speak about something like “justice,” without fault, as it “really” is in its entirety. Thus, approaching a topic obliquely (without assuming that one possesses the power to address and grasp the issue or topic directly, “as such,” or in its entirety), helps to create opportunity for the discussion to develop more responsibly, perhaps even more justly. As Derrida explains in *Of Grammatology*:

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work. This is what the person who has begun the same work in another area of the same habitation does not fail to point out with zeal. No exercise is more widespread today and one should be able to formalize its rules.⁷⁰

According to Derrida then, deconstructive thinking begins obliquely; that is, from the position of the one being addressed, as an inheritor, a position that will always involve answering to an address with a *response*. Therefore, in reconsidering human-animal relations, the ways in which we *approach* this topic must be altered. While other philosophical models and approaches such as utilitarianism and the rights based approaches proceed to address “the animal” through a model of ethics that is influenced by what Derrida refers to as “the metaphysics of presence,” the form of

⁷⁰ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, ed. and trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Hopkins Fulfillment Service; Corr. edition, 1998), 66. Cited hereafter as *Of Grammatology*.

deconstruction that Derrida employs when approaching this topic begins from the second person position of a respondent, rather than from the position of a first person addressor. In other words “ethics,” for Derrida and deconstruction, comes from and must begin with, the concept of “the other” as the absolute other who is what, in *Spectres of Marx* (and other works), Derrida refers to as the *arrivant* (arriving) or *venir* (to come).

This concept of the other, as one who is wholly other, always arriving, and never fully present, is notably different from Heidegger’s conception of *Dasein* (“being there”). In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida remarks that in *Being and Time*, where Heidegger succeeds in radicalizing the questions of Husserlian phenomenology by posing the question of being, “And with it the question of truth, of sense, of the logos” to metaphysics,⁷¹ he also succeeds in destabilizing, shaking, and perhaps even “destroying the securities of onto-theology.”⁷² Derrida explains that “such a meditation contributes, quite as much as the most contemporary linguistics, to the dislocation of the unity of the sense of being, that is, in the last instance, the unity of the word [i.e. logocentrism].”⁷³ However, Derrida also contends that Heidegger falls back into the reasoning of onto-theology, the metaphysics of presence, and logocentrism, in the way that he inscribes *Dasein* with a sense of incomparable force or power that “the animal” does not possess or have the capacity to attain (a discussion I will take up next chapter). According to Derrida, this incomparable power or force that Heidegger attributes to the human-*Dasein*, can be precluded in Heidegger’s relation of human-*Dasein* to *Walten* or *Gewalt*—an unmatched and violent governing power.⁷⁴ By virtue

⁷¹ Ibid., 22.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Derrida, Jacques, *The Beast and the Sovereign Vol. II*, Trans. Geoffrey Bennington (The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 30.

of this power, Heidegger elevates man out of the impoverished world of *animality* and situates “man” as world-forming.

Conclusion

In “Force of Law,” Derrida remarks that his presentation at the Cardozo Law School is closely related to a lecture he gave a few days earlier in Chicago where he “devoted [time] to a certain number of texts by Heidegger in which the words *Walten* and *Gewalt* play a decisive role.”⁷⁵ Much like the Christian philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) who argues that “the just and the strongest, the most just as or as well as the strongest *must* be followed,”⁷⁶ Heidegger too argues, in his own way, that might is right. Therefore, in the case of Heidegger, the animal follows man, not vice-versa. However, it was not until near the end of Derrida’s life that he began to change his perspective on the way Heidegger’s definition of *Dasein* operated in association with the word *Walten*. As I explain above and in chapter one, Derrida’s philosophy is concerned primarily with metaphysics as “the science of presence” (although he does not confine the entirety of metaphysics to this definition). Thus, part of what Derrida is challenging in metaphysics, and in Heidegger’s philosophy, is how the relation of words create meaning and how that meaning formulates a certain kind of teleological reasoning that is auto-affective, and anthropocentric. For instance, in “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” Derrida states that:

The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix—if you will pardon me for demonstrating so little and for being so elliptical in order to bring me more quickly to my principal theme—is the determination of being as presence in all the senses of this word. It would be possible to show that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated the constant of a presence—*eidōs*, *arché*, *telos*,

⁷⁵ “Force of Law,” 927.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 935.

energia, ousia, aletheia, transcendentality, consciousness, or conscience, God, man, and so forth.⁷⁷

What Derrida seeks to map out regarding *animality* in Heidegger's philosophy as it relates to metaphysics, is how constellations of words embedded within a certain heritage of metaphysics move through Heidegger's philosophy to eventually produce and reiterate a logic of "pure presence" for "the human." In his final seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*, Derrida argues that Heidegger's inventiveness with language, and his creativity in explaining and articulating what *Dasien* is and what it means to be human, is based on a "phantasm." In this seminar, and significantly so, Derrida embarks on a path that traces the methodological meaning that the hetero-affective structure of the phantasm has for deconstruction and philosophy in general. Following Derrida's comparison of Martin Heidegger's discussion of *animality* in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, to Robin Crusoe's fantasy of "a living death" in Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*, my next chapter will explore how Derrida sets out to problematize and challenge Heidegger's assertion that, "Only man dies (*Nur der Mensch stirbt*)," whereas, "The animal perishes (*Das Tier verdendet*)."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2006), 353. Cited hereafter as "Play."

⁷⁸ *BSII*, 121. Derrida is quoting Heidegger's *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, Trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Indiana University Press, 1995), 171.

to live the death of the other

The question, that was the question of the seminar, remains entire: Namely that of knowing who can die. To whom is this power given or denied? Who is capable of death, and, through death, of imposing failure on the super- or hyper-sovereignty of *Walten*?¹

This chapter begins with a reluctant response to the questions above: “I don’t know.”² According to Jacques Derrida, “saying ‘I don’t know’ about fantasy and revenants is the only way to take them into account in their very effective power.”³ Thus, similar to Robinson Crusoe, who reluctantly (and perhaps confessionally) wrote in his journal, “I know not to this Hour, whether there are any such Things as real Apparitions, Spectres, or walking of People after they are dead,”⁴ Derrida also writes, in reference to himself and the way he uses the word phantasm:

I do not know if this usage of the word ‘phantasm’ is congruent or compatible with any philosophical concept of the *phantasma*, of fantasy or fantastic imagination, any more than with the psychoanalytic concept of the phantasm, supposing, which I do not believe, that there is one, that there is only one, that is clear, univocal, localizable.⁵

¹ Derrida, Jacques, *The Best and the Sovereign Vol. II*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 290. Cited hereafter as *BSII*.

² *Ibid.*, 149.

³ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 149. Emphasis mine.

This chapter tracks Derrida's engagement with Heidegger's work through *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, "Heidegger's Hand (*Geschlect II*), *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, and other related works. Along the way, I investigate the meaning and relationship of Derrida's conception of the term "phantasm," and its relationship to how he translates the term *Walten* in Heidegger's philosophy as it is discussed during Session Six of Derrida's final seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*.

Building on Derrida's translation of *Walten*, I suggest that a particular dimension of the meaning of this term can be derived from how Heidegger and Eugene Fink, in their 1966/67 *Heraclitus Seminar* understand the term "lightning" (κεραυνός) in Heraclitus Fragment B64. From here, the chapter unfolds through a close reading of how Fink and Heidegger come to understand the order of the "world" in the Heraclitus Fragments where they encounter the formula "to live the death of the other." I argue that this formula is analogous to the structure of Heidegger's philosophy on the experience of human *Dasien's* life-death and, as such, it is a phantasm. In the final stanza of this chapter, I explore how the phantasm is an integral aspect of deconstructive thinking that holds a double meaning. The double meaning, I suggest, involves a dangerous but also fruitful mode of critique and that, *perhaps*, it is only through fantasy, or what Derrida deems "the auto-hetero-affective" dimension of the phantasm⁶ that sovereign concepts like *Walten*, and the structures they are a part of, can be effectively challenged.

Sovereignty and Controversy: Derrida's Reading of Heidegger's Humanism

Among other things, Derrida's final seminars *The Beast and The Sovereign Volumes I and II*, examine the history of sovereignty from the time of King Louis the XIV (1638) to the French revolution (1787-99) and beheading of King Louis the XVI (1793). Marked by the guillotine, this

⁶ Ibid., 170.

revolutionary event, for many writers and political philosophers (past and present), signifies a change in governance and, ultimately, a change in how the subject (“self”) came to be imagined. The French motto *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*, commemorates the establishment of principles of popular sovereignty which are thought to have eradicated the divine right of kings and privileges of the nobility and clergy. Indeed, absolute sovereignty, defined by Derrida as a locus of undivided power or force authorized by itself to make its own law and to use force for its own self-interest, seemed to be dethroned. However, according to Derrida, in the same manner that older constitutional monarchies, aristocracies, and oligarchies claimed power as an undivided sovereign force, the autonomous “subject,” the “individual” who replaced the monarch, also claimed sovereign power for itself. The writers whom Derrida is particularly interested in engaging throughout his final seminars (and other works), are those who have most commonly been credited with shaping and developing the philosophico-politico-juridical, and theological principles of liberal ideology that grew out of the Early Modern period (roughly 1500-1800 CE).

Emerging mainly in response to The European wars of religion (1524-1648 CE), the Protestant Reformation in Western and Northern Europe, and the civil wars of seventeenth century England (and other events), European intellectuals, such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, John Stuart Mill, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Paine, Baron de Montesquieu, and many others, played a significant role in influencing early modern juridico-political discourses on the nature and rights of “man.” From the works of many Early Modern and Enlightenment scholars, certain principles and concepts about humanism contributed to the development and instantiation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1948 at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris, the UDHR emerged as a response to the devastating experience of the Second World War and represents the first global expression of

rights to which all human beings are inherently entitled. As noted previously in chapter two, due to Derrida's continued engagement with German philosophy and Martin Heidegger, who took out a one-year membership in the National Socialist Party in 1933, many intellectuals in and around France had grown suspicious of Derrida and considered him to be a dangerous thinker.

Human existence as “Ek-sistence”

As Edward Barring notes in *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy*, Derrida had been translating Heidegger's meaning of the German word *Dasein* (being there) as *réalité-humaine* up until the mid-60s (as can be seen his 1961-62 course “Transcendental”).⁷ The centrality of the concept of “man,” how it has been configured and defined in the works of such canonical thinkers as René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, and Friedrich Nietzsche (among others), occupied Derrida's thinking during a time when philosophies about humanity and what it means to be human were influencing the ideals of different intellectual and political communities across Europe. Due to Heidegger's association with National Socialism, many intellectuals began to avoiding Heidegger's philosophy, and even dismissed it as being tainted with the ideals of Nazism.⁸ Yet, despite the decision of many scholars to abandon Heidegger's work, Derrida began to adapt, build on, and transform Heidegger's philosophy of human existence as “Ek-sistence.”⁹

⁷ Baring, Edward, *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945-1968* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 273. Cited hereafter as *The Young Derrida*.

⁸ For example see Farias, Victor. *Heidegger and Nazism*. Temple UP, 1991, and Faye, Emmanuel. *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Yale UP, 2011. These books have sparked much controversy and an unresolved debate about not only Heidegger's affiliation with National Socialism but also, to what degree of his philosophy was influenced by/influenced National Socialism. Critics, such as Jürgen Habermas, Theodor Adorno, and others have argued that that his affiliation with National Socialism influenced his philosophy and lead to the flaws in his work. Whereas others, such as Hannah Arendt, Derrida, David Krell, and Richard Rorty (among others) treat his involvement with Nazism as an error, but still see value in his philosophy and, while critical of his work, are careful not to essentialise his work by reducing it to his affiliation with National Socialism.

