Beasts (Un)Like Us: Thinking about the Animalization of Animals with Theodor W. Adorno and Jacques Derrida, or From Appropriating to Appreciating Animal Others

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Abstract

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The objective of this thesis is twofold: On the one hand, this thesis is a critical assessment of the legacy of Western philosophy from the perspective of those beings that it has consistently excluded from its realm of concern: the so-called 'non-human animal'. In the first part I examine some parallels between the ideas that led to the Nazi Holocaust of over 6 million Jews and others and the ideologies and concepts that underlie the continuing murder of over 9 billion animals in North America's slaughterhouses every year. Starting out with the work of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, I attempt to show that there are more than a few accidental affinities between the ways the Nazis treated and conceptualized the Jews and the ways in which some of the most important philosophers in the history of Western philosophy have thought about animals. In the second part, through the work of Jacques Derrida I shall embark on a radical examination of the human-animal binary by taking a closer look at the function and genesis of the concept of 'the animal'. My main focus here is on the significance of our practices of "eating" animals. I shall analyze how the act of killing and eating animals communicates a certain self-understanding or truth about ourselves that needs to be decoded and analyzed if we want to lastingly subvert our oppressive-exploitative attitude towards non-human animals. The aim of both parts is to disrupt the veiling normalcy of the violence

we continue to inflict upon literally countless animals every year and to devise and open possible forms of opposition against this violence.

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For Diana

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Von den Tieren redet viel, wer sich der Menschen schämt.
(Elias Canetti)

Introduction: The Animal Question Reconsidered

In his Gift of Death, Jacques Derrida discusses the aporetic and scandalous character of the concepts of moral duty and absolute responsibility. He illustrates these concepts by means of the biblical story of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his son Isaac. What this story purports to illustrate is the difference between responsibility in general and absolute responsibility. What is maybe more outrageous than the story itself and Derrida's interpretation of it is his claim that the sacrifice of Isaac is "the most common and everyday experience of responsibility."

> As soon as I enter into a relation with the other ... I know that I can respond only by sacrificing ethics, that is by sacrificing whatever obliges me to also respond, in the same way, in the same instant, to all the others. I offer a gift of death, I betray, I don't need to raise my knife over my son on Mount Moriah for that. Day and night, at every instant, on all the Mount Moriahs of this world, I am doing that, raising my knife over what I love and must love, over those to whom I owe absolute fidelity, incommensurable.[1]

In other words, while Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac is the most monstrous event imaginable, one that every civilized society will and must surely condemn, according to Derrida, it is at the same time the most common event in the world. As a matter of fact, Derrida argues, the smooth and normal functioning of our society

> is in no way impaired by the fact that, because of the structure of the laws of the market that society has instituted and controls, ... the same 'society' *puts to* death or ... *allows* to die of hunger and disease tens of millions of children ... without any moral or legal tribunal ever being considered competent to judge such a sacrifice.[2]

And if this was not already bewildering enough, Derrida adds:

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[1] Jacques Derrida. Gift of Death (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995) 68.
[2] Derrida, Gift of Death 86.

> Not only is it true that such a society participates in this incalculable sacrifice, it actually organizes it. The smooth functioning of its economic, political and legal affairs, the smooth functioning of its moral discourse and good conscience presupposes the permanent operation of this sacrifice.[3]

What is true for the society in general, certainly also holds for the individual. Who could imagine what it would be like to live with the permanent consciousness of guilt that would ensue if at every moment were aware of the monstrosities on which our normal lives are built? Theodor Adorno might after all have been right when he said that, if at every moment we were aware of what was happening and "to what concatenations we owe our own existence, and how our own existence is interwoven with calamity, even if we have done nothing wrong ... one would really be unable to live."[4] What connects Derrida's and Adorno's claims is a sense of "moral paranoia" which disrupts and shatters the good conscience and peace of mind that accompanies most of our ordinary everyday actions; it shows that even the most righteous and moral people constantly violate environing others without the slightest regard for their interests. It seems that violence has always been endemic to human society. Human beings objectify, oppress, and exploit other human beings in a multitude of different ways, yet these ways are in many regards overshadowed by the ways in which we human beings violate, oppress, exploit, and appropriate their "favourite" victims: non-human animals.

As Brigitte Kronauer has argued, animals have long been the involuntary protagonists of our culture.[5] Even in our post-Darwinian age the so-called 'non-human animal' is still the "comparative basis without which it would be impossible to

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[3] Derrida, Gift of Death 86.
[4] Theodor W. Adorno, Metaphysics. Concepts and Problems (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) 113.
[5] Elias Canetti, Über Tiere (München: Hanser, 2002) 111.

understand ourselves as a species."[6] Their presence reaches from factory farms to fairy tales, from pet shops to pâté, from the glaring lights of "entertainment" spectacles to the abyssal depths of our subconscious. Even our language is populated with and inhabited by creatures we hold in contempt yet at the same time depend on (imagine what it would be like to insult someone if there were no 'pigs', no 'bitches', no 'rats'). Elias Canetti is certainly right when he says that if one day there were no more animals, we would have to invent them again.[7]

And yet, despite their centrality in all areas of our lives, in the history of Western philosophy animals have rarely been taken seriously. This negligence is epitomized by the four questions into which Immanuel Kant sums up the (entire!) field of philosophy in his Logic: 1) What can I know? 2) What ought I to do? 3) What may I hope? 4) What is man? Of the last question Kant says that it is answered by anthropology. Immediately after this Kant states: "At bottom all this could be reckoned to be anthropology, because the first three questions are related to the last."[8] Kant's statement unequivocally puts the human being at the centre of Western philosophy. Although during the past 2500 years the meaning of 'human being' has undergone considerable changes and Western philosophy has broadened its concept of the human being by including in it those groups of people it had implicitly or explicitly excluded, it has nevertheless remained fundamentally anthropocentric.

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[6] Ingrid Saelid Gilhus, Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Ideas (London: Routledge, 2006) 265.
[7] See Canetti 45.
[8] Immanuel Kant, Logic (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974) 29.

In this thesis I shall take an alternative look at the legacy of Western philosophy, namely from the perspective of those beings that it has consistently excluded from its realm of concern: the so-called 'non-human animal'. My main thesis is that not only is Western philosophy, including some of its most revered thinkers, responsible - the kind and extent of this responsibility will be discussed in the first chapter - for our continuing war on the rest of the living but also that, unless it radicalizes its interest in 'the animal question', it remains complicit in the greatest mass-slaughter in the history of humankind, not as mere bystanders but as willing helpers. As Milan Kundera wrote with unmatched poignancy in The Unbearable Lightness of Being:

> True human goodness, in all its purity and freedom, can come to the fore only when its recipient has no power. Mankind's [*sic*][9] true moral test, its fundamental test (which lies deeply buried from view), consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals. And in this respect mankind has suffered a fundamental debacle, a debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it.[10]

Given the magnitude and intricateness of this debacle I believe that it would be obscene to aspire to offer a solution to it. I believe that the extent of the debacle, as well as the high and the all too grim prospects make any such optimism inappropriate. One of my fundamental motivations for this thesis is to *raise* 'the animal question' in the double sense of putting it in front of us and of revaluing it in its philosophical and general significance. The active mode of the *raising* of 'the animal question' may be deceiving, for it is not so much *our* act of raising the animal question but rather that (some form of) the question of the animal has accompanied philosophy in its shade since Aristotle. As Cary Wolfe writes in the introduction to his excellent book Animal Rites, "the figure of

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[9] In order not to unnecessarily interrupt the flow of the reading I have tried to minimize the use of "*sic*". As a general rule there will only be one "*sic*" per quotation.

[10] Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being (New York: HarperPerennial, 1999) 289.

the 'animal' in the West ... has always been especially, frightfully nearby, always lying in wait at the very heart of the constitutive disavowals and self-constructing narratives enacted by that fantasy figure called 'the human'."[11] Despite the fact that "the animal" has haunted Western philosophy since ancient times, for the longest time philosophers have failed to take animals seriously. In the introduction to his Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life, H. Peter Steeves argues that, "In our 'growth', there is a point at which the animal is no longer philosophically interesting."[12] It could be added that even when philosophers took an interest in animals, it was usually not their intrinsic value that mattered, but only their instrumental or heuristic value, which ultimately betrayed but their anthropocentric motivation. That is to say, when philosophy took an interest in animals it usually did so to shed light on its actual object of interest: the human being. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer write in "Man and Beast": "Throughout European history the idea of the human being has been expressed in contradistinction to the animal. The latter's lack of reason is the proof of human dignity."[13] I believe that this relation mirrors the instrumental or exploitative attitude Western societies have held towards material animals for centuries. Where philosophy took an interest in "the animal" it was usually to elicit the *differentia specifica*, or that which separates human beings *as such* from the rest of the animal world and makes us superior to it.