⁹ *The Young Derrida*, 273.

And in doing so, it was no doubt through Heidegger's understanding of human *Dasein*'s existence as ek-sistence that Derrida was encountered by the figure of "animality."

According to Derrida, "the animal," or the concept of animality, for not only Heidegger's discourse but also, the social sciences and humanities in general, is crucially important. If the goals of social scientists and researchers are to avoid grand reductions and idealized ways of thinking, then one must question the inherited presuppositions that lay embedded in our language and they way certain idioms influence the way researchers establish "the facts" about "the human," its relation to "the world," and "the animal." In reference to Heidegger, Derrida states in *Of Spirit*:

Can one not say, then, that the whole deconstruction of ontology, as it is begun in *Sein und Zeit*. and insofar as it unseats, as it were the Cartesian-Hegelian *spiritus* in the existential analytic, is here threatened in its order, its implementation, its conceptual apparatus, by what is called, so obscurely still, the animal? Compromised, rather, by a *thesis* on animality which presupposes—this is the irreducible and I believe dogmatic hypothesis of the thesis—that there is one thing, one domain, one homogenous type of entity, which is called animality *in general*, for which any example would do the job. This is a thesis which, in its *median* character, as clearly emphasized by Heidegger (the animal *between* the stone and man), remains fundamentally teleological and traditional, not to say dialectical.¹⁰

For Derrida, Heidegger's thinking of animality was much more than just a problematic humanist teleology; rather, it represents a terrifying symptom of a broader program of thought which continues to contaminate the way discourses across the social sciences and humanities converse about "knowledge," "the human," and "the question of the animal."

This notion of "the human," humanism, and recently emerging discourses on the post-human, are, for Derrida, related at least in some way to western-liberal, early modern discourses on "rights." In his seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign Volumes I and II*, whether in relation to Heidegger or to others, Derrida engages traditional discourses on what it means *to be* "human" in

¹⁰ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 57. Cited hereafter as *Of Spirit*.

order to demonstrate how thinkers (whether consciously or not) reiterate a parallel discourse on *animality*. In the first volume of the seminar, he shows how certain discourses represent “the animal” as a simple being that does not actually live because it wanders through existence in a directionless way. This conception of “the animal” has occupied Derrida’s thinking from as far back as *Of Grammatology*, where he writes that “the animal” is continuously represented in philosophy, politico-juridical, and theological discourses as having no relationship to death; and yet, is on the side of death.¹¹ Coming almost full circle to this line of thinking in his final seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*, he argues that speaking of “the animal” in general terms continues to replicate a complex spiritual idiom, or structured web of related concepts and fundamental principles. This idiom, continues to determine that death is a strictly human capacity and that through the experience of bearing witness to the death of the other, man attains his right to “life.” Illuminating the limits of this metaphysical conception of a living-death (or lifedeath), in this next section I argue that Derrida’s work is a critical resource for rethinking “life” and “death.”

Walten—what rules Heidegger’s Spiritual Idiom

Thought of as a sovereign entity (self or nation state), the modern subject is a phantasm, according to Derrida. By engaging with epistemological models of political philosophy throughout his first year of the seminar, Derrida outlines the limits of various philosophical discourses, seeking out and challenging the principles that writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and Carl Schmitt (among others) use to establish the authority of their discourses. Questioning how certain key figures in the Western

¹¹ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, ed. and trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Hopkins Fulfillment Service; Corr. edition, 1998), 196. Cited hereafter as *Of Grammatology*. Derrida writes that “The animal who, as we have seen, has no relationship to death, is on the side of death. Speech, on the other hand, is living speech even while it institutes a relation to death, and so on.”

canon establish their knowledge, by what principles, methodological analyses, and theoretical approaches they employ to support their conclusions, Derrida outlines the boundaries and limits of what many writers in the Western canon claim to “know” about “the world,” “man,” and “the animal.”

In *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, Derrida does this through his reading of Martin Heidegger’s work, specifically, Heidegger’s *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, alongside which he reads Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Derrida reads Heidegger’s philosophical discourse *as if* he were reading a fictional story; that is, he reads Heidegger in a similar way that he reads the novel, *Robinson Crusoe*. “The world” that Heidegger imagines, although unique and different, is similar to the fictional island-world constructed by Defoe for Crusoe. In the same manner that Defoe gives Crusoe the power to manipulate and enforce his clout on the “life” of the island; Heidegger also assigns to man (*Dasein*) the power to rule and *be* a sovereign subject. Analogous to Crusoe’s Christian God, *Walten* occupies a similar status as power in Heidegger’s discourse. In *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*, Derrida states that, “*Walten* is a force of which one can say neither that it bears life nor that it bears death.”¹² In footnote 2 of Session Four (which is in reference to the word “force” used by Derrida in the quotation just cited), Derrida attempts to define and translate *Walten*. In that footnote, Geoffrey Bennington points out, “Derrida adds: ‘I put the word ‘force’ in quotation marks because it does not satisfy me, any more than the word ‘violence’; in any case, it [*Walten*] is something that is not a thing, not a thing of life or a thing of death’”¹³ This non-thing, Derrida suggests, is equivalent to the omnipotent and omnipresent God of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*.

¹² *BSII*, 94.

¹³ *Ibid.* See also Session Ten, where Derrida writes that *Walten* is “the violent, the prepotent, and thus what is superlatively more violent, predominant in violence, is the constitutive essential character of the dominance that is

Derrida's analogous linking of Heidegger and Crusoe (and Defoe) involves a treatment of Heidegger's *Walten* as a (violent) concept, figure, or character similar to others that appear in the political and onto-theological history of sovereignty that he engages. What becomes interesting about Derrida's analysis of the history of sovereignty is how, in the Western canon, "the animal" is positioned as opposite to the absolute sovereign (kings and God for example). Derrida suggests that this oppositional structure represents a certain pattern of thinking that locates both the animal and the sovereign outside the law. This (problematic) dichotomy, which places "the human" above "the animal," depends on an idea about the world and how the beings inhabiting "the world" relate to it. This idea (*eidōs*), which presupposes that the world (*Welt*) continues to exist even after death, and that the world belongs to man, (re)emerges throughout the writings of Heidegger, in particular his *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* where he claims that "the animal, contrary to how it might appear, does not and never can relate to *present-at-hand* things singularly or collectively."¹⁴ He contends, as Derrida explicates elsewhere,¹⁵ that without the hand, the animal lacks the capacity to grasp, and in turn be grasped by, the world "as such."

In the history of sovereignty that Derrida engages, Heidegger's writing represents a moment in European history where the same language of sovereignty that existed in the past (which many claimed had been overthrown during the time of the French revolution), (re)emerges or persists, albeit now transferred from the monarch to the social-political, and philosophical-existential individual. Derrida approaches Heidegger's rhetoric as if it were based on the same principles

itself predominant potency. In its eruption, *Walten* can retain in itself (*an sich halten*) its prepotent potency [...] but by holding it back it is all the more terrible and distant, and anything but harmless [*inoffensive*] (*harmlos*)" (286).

¹⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Indiana University Press, 1995), 255. Cited hereafter as *Fundamental*.

¹⁵ For instance, see Derrida's "Heidegger's Hand (*Geschlecht II*)" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II* (Ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008. 27-63. Print).

enforcing discourses about the self and nation state (and God) as sovereign entities.¹⁶ In the *Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*, Derrida suggests that Heidegger's *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* equates the ancient notion of *physis* (nature) with *Walten*. For Heidegger, *physis* and *Walten* "are synonyms of everything, of everything that is, and that is, then, as originally sovereign power."¹⁷ Previous to this seminar, in *Of Spirit* (1987), Derrida explains that Heidegger was always after a non-platonic-Christian, non-metaphysical, or onto-theological determination of the spiritual. As Heidegger would prefer, *geistliche*, or the concept of *geist* in philosophy, would be more originary and thus without any form of Christian or ecclesial signification.¹⁸ Confessing that "in the end," he is not certain about what "rules Heidegger's spiritual idiom,"¹⁹ Derrida notes that perhaps it is the ambiguous notion of the concept "flame" that would bring some clarity to this matter.²⁰ As Derrida proceeds from this hypothesis about the flame, he argues that "Heidegger's thinking of Spirit passes 'between a Greek or Christian—even onto-theological—determination of *pneuma* or *spiritus* and a thinking of *Geist* which would be other and more originary. Seized by the German idiom, *Geist* would rather earlier [...] give to think flame."²¹ The flame guides Derrida to the poetry of both George Trakl and Friedrich Hölderlin, where he argues Heidegger derives his meaning of spirit from. In addition to Derrida's hypothesis that Heidegger derives his conception of spirit as flame from his interpretation of how *geist* is represented in the poetry of Trakl and Hölderlin,²² I would also like to suggest that, at least obliquely, Heidegger also derives his understanding of spirit from the concept of lightning

¹⁶ To save time I have provided a very brief overview of one aspect of Derrida's methodology in this final seminar. What Derrida is doing in this seminar, especially methodologically, is much more complex than I have indicated.

¹⁷ *BSII*, 39.

¹⁸ *Of Spirit*, 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

²² *Ibid.* Also, see pages 12, 33, 41, 63, 76, 78, and 80.

(κεραυνός) in Heraclitus Fragment B64, which reads τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει κεραυνός (Lightning steers all things).²³

As Derrida explains, in Heidegger's philosophy the term *Walten* is preoccupied with the idea of increasing through force. This aspect of Derrida's understanding of *Walten* comes from Derrida's focus on how *geist* (spirit) is understood by Heidegger as something that inflames by giving and catching fire. The idea of a giving and catching, can perhaps also be thought of in terms of transport, transpose, or deport. When thought of as occupying a certain element of human *Dasein*, this form of deporting can then be understood as a comportment towards, or even a form of thrownness. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains that he derives his understanding of *Dasein*'s existence from the Ancient Greek term ἔκστασις (*ekstasis*), which means "to stand out."²⁴ In his "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger goes on to explain that "man occurs essentially in such a way that he is the 'there' [*das "Da"*], that is, the lighting of Being. The 'Being' of the *Da*, and only it, has the fundamental character of ek-sistence, that is, of an ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being. The ecstatic essence of man consists in ek-sistence, which is different from the metaphysically conceived *existentia*."²⁵ A little later on in this text he writes that "ek-sisting sustains Da-sein in that he takes the Da, the lighting of Being into 'care.' But Da-sein itself occurs as 'thrown.' It unfolds essentially in the throw of Being as the fateful sending."²⁶ According to Heidegger, man is innately prescribed with a share in the truth of Being. As such, he bears the

²³ Heidegger, Martin and Fink, Eugen, *Heraclitus Seminar*, trans. Charles H. Seibert (Northwestern UP, 1993), 138. Cited hereafter as *Heraclitus*. Also, thanks to the Honors College at the University of Oklahoma where Randy Hoyt, under the advisory and help of Dr. Laura Gibbs, have made the Heraclitus Fragment available online at the following website: <http://www.heraclitusfragments.com/files/ge.html>. All English translations of the fragments that appear in this chapter are taken from the way Heidegger and Eugene Fink translated them in their 1966/1967 *Heraclitus Seminar*, unless otherwise specified.

²⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (HarperCollins Canada, 2008), 54. Cited hereafter as *Being and Time*.

²⁵ Heidegger, Martin, "Letter on Humanism," trans. and ed. David Farrell Krell in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger* (Routledge, 1993), 205. Cited hereafter as "Humanism."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

to live the death of the other

responsibility of the lighting of Being. What I think Heidegger means by this is that in his thrownness, man alone lights the path of his trajectory (his fateful sending) and, in doing so, he retains the power of foresight, and can change the course of existence. This ability to steer, is analogous to the way Heidegger and Fink understand “lightning” (κεραυνός) in Heraclitus Fragment B64.

Lightning steers all Things

In the *Heraclitus Seminar*, organized by German philosophers Heidegger and Eugene Fink (1966/67), Heidegger and Fink set out to reorganize, retranslate, and reinterpret the Heraclitus fragments in order to recover the origins of what Heidegger considers to be many of the foregrounding, pre-metaphysical principles that he argues belong to philosophy proper. Paying homage to such early Christian church fathers as Hippolytus and other translators for preserving and translating important portions of Heraclitus’s work, Heidegger and Fink reorganize how certain fragments relate to each other in an attempt to strip away what they consider to be the imposition of both ancient and modern Christian concepts that have obstructed the “true” meaning of the foundational principles of philosophy for millennia. Throughout a series of thirteen sessions, Heidegger and Fink work to recover what Heidegger deems a “not-yet-metaphysical”²⁷ way of thinking. In doing so, they claim to discover in one of the Heraclitus fragments the proposition of a formula—“to live the death of the other.” According to Heidegger and Fink, this cryptic formula holds hidden within it how power is articulated by Heraclitus. As they proceed from the lightning fragment, Fink and Heidegger explain that lightning tears open the dark with brightness and lets all things (τὰ πάντα) come forth to appearance, thus arranging each thing in its fixed outline.²⁸ Fink then draws on Fragment B11 which reads “Everything that crawls is tended

²⁷ *Heraclitus*, 67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

to live the death of the other

by [gods] [whip] blow”²⁹ (πᾶν γὰρ ἔρπετον πληγῆ νέμεται). According to Fink, the Greek word πληγῆ indicates “another fundamental word for lightning. It means then the lightning bolt.”³⁰ Heidegger and Fink then read the lightning bolt in relation to the Greek word νέμεται (from νόμος [nomos] meaning law or custom), in order to determine that lightning is the law or guiding principle of steering, or being driven by the blow.³¹ Fink indicates that “the image that Heraclitus mentions implies that pasture animals will be driven by the shepherd with the whipblow, indeed so that they change pasture from time to time,” to which Heidegger adds, “Tending to a driving as well as a heading.”³² Through this exchange unfolds an entire structure wherein Heidegger and Fink illustrate that according to Heraclitus, like lightning, which steers all things in making them visible, with fire, man too can make things visible in order to distinguish things from each other. Thus, while the phenomenal realm of man is made apparent during the day due to the brightness that shines from the sun, during the night, in the realm of darkness, man emulates the sun and stands-out in existence as a being between night and day. As Heidegger and Fink go on to track how fire is being articulated by Heraclitus, they run into Fragments B31, B62, and B76. The obscurity of what it means to turn-over in Fragment B31 leads them to connect what is stated in Fragment B62 with B76 where their own translation, interpretation, and understanding becomes clearer.

In Fragment B62 they encounter the formula “Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the others’ death and dying the others’ life”³³ (ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες), and then move to

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 34-35.

³² Ibid., 51.

³³ Ibid.

to live the death of the other

translate B76 to mean “The death of fire is the birth of air, and the death of air is the birth of water”³⁴ (πυρὸς θάνατος ἀέρι γένεσις, καὶ ἀέρος θάνατος ὕδατι γένεσις). Fink explains that “What

is named only as turning over in Fragment 31, is here spoken of as ‘to live the death of the other.’”³⁵

They mark this expression as a formula for how Heraclitus understand the order of things and how they relate to each other in the world. Fink goes on by stating:

At first, it should sound noteworthy to us that the dark formula of death, which first becomes clear to us in the domain of the living, is referred to such entities as neither live or die, like water or earth. In the small domain of the human ambit, we know well the phenomenon that fire vaporizes water and water quenches fire. Here we can say that fire lives the destruction of water and water lives the destruction of fire.³⁶

To this Heidegger then adds, “To live here would mean ‘to survive...’” to which Fink replies

“...to survive the passing of the other, to survive in the annihilation of the other.”³⁷ A little

while later Fink explains that:

[...] the gods understand themselves in their own everlasting being in express reference to mortal humans. The constant being of the gods signifies a persistence in view of humans’ being constantly delivered over to time. In this manner the gods live the death of human. And in the same way [...] humans die the life of the gods, or that they atrophy in reference to the life of the gods; namely, it is thereby said that humans, by understanding themselves as the ones who most disappear, always comport themselves toward the permanence that the life of the gods appear to us to be.³⁸

What troubles Heidegger about this explanation is whether transitions, which Heraclitus refers to as the living in Fragment 88, occur in *animalia* (animals) or not.³⁹ In reference to the Greek word

τὰυτό (same or the same), which opens and closes the sentence, Heidegger states that he cannot determine what Heraclitus means here and that this question should remain open. However, a few

pages later, the conversation turns to an interesting moment in Heidegger’s work. Fink says to

³⁴ Ibid., 68.

³⁵ Ibid., 82.

³⁶ Ibid, 68.

³⁷ Ibid., 82.

³⁸ Ibid., 100.

³⁹ Ibid., 119.

Heidegger: “You have, one time when you came to Freiburg, said in a lecture that the animal is world-poor. At that time, you were underway toward the affinity of the human with nature.”⁴⁰

Heidegger responds, “the body phenomenon is the most difficult problem. The adequate constitution of the sound of speech also belongs here. Phonetics thinks too physicalistically when it does not see φωνή [speech] as voice in the correct manner.” A participant interrupts and states that, “Wittgenstein says an astounding thing in the *Tractatus*. Language is the extension of the organism.” Fink interjects: The only question is how ‘organism’ is to be understood here, whether biological or in the manner that human dwelling in the midst of what is essentially determined by bodiliness.” To which Heidegger states: “One can understand organism in the sense of [Jakob von] Uexküll’s⁴¹ or also as the functioning of a living system. In my lecture, which you mentioned, I have said that the stone is world-less, the animal world-poor, and the human world-forming.” Fink then presses on and says:

It is thereby a question whether the world-poverty of the animal is a deficient mode of world-forming transcendence. It is questionable whether the animal in the human can be understood at all when we see it from the animal’s viewpoint, or whether it is not a proper way that the human relates to the dark ground.⁴²

To end this brief exchange on embodiment and the world-poor animal, Heidegger explains, as he does in his “Letter on Humanism,”⁴³ that, “the bodily in the human is not something animalistic. The manner of understanding that accompanies it is something that metaphysics, up till now has

⁴⁰ Ibid., 146.

⁴¹ Ibid. Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944), was a German biologist who proposed the animal-world as an *umwelt* (a surrounding world or a world around the animal). His most well-known work is *A Foray Into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “Letter on Humanism,” 203-204. Heidegger states, “Above and beyond everything else, it finally remains to ask whether the essence of man primordially and most decisively lies in the dimension of *animalitas* at all [...] In principle we are still thinking of *homoanimalis*—even when *anima* [soul] is posited as *animus sive mens* [spirit or mind] and this in turn is later posited as subject, person or spirit [*Geist*]. Such positing is the manner of metaphysics. But then the essence of man is too little heeded and not thought in its origin as the essential provenance that is always the essential future of historical mankind. Metaphysics thinks of man on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of his *humanitas*.”

not touched on.”⁴⁴ What is interesting about this statement, and the way Heidegger and Fink outline the structure of beings and the way Heraclitus articulates power in these Fragments, is that “the animal” is positioned as opposite to the absolute sovereign (the Gods or lightning). In Derrida’s final seminars, he suggests that this oppositional structure represents a certain pattern of thinking that locates both the animal and the sovereign outside the law. As the light kindler, according to Fink, man represents the being “who is delivered over to the nature of light. While at the same time, however, he also rests on the nightly ground that we can only speak of as closed. The sleeping and the dead are figures indicated by human belonging in living and dead nature.”⁴⁵ Agreeing with Fink, Heidegger explains that this is closer to the proper understanding of human *Dasein* as it is expressed in his own work. Estranged from other entities, human *Dasein* understands the being of all the domains of things “... [...] precisely on the ground of the ontic distinctness.”⁴⁶

What concerns Derrida about Heidegger’s emphasis regarding man’s non-animal ontic-distinctness is his claim that humans are the only species capable of truly grasping not only their own “being” or “existence” (*Dasein*) “as such” (as it really is) but also, the essence of “the animal.” Heidegger’s presumption about who *can* “know,” or is capable of “knowing,” about the world and all that it entails, attributes to “the human” a power or capacity to understand how animals relate to the world. Derrida argues that it is almost as if Heidegger claims that humans have the capacity to understand an animal’s perception of itself better than an animal does.⁴⁷ He notes that the capacity of man to grasp the world because they can draw closest to *Walten* (God, lightning, etc.), designates “the human” with a privileged position in Heidegger’s discourse. This positions man

⁴⁴ *BSII*, 146.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

to live the death of the other

as a being with the capacity to affect the world and all that it entails through a process of destroying and creating, pushing and pulling, gathering and disseminating, effecting and being effected by the world. According to Heidegger, the might of our capacity in this respect, constitutes a self-assigned right over the totality of existence. “The animal,” as the object of comparison, is imagined by Heidegger as lacking this integral component or capacity to destroy and create, and is therefore rendered dazed or stunned (*benommen*) because it remains trapped within its own “disinhibiting ring or sphere.”⁴⁸ This self-encirclement prevents the animal from being open and capable of relating to other beings “as beings.” While Heidegger claims that this incapacity to grasp or behave manifestly is not a weakness but rather a state of consciousness that works in “the animals” favour, Derrida notes that Heidegger imposes an ontological hierarchy that reiterates a common pattern of thought in metaphysics which conceptualizes “man” as a figure of sovereignty above the law, because man is both creator and abider of its law, while “the animal” is figured as an outlaw without rights.

Lifedeath in Heidegger

This ontological distinction is presented in Heidegger’s three theses. These theses, in turn, grow out of the questions “what is world (*Welt*)? What is finitude (*Endlichkeit*)? What is loneliness, isolation or solitude (*Vereinzellung, Einsamkeit*)?”⁴⁹ Each thesis designates a path towards Heidegger’s proposition that the stone has no world (*der Stein ist weltlos*), the animal is poor in world (*das Tier ist weltarm*), and man is world-forming (*der Mensch ist weltbildend*).⁵⁰ Reflecting on these theses throughout *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*, Derrida seeks to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 255.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁰ *BSII*, 6; *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 176.

question and challenge why Heidegger's discourse on ontological difference (*ontologische Differenz*) launches "the human" as sovereign and "the animal" as subject to human rule.