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[11] Cary Wolfe, Animal Rites. American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 6.
[12] H. Peter Steeves, ed. Animal Others: On ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999) 2.
[13] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment (Stanford: Stanford University Press,
2002) 203. [Henceforth "Dialectic"]

Over the past decades, however, there have been some promising changes. Philosophers and other thinkers have remembered Claude Lévi-Strauss' well-known dictum, "Animals are good to think," and have thus rediscovered the value of thinking about and with animals. While I welcome this development without reserve, we must not overlook that 'the animal question' is still confined to a marginal position and might be light-years away from making its way into mainstream discourse. While it cannot be denied that one of the most important reasons for this is the failure to recognize the significance of 'the animal question', at the same time part of the blame for this has to be given to those thinkers who, albeit in good faith, have tried to raise awareness for the plight of animals in an all too restricted way. The slowness of the re(dis)covery of the animal (question) moreover stands in sharp contrast to the ever-increasing scale and speed of the industrialized mass-killing that has long passed genocidal dimensions and whose true extent has come to defy our attempts to represent it. This makes one wonder whether the effort to elevate "the animal other" does not come too late. Despite the countless sophisticated mechanisms and strategies of repression that we have developed, most of us cannot help an ineffable and oftentimes faint feeling of guilt towards our animal brothers and sister. And yet, in the end we accept the miserable fate that we inflict upon them as a matter of necessity.[14] Of course, it cannot be denied that there is a growing awareness of the myriad ways in which we infringe on non-human life, and one must not overlook the many attempts that have been undertaken to change all this. But, when we look at the ever-increasing numbers of animals that are routinely or by accident put to death, Jeremy Bentham's vision of a time in which "the rest of the animal creation

[14] Canetti 109.

may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny"[15] seems as utopian as it must have seemed to his contemporaries. While there appears to be a dawning consensus that the traditional human-animal dichotomy has become both ontologically and ethically untenable, there is little agreement about the remedies for this situation. Part of the failure to approximate Bentham's utopian state may have to do with the fact that even the most radical forms of protestation have largely relied on those axioms, concepts, and values in the name of which the worst forms of inter-species violence were inflicted. As Jacques Derrida and others have pointed out for example, "to confer or to recognize rights for 'animals' is a surreptitious or implicit way of confirming a certain interpretation of the human subject, which itself will have been the lever of the worst violence carried out against nonhuman living beings."[16] When I say that the efforts to elevate the animal other and the animal question come too late, this coming-too-late does not only refer to the tens of millions of animals that are put to death every day and who will never benefit from *our* philosophical discourse on *their* status. It also refers to the fact that the tools we have at our disposal to deal with and improve this situation have either largely been discredited or at least rendered too problematic to yield any firm ground from which we could attempt to counter this development. The 'weakening of thought'[17], to use a term that Gianni Vattimo has coined, brought about by Nietzsche, Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida as well as the unmasking of the racist and sexist

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[15] Jeremy Bentham, Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 283.
[16] Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Rodinesco, "Violence Against Animals," In: For What Tomorrow... A Dialogue (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) 65. [Henceforth "VAA"]
[17] See Gianni Vattimo, "'Weak Thought' and the Reduction of Violence: A Dialogue with Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala," Common Knowledge, Vol. 8, No. 3, (2002).

aspects of our traditional ways of thinking that we owe to feminism, critical race theory and post-colonial studies have irrevocably undermined the traditional mandate of philosophy. At the same time, these thinkers and movements have opened up a multitude of discourses in which those who Western philosophy had traditionally excluded could voice their own, oftentimes incommensurable standpoints. As Italian philosopher and activist Gianni Vattimo has it, philosophy is no longer a demonstrative discourse but an edifying one, "more directed to the edification of humanity than toward the development of knowledge and progress."[18] This development has changed the vocation and responsibility of the philosopher whose duty "no longer corresponds to the Platonic agenda: the philosopher is no longer humanity's guide to understanding the Eternal; rather he [*sic*] directs humanity toward history."[19] To direct humanity toward history means both to bring humanity closer to its own finitude and to remind humanity of the historical conditionality of all its products including those that aspire to transcend history. One of the important insights on which this new understanding of philosophy and thinking in general is built is that the notion of the things in themselves is no longer tenable. According to Vattimo, this entails that all truth is conversational.[20] The conversationality of truth points to an infinite openness that any claim and any conviction needs to make room for.

As a result of this understanding of truth this thesis does not and cannot aspire to preempt all possible objections and will not attempt to refute them in advance thereby barricading the ideas expressed in it.

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[18] Vattimo, "'Weak Thought' and the Reduction of Violence" 452.
[19] Vattimo, "'Weak Thought' and the Reduction of Violence" 452.
[20] See Vattimo, "'Weak Thought' and the Reduction of Violence" 453.

> [A] person who thinks should not try to persuade others of his [*sic*] belief; that is what puts him on the road to a system; on the lamentable road of the 'man of conviction' ... but what is a conviction? it is a thought that has come to a stop, that has congealed.[21]

Against this systematizing, totalizing, and ultimately reifying way of thinking Kundera opposes "experimental thought" which "seeks not to persuade but to *inspire*, to inspire another thought to set thought moving."[22] It does so by breaking up whatever is rigid, by undermining commonly accepted beliefs, by interrogating supposedly self-evident truths in order to "open rifts for venturing into the unknown."[23] As a direct result of this, I have resisted the norm of linearity and instead pursue a more free, multidimensional, and associative kind of reasoning when I deemed this beneficial or required by the subject matter at hand.[24] This methodology admittedly diverges from the strict and linear thinking that mainly those philosophers schooled in the analytic tradition propound as the only legitimate way of reasoning in philosophy. According to these thinkers the truth of a theory or idea "can only be decided by how well it stands up under the heat of informed efforts to refute its claims."[25] Although I do not want to reject this kind of antagonizing thinking altogether, I believe that we are indeed well-advised to limit the scope of adversarial reasoning and to make room for alternative approaches to truth-finding especially there where it crushes creativity.[26] Besides the material ineffectiveness of

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[21] Milan Kundera, Testaments Betrayed (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996) 175.
[22] Kundera, Testaments Betrayed 175; emphasis mine.
[23] Kundera, Testaments Betrayed 174.
[24] See Jacques Derrida, Positions (New York: Continuum, 2004) 82.
[25] Tom Regan, A Case for Animal Rights (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) xii.
[26] Another reason why in this thesis I do embrace experimental thinking is the lack of effectiveness of the former way of reasoning. As Robert Nozick writes in Philosophical Explanations, "Though philosophy is carried on as a coercive activity, the penalty philosophers wield is, after all, rather weak. If the other person is willing to bear the label of 'irrational' or having the worse arguments, he [*sic*] can skip away happily maintaining his [*sic*] previous belief." (Cited in Brian Luke, "Taming Ourselves or Going Feral? Toward a Nonpatriachal Metaethic of

stigmatizing an opponent as irrational, feminist thinkers and others have long warned us to be wary of whose rationality we are talking about and by whom and for what purposes particular procedures and concepts have been devised. To sum things up, there are at least two reasons for my decision to pursue a more experimental kind of thinking in this thesis: Besides the ineffectiveness and insufficiency of the predominant ways of framing the animal question I also hold the conviction that the theories and concepts that we have devised in the past are either inherently not meant to deal with the problems we are facing today or if that is too strong, *de facto* incapable of doing this in an appropriate way. Having said this, I would like to stress that I do not claim or aspire any neutrality with regard to the subject matter of this thesis. I do not believe that we can any longer tolerate things as they are, and I would not have written this thesis if I was not convinced of the utter necessity for a drastic change in our human attitude towards non-human animals. In other words, in this thesis I take a clear stand with regard to its subject matter. In order to preempt accusations that say that I am being judgmental or prejudiced, let me say it very clearly that I am indeed prejudiced and far from neutral with regard to the questions discussed. I find myself in full agreement with Kundera's claim[27] about the fundamental debacle of humanity. To say that I agree with Kundera does not mean that I agree with the literal meaning of his claim. As a matter of fact, I believe that if we were to take Kundera's claim literally and consequently find fault with it, we would misunderstand it,

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Animal Liberation," Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations, ed. Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) 298/299.)