According to Heidegger, the animal, poor in world, is not actually "living" in the fullest sense of the word "life." Continuing on the path he had set out for himself in *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), which sought to examine what it means to "be," "exist," or "live,"⁵¹ Heidegger declares that life, or what it means to exist, cannot be grasped or understood without considering death, or what death entails for the meaning of life and what it means to live. In Session Five of *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, and in an in-depth analysis of the use of Heidegger's language in the work "Das Ding," ("The Thing"), Derrida argues that Heidegger's emphasis on death is an attempt to define the essential character of *Dasein*.⁵² *Dasein* is stretched between birth and death—it lives-death as death according to Heidegger. In Heidegger's view, human *Dasein* is thrown into a continuous trajectory of becoming mortal; that is, only *Dasein* can anticipate and contend with its death-as-death. From moment to moment, from birth to death, in a continuous cycle of living-death that extends from the thrownness of human *Dasein* to its exodus, *Dasein* is always departing from itself only to partake in a process of arriving back at itself. Derrida notes that Heidegger writes:

Death is the shrine of Nothing (*Der Tod ist der Schrein des Nichts*), that is [...], of that which in every respect is never something that merely exists [...], but which nevertheless presences, even as the mystery of Being itself (*als das Geheimnis des Seins selbst*). As the shrine of Nothing, death harbors within itself the presence of Being (*das Wesende des Seins*). As the shrine of Nothing, death is the shelter of Being (*das Gebirg des Seins*). We now call mortals mortals – not because their earthly life comes to an end (*endet*), but because they are capable of death as death (*weil sie den Tod als Tod vermögen*) [...] They [the mortals] are the presencing relation to Being as Being (*Sie sind das wesende Verhältnis zum Sein als Sein*).⁵³

⁵¹ *Being and Time*, 1.

⁵² *BSII*, 124.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

While it is the case that life and death harbor and engender each other according to Heidegger, it is the human who bears the misfortune of a being-able-to tap into, grasp, or access that aspect of *zoe* (life) that engenders death “as such.” Derrida argues that Heidegger “defines man as mortal, and this power of as such, of the *as such* [...], this power to have access to the *as such* of death (i.e. the Nothing as such) is none other than the relation to the ontological difference, and thereby to Being as Being.”⁵⁴ Therefore, Derrida explains that according to Heidegger, what differentiates humans from animals is the power of *Dasein*’s mortality; that is, its capacity (power) to die and to access death *as* death: “To die” Heidegger writes, “means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies (*Nur der Mensch stirbt*). The animal perishes (*Das Tier verendet*) [...] It [the animal] has death as death neither ahead of itself nor behind it.”⁵⁵ Derrida comments on this statement by writing that:

This sentence counts as more than a mere explication, but specifies the fact that the ‘as such’ of death presupposes that one have death *ahead of oneself and behind oneself*, that one see it coming by anticipating in the being *zum Tode* [toward-death], but also that one retain it and recall it in mourning, burial, the memory one keeps, so many possibilities and powers that Heidegger refuses without the slightest nuance to what he calls in a very homogeneous way *Das Tier* in general, the animal in general.⁵⁶

The Being-toward-death or *Sein-zum-Tode* is not an orientation that brings *Dasein* closer to its end but rather, is an exclusive way of being for the human; a way of being that consists of a living-death, a process of growing through the world where a certain force, which Derrida associates with *Walten*, inaugurates the human with the responsibility of pursuing an authentic perspective attainable through different possibilities. Although some may think of *Dasien*’s movement, which is a kind of projection or thrownness, as temporality, or a linear progression of past, present and future, it is important to note that, for Heidegger, time is not linear in the sense of a temporal

⁵⁴ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 122.

progression. In the Heideggerian sense, perhaps time is a form of being as extension that is delineated from the thrownness of human *Dasein*. To be thrown into the world is to be thrown into a particular context of existence that entails class, suffering, angst, demands or duties, and is fundamentally understood as a decision which one has no control over. In this sense, the very fact of one's existence, or the very fact that one is living, is a manifestation of thrownness. Thus, for humanity, death is already a determined feature of being which authenticates the human as a being always oriented towards death—indeterminate and always arriving. This trajectory of arrival, of path breaking, and self-awareness of man's movement towards death is, for Heidegger, what distinguishes man from "the animal."

Phantasm: the ascent of human *Dasein*

As I have indicated above, according to Heidegger, man should not be thought of as an animal organism. To cast him as such would be a metaphysical projection.⁵⁷ Therefore, in being thought of as the being-toward-death, perhaps the standing-out of human *Dasein* can be understood as an enabling which lets the human act *as if* it could observe the Beingness of Being from outside-of-itself. Death, then, is the possibility of the impossible for human *Dasein*. As such, it cannot be compared to any other form of "ending," "perishing," or non-existing-thing. And thus, man for Heidegger, draws nearest to divinity, rather than the world-poor realm of "animality." As Heidegger argues in his "Letter on Humanism":

Of all Beings that are, presumably the most difficult to think about are living creatures, because on the one hand they are the most closely related to us, and on the other are at the same time separated from our ek-sistent essence by an abyss. However, it might also seem that the essence of divinity is closer to us than what is foreign to other living creatures, closer, namely, in an essential distance which however distant is non-the-less more familiar to our ek-sistent essence than is our appalling and scarcely conceivable bodily kinship with the beast.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "Humanism," 204.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

For Derrida, it is precisely this motif of proximity, this idea about drawing nearer to the Being of beings that marks in Heidegger a spiritual idiom of man's ascent. However, according to Derrida, this ability to draw near to some-thing by acting "as if" is always a representation which falsely identifies itself *as* the thing it claims to be imitating and thus, is a phantasm, a fiction, or phantasmatic conjuring. Derrida writes that:

But of course, as dying a living death, in the present, can never really present itself, as one cannot presently be dead, die, and see oneself die, die alive, as one cannot be both dead and alive, dying a living death can only be a fantasmatic virtuality, a fiction, if you like, but this fictive or fantasmatic virtuality in no way diminishes the real almightiness of what thus presents itself to fantasy, an almightiness that never leaves it again, never leaves it, and organizes and rules over everything we call life and death, life death. This power of almightiness belongs to a beyond of the opposition between being or not being, life and death, reality and fiction or fantasmatic virtuality.⁵⁹

What is a fantasmatic virtuality? Moreover, what is a phantasm and the phantasmatic virtual-reality that Derrida is alluding to here? At the end of Session Six in the *Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*, Derrida asks, "What does phantasm, *phantasma*, revenant, fantasia, imagination, fantastic imagination, mean?"⁶⁰

Lexically, in Ancient Greek, φάντασμα (*phantasma*, "phantasm"), from φαντάζω (*phantazō*) means, "I make visible" (*Beast* 136).⁶¹ Similarly, the Latin form, *phantasma*, is defined as an apparition, specter, appearance, or image. As a noun in English, a phantasm⁶² is some "thing" seen that has no definite physical reality. However, in German phantasm is *trugbild*, which means phantom; illusion; holder; or to be deceptive. The suffix *bild* (*bilt*) means picture; image; illustration; portrait; or, figuratively speaking, idea; notion; a picture story. In the form *bilden*, this

⁵⁹ *BSII*, 130.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* Also, see 136 where Derrida defines the Greek *phantasmata* as "both product of the imagination and fantasy or revenant."

⁶² *Ibid.* 77, fn. 30. Geoffrey Bennington remarks that "Derrida spells this word in French both as 'fantasme' and 'phantasme.'"

to live the death of the other

word means to form or shape. Figuratively, it can also mean to educate, train, develop, *be*, constitute, improve one's mind, or form an opinion. The stem word *trug*, means deceit; fraud; delusion (of senses) and, holder. What is curious is that as the pretense of *tragen*, *trug* means to bear, carry, or support. The relationship and combined meaning of the words *trug* (deceit or delusion) and *tragen* (bear or carry) signifies a certain "thing" or a "what" as the carrier of deception, the bearer of delusion, the holder (as in *trugbild*) of an ability—the ability to act or even *be* "as if." In Session 64 of *The Fundamental Concepts*, Heidegger outlines what he plans to discuss with a subheading that reads, "*The primary characteristics of the phenomenon of world: the manifestness of beings as beings and the 'as'; the relation to beings as letting be and not letting be (comportment toward, orientation, selfhood.*" Heidegger continues by stating:

If we proceed from the examination of the thesis that the animal is poor in world to examine the thesis that '*man is world-forming*' and ask ourselves what we can glean from our previous discussion in order to characterize the essence of world, then we can arrive at the following kind of formula: The manifestness of beings as such, of beings *as* beings, belongs to world. This implies that bound up with world is this enigmatic 'as,' beings *as* such, or formulated in a formal way: 'something *as* something,' a possibility which is quite fundamentally closed to the animal.⁶³

The ontological difference (*die ontologische Differenz*) between human and animal that Heidegger is trying to describe depends on the characteristic of an "as"—a characteristic which designates what, he says, animals fundamentally lack. This formulaic "as" signifies a particular way that Heidegger writes about human *Dasein* and its relation to *Walten* (an unmatched power that bears neither life nor death). Derrida writes that Heidegger often tries to describe the nearness of human *Dasein* to *Walten* and the capacity of *Dasein* to draw near to *Walten* by postulating human *Dasein* to act "as" *Walten* (something *as* something). It is almost as if Heidegger describes human *Dasein* as a kind of "as if"; that is, as a combination of bearing (*tragen*) and delusion or deceit (*trug*). In

⁶³ *Fundamental*, 274.

this sense, the relationship of the words *trug* and *tragen* is telling about the way Heidegger describes the capacity of human *Dasein*. The “as,” which is a distinguishing feature of ontological difference (*ontologische Differenz*) between human and animal, defines the animal as being sealed off and closed to true-life-experience and, therefore, through the notion of the “as,” or an “as if,” defines human *Dasein* as some “thing” or “being” open to the possibilities of self-development or formulation (*bilden*). Therefore, human *Dasein* bears (*tragen*) the capacity of trajectory, moving, or becoming through development which is facilitated by acting “as if” it could possibly become *Walten*, however, could never actually “be” *Walten*. In this sense, human *Dasein* is the phantom former⁶⁴ (*trugbilden*), always acting, or bearing the capacity to act “as”—or “as if” it were—some other “thing.”

In the Fourth Session of the *Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*, Derrida writes that *Dasein* “is a compulsive nostalgia, a drive [...] that pushes it to be everywhere at home not in a blind and disoriented, directionless way, but directed or rather awakened [...].”⁶⁵ In Session Six, he also states that this capacity to become “as” (or “as if”) other, to be at home everywhere, is “[...] what, in an obscure way, I have proposed to call a phantasm, i.e. a certain ‘as if’ [...].” Derrida goes on to write:

Under the sign of this ‘as if,’ ‘perhaps,’ ‘I do not know,’ we allow ourselves to have an impression made on us, we allow ourselves to be *affected*, for this is an affect, a feeling, a tonality of pathos, we allow ourselves really to be affected by a possibility of the impossible [...] that the dead one be still affected or that we could still be affected by the dead one him or herself [...] this being-affected *of* the dead one or *by* the dead one is, precisely, interrupted, radically, irreversibly interrupted, annihilated, excluded by death, by the very sense of the word ‘death.’ [...] It is precisely because this certainty is terrifying and literally intolerable, just as unthinkable, just as

⁶⁴ *BSII*, 79. In reference to Crusoe, to whom Derrida is comparing Heidegger, Derrida cites Henri Bergson and states that “This insular experience, this fiction of the island where everything has to be reinvented, like at the origin of the world, at the origin of the universe itself, and of the universalization of the universe, would seem to answer, while perhaps perverting it, to Bergson’s famous formula, at the end of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, which concludes with this definition of the universe, or more precisely, more literally, with the ‘function of the universe’ and the universality of the universal: a ‘machine to make gods.’”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

unpreventable and unrepresentable as the contradiction of the living dead, that what I call this obscure word ‘phantasm’ imposed itself upon me.⁶⁶

In other words, for Derrida, to think of “the animal” as poor in world, as Heidegger suggests, one is representing and describing the animal as it appears to “the common *Dasein*” for the purpose of building its own image as a kind of consciousness (or awareness). Therefore, human *Dasein* is as much of a fiction, an imagined being, a phantasm, as “the Animal” in general is in Heidegger’s work.

Ending his final seminar by asking who (not what) can die, who is given the power to grant or deny death and, who, or perhaps “what,” is capable of limiting or putting in check the limits of some “thing”—such as Heidegger’s *Walten*—that, once seen not in terms of truth and reality but as power and affect (a locus of undivided power authorized by itself to make its own law and to use force in its own self-interest), Derrida is asking, what is it that could possibly delimit not just the super or hyper-sovereignty of Heidegger’s *Walten* but also, the phantasm, the notion of a phantasm of the absolute, the phantasm of the absolute phantasm.

In “*Comme si, comme ça: Phantasms of Self, State, and a Sovereign God*,” Michael Naas suggests that “the phantasm is not an error to be measured in relation to truth; it is not some imitation, image, or representation to be measured against the real, but is akin to what Freud in *The Future of an Illusion* and elsewhere terms an ‘illusion.’”⁶⁷ This does not necessarily mean, as Michael Naas suggests, that our phantasms are representations or misrepresentations of reality or “of the way things are” but rather, that phantasms are “projections on the part of a subject or nation-state of the way one would wish them to be—and, thus, in some sense, the way they become, with all their real, attendant effects.” A phantasm is thus a simulacrum—a force or drive of image-

⁶⁶ Ibid., 149.

⁶⁷ Naas, Michael, “*Comme si, comme ça: Phantasms of Self, State, and a Sovereign God*,” in *Mosaic* 40.2 (2007), 19. Cited hereafter as “Phantasms.”

making that represents what one imagines to be “the real” yet is only a small fragment, or trace of that fragment of what we imagine to be “reality.” A phantasm, then, is one projected perspective, yet its effect is one of simulation; that is, it influences the way others imagine and perceive “things.” In the case of the general “Animal” category used and enforced by Heidegger, Derrida writes:

this is indeed how we spontaneously tend to see things. This phenomeno-ontology would then reflect the point of view of common human consciousness [...] what Heidegger would be describing rigorously, with all the philosophical exigency he can, often against the tradition, often following the tradition, is the animal as it appears to us, and even as it appears to us historically, historically—to us, in our human *Dasein* [...] I wonder whether this supposed statement of essence (‘the animal is poor in world’) does not belong, precisely, and only, to the world, to the limits of the world, or more narrowly to the limits of *this* world that *Dasein* has formed or configured for itself.⁶⁸

The limits of the configuration of the animal, for the configuration of its own human *Dasein* image, and thus for its own configuration of what the world is for itself—the very limit of this phantasmatic reality built (*bilt*) around the imagined self and its non-relation to the Animal—is, in fact, limited, especially when it comes to death. As co-habitants of the world, as Heidegger suggests, human and animal share and co-habit. Both animal and human, according to Heidegger, share a common world. Derrida explains that, “this co- of the cohabitant presupposes a habitat, a place of common habitat, whether one calls it the earth (including sky and sea) or else the world as world of life-death. The *common* world is the world in which one-lives-one-dies, whether one be a beast or a human sovereign, a world in which both suffer, suffer death, even a thousand deaths.”⁶⁹ Indeed, as Geoffrey Bennington explains in “Rigor; or, Stupid Uselessness,” “The end of the world is the end of the Idea of the world, and more precisely the end of its end, the (finite) end of its (infinite) end, the failure or collapse of its *telos* in the open-endedness of the dispersion

⁶⁸ *BSII*, 198.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 264.

to live the death of the other

of singularities and alterities for which *différance*, dissemination, and trace are possible names.”⁷⁰

The idea of a common world, is the very limit of the phantasm that Derrida demarcates. For what is shared according to Derrida is not *the* world or even *a* world; but rather, the absolute singularity of one’s (undetermined) end to come (human or not). This limitation of an “I don’t know” about death, at which moment one will die and what happens after, is the *commonality* that marks, for Derrida, as the title of *The Animal That Therefore I Am* suggests, “the human” as an animal organism, not a celestial one. Thought of in this light, “the human” remains grounded, less metaphysical, and certainly closer to other animal species instead of God, *Walten*, or some other hyper-sovereign-subject. But how to begin to rethink the relationship of humans and animals?

Conclusion

As Derrida notes in his final seminar, a phantasm holds a double-meaning; on the one hand, a phantasm represents how a subject has come to imagine death, “the animal,” reality, the other, etc., which can be detrimental and have a major effect or influence on the way others come to envision “the world.” On the other hand, the phantasm is necessary and therefore represents a way of thinking, or an avenue by which accepted ideals or privileged positions could be critiqued, challenged, overturned, interrupted, or deconstructed. This double meaning of the phantasm is what, at the end of Session Six, Derrida refers to as “the hetero-auto-affective structure of the phantasm.” Therefore, while Heidegger, Crusoe, and Defoe (and others) act as if we are actually “inhabiting the same world and speaking of the same thing and speaking the same language [...]” Derrida writes, “we well know—at the point where the phantasm precisely comes up against its limit—that this is not true at all.”⁷¹ According to Derrida this leaves us with two options, each

⁷⁰ Bennington, Geoffrey, “Rigor; or, Stupid Uselessness,” in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy Volume 50* (2012), 37. Cited hereafter as “Rigor.”

⁷¹ *BSII*, 170.

equally as fantastical as the other: first, if we pretend there is a world, then “I carry you, I have to, I ought to, when nothing will happen to us nor welcome us ever on any island or any shore, nor any world, to life to death.” However, if we reject this hypothesis, Derrida argues that we ought to pursue the impossible in order to make the impossible more possible—“where there is no world, where the world is not here or there but *fort* infinitely distant over there, that what I must do, with you and carrying you, is make it that there be precisely a world, just a world, if not a just world [...] for you, to give it to you, to bear it toward you, destined for you, to address it to you [...] as though there ought to be a world where presently there is none.”⁷² In the ontological, political, and philosophical theology that Derrida engages throughout his final seminar, albeit in a somewhat pantological⁷³ fashion, “the animal,” is denied a world, “the world,” or a “common-world.” It is in the face of this denial of “world” to animals that we must begin to dream, invent, recreate, change, and transform the way we think about animals not only in general but also, institutionally; that is, juridico-politically, and theologically.

In the Western canon, where many have dreamed about “the animal” as poor and man as the supreme ruler, would it be possible to dream about the concept of “world” differently, as Derrida suggests? Would it be possible, perhaps, to begin dreaming about the world, and the relations between the beings that inhabit it, in a different way, and in a manner that would make it so “that there be precisely a world, just a world, if not a just world” for animals (human and non-human),

⁷² Ibid., 268.

⁷³ Krell, David Farrell, *Derrida and Our Animal Others: Derrida's Final Seminar, The Beast and the Sovereign* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2013), 142-144. According to Krell, “Pantology” is a type of gathering that involves an attempt to account for everything, a gathering that accumulates endless or an infinite amount of knowledge or material. He also writes that there is a very long moment in Derrida’s final seminar “when *pantology* becomes *phantology*, offering an account of the phantasm that exceeds the logic of the *logos*. Perhaps the translation of *Ver-sammlung* as *repartition*, ‘gathering’ as ‘bungled gathering’ or ‘sharing out’ or ‘distributing,’ has everything to do with a dominion—the *Walten*—of the phantasm in Derrida’s readings of both Heidegger and Defoe. Krell then asks whether it is the case that it is actually phantology, rather than pantology, that is “the very touchstone of all philosophy?”

to live the death of the other

to give it to animals, to bear it toward them, destined for them, to address it to them “as though there ought to be a world where presently there is none.”⁷⁴ Might we begin to believe, contrary to what many have believed in the past, or what many may believe now, that animals have a world, not “the” world, but a world, a world different for each and every animal?

Such a task, as Derrida suggests, is *perhaps* impossible. However, isn't this how all the confabulations, configurations, and formulations in the Western history of the beast and the sovereign begin; that is, with a dream, phantasm, or fable about paradise where beast and man live in harmony?⁷⁵ Perhaps it is the case that it is only through the phantasm, or inventive engagement, that the impossible can become more possible than we imagine. Indeed, *how to think* co-habitation and what it means to live-together more *responsibly*, is a discussion that I will pursue in my final chapter on responsibility.

⁷⁴ *BSII*, 267.

⁷⁵ See, for instance, the myth of the Age of Cronos in Plato. *Statesman*. Trans. C. J. Rowe. *Plato Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Hackett Publishing Company, 1997. 294-359.

Response and Responsibility

Building on Derrida's notion of the trace in chapter one, and in keeping with the understanding of address as a form of response, as explained in chapter two, by way of conclusion and in an attempt to think what the implications of a response entails for animal ethics and human-animal relations in Derrida's work, this chapter explores the relationship that Derrida draws between "the two sources of religion" and "responsibility" in his essay "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone." By engaging in a close reading of "Faith and Knowledge," I discuss this theme as a concept that is graphed into Derrida's writing about the link between humans and animals. I suggest that this performative writing, which is detectable in works such as *The Animal That Therefore I Am* and *The Beast and the Sovereign Volumes I and II* (among other related texts), is an exemplary method of writing that helps us veer away from reproducing a logic of writing that would, by its very movement, syntax, and punctuation, originate from a violence that Derrida deems "the worst."

Trace

In chapter one I explained that in his early work (*Of Grammatology* and *Voice and Phenomena*, both 1967), Derrida's notion of the trace marks a departure from instantiating the traditional Cartesian dualism between mind/body, life/death, man/animal, etc. that led to the inward turn of the subject in philosophy. While Plato and other philosophers argued that speech comes before writing and is therefore a more pure representation of thought, Derrida inverts this distinction and, in *Of Grammatology*, argues that speech is a form of writing.¹ In the context of animal ethics, this inversion is useful because it explains that all species are, at least in some way or form, influenced by their environment, by their peers, traditions, and the material matter that surrounds them. For Derrida, then, "life" is scattered across species in written form. As genetics insists, life is "written" or is comparable to a text that is the DNA code, AGCT, etc. Derrida gives a growing attention to life as a process that *records* information rather than *produces* it. As such, the "external" becomes the "internal." This perspective breaks from the forms of binary thinking spawned by Cartesian dualism which, as I explain in chapter one, posits that the essence of the human lies in thought, the *res cogito* or immaterial mind rather than the material, bodily realm of *res extensa*.

In deconstructive terms, the external material of the environment is comprised of a trace structure that is always already patterned and informed (as explained in chapter one, this represents something like the code of information in DNA that is copied and then edited in RNA). The trace-material has the capacity to retain, is malleable, and thus is also modifiable. As Clayton Crockett explains in the "Foreword" to Catherine Malabou's *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic*,

¹ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, ed. and trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Hopkins Fulfillment Service; Corr. edition, 1998), 55-56. Cited hereafter as *Of Grammatology*. Cited hereafter as *Of Grammatology*.