[27] To say that it is *Kundera's* claim is in so far inaccurate as it is one of the characters in his novel that utters these words. However, for brevity's sake I shall throughout this thesis refer to it as 'Kundera's claim'.

and take a philosophical claim for a scientific one.[28] I hence ask my readers not to find fault with the statement but with the catastrophic and atrocious material tendencies to which it refers. It is with regard to these tendencies that I cannot be neutral. I believe that there where "neutrality means nothing less than annihilation,"[29] neutrality is not only not desirable but it is not *defensible*. When it comes to our treatment of and attitudes towards the non-human I believe that we *must* intervene, theoretically and practically.[30] As Elie Wiesel famously admonished the post-Auschwitz generations, "Take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."[31]

After having outlined the general methodology of this thesis and after having stated my "biases," I deem it instructive to divulge the reasons why I believe that the animal question is worth attending to. Without wanting to anticipate too much from what will be the subject of the next chapter, I believe that we find ourselves in a situation today that forces 'the animal question' on us, although admittedly without force. At the beginning of the 21st century, for those of us who have not made ourselves utterly insensitive to the state our world finds itself in any "joy of thought" (Adorno) has been

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[28] As Adorno writes in his metaphysics lectures, "it is in the nature of philosophy ... that nothing is meant quite literally. Philosophy always relates to tendencies and does not consist of statements of fact. It is a misunderstanding of philosophy, resulting from its growing closeness to the all-powerful scientific tendencies." (Adorno, Metaphysics. Concepts and Problems 110)

[29] David Clarke, "On Being 'The Last Kantian in Nazi Germany'," Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History, ed. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (New York: Routledge, 1997) 172.

[30] To say *that* we have to intervene does, however, not say anything about *how* we should intervene. As I said before, I believe that we are no longer in a position that allows us to *prescribe* anything or to offer *grand solutions*.

[31] Cited in Charles Patterson, Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust (New York: Lantern Books, 2002) 137.

irrevocably tainted by the atrocities and injustices that we continue to witness. The feeling of wonder that Plato famously put at the beginning of philosophy has been replaced by a sense of terror. The way we routinely treat animals in our culture, especially, but not only, farmed animals, might be but one of the many disgraces of our modern civilization. Yet, it is certainly one of the least acknowledged ones. However, this does not change the fact that, as Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee writes in The Lives of Animals, "we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing which rivals anything the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, brining rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly in the world for killing them."[32] The question should hence not be why we should deal with this problem but what (or who) made us think for much too long that the problem at hand was *not* a worthwhile, important and necessary one.

Having witnessed the horrors of Auschwitz, Theodor Adorno was more aware than many others, "how dubious it is to occupy oneself with philosophy in a world like the one in which we live."[33] The fact that Auschwitz could happen in the midst of a society that had brought up some of the greatest thinkers in the history of Western philosophy and Western culture in general forever shattered Adorno's faith in the power of philosophy. Even if Auschwitz couldn't make him give up philosophy altogether it nevertheless put its business into perspective:

> As long as culture lives on in a world arranged like ours in which, whether in South Africa or Vietnam, things happen of which we know and only with difficulty repress the

[32] J.M. Coetzee, The Lives of Animals (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 21.
[33] Adorno, Metaphysics. Concepts and Problems 130.

> knowledge that they happen – in such a world culture and all the noble and sublime things in which we take delight are like a lid over refuse.[34]

To conceive of philosophy and its mandate in a timeless, unchanging way is not only anachronistic but it has become unethical, and at least for Adorno was irreconcilable with the world. To put it very succinctly, since philosophy is not over and above the world at large, I believe that this should be reflected in its orientation. While, as Derrida shows in Gift of Death, none of our (moral) choices can be justified in an absolute sense, this does not mean that all choices are equally defensible. What matters is that one does *something*. If it can be justified to occupy oneself with philosophy in this world, it is due to philosophy's potential to break the forgetfulness that enshrouds our ordinary lives and to remember the oftentimes terrible circumstances we contribute to by living the (normal) lives we live. To raise the animal question hence means first of all to remove it from oblivion and to give it at least a temporary platform in the academic world. Whether the hope tied to this endeavour is justified will show in the future.

So far I have rather indiscriminately referred to the problem at hand either as 'problem' or as 'question' or as 'situation'. I have borrowed the expression "the animal question" from Tom Regan's foreword to Animal Others. In this foreword, Regan rightly argues that, "To make reference to 'the animal question' is ... to oversimplify."[35] The reason for this, Regan tells us, is that there is not a single animal question but a network of interrelated problems. Due to this interrelatedness I find myself incapable of defining or delimiting the animal question in a definitive manner. Moreover, as I already argued above I believe that it is in part due to a too narrow conception of the animal question that

[34] Adorno, Metaphysics. Concepts and Problems 130.
[35] Steeves xi.

the problems behind it have not received more attention. Instead of offering a positive delimitation, I shall briefly attempt to clarify the meaning of the animal question negatively. At the most fundamental level, the animal question is not a question in the ordinary sense, that is, something that has an answer. Secondly, the animal question is not a question about the essence of animality. If anything the animal question works against the idea of such an essence. Thirdly, the animal question contains, yet cannot be reduced to, the question about the proper ethical / moral relation between humans and animals. While the furthering of the moral aspect of the human-animal relationship is indeed one of the central motivations for the examination of the animal question, the originality of this thesis does not reside in its ethical message. As a matter of fact, it is my conviction that in this regard Jeremy Bentham's famous claim that "the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? But, Can they *suffer*?"[36] constitutes despite its admitted limitations an unsurpassable horizon against which any future ethical examination will have to be measured. Lastly, despite appearances the animal question is not "about" animals in the same sense as the question of human rights is about human rights. The quest of the animal question is one in the course of which we should learn why we must do away with any reified notion of animality. Instead we must ask what mechanisms, practices and discourses enable us to speak of animals in the first place. We must, in other words, interrogate the specific animal way of being-in-the-world.

The main section of my thesis is divided into two parts. In the first, I shall venture to undertake a philosophical comparison of the Holocaust and the organized mass-killing (which is mainly a mass-*slaughter*) of animals. I shall do this by showing

[36] Bentham 283.

the similarities between the ways in which the Nazis vilified the Jews and the ways Western philosophy has for the longest time conceptualized the animal. By doing this I shall work through a more or less homogeneous set of ideas that Western philosophy has consistently associated with the animal. I believe that this is absolutely essential if we want to understand the philosophical background against which the 'animal holocaust'[37] could happen. More specifically, I shall show that the mechanisms that turned the Jew into a *homo sacer* "a man [*sic*] who can be killed without impunity since, in the eyes of the law, his life no longer counts,"[38] and the exclusion of the animal from the realm of moral concern are disturbingly similar. I will also attempt to show that the animalization of the animal and the philosophical exhortations to overcome or transcend our animality find their dubious fulfillment in the mass-killing operations in today's slaughterhouses. I will argue that the slaughter of the animals can be regarded as humankind's symbolic attempt to overcome or extirpate of its animality. As Thomas Bernhard writes in his novel *Frost*: The animal bleeds for and in the place of the human being.[39] I believe that

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[37] I am using this term to designates the totality of practices involving the lethal "use" (understood in the widest sense) of non-human animals in the so-called Western world. Every year, 11 billion land animals and birds are killed for human consumption in Canada and the United States alone. This means that every second about 350 chickens, turkeys, pigs and cows to name just the most common ones are killed in the slaughterhouses across these two countries. This means that in less than two days, every 44 hours to be precise, more animals are killed in slaughterhouse in Canada and the United States than humans were killed during World War II. While the number of animals killed for human consumption exceeds *by far* the number of all the other animals that die directly or indirectly "in the service of a certain being and the so-called human well-being of man", we must not forget that every year millions upon millions of animals are killed for their skin or fur, or poisoned, gassed, drowned in so-called scientific experiments; a term which covers everything from testing consumer products and industrial chemicals to medical experiments for drugs, to tax-payer money sponsored military research and testing of conventional as well as unconventional, that is to say, biological, chemical and nuclear, weapons.
[38] Slavoj Zizek, How to Read Lacan (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007) 89.
[39] Thomas Bernhard, *Frost* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972) 255. ["*Das Tier blutet wohl für den Menschen und weiß es.*"]

the extreme cruelty inherent in the act of slaughtering an innocent animal unmasks the absurdity of the concepts of humanity and animality on which our slaughterhouses are built.[40]

The first part of this thesis can be regarded as what Paul Ricoeur calls "an exercise in *telling otherwise.*"[41] As such, it is at least in part a work of remembrance, a work of remembering both the victims of our human rise to power and the ideas and mechanisms that made this rise possible.

> [A] basic reason for cherishing the duty to remember is to keep alive the memory of suffering over against the general tendency of history to celebrate the victors. We could say that the whole of history, especially in the Hegelian sense of this expression, is concerned with the culmination of advantage, progress and victory. All that is left behind is lost. We need, therefore, a kind of parallel history of, let us say, victimization, which would counter the history of success and victory. To memorise the victims of history – the sufferers, the humiliated, the forgotten – should be task for all of us at the end of this century.[42]

The motivation behind this comparison is twofold: On the one hand, I hope that in juxtaposing the Nazi Holocaust and the animal holocaust I will contribute to establishing 'the animal question' as a legitimate, worthwhile and necessary philosophical question that we can no longer afford to ignore or marginalize. On the other hand, my analysis

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[40] This claim is analogous to Adorno's and Horkheimer's dialectical insight that " The human being's mastery of itself, on which the self is founded, practically always involves the annihilation of the subject in whose service that mastery is maintained." (Horkheimer and Adorno 43)

[41] Paul Ricoeur, "Memory and Forgetting," Questioning Ethics. Contemporary Debates in Philosophy, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) 8. As Ricoeur writes in the section in question, "it is always possible to tell in another way. This exercise of memory is here an exercise in *telling otherwise*, and also in letting others tell their own history, especially the founding events which are the ground of a collective memory. It is very important to remember that what is considered a founding event in our collective memory may be a wound in the memory of the other."