Destruction, Deconstruction, materiality is essentially plastic.² This is also recognized by David Wills in *Dorsality: Thinking Back Through Technology and Politics*, where, in a radical rethinking of the relationality of animate/inanimate, human/animal, he argues that the environment outside of the human body, as much as inside it, “remains as a matter of record and increasingly becomes the very record or archive,” which, through a process of cataloging, becomes “available for a future retrieval.”³ Therefore, in understanding Derrida’s³ notion of the trace as an abundance of materials that retain modifiable information, the plasticity of materiality provides the basis for the formulation and modification of complex chains of retention. These traces of modifiable mnemonic chains can be thought of, according to Derrida, as texts.

As beings which are occupied by spaces of inheritance (in the sense of a text), spaces where editing processes occur during and after impressions are made socio-psychologically, and physically, humans (like all other animals), according to Derrida, are finite and vulnerable. This emphasis on the complexity of an ever changing heterogeneous trace structure which contributes to the finitude of a living organism represents a philosophical interpretation of being that breaks away from understanding human-life in relation to sovereign concepts such as Heidegger’s *Walten* or the One God. Phantasms such as *Walten* or the individual sovereign subject are representations of an imagined being that do not inherit but always disseminate, direct, dictate, control, and steer existence through a force of violence. As Derrida explains in *For What Tomorrow*, “only a finite being inherits, and his finitude obliges him. It obliges him to receive what is larger and older, and more powerful and more durable than he.”⁴ This understanding of being (human and non-human)

² Crockett, Clayton, “Foreword,” in *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Columbia UP, New York 2005), xiii. Cited hereafter as *Plasticity*.

³ Wills, David, *Dorsality: Thinking Back Through Technology and Politics* (Indianapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 11. Cited hereafter as *Dorsality*.

⁴ Derrida, Jacques and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004), 5. Cited here after as *Tomorrow*.

as a space for inheritance seeks to dismantle the imagined alliance and closeness of “man” to a sovereign power-figure like the Christian God in order to rethink, reconstruct, and rebuild a relationship between so-called “man” and animals as subjects.

By moving away from divinity and the idea of the ascent of “man,” and rooting his perspective in a more biogenetic interpretation of materiality, Derrida’s philosophy has profound implications for redefining the meaning of concepts such as responsibility, hospitality, co-habitation, friendship, alliance, and other related terminology that cannot be mentioned here, nor taken up for reconstructive analysis in this chapter. However, what this next section will go on to discuss is how the process of reconstructive analysis in deconstructive thinking can help us reimagine the dynamics of the relationship between humans and other animal species. This will no doubt involve delving more deeply into the heritage of concepts that retain, and continue to enforce in modern literature on human-animal relations, oppressive power structures of an originary violence; or, what Derrida refers to as the violence of “the worst.”

The Worst in “Faith and Knowledge”

While the notion of the “the worst,” (*le pire*) can be found in many different places throughout Derrida’s work,⁵ perhaps this expression, in so far as it relates to “the animal question,” is best explained in his essay “Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone.” This essay focuses on post-Kantian modernity which witnessed the acceleration of industrial growth through “scientific” thinking that signified a move away from “religious” reasoning. This move away from religion connotes at once and the same time the rise

⁵ Derrida, Jacques, *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume I and II*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010 and 2011; “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority.’” Trans. Mary Quaintance. *Cardozo Law Review*, No. 5-6, Vol. 11 (July 1990). 919-1046; *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005; *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Routledge, 2006 (to name a few).

of scientific, and secular reasoning. As other scholars have been keen to argue in animal ethics, this scientific and secularized way of thinking contributed to all sorts of compassionless technological treatments of animals. From the rise of factory farming and the regimentalization of animals by means of genetic experimentation, to industrial production for consumption of animal meat, artificial insemination on a massive scale, and the audacious manipulations of the genome through animal experimentation and the reproduction of hormones, genetic crossbreeding, and cloning for all sorts of other products (cosmetic, fashion-based, and exploitive energy-saving-labour-measures via transportation and security), the rise of secularism, in retrospect, many have argued, left behind the kind of conservative ethics and heritage of morals in religious thinking that is needed to combat this violence. However, contrary to this narrative, Derrida argues that many scholars who adhere to this vocation reiterate a prescriptive definition of “religion” as retaining within it the ideals of a moral way of thinking that can save us because they remain pure, sacred, and entirely unscathed.

This popular notion of religion, Derrida explains, is determined by false pretenses that never question the scholarship that came to establish the definition of religion in this manner. Thus, while scholars in the study of religion and other fields adhere to the definition of religion as being unscathed, Derrida argues that this violence, or “plus d’un,”—meaning “more of one,” “a lot more of one,” “only one,” or “the most one”—signifies a superlative sacrificial structure that emerges out of a certain aspect of religiosity. To think the secular without the concepts and principles of theology, which have foregrounded and contributed to the development of tele-techno-scientific thinking, would be myopic. As Derrida argues in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, this emphasis on the rise of the secular is “ambiguous” because although it “frees itself from the religious [...] it

remains marked, in the very concept, by the religious.”⁶ Therefore, in “Faith and Knowledge,” written seven years prior to *Rogues* (2003), Derrida seeks to think the secular tele-techno-scientific in relation to certain concepts in the family of “religious” terminology. This attention to the relationship between “religion” and “science,” I argue, marks an algorithm for the incalculable increase of animal suffrage over the past two centuries that, according to Derrida, results from the relationship between faith and knowledge.

Contrary to the opinion that a return to religious thinking would save us from the horrible situation in which we currently find ourselves vis-à-vis the dynamics of human-animal relations, Derrida argues that, first of all, this phrase about the return to, or the return of, “religion,” is problematic. For it seems that this curious phrase of a “return” is foregrounded by a certain Enlightenment tradition that is rooted in “*Marxist Criticism, Nietzschean Genealogy, Freudian Psychoanalysis and their heritage.*”⁷ According to Derrida, this tradition believed naïvely that “*Reason, Enlightenment, Science, Criticism*” actually “*opposed Religion.*”⁸ However, in its very rejection of “religion,” this Enlightenment tradition reproduces a definition of religion as fundamentally detached or separate from reason, or secular ways of reasoning. “Religion,” or what is deemed its fundamental principles and associated terminology in the Western tradition, Derrida argues, is/are not purely and solely “religious” and have never gone away, or disappeared from the scene of the mechanical, the industrial, and tele-techno-scientific.

In *Miracle and Machine: Jacques Derrida and the Two Sources of Religion, Science, and the Media* (an elaborate exploration of Derrida’s essay “Faith and Knowledge”), Michael Naas

⁶ Derrida, Jacques, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005), 28. Cited hereafter as *Rogues*.

⁷ Derrida, Jacques, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” trans. Samuel Weber, in *Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1998), 4. Cited hereafter as “Faith.”

⁸ Ibid.

explains that Derrida will not speak “of a *return* to religion but of a *resurgence* of it, a new wave or surge in what has been an ever-present force or movement in European culture that has varied over time in intensity or visibility but that has never gone away in order, one day, to return.”⁹ Indeed, as Derrida himself explains in “Faith and Knowledge,” “The fundamental concepts that often permit us to isolate or to *pretend* to isolate the *political*—restricting ourselves to this particular circumscription—remain religious or in any case theologico-political.”¹⁰ This orientation is developed in part as a response to many Enlightenment scholars whom believed that they completely broke away from “religious” thinking. The very origins of the Enlightenment, Derrida argues in this essay, are found in religion. Thus, if we continue to believe in the strict opposition between religion and science, we remain trapped in the fallacies of a certain Enlightenment tradition which runs from Voltaire to Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud (among others). If we can get beyond this determinate opposition of religion/science (or reason), faith/knowledge, according to Derrida, “perhaps we might be able to try to ‘understand’ how the imperturbable and interminable development of critical and technoscientific reason, far from opposing religion, bears, supports and supposes it. It would be necessary to demonstrate, which would not be simple, that religion and reason have the same source.”¹¹

In seeking to explain why religion and science originate from the same source, Derrida retraces the etymology of the Latin word “religion.” Pointing out why relying solely on the etymology of this term to get at some totalizing definition of the “religious” is problematic, he explains that the etymology of “religion” implies two definitions:

⁹ Naas, Michael, *Miracle and Machine: Jacques Derrida and the Two Sources of Religion, Science, and the Media* (New York: Fordham UP), 83. Cited hereafter as *Miracle*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹ “Faith,” 66.

1. The experience of *belief*, on the one hand (believing or credit, the fiduciary or the trustworthy in the act of faith, fidelity, the appealing to blind confidence, the testimonial that is always beyond proof, demonstrative reason, intuition); and
2. The experience of the unscathed, of *sacredness* or of *holiness*, on the other.¹²

These two interpretations of religion come, Derrida notes, from Cicero's definition of *relegere*, which signifies "bringing together in order to return and begin again; whence *religio*, scrupulous attention, respect, patience, even modesty, shame or piety," and, in another trajectory, from Lactantius's and Tertullian's "*religare*," which involves "linking religion to the *link* precisely, to obligation, ligament, and hence to obligation, to debt, etc., between men or between man and God."¹³ Both sources of religion hold within them a definition of the "link" as a form of obligation, that is restricted, prevented, or halted (*halte*) from thinking the relationality of human life to the lives of other animal species.

The link, which conditions the very concept of "relationship" as man-man, and man-god, is fundamentally closed to animals. The structure of the relationship between "man" and "animal" as Derrida explains, can perhaps be thought as the law of an imperturbable logic, Promethean and Adamic in origin, Greek and Abrahamic (meaning Judaic, Christian, and Islamic) in tradition. From these two definitions of religion as, on the one hand, the unscathed, *heilig*, *holy* and, on the other hand, faith, belief, or the fiduciary, Derrida states "One could, without being arbitrary, read, select, and connect everything in the semantic genealogy of the unscathed—'saintly, sacred, safe and sound, *heilig*, *holy*'" to the notion of sacrifice, which "speaks of force, **life**-force, fertility, growth, augmentation, and above all *swelling*."¹⁴ According to Derrida, this logic of swelling "would perhaps be the place to enquire about the relationship between excess and sacrifice."¹⁵

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 74.

¹⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Excess and Sacrifice: the structure of “the worst”

As I explain earlier in this thesis, the configuration of “the animal” is consistently used by many in the Western canon as a touchstone for defining what it means to be “human.” In the history of sovereignty that Derrida engages in his final seminars *The Beast and the Sovereign*, all forms of life, from ants, monkeys, snakes, wolves and lions, to lamb, sheep, eagles and protozoa (all non-human animals), are reduced to a single category “the Animal” or *animality* in general. This grand reduction that bundles the infinitely diverse experiences and unique differences of all non-human species into one single category is what Derrida considers to be a logic of “the worst” kind. By its very function in gathering all animals under one name, “the animal,” as if for a slaughter, signifies a certain sacrificial way of thinking; that is, it signifies a violence of the worst kind.