[42] Ricoeur 10/11.

will attempt to broaden the scope of the discourse on our treatment of non-human animals and to open up and point into new directions that further discussions could pursue.

In the interlude I shall take a look at how the Nazi Holocaust not only teaches us something about our treatment of non-human animals but also about the traps we must avoid in framing a strong opposition to this very treatment. For this reason, I shall discuss some important criticisms that Luc Ferry has leveled against a range of animal liberation ideas, especially tendencies that in their opinion try to naturalize ethics. As Emmanuel Levinas warns,

> The real problem for us Westerners no longer consists so much in rejecting violence as it does in asking ourselves how we can combat violence in such a way that we - without withering away in the refusal to resist evil – can prevent the institutionalization of violence as a result of just this struggle. Does not the war declared against war perpetuate what it is called upon to eradicate?[43]

While Ferry is undeniably right about certain tendencies within the animal liberation discourse I believe that the credibility of his criticisms is crucially undermined by a number of spurious ideas. The discussion of these limitations will lead into the second part of this thesis.

After having taken a look at the philosophical animalization of the animal in the first part, in the second part I shall take my analysis a step further and examine the innocent-looking category "animal". I shall do this by means of examining the interrelation between the concepts of sacrifice, self, nature, and slaughter through and in the work of Jacques Derrida. Derrida has repeatedly voiced his suspicion about the seemingly self-evident human-animal opposition. The reason for this is that "[t]here is

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[43] Cited in Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, eds. Postmodernism and the Holocaust (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998) 157.

no such thing as Animality, but only a regime of differences, without opposition."[44] One of the reasons why Derrida considers the idea of such an oppositional limit to be no longer tenable is that,

> one could demonstrate ... that none of the traits by which the most authorized philosophy or culture has thought it possible to recognize this 'proper to man' [e.g., language, tool-making, the capacity to deceive, etc.] – none of them is, in all rigor, the exclusive reserve of what we humans call human. Either because some animals also possess such traits, or because man [*sic*] does not possess them as surely as is claimed.[45]

Among the various practices that "animalize" animals, the practice of killing and eating animals has a special status. My analysis in the second part will revolve around precisely this practice and its implications. I will attempt to unearth the implicit, symbolic meanings of our practice of killing and eating animals. I will show these meanings do not necessarily coincide with the *ex post* rationalizations (whether they be mythical or secular) we give to the act of killing and eating. In a parallel line of reasoning, I will raise the question of the function of the ritual*ization* of the act of killing. I shall discuss René Girard's and Walter Burkert's observation that the main function of ritual is to reinterpret the act of killing and to render it sublime, which in turn displaces the responsibility for the killing. Both aspects point to what could be called a 'primordial guilt' which stems from the original act of killing and which needs to be masked. I

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[44] Jacques Derrida, "On Reading Heidegger: An Outline of Remarks to the Essex Colloquium," In Research in Phenomenology 17 (1988) 173.

[45] VAA, 66. Moreover, we have to ask, whose 'proper to man', and which 'man' we (and who is *we*?) are talking about here. Of course, Derrida is not the first let alone the only thinker to advance this idea. An earlier articulation can for instance be found in Donna Haraway's famous "A Cyborg Manifesto": "By the late twentieth century in the United States scientific culture, the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached. The last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted, if not turned into amusement parks – language, tool use, social behaviour, mental events. Nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human and animal ... Movements for animal rights are not irrational denials of human uniqueness; they are clear-sighted recognition of connection across the discredited breach of nature and culture." (Simians, Cyborgs, and Women, 151/152)

believe that one of the tasks for a defense of an ethical vegetarianism is to reveal the contingent mechanisms devised to cope with this primordial horror and guilt, and to demolish the sophisticated artifices we have erected in order to bar ourselves from (re)experiencing this primordial guilt. This theoretical route will culminate in a close analysis of Derrida's critique of the general singular "the Animal".[46]

[46] While on the surface, the two parts may appear rather different in its approach and object I have tried to highlight the connections that I see between the parts and that in my opinion make them rather complementary than independent. I kindly ask my reader to remain patient and charitable if she or he does not find all the answers she or he is looking for in the first part and see if they may not be found at a later point.

Man sollte die Lehre von
den Menschen an Hand der
Schlachthäuser anfangen!
(Thomas Bernhard)

Part 1 : The Holocaust Comparison

Theodor Adorno allegedly claimed that, "Auschwitz begins wherever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they're only animals."[47] The comparison between the "administered murder of millions"[48] during the Third Reich and the industrialized mass slaughter of billions of animals in the Western world is both familiar and, to say the least, controversial. No one has probably expressed the analogy more powerfully than Nobel Laureate and Holocaust refugee Isaac Bashevis Singer.[49] In his short story *The Letter Writer* we read:

> In his thoughts, Herman spoke an eulogy for the mouse who had shared a portion of her life with him and who, because of him, had left this earth. 'What do they know – all those Scholars, all these philosophers, all the leaders of the world – about such as you? They have convinced themselves that man [*sic*], the worst transgressor of all species, is the crown of creation. All other creatures were created merely to provide him with food, pelts, to be tormented, exterminated. In relation to them, all people are Nazis; for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka.[50]

The overarching question that I shall examine throughout this chapter is, in how far this 'comparison' is helpful in understanding our current treatment of non-human animals. Despite the familiarity of the comparison of the "non-criminal putting to death" (Derrida) of billions of animals and the equally non-criminal putting to death of millions of Jews,

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[47] Cited in Patterson 53.
[48] Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics (New York: Seabury Press, 1973) 362.
[49] Singer's work was not only a major inspiration for this chapter, but his visionary and empathetic power anticipates many of the ideas that will be discussed in the following pages.
[50] Cited in Patterson vii.

Gypsies, communists, homosexuals, mental and physical misfits ("nature's mistakes"), Slavs, and Poles, I believe that a *philosophical* contribution to this comparison is still largely lacking.

The idea that the oppression of animals is related to other forms of oppression is not new and has usually been approached in one of the following ways: genealogically or synchronologically. Within the first approach the idea of a continuity between different forms of oppression is perhaps best understood to mean that different forms of oppression spring from a single source, or that different forms of oppression are, as it were, historically modeled on an "arch-oppression." It has, for instance, been pointed out by different anthropologists that the original purpose of weapons was the hunting and killing of animals, and that it was the invention of weaponry, which marked the transition from humanity's scavenger/gatherer stage to that of hunters. Understood this way, one might argue that the oppression/exploitation of animals is both a consequence and a manifestation of a particular "exploitative" attitude towards nature.[51] I believe that the appeal of this approach is that it holds the promise of unearthing the origin of all our atrocities, a promise that is wedded to the redeeming hope that once we have uprooted the basis of our immorality the rest of it will wither away. Within the synchronological approach the idea of continuity is better understood in the sense of a mutually reinforcing *connectedness* between different forms of oppression (e.g., the systematic oppression of animals and the similarly systematic oppression of women). This connection has perhaps nowhere been made more clear conceptually than in Peter Singer's Animal Liberation

[51] As we shall see in a moment, Adorno and Horkheimer see a direct connection between the domination of nature and the Nazi Holocaust.

with the help of the concept of *speciesism*. In his book Singer argues that just as the racist and the sexist violate the principle of equal consideration by favouring the interests of members of their own race or sex over that of others, "[s]imilarly, speciesists allow the interests of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case."[52] While Singer's point is admittedly highly significant, I believe that we must be careful not to level the specific differences that after all exist between these forms of oppression (after all women, for instance, are usually not slaughtered and eaten in our society). This being said, I believe it is important the we do not "compartmentalize oppressions and conceive them as separate phenomena, thus setting up a competition ... between different groups of the oppressed,"[53] which ultimately benefits solely the common oppressor. Yet, it is equally important to remind ourselves that even though these oppressions may have the same beneficiaries, they arise from different historic contexts, have their own ideologies, and manifest themselves in their own specific ways. Although the juxtaposition of the oppression of animals and other historically oppressed or marginalized groups, like women or people of colour, is indeed pertinent to our current examination and certainly highly beneficial in itself, I shall resist the temptation to view all these oppressions as manifestation of a single attitude or principle. Instead, my comparison will rather try to highlight certain *similarities* or analogies between the Nazi Holocaust and oppressive-

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[52] Peter Singer, Animal Liberation (London: Cape, 1976) 9.
[53] Susanne Kappeler, "Speciesism, Racism, Nationalism... or the Power of Scientific Subjectivity," Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations, ed. Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) 321.