In “Faith and Knowledge,” *the worst* violence, then, would signify a structure of excess or growth that is based on an unmatched principle of “the more.” This principle of growth and swelling occurs when the other is *completely* consumed or appropriated by one’s self in the sense that one assumes that s/he can actually retain the other to such a degree that one could access, via knowledge and knowing, the other, and the other’s experience(s), *as such*. Understood in this sense, there is no limit to one’s appropriation of the other and therefore, it is this idea of a *complete* consumption or appropriation of “the other” *as such*, that leads to exclusion, or limitless extermination of the difference of “the other.” This axiomatic of *the most* operates to make what is more than one, simply One. It reduces division and difference into an indivisible sovereignty, such as the “pure actuality” the One God, or Heidegger’s *Walten*. This logic of excess growth, sacrifices the difference of “the other,” to satisfy its own desire to accumulate more.

In “Faith and Knowledge,” what Derrida seems to be suggesting about this type of sacrificial logic is that it always involves certain “*mechanics*” that “reproduces, with the regularity

of a technique, the instance of the non-living or, if you prefer, of the dead in the living.”¹⁶ In the history of theologico-political and juridical philosophy that Derrida engages on the “the animal question,” this mechanical technique, replicates a simple principle about how the worth of a life is measured. “Life,” Derrida writes, “has absolute value only if it is worth *more than* life.”¹⁷ Life is classified as sacred, holy, and infinitely respectable, Derrida explains “only in the name of what is worth more than it and what is not restricted to the naturalness of the bio-zoological (sacrificeable).”¹⁸ Therefore, respect of life in the canonical writings of the Western discourses of religion, and on religion, Derrida argues, concerns:

human life only in so far as it bears witness, in some manner, to the infinite transcendence of that which is worth more than it (divinity, the sacrosanctness of the law). The price of human life, which is to say, of anthro-po-theological life, the price of what ought to remain safe (*heilig*, sacred, safe and sound, unscathed, immune), as the absolute price, the price of what ought to inspire respect, modesty, reticence, this price is priceless.¹⁹

When we think of this in relation to how the worth of a life is measured by animal ethics scholars such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan, as discussed in chapter one, we can see that animal life is valued only in so far as it can bear witness to that which exceeds it, to the invented “person” that all beings are to be measured against which determines the dignity, worth, and value of life in general. Without a doubt, this way of thinking is an extension of Enlightenment-era moral, ethical, legal, and political concepts concerning dignity and how to determine whether a being has an innate right to be valued and receive ethical treatment. This is an area in contemporary discourses on animal life that needs rigorous attention because it is still dominated by Immanuel Kant’s

¹⁶ Ibid., 87.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

androcentric philosophical ideology on dignity. And while I will attempt to discuss it briefly here, I cannot devote sufficient time to the topic of “dignity” in this chapter.

Dignity

In *Fundamental Principles of The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argues that that a thing which is not discussed in terms of its value has dignity. “Value,” according to Kant, is necessarily relative, because the value of a thing depends on the judgment of an observer. Thus, a thing that is not relative and is only an end in itself is beyond all value. This axiomatic determines, according to Kant, that a thing can only count as an end in itself so long as it has a rational and, therefore, moral dimension. In Kant’s words:

Morality is the condition under which alone a rational being can be an end in himself, since by this alone is it possible that he should be a legislating member in the kingdom of ends. Thus morality, and humanity as capable of it, is that which alone has dignity. Skill and diligence in labour have a market value; wit, lively imagination, and humour, have fancy value; on the other hand, fidelity to promises, benevolence from principle (not from instinct), have an intrinsic worth.²⁰

Going on to identify art and instinct with nature and irrationality, which Kant holds in opposition to the “objective” rationality of the (upright demeanour of a forward seeing²¹ and) thinking mind, he explains that because human’s alone have morality and should therefore be thought of as ends in themselves, “a systematic union of rational beings” comes forth “by common objective laws, i.e., a kingdom which may be called a kingdom of ends, since what these laws have in view is just the relation of these beings to one another as ends and means.”²² According to Kant, what this *ideal* Kingdom of ends suggests about *man* is that “he belongs to it as sovereign when, while giving laws, he is not subject to the will of any other.”²³ Kant then states that, “A rational being must

²⁰ Kant, Immanuel, *Fundamental Principles of The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Thomas Kingmill Abbott (Merchant Books), 109. Cited hereafter as *Metaphysics of Morals*.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 106.

²³ *Ibid.*

always regard himself as giving laws either as member or as sovereign in a kingdom of ends,” and in doing so, he becomes “completely [of] relative worth, i.e., value, but an intrinsic worth, dignity.”²⁴

In “Faith and Knowledge,” Derrida explains that Kant’s definition of the term dignity (*Würdigkeit*), which defines the life of a rational finite being as the absolute value beyond all comparative market prices (*Marktpreis*), represents “the religiosity of religion.”²⁵ In other words, “this excess above and beyond the living, whose life only has absolute value by being worth more than life in short, is what opens the space of death that is linked to the automaton (exemplarily ‘phallic’), to technics, the machine, the prosthesis: in a word, to the dimensions of auto-immune and self-sacrificial supplementarity, to this death-drive that is silently at work in every community, every *autocommunity*, constituting it as such in its iterability, its heritage, its spectral tradition.”²⁶ What I suggest Derrida is explaining about concepts like “dignity” and their heritage at the nexus of traditional theological, philosophical, and political discourse, is that they reproduce a sacrificial logic of excess that totalizes by appropriating the other into itself via knowledge and, in that very appropriation, is consumed by the principles of its very own consumption. Understood as something like the death drive in Freud, this complete excess eventually leads to its own self-destruction, its own death via suicide because these ideals, such as the kingdom of ends, *paradise*, and dignity, are still maintained within the logic of a phallacy; that is, they are imagined principles and concepts that, in pretending to be able to formulate objectively an accurate representation of reality, or the way reality ought to be construed, they in fact become marked by their very own conditionality and, therefore, remain perfectible.

²⁴ Ibid., 106-107.

²⁵ “Faith,” 87.

²⁶ Ibid.

Perfectibility, Performativity, Writing

It is in this dimension of perfectibility that Derrida not only constates but also performs his understanding of what it means to respond and be responsible. For Derrida, a text is not only a “vouloir-dire,” a “wanting to say,” or an “argument.” It is also a performance which always remains perfectible in our encounter with the other. From his cat to different philosophers, linguists, and literary writers, Derrida performs his interpretation from the position of a respondent which modifies his behavior, performance, or “writing.” We are infinitely modified and perfected by the other (human or non-human). And what I am trying to allude to here, in the final section of this thesis, is that Derrida’s approach to the “the animal question” offers us a way to think differently about the living and what it means to live. As Leonard Lawlor explains in his introduction to *Voice and Phenomena*, this experience of thinking differently “call[s] forth a new collectivity, a new people, a new *demos*, a new ‘we.’”²⁷ In truth, this is not without a certain undeniable risk, however. In not knowing what will arrive, or when it will arrive, whether “it” be disease, death, the other, or some form of alterity, we bear the responsibility of hosting the yet-to-come event of an other’s arrival. The way I wish to show how this understanding is performed by Derrida in his work is by paying close attention to a passage about Heidegger from Derrida’s *Of Spirit*.

There is no denying that Heidegger’s involvement with National Socialism is highly controversial; however, for Derrida, we cannot simply dismiss Heidegger’s thought and reduce it entirely to National Socialism. For if we were to perform this sort of dismissal, we would be invoking the same sort of totalizing way of thinking that we in fact are attempting to contest and dismiss. “The animal” (all animals) are stupid and irrational. Religion is unscathed. Heidegger

²⁷ Lawlor, Leonard, “Translator’s Introduction,” *Voice and Phenomena* (Northwestern UP, 2011), xxviii. Cited hereafter as “Introduction.”

was solely and purely a Nazi. Such expressions as these represent a way of thinking that avoids engagement, and in avoiding, fails to consider subjects in their complexity, and fundamentally contradicts itself and, therefore, renders itself invalid argumentatively. In deconstructive terminology, this way of thinking commits suicide in pretending that these concepts and subjects are unconditioned and therefore not attached to a complex heritage. If we desire to change this way of thinking, we must, at least to some degree, engage it in order to demonstrate why it is problematic. And in showing how or why certain aspects of totalizing thinking are problematic, we can begin to break away from repeating the very pattern of logic that we are trying to contest because in our very willingness and openness to engage the other, we avoid reiterating the same logic of consumption, of a pretend knowing, that the other discourse performs. A good example of how this openness is performed by Derrida can be read in *Of Spirit*, where he writes:

If I analyze this 'logic,' and the aporias or limits, the presuppositions or the axiomatic decisions, above all the inversions and contaminations, in which we see it becoming entangled, this is rather in order to exhibit and then formalize the terrifying mechanisms of this program, all the double constraints which structure it. Is this unavoidable? Can one escape this program? No sign would suggest it, at least neither in 'Heideggerian' discourses nor in 'anti-heideggerian' discourses. Can one transform this program? I don't know. In any case, it will not be avoided all at once and without reconnoitering it right down to its most tortuous ruses and most subtle resources.²⁸

This way of writing involves paying attention to the way a text moves, produces or presents, and makes visible the meaning of its own logic by means of its literary performance. One begins to detect as much by paying attention to syntax, understanding from where a text draws its examples, how it expresses its analogies, and understanding what rhetorical structures permeate the authors thinking through representations of breath and excitement, for instance, in the way a writer uses punctuation. Therefore, in taking the process of writing

²⁸ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 56. Cited hereafter as *Of Spirit*.

more seriously in order to better determine how the way one writes contributes to the production of one's argument, we can begin to detect how a text might begin to disrupt, interrupt, and dismantle itself, in a certain way, from within.

The faithful "Yes"

To explain how this process happens within a text, according to Derrida, one must engage in an act of faith where, in being encountered by the other, we accept the other and affirm, with a "yes," that we acknowledge the other without condition. And in that unconditional acceptance, we continue to maintain an openness towards the other that endures throughout our engagement with the other. This unconditional and affirmative "yes," which is the subject of Derrida's discussion in *Of Hospitality* develops out of his analysis of the two sources of religion, in "Faith and Knowledge."

In deconstructive terms, one cannot think of response and responsibility outside of an experience of inheritance. As Derrida explains in *For What Tomorrow*, "Even before one is responsible for a particular inheritance, it is necessary to know that responsibility in general [...] is assigned to us through and through, as an inheritance. One is responsible for what comes before and after, what is to come."²⁹ In "Faith and Knowledge," Derrida writes that this understanding of response and responsibility implies the notion of, "to swear" as in, to swear "the faith: *respondere, antworten, answer, swear (swaran)*: 'to be compared with the got, *Swaran* [from which come *schwören, beschwören*, 'swear,' 'conjure,' 'adjure,' etc.], 'to swear, to pronounce solemn formulas': this is almost literally *respondere*."³⁰ This emphasis on response as the place which prefigures the two definitions of religion, would entail an understanding of response and

²⁹ *Tomorrow*, 5.

³⁰ "Faith," 67. The quotation is from Benveniste, *Indo-European Language*, p. 475, article 'Liberation, 1: sponsio.'

responsibility that is prior to thinking the link between man and the divinity of God in the Western canonical tradition.