exploitative attitude towards non-human animals without wanting to suggest that there is a *direct connection*.[54]

I am very aware that in the face of so much suffering the question of the *truth* of the comparison may seem to some of my readers as rather obscene. One of the reasons for this could be that, as some critics have argued, any such comparison not only betrays the uniqueness of the Holocaust, but also repeats the animalization of the Jews that at least facilitated and maybe also justified the extermination of millions of European Jews in the first place. Others have argued that the claim that if the Jews died like cattle, then it follows that cattle die like Jews, is

> a trick with words [which] misunderstand[s] the nature of likeness . . . Man is made in the likeness of God but God does not have the likeness of man. If Jews were treated like cattle, it does not follow that cattle are treated like Jews. The inversion insults the memory of the dead. It also trades on the horrors of the camp in a cheap way.[55]

What we can see in this quote is that the questions of factuality (the question of the right interpretation of 'likeness') and morality ("insults"), or fact and value are not only closely linked but especially in this case inextricably intertwined. Even more sympathetic thinkers like, for instance, David Clark have warned against the assimilation of the two phenomena in the name of the "incalculable differences between feeding people in the industrialized West and murdering them."[56] Clark argues that "there are other horrors capable of making a claim upon our conscience, other forms of 'butcheries' ... without for a moment suggesting that they are the *same* horror as the Holocaust."[57] While

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[54] The sole explicit exception will be my rather brief recapitulation of Charles Patterson's holocaust comparison in Eternal Treblinka that I discuss in section 1.3.1.
[55] Coetzee 50.
[56] Clark 172.
[57] Clark 172.

Clark's point is certainly well taken, it cannot be denied that the treatment of non-human animals as a moral or philosophical problem is still a very marginal and marginalized one. I hence believe that while the significance of the animal question does not depend on the viability of the holocaust comparison, if it can be shown that the Nazi Holocaust and the animal holocaust exhibit a sufficient number of significant similarities, this will hopefully give our treatment of non-human animals the philosophical attention that it is still lacking so far. The reason for this is, as Adorno says in the Negative Dialectics, that a "new imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind [namely] to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that *nothing similar* will happen."[58] In other words, what I shall examine and evaluate in this part is in how far Adorno's imperative obliges us not to neutrally stand apart from the actual destructiveness of our carnivorous being-in-the-world. There are admittedly few events about whose moral assessment there is greater agreement than the Holocaust. In showing the analogies between "the unspeakable human holocaust and the unspoken animal one" (John Llewelyn) I hope to move our current treatment of non-human animals away from the margins and back to the centre of the philosophical and academic agenda. As such my objective is rather modest, and if my analysis will spark at least some interest in this comparison – whether out of agreement with or opposition against my ideas – my efforts will have been worthwhile.

The following comparison will proceed with the utmost care not to engage in a "cynical politics of competitive suffering."[59] While there are indeed many more or less

[58] Adorno, Negative Dialectics 365; my emphasis.
[59] Milchman and Rosenberg 13.

important differences between the two phenomena, I shall categorically refrain from locating these on the level of suffering. The sole goal of this comparison is to shed light on the similarities between these two events without wanting to judge who suffered more. Moreover, as I stated in my introduction this comparison has no interest in a disengaged, calculative comparison of the amount or intensity of suffering with the goal of privileging one tragedy over the other. To ask the question who suffered more, already betrays a callousness that this examination is meant to shake in its very foundations.[60]

1.1 Preliminary Remarks on Thinking about the Holocaust

The Holocaust[61] is probably the single most examined and controversially debated event of the 20th century, and it goes without saying that an event as complex as the Holocaust does not lend itself to any mono-causal explanation. Although a proper understanding of the philosophical discussion of the Holocaust is crucial for this chapter, I shall limit myself to a few general remarks that are in no way meant to constitute a

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[60] My comparison shall begin with a rather lengthy introduction in which I position myself with regard to the Nazi Holocaust and our thinking about and philosophical assessment of it. I consider this not only necessary because I deem it indispensable to make my "biases" about the Nazi Holocaust explicit, but also because I believe that it will be helpful to keep the Nazi Holocaust as *comparandum* vividly in the mind of the reader throughout this analysis.

[61] I shall use the Greek term 'Holocaust' throughout this chapter instead of the Hebrew term 'Shoah'. According to the Oxford English Dictionary a holocaust (from Greek *όλο-ς* whole + *καυστος* burnt) is "a sacrifice wholly consumed by fire." This choice is not arbitrary and its significance will become more apparent in the next chapter, when we will discuss Derrida's thoughts on the significance of sacrifice within Western metaphysics. As Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe argues in Heidegger, Art and Politics, "[T]o speak of a 'Holocaust' is a self-serving misinterpretation, as is any reference to an archaic scapegoating mechanism. There was not the least 'sacrificial' aspect in this *operation*, which was calculated coldly and with the maximum efficiency and economy (and never for a moment hysterically and deliriously) was a pure and simple *elimination*." (Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 37) While Lacoue-Labarth's analysis is undoubtedly right, I believe that it suffers from a one-dimensionality that misrecognizes the complexity of the course of events.

complete representation of the discourse on the Holocaust. That this is nevertheless important and necessary derives from the obvious fact that the way we conceptualize the Holocaust will inevitably affect the comparison between the Holocaust and the organized animal mass-slaughter. While the scope of this paper does not allow for a conclusive justification of the choices that I decided to make in this respect, I deem it nevertheless important to make them explicit.

1.1.1 Attempt at a Definition

Before we can proceed to the actual comparison we need at least a working definition of what we mean by 'Holocaust'. It is more than a trite commonplace that definitions can never be more than abstractions or approximations of the reality they are supposed to capture.[62] When it comes to defining what we mean by 'Holocaust', not only do we find ourselves already in the midst of the numerous debates about the Holocaust. One of the main controversies is whether we view the Holocaust as the answer or solution of the so-called *Judenfrage*, that is the attempted annihilation of the entire European Jewry by the Nazis and their allies, or if this definition is too narrow and the term 'Holocaust' needs to include the murder of millions of Gypsies, communists, homosexuals, handicapped people, Slavs and Poles. Another important and closely related controversy revolves around the relation between the initial discrimination against

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[62] As historian Yehuda Bauer writes in his Rethinking the Holocaust: "Any historiographical definition is designed to help us understand the event or events being defined. Because life is infinitely more complex than any definition, definitions, *by definition*, can never be fully adequate to the events they are supposed to define . . . Inevitably our definitions are selective – they deal with parts of a phenomenon." (Yehuda Bauer, Rethinking the Holocaust (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 8)

the Jews and their ultimate mass liquidation. While the Yad Vashem centre defines the Holocaust as "the sum total of all anti-Jewish actions carried out by the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945,"[63] some historians, have argued in the light of new findings that the alleged continuity between the first organized boycotts of Jewish businesses after Hitler's rise to power in 1933 to the beginning of the mass killing in 1941 is less straightforward than often assumed, and that until as late as 1941 the total annihilation of the Jews was not inevitable.[64] While historically this may very well be so, I shall nevertheless follow Henry Friedlander's suggestion that the extermination of the Jews (and other groups) "was only the most radical method of excluding groups of human beings from the German national community."[65] As far as the victims of the Holocaust are concerned, I shall for the time being follow Alan S. Rosenbaum's inclusive definition of the Holocaust as denoting "what the Nazis called the 'Final Solution of the Jewish question,' namely, the deliberate, systematic extermination of all Jewish people" as well as "the relentless persecution, enslavement, and murder of many millions more: Gypsies (or Roma, or Romani), Poles, Slavs, gays, the mentally ill, the handicapped, and political dissidents."[66]

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[63] http://yad-vashem.org.il/Odot/prog/index_before_change_table.asp?gate=0-2 (accessed July 17, 2006)

[64] See for instance Götz Aly's Final Solution. Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews (London ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[65] Henry Friedlander, The Origins of the Final Solution. From Euthanasia to The Final Solution (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995) 1.

[66] Milchman and Rosenberg 11. While I deem it important to use this inclusive definition of the Holocaust, my main focus throughout this part will be on the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The reasons for this are merely pragmatic and are in no way meant to reflect any value judgment on my part.