The priority of this concept has no origin and cannot be traced back etymologically to a certain axiom generated through particular concepts of abstract terminology. For Derrida, this notion of inheritance and responsibility is determined by “the experience of witnessing” which “situates a convergence of *these* two sources: the *unscathed* (the safe, the sacred or the saintly) and the *fiduciary* (trustworthiness, fidelity, credit, belief or faith, ‘good faith’ implied in the worst ‘bad faith’).”³¹ From the very first instant that one is addressed by the other, that one bears witness of the other’s arrival, human or non-human, one is performing, whether knowing it or not, an “act of faith” that “in bearing witness exceeds, through its structure, all intuition and all proof, all knowledge” where one “will never be able to see nor know the irreplaceable yet universalizable, exemplary place from which” the other addresses us.³² Implied in every “social bond,” then, whether human-human, animal-animal, or human-animal, is this notion of faith which, according to Derrida, “renders itself indispensable to Science no less than to Philosophy and to Religion.”³³ And what this logic of being encountered by the other involves is an unravelling. As Judith Butler states in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, in bearing witness to each other, in the very instance of our social bond, “Let’s face it. We’re undone by each other.”³⁴ What this implies is that a certain interruptive unraveling is what conditions the “social bond,” which brings forth “the possibility that every knot can come undone, be cut or interrupted.”³⁵

³¹ Ibid., 98.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 99.

³⁴ Butler, Judith, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 23. Cited hereafter as *Precarious*.

³⁵ “Faith,” 99.

What we can see in this attempt to reconceive the link as being prior to its determination of man's nearness to the One God, *Walten*, etc., is an attempt to "un-close" the very concept of the "link" itself so that it may remain open to species that are different from "the human." This attempt to uncondition the link, and the very concept of relationality itself, from the axiomatic of divinity, and therefore of "the more," places an emphasis on the relatedness of humans and animals because they are finite, and in their finitude, each animal is singularly and "wholly other" (*tout autre*). In thinking through this reconfiguration of the link or relationality between humans and animals, perhaps it may be possible, one can only hope, to begin to rethink and reimagine a community or world where humans could *live together with* animals, and each other, more responsibly; perhaps, even more ethically.

Conclusion

This thesis has encountered a number of challenging problems, some of which include: thinking of animal life and how distinctions are made between nonhuman and human animal life; concepts of the human, person, or subject that are based on hierarchical human/animal binaries; models of ethics that rely on preprogrammed, intuitive criteria and calculations that are reminiscent of a Cartesian way of thinking about mental capacity and the hierarchy of the "human" mind; and, problematic approaches to ethics that continue to depend on principles of sameness rather than difference (among many others). It is in becoming more aware of these issues during my research that I have also had the fortune of encountering many different and very fruitful approaches to animal ethics (including, for example, but not limited to), works that come out of feminism, *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*; sociology, *Animals and Sociology*; architecture, *Architecture, Animal, Human: The Asymmetrical Condition*; philosophy, *Philosophy and Animal Life*; religion, *Food for the Gods: Vegetarianism and the World's Religions*; disability studies,

Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species; literature, *The Lives of Animals*; and, cultural studies, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*). All of these works, and the many others that I have not mentioned here, propose very unique and wonderful avenues for thinking more critically about animal ethics and human-animal relations. While one could easily cite over a thousand very different and unique works on “the animal question,” by no means is this thesis an attempt to put forth an antithesis in the form of a critical survey of the vast literature available on animal ethics and related issues. Nor should it be thought of as an attempt to synthesize various approaches in order to construct some sort of formula to provide a solution to the plethora of problems with which various approaches to ethics and human-animal relations are continually faced. Rather, in the space of thinking about what it means *to write* a thesis after being encountered by the issues and various works of literature on animal ethics, I began to question what it means *to write* a thesis.

What is a thesis? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), a thesis is “A statement or theory that is *put forward* as a premise to be maintained or proved.” The OED also states that, “in Hegelian philosophy,” a thesis “is a proposition forming the first stage in the process of dialectical reasoning.” As Karl Marx explains in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Hegel’s formulaic trichotomy develops from a dialectical reasoning process which “is forced to turn head over heels, in posing itself, opposing itself and composing itself—position, opposition, composition. Or, to speak Greek—we have thesis, antithesis and synthesis.”³⁶ Continuing on with this “Greek” vocation, etymologically, “thesis” derives its meaning from the root *tithenai* meaning “to put,” and perhaps, in the sense of *putting forward*, can also be understood as a form of setting down, and depositing, which would also signal a space for receiving, collecting, gathering together, or growth

³⁶ Marx, Karl, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, trans. Fredrick Engels (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1892), 101.

(as in progress)—*a swelling* that entails getting larger due to accumulation. All of these motifs, which are themselves collected together and deposited in the space reserved for a *title*, would perhaps suggest that a thesis is the act of gathering material to put forward an *address*.

As I explained in chapter two, according to Derrida, an address is always, at least in some way, a form of response. It is from the position of a respondent, then, that this thesis was written, and wishes to emphasize (perhaps, for better or for worse, even over emphasis). By way of conclusion then, this chapter explores what it means to respond, according to Derrida and, in doing so, it is my hope that the writing here within reflects in its very form that of a response.

Bibliography

- Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Vols. I and II. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984.
- Baring, Edward. *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy: 1945–1968*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Bennington, Geoffrey. “Rigor; Or, Stupid Uselessness.” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*. Volume 50. 2012. 20-38.
- Bentham, Jeremy. *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Prometheus Books, 1995.
- Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso. 2006.
- Calarco, Matthew. *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. New York : Columbia Up, 2008.
- Cooper, John M. Ed. *Plato: Complete Works*. Assoc. ed. D. S. Hutchinson. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1997.
- Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. Dover, 1998.
- Deleuze, Gilles. “Renverser le platonisme.” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 71, No. 4 (October-December 1966). 426-438.
- Derrida, Jacques and Dufourmantelle, Anne. *Of Hospitality*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias*. Trans. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.
- _____. “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida.” Trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronnell. *Who Comes After the Subject?* Eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy. London: Routledge, 1991. 96 – 119.
- _____. “Faith and Knowledge: Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone.” Trans. Samuel Weber. *Acts of Religion*. Ed. Gil Anidjar. London: Routledge, 2002. 40 – 101.
- _____. “Heidegger’s Hand (*Geschlecht II*).” Trans. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg. *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008. 27 – 63.
- _____. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. and ed. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Hopkins Fulfillmet Service; Corr edition, 1998.
- _____. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Chicago, Il: U of Chicago P, 1989.
- _____. *Paper Machine*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005.
- _____. “Plato’s Pharmacy.” Trans. Barbara Johnson. *Dissemination*. Chicago, Il: U of Chicago P, 1981. 61 – 171.

- ____. *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Routledge; First Ed., 2006.
- ____. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Ed. Marie-Louise Mallet. Trans. David Wills. New York: Fordham UP, 2008.
- ____. *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume I*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011.
- ____. *The Beast and the Sovereign Volume II*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010.
- ____. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority.'" Trans. Mary Quaintance. *Cardozo Law Review*, No. 5-6, Vol. 11 (July 1990). 919-1046.
- ____. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005.
- ____. *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Routledge, 2006.
- ____. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Social Sciences and Humanities." *Writing and Difference*. University of Chicago Press, 1980. 351-371.
- ____. *Voice and Phenomena: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*. Trans. Leonard Lawlor. Northwestern UP, 2010.
- ____. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Derrida, Jacques and Elisabeth Roudinesco. *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue*. Trans. Jeff Fort. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004.
- Derrida, Jacques and Elisabeth Roudinesco. "Violence Against Animals." Trans. Jeff Fort. *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004.
- Derrida, Jacques and Mehlman, Jeffrey. "Freud and the Scene of Writing." *Yale French Studies* No. 48. French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis. Yale UP 1972, 74-117. Accessed on web (September 2013) at: <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2929625?uid=2&uid=4&sid=21104179325543>.
- Descartes, René. *Description of the Human Body and All of its Functions*. Ed. and Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985). 314-324
- ____. *Discourse on Method. The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch. Vol 1. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.

- _____. “Letter to the Marquess of Newcastle, 23 November 1646.” *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes; The Correspondence*. Ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. 302 – 204.
- _____. “Letter to More, 5 February 1649.” *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes; The Correspondence*. Ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. 360-367.
- _____. *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selection from the Objections and Replies*, Ed. John Cottingham. Cambridge University Press; 1 Edition, 1996.
- _____. Descartes, René. *Philosophical Letters*. Ed. Anthony Kenny. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970.
- Farias, Victor. *Heidegger and Nazism*. Temple UP, 1991.
- Faye, Emmanuel. *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Yale UP, 2011.
- Foucault, Michael. “Ceci n’est pas une pipe.” *Dits et écrits*, vol. I, 1954-1975 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001). 663-678.
- _____. *This Is Not a Pipe*. Trans. James Harnes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Garner, Bryan A. *Blacks Law Dictionary*. 9th Edition. St. Paul, MN: West, 2009.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson. HarperCollins Canada, 2008.
- _____. “Letter on Humanism.” Trans. and Ed. David Farrell Krell. *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger*. Routledge, 1993.
- _____. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995.
- _____. *The Question Concerning Technology*. Harper Perennial; Reissue edition, 2013.
- Heidegger, Martin and Fink, Eugen. *Heraclitus Seminar*. Trans. Charles H. Seibert. Northwestern University Press. 1993.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Fundamental Principles of The Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Thomas Kingmill Abbott. Merchant Books, 2009.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. *The Althusserian Legacy*. New York: Verso, 1993.
- Krell, David Farrell. *Derrida and Our Animal Others: Derrida’s Final Seminar, The Beast and the Sovereign*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2013.
- _____. “The Way Back Down: Paul Klee’s Heights and Depths.” *Research in Phenomenology* Volume 43, No. 3, 2013. 331-339.

- Lawlor, Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. Indiana UP, 2002.
- _____. "Translator's Introduction: The Germinal Structure of Derrida's Thought." *Voice and Phenomena*. Northwestern UP, 2011.
- _____. *This is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida*. Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Lippit, Akira, Mizuta. *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Lock, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford UP, 2011.
- McCance, Dawne. *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*. State University of New York Press, 2013.
- McCance, Dawne, Dokurno, Karalyn, Fics, Ryan, and McGuire, Riley. "Crossings: An Interview With Nicholas Royle." *Mosaic, a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*, Vol. 47 No. 1, March 2014.
- Naas, Michael. "Comme si, comme ça: Phantasms of Self, State, and a Sovereign God." *Mosaic* 40.2 (2007): 106-27.
- _____. "Derrida's Flair (For the Animals to Follow...)." *Research in Phenomenology* 40, 2 (2010). 219 – 242.
- _____. *Miracle and Machine: Jacques Derrida and the Two Sources of Religion, Science, and the Media*. New York: Fordham UP, 2012.
- Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1997. 506-558
- Plato. *Statesman*. Trans. C. J. Rowe. *Plato Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1997. 294-359.
- Peeters, Benoit. *Derrida*. John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2012.
- Regan, Tom. *The Case for Animal Rights*. 3rd edition. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1983, 2004.
- Regan, Tom and Steeves, Peter, H. *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*. State University of New York Press, 1999.
- Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. Manchester UP, 2003.
- Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. 4th edition. New York and London: Harper-Collins, 2009.

- _____. Ed. *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- _____. *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1979.
- _____. *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics*. St. Martin's Griffin, 1996.
- Spectre, Michael. "The Extremist: The Woman Behind the Most Successful Radical Group in America." *The New Yorker* (April 13, 2003), 52-67. Accessed on web (October 2013) at: <http://www.michaelspecter.com/2003/04/the-extremist/>.
- Turner, Lynn. Ed. *The Animal Question in Deconstruction*. Edinburgh UP, 2013.
- Uexküll, Jakob von. *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Wills, David. *Dorsality: Thinking Back Through Technology and Politics*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008.