1.1.2 The Uniqueness Debate

One of the biggest debates in the field of Holocaust studies is the question over the uniqueness of the Holocaust. According to defenders of the uniqueness thesis (UT), although the history of humankind is marked by countless acts of indescribable atrocities and barbarism, the Holocaust constitutes an event that is without precedent in the history of humankind, one that is "uniquely unique" (A. Roy Eckardt). In contrast to this view, proponents of the universality thesis argue that the isolation of the Holocaust from the rest of history not only lacks a factual basis, but also ultimately runs the risk of undermining the significance of the Holocaust for future generations by removing it from the trajectory of humankind in general. Both proponents and opponents of the UT concede that the question of uniqueness is closely related to the question of remembering.[67] Instead of offering a solution for the deadlock in this debate I believe that we will be better advised if we take a step back and ask ourselves why we should

[67] As most thinkers, both proponents and opponents of the UT agree, the proper evaluation of the uniqueness hypothesis can only be achieved by comparing the Holocaust to other instances of mass killing; yet for many of these horrors an accurate and complete understanding is still missing. David E. Stannard, for instance, claims that, "it [the uniqueness assertion] is the hegemonic product of many years of strenuous intellectual labor by a handful of Jewish scholars and writers who have dedicated much if not all of their professional lives to the advancement of this exclusivist idea." ("Uniqueness as Denial: The Politics of Genocide Scholarship", 249) According to Stannard, the idea that the Holocaust is unique is not only "fundamentally racist" (Ibid.) but it also "willingly provides a screen behind which opportunistic governments today attempt to conceal their own past and ongoing genocidal actions." (250)

study the Holocaust at all. In his "The Ethics of Uniqueness", John K Roth, reminds us that we study the Holocaust and remember its victims "not only for the dead but perhaps even more for the living."[68] To say this, is not to deny the importance of getting the facts right; instead it reminds us that if we get bogged down in scholarly debates over the alleged uniqueness or non-uniqueness of the Holocaust we run the risk of overlooking that the Holocaust should teach us something much more important than its supposed uniqueness. In other words, to say that the Holocaust was unique might not be false after all, but maybe merely "quite beside the point."[69] While no one wants to deny the responsibility that we bear towards the dead, I believe that we bear an even greater responsibility towards the living and those who are suffering and made to suffer at this very moment. If we keep in mind that remembering is always also for the living, not only does it change our perspective on the significance of the act of remembering but it should also serve as a warning that our reconstructions cannot be objective but that they are always shaped and guided by the concerns of those living in the present. Roth summarizes this point when he says that, "We seek not only to learn *about* the Holocaust but to learn *from* it."[70] In other words, the most fundamental and compelling reason to

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[68] John K. Roth, "The Ethics of Uniqueness," Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide, ed. Alan S. Rosenbaum (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001) 23.
[69] Roth 24.
[70] Roth 29. I believe that this point is absolutely essential for the appropriate understanding of the nature of this comparison of the Nazi Holocaust and the animal holocaust: In privileging the Nazi Holocaust over other instances of mass killing or genocide I do *not* intend to make a claim about the status of the Holocaust with regard to other atrocities. It is an undeniable fact that the Holocaust has received more general but also more philosophical attention than any other instance of mass killing. My reason for comparing the animal holocaust to the Nazi Holocaust is twofold: First, in making a philosophical comparison of the two events I am making a contribution to an already existing discourse that I consider to be as significant as it is underdeveloped. And secondly, in doing this I will at the same time try to enhance the significance of this question.

study the Holocaust may be an ethical one: "to make people more sensitive ... it means help and intervention on behalf of those in need."[71] It is maybe precisely in this function that the victims of the Holocaust will be honoured the most, namely by making sure that the Holocaust does not run the risk of becoming "a kind of useless knowledge"[72] that will ultimately dust over in the archives of human history. Moreover, once the question of accuracy has been harnessed by the imperative to sensitize ourselves to the plight of those in need, the act of study*ing* and compar*ing* will not be about the result of this test of accuracy but about the sensitization of those who take on this difficult yet necessary task. In other words, it will be a learning *process*.[73]

1.2 From Explaining the Holocaust to Taking Responsibility

When it comes to explaining the Holocaust or reconstructing what led to it we are faced with the following challenge: We must neither explain Auschwitz too generally, so that its specificity eludes us, nor should we try to drive the claim to uniqueness or particularity to its extreme. The latter will necessarily isolate the Holocaust and ultimately drive it into obscurity which in turn will leave us with nothing but distancing condemnation.[74] Furthermore, I believe that it is mandatory to avoid any reductionistic tendencies and instead respect what the German historian Hans Mommsen calls the

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[71] Roth 28.
[72] Roth 31.
[73] I shall henceforth use the term 'unprecedentedness' instead of the term 'uniqueness'. The reason for this is that I believe the term does not carry the same emotional or moral or hierarchizing (or to put it more positively, 'warning') undertone of 'unique'. While every historical event is in a trivial sense unique, the term 'unprecedented' leaves open the possibility that in the future a similar event could happen (which is of course at least a physical possibility).
[74] See Jean-Luc Nancy, "Our History," Diacritics, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1990) 106.

"multi-causality of the course of events [*Multikausalität der Abläufe*]."[75] Since I am not a historian the following schematic reconstruction is based on the insights and opinions of some of the most respected historians of the Holocaust. To my knowledge none of them has combined the following factors in the exact same way. However, I tried to be as inclusive as possible. Due to the fact that several of the authors disagree with each other about different crucial aspects, I do not expect any of them to fully agree with my analysis. This being said, it appears to me that there were *at least* six factors that played a decisive role in the actualization of the Holocaust (in no particular order)[76]:

1) ...the latent and overt anti-Semitism that regarded the Jews as "antirace, the negative principle as such."[77]
2) ...the bureaucratic apparatus that implemented the Final Solution in a way that "made it possible for each person to avoid any individual responsibility."[78]
3) ...the racial biologism, the Nazis' eugenics and "euthanasia" program (commonly referred to as 'Operation T4') whose goal was "the destruction of life unworthy of life" [*die Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens*].[79]

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[75] Harald Welzer, Auf den Trümmern der Geschichte. Gespräche mit Raul Hilberg, Hans Mommsen und Zygmunt Bauman (Tübingen: Edition diskord, 1999) 84 ; translation mine. Mommsen argues that in Germany, for instance, the exclusive focus on Hitler's role arises from an apologetic desire to externalize responsibility. In contrast to this, a multi-causal approach recognizes the Holocaust as the result of a multitude of not always logically related factors.
[76] Throughout the remainder of this thesis I shall attempt to show how at least for the first three factors there is a direct analogue in our attitude towards and treatment of non-human animals. For the present analysis, I consider these factors to be the most important ones. The fourth factor will be briefly mentioned in the second part (section 2.3.3.3), whereas I shall discuss the fifth aspect in the interlude.
[77] Horkheimer and Adorno 137.
[78] Aly 233.

4) ...the Nazis' expansionist policies based on the intention to create additional *Lebensraum* for the German people (the 'Generalplan Ost') combined with the plan to resettle ethnic Germans.

5) ...Hitler and the totalitarian regime he represents.

6) ...numerous contingent factors that foiled various deportation and resettlements projects that preceded the systematic murder of the European Jewry.[80]

Neither of these factors alone is sufficient to explain the Holocaust. At the same time, the absence of any of these factors would most likely have changed the course of the events that led to the Holocaust. The Holocaust would, for instance, not have been possible without the anti-Semitic ideology. Yet, it was only the ideology in combination with other (contingent) factors that brought about the Holocaust.[81]

The question which has occupied the philosophical discussion of the Holocaust maybe more than any other question: Does the Holocaust constitute an aberration from the greater trajectory of Western civilization, a lapse into the darkest pre-enlightened ages, and maybe the most horrible rejection of the values and ideas of modernity? Or, was the industrial and administered killing a possibility and a perpetual possibility of

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[79] The most comprehensive account of the relation between Operation T4 and the Holocaust is Henry Friedlander's The Origins of Nazi Genocide. From Euthanasia to the Final Solution.

[80] For one of the most systematic accounts of these factors see Götz Aly's Final Solution.

[81] As Mommsen has it, "the complexity of the course of events eludes an ideographic description [*die Komplexität des Vorgangs sich einer ideographischen Beschreibung entzieht*]."(Welzer 78 ; translation mine.) Zygmunt Bauman, for instance, has repeatedly stressed the importance of the bureaucratic apparatus that implemented the mass extermination of the Jews. With the mob violence alone that erupted during the "Reichskristallnacht", in which about one hundred were murdered and which was the most widespread public display of violent anti-Semitism, it would have taken more than decades to murder as many people as were murdered in the extermination camps.

precisely those "energies and ideals, technologies and ideologies, that have brought about the 'great transformations' of humanity?"[82] One of the staunchest proponents of the first thesis was maybe Georg Lukács, who in his *magnum opus* The Destruction of Reason argued that "the possibility of a fascist, aggressively reactionary ideology is objectively contained in every philosophical stirring of irrationalism."[83] This view has been criticized by many (so-called) postmodern thinkers.[84] Many of these attempts have in turn been attacked for their alleged complicity with the irrationalism that these thinkers take to be the intellectual seed beds of Nazism[85] which seems to make the debate in circles. In this theoretical stalemate this Jean-Luc Nancy has offered a promising way out of this deadlock by making a convincing case against any simplifying "Manichean distribution of blame."[86] In "Our History", he argues,

> Condemnation, by itself, tells us nothing about what made possible that which is condemned. More exactly, it tells us only *that* it deserves to be condemned because it countervenes a set of norms and political and ethical values whose self-evidence or validity is for us indisputable. We have therefore classed the condemned on the side of those who have dismissed these values, and we, more or less implicitly, impute their crime to the bad character either or their person ... or their principles (they were fascists) . . . But what will we say, if it must be averred that faults were committed in the name of the same principles as our own, or as the result of a blurring or aberration to which those principles themselves were susceptible?[87]

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[82] Omer Bartov, Murder in our Midst. The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 2.
[83] George Lukásc, The Destruction of Reason (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1981) 32. Throughout his book Lukács draws a direct line from the irrationalist philosophies of Schelling through Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger to Hitler. Lukács blames these philosophers and their "attacks against objectivity and rationality, against the dominance of reason" (26) as the crucial "intellectual spadework" (5) that prepared the groundwork for Hitlerism.
[84] A good overview over some of the most important criticisms can be found in Postmodernism and the Holocaust.
[85] See Milchman and Rosenberg 7.
[86] Nancy 107.
[87] Nancy 106/107.

In other words, we do not have to accept totalizing explanations like for instance Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe's claim that, "[i]n the Auschwitz apocalypse, it was nothing less than the West, in its essence, that revealed itself."[88] The mere fact *that* Auschwitz could happen "in the midst of the traditions of philosophy, or art, and of the enlightening sciences"[89] obliges us to assess the legacy of Western philosophy without reserve. The reason why I think that Nancy's approach is the most promising is also because it incorporates a new understanding of responsibility, one that acknowledges the transformative character of the Holocaust. What Auschwitz showed us, among others, was that one does not, so to speak, have to pull the trigger to be complicit. To say that there can be no neutrality does not mean that everyone is equally responsible or not responsible. To say that the Nazi executioners who operated the extermination camps have *the same* responsibility as the millions of Germans who would rather not know or the great *Vordenker* of the Nazi Holocaust, is of course nonsense. They are responsible *in different ways*, yet in these different ways maybe they were equally responsible. The reason for this is that for the Jews in the extermination camps it did not matter whether someone had directly caused or "only" facilitated their situation by not doing everything in their power to prevent it.[90] The same holds for the animal holocaust. To argue that a certain ideology is "responsible" for the Holocaust is *not* to suggest this ideology

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[88] Lacoue-Labarthe 35.
[89] Adorno, Negative Dialectics 366.
[90] Nancy illustrates this point nicely, when he says "Fascism is not in Hegel, because fascism presupposes precisely this massification of thought and action. But that does not mean that a condition for the possibility of fascism does not exist in Hegel (and/or Fichte, for example)." (Nancy 111)

deserves all the blame. Yet since this is a *philosophical* paper I can but assess the role that Western philosophy can be said to have played in this thing.

Since my prime interest is not in the Nazi Holocaust but in the animal holocaust I deem it legitimate to focus on those factors where the comparison is plausible and most instructive. These are anti-Semitism, racial biologism, totalitarianism and the deferral or erosion of responsibility[91] (or the role bureaucracy played).

1.3 Comparing the Nazi Holocaust and the Animal Holocaust

I believe that instructive analogies between the Nazi Holocaust and the animal holocaust can be found on at least three different levels: 1) on the historical or factual level (Patterson), 2) on the psychological level or in terms of the attitudes of the perpetrators towards their victims (Arendt, Honderich), and 3) on the ideological level, that is in terms of the ideas and thought schemata that made both possible (Adorno and Horkheimer).

1.3.1 Charles Patterson[92]

The first connection that Patterson makes has Henry Ford as its crucial linchpin. According to Patterson, Ford's implication in the Holocaust is twofold: "Not only did he develop the assembly-line method the Germans used to kill Jews, but he launched a

[91] I shall have more to say about this in section 2.3.3.1.

[92] Since I am very indebted to Patterson's analysis in so far as his account was the first to sensitize me to the analogies between the Nazi holocaust and our modern treatment of animals I have decided to include a section on Patterson's analysis in this thesis. This is meant both as an acknowledgment of Patterson's merits and to familiarize the reader with Patterson's account, albeit in a very condensed form.

vicious anti-Semitic campaign that helped the Holocaust happen."[93] As Patterson points out, this connects the Nazi Holocaust and the animal holocaust in so far as Ford in turn received the inspiration for his assembly-line production from a visit to a Chicago slaughterhouse. Ford was highly impressed by the efficiency that made possible mass-production of (animal) corpses (i.e., meat) on an unprecedented.[94] For Patterson there exists hence a relevant connection between the first large-scale meat-packing plants in the U.S. and the death camps of Chelmo, Sobibor, Treblinka and Auschwitz in so far as the former were the first sites to exemplify the rationalized organization of work that made the systematic murder of millions of Jews and others possible.

The second connection that Patterson examines is that between the Nazi eugenics program and the American eugenics movement, which, according to Patterson, was "inspired and guided by the breeding of domesticated animals."[95] The goal of both the American and the German program was the "improvement of the human race by better breeding."[96] On the one hand, better breeding meant the deliberate proliferation of desired personality traits by selective and controlled breeding. On the other hand, it meant the compulsory sterilization of individuals that were deemed "degenerate" , "inferior", or harmful to the health of the society on the whole. This second program was meant to "keep people who deviate from acceptable social norms from reproducing."[97] The extent of these ideas was so great in Nazi Germany that the American geneticist T.U.H. Ellinger upon his return from Germany in 1940 claimed that, "the treatment of

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[93] Patterson 73.
[94] See Patterson 72/73.
[95] Patterson 81.
[96] Patterson 83.
[97] Patterson 84.

Jews in Germany had nothing to do with religious persecution, but rather was 'a large-scale breeding project, with the purpose of eliminating from the nation the hereditary attributes of the Semitic race.'"[98] As Henry Friedlander has conclusively shown, the first victims of the Nazis' *Aufwertung-durch-Ausmerzung* [elevation through eradication] policy were those individuals whose lives the Nazis deemed "unworthy of life" (*lebensunwert*) or "without purpose."[99] As we saw above, it was hence not only the staff and expertise that the Operation T4 provided to for the death camps but also the ideological framework for the "culling of those without value."[100]

In the third part of Patterson's comparison, he discusses the impact that the Holocaust had on several animal welfare/rights advocates who either escaped the Holocaust themselves or who had relatives that "perished" in the Holocaust. These people admit that their personal experiences made them more aware of the similarities between the Nazi Holocaust and the animal holocaust. Patterson quotes the psychologist and Holocaust survivor Leo Eitinger whose studies revealed that "former prisoners of the camps possess a more heightened sensitivity toward other people [and animals ; NF] and a greater empathy."[101] Having themselves been subjected to the most dehumanizing treatment thinkable, I believe that they occupy a position with regard to the question of suffering that a theoretical discourse can hardly penetrate. Having themselves experienced what it means to be regarded as worthless and being at the absolute mercy of

[98] Patterson 99.
[99] See Patterson 89.
[100] Peukert 236.
[101] Patterson 139.

those "who had absolute power over them and exercised it with brutal force"[102] for some of these individuals there is a felt connection of empathy that goes deeper than theoretical or ideographical comparisons. Patterson mentions one survivor who was forced to undergo experimental spinal surgery at the age of twelve and who today strongly opposes similar experiments on animals.[103] For these individuals it is the existential dimension of both situations that despite the indisputable differences in purpose, procedure and ideology legitimates the comparison. To say that "We were like that too"[104] is, as David Wood rightfully points out, "not an obscene analogy, but an obscene piece of history."[105] For many of these people the question remains how especially, but of course not only, people directly affected by the holocaust can do to animals what the Nazis did to them and not even recognize the parallels.[106] By not speaking out against this state supported mass-killing we become just like the millions of "righteous" and normal Germans who looked away when the Jews were treated like this.

1.3.2 Hannah Arendt and Ted Honderich: From the Banality to the Ubiquity of Evil

It is arguably one of Hannah Arendt's most significant contributions to the Holocaust discourse to have shown that the most extreme monstrosity can reside in the most innocuous, ordinary and commonplace actions, and that mere thoughtlessness "can

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[102] Patterson 140.
[103] See Patterson 141.
[104] Patterson 141.
[105] David Wood, The Step Back. Ethics and Politics after Deconstruction (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005) 49.
[106] See Patterson 155.

wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts together."[107] What makes Arendt's analysis so disturbing is that she shows that "Eichmann was not inherently a criminal" but that "he merely never realized what he was doing."[108] To say this is *not* to exonerate Eichmann but to show us the new kind of evil that Auschwitz revealed to us. This kind of evil was not brought about by a demonic sadist (of course there were people like this too) but by a banal man who was not even stupid but merely thoughtless.[109] Taking Arendt's point a step further, Fabio Ciaramelli suggests that this kind of thoughtlessness implies "the radical lie with regard to oneself,"[110] that is an act of self-deception to the extent that implies a) a refusal to realize the consequences of one's actions, and b) an avoidance of a moral conscience. As Arendt repeatedly points out, this kind of thoughtlessness is not stupidity. Instead, it "goes together perfectly with unthinking adherence to accepted rules, to widespread opinions."[111] Far from conceiving of the moral conscience as an ahistoric constant, at the very least it refers to the ability to "return onto oneself, to dialogue with oneself, to answer above all to oneself."[112] If Arendt is right about the banality of evil then one similarity between the animal holocaust and the Nazi Holocaust can surely be found in the ordinariness of the perpetrators. Bauman summarizes the predicament that this brings about as follows:

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[107] Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil (New York: Penguin Book, 1994) 288.
[108] Arendt 287.
[109] See Arendt 287.
[110] Fabio Ciaramelli, "From Radical Evil to the Banality of Evil: Remarks on Kant and Arendt," Postmodernism and the Holocaust, ed. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998) 106.
[111] Ciaramelli 107.
[112] Ciaramelli 107.

> 'Wouldn't you be happier if I had been able to show you that all the perpetrators were crazy?' asks the great historian of the Holocaust, Raul Hilberg. Yet this is precisely what he is *unable* to show. The truth he does show brings no comfort. It is unlikely to make anybody happy. 'They were educated men of their time.'[113]

To treat meat-eaters as monsters is just as wrong and simplistic[114] as it would be to treat Eichmann as one. To brandish them as monsters is not only problematic because at least by the prevailing standards of their times neither were doing anything illegal, but it also misses the specificity of their wrongdoings. Although we would like to think of ourselves as being fundamentally different from people like Eichmann we need but to look at our own ordinary lives to see how they are also entangled with calamity, violence, and injustice: whether we talk about sweat shop manufactured clothes, the daily cup of coffee to go, or our favourite hamburger these items are just as much part of our ordinary lives as their production is inextricably intertwined with violence, exploitation, and oppression. The same holds to an even stronger extent with regard to the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the drugs we take, the household products we use, to name just the most obvious ones; animals and the products we derive from them are everywhere, and yet on our moral radar they are hardly ever to be found. It cannot be denied that our ordinary lives have become a significant source and locus of the evils of the 21st century. One of the most outspoken critics of this situation in the academic world is Ted Honderich:

> [B]y our ordinary lives we contribute to certain terrible circumstances. We make essential contributions to the shortening of the lifetimes of whole peoples and classes, and to the kinds of distress, including degradation , denials of freedom, and so on. In fact we *ensure* by our ordinary lives that multitudes of individuals die before their time, that

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[113] Zygmunt Bauman, Modernity and the Holocaust (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 83.
[114] As Baumann poignantly observes, "The central question is not, why evil people do evil deeds, because that is of course a tautology. No, the question is why people who are not evil at all, who go to church, who think of themselves as moral people, who are good fathers and so on, why do *these* people to that." (Welzer 99 ; translation mine)

> families exist in single rooms in awful camps, and that this or that people are powerless in their homelands, subservient in it, or driven from it.[115]

According to Honderich, one of the fundamental problems is that all too often we have "too small a conception of what might be called [our] world of possible (positive or negative) effectiveness."[116] While this does not of course in all cases lead back to deliberate self-deception, it cannot be denied that in many cases there is an avoidance of evidence combined with the wish to rather not know, or at least to put that which we know or at least *should* know out of mind.[117] It could be argued that our forgetfulness is an all too human defense mechanism in the face of so much suffering and injustice. However, we must not forget Adorno's exhortation that this forgetfulness as a form of self-deception is "already a form of guilt."[118] The fact that our immediate intentions might oftentimes be utterly innocuous or benign (e.g., to spoil ourselves with a good steak after a long day of work) must be taken into consideration, yet it does not change the outcome of our actions for those who suffer the consequences. Nor should that be enough to exculpate us. I believe that the willful avoidance of information paired with a lack of criticalness in our lives leads to a very similar "remoteness from reality"[119] that Arendt diagnosed in Eichmann. At any rate, I believe that David Clark is right in his analysis that we live in a culture "that failed catastrophically to grasp the injustice of

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[115] Ted Honderich, Terrorism for Humanity: Inquiries in Political Philosophy (London: Pluto Press, 2003) 110. That Honderich who exhibits such a high awareness of human suffering leaves out any reference to animal suffering in a sad way shows the extent of the denial that we are in when it comes to non-human suffering.
[116] Honderich 143.
[117] See Honderich 143.
[118] Adorno, Metaphysics. Concepts and Problems, 113.
[119] Arendt 288.

killing Jews; but 'we' also live in a culture for which the justness of putting animals to death is simply not an intelligible consideration."[120]

The second attitude that I shall mention only briefly is that of the sublimation of violence. Since I shall have more to say about this in the next chapter, I will limit my comments to the following: As Zymunt Bauman writes in Modernity and the Holocaust, "*Modern genocide is genocide with a purpose.*"[121] The destruction of the adversary is desired for itself but is wedded to a specific idea.

> Getting rid of the adversary is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end: a necessity that stems from the ultimate objective, a step that one has to take if one wants ever to reach the end of the road. *The end itself is a grand vision of a better, and radically different society.* Modern genocide is an element of social engineering, meant to bring about a social order conforming to the design of the perfect society.[122]

Slavoj Zizek concurs with this analysis: "Most of them [the Nazi executioners] were not simply evil, they were well aware that they were doing things that brought humiliation, suffering and death to their victims."[123] Yet, they acted "heroically" and resisted "the very temptation to succumb to elementary pity and sympathy in the presence of human suffering."[124] The ultimate perversity of their actions hence lay in the fact that their "violation of spontaneous ethical instincts of pity and compassion [was] transformed into the proof of my ethical grandeur: to do my duty, I am ready to assume the heavy burden of inflicting pain on others."[125] I believe that this resistance towards elementary pity is comparable to the belittlement that compassion for animals has received whenever it was

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[120] Clark 178.
[121] Bauman 91.
[122] Bauman 91.
[123] Žižek 106.
[124] Žižek 106.
[125] Žižek 106.

seen as the outgrowth of a "vulgar sentimentality" and lacking any higher (i.e., rational) basis. Moreover, as we shall see, the *Ausmerzung* of the "animal within" was in the history of Western philosophy also wedded to a redemptive promise: virtue, truth, and ultimately humanity itself are to be attained by means of subjecting and overcoming the "impure" or "foreign" aspects of our existence that throughout the history of Western philosophy were regarded as obstacles for the realization of the human ideal.

1.3.3 Modernity, Anti-Semitism and the Liquidation of the Individual

Since it is Adorno's claim that Auschwitz begins wherever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they're only animals, and this is my primary interest in this chapter, I shall privilege Adorno's and Horkheimer's analysis of the Holocaust. I shall, however, supplement their account with ideas from other thinkers when I deem this helpful and instructive. The fundamental problem with this approach is obvious: If Adorno's and Horkheimer's analysis is wrong, then Adorno's claim that, "[a]nimals play for the idealist system virtually the same role as the Jews for fascism,"[126] is irrevocably distorted. Since my goal is, however, neither to make an air-tight case for the comparability of the Nazi Holocaust and the animal holocaust – this would be tantamount to patronizing my readers which I find myself in no position to do – nor to prove the correctness of Adorno's equation, I believe that even if Adorno's and Horkheimer's analysis of the Holocaust is incomplete (to say that it is outrightly false is, I believe, as

[126] Theodor W. Adorno, Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music: Fragments and Texts (: Stanford University Press, 1998) 80.

implausible as it is irresponsible) it still contains enough important insights to warrant my choice.

Since I believe that Adorno's and Horkheimer's account of the Holocaust can only be properly understood within their wider theory of the 'dialectic of enlightenment', I shall begin my analysis with their characterization of the concept of Enlightenment.[127] Adorno and Horkheimer start out with the claim that, "Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters."[128] From here they go on to argue that, "Enlightenment's program was the disenchantment of the world."[129] The two main ideas that we encounter in this opening passage are that of fear and mastery. According to Adorno and Horkheimer the disenchantment of the world "means the extirpation of animism,"[130] where mystery is replaced by mechanistic calculability. Unlike in earlier ages, knowledge no longer aims at producing concepts, images or "the joy of understanding"[131] but at the more pragmatic and material gains of control:

> The 'happy match' between human understanding and the nature of things that he [*sic*] envisaged is a patriarchal one: the mind, conquering superstition, is to rule over disenchanted nature . . . What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings. Nothing else counts.[132]

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[127] While a considerable part of Adorno's and Horkheimer's analysis revolves around the socio-economic and political conditions that produce anti-Semitism, I will for the most part leave this aspect of their analysis out.
[128] Horkheimer and Adorno 1.
[129] Horkheimer and Adorno 1.
[130] Horkheimer and Adorno 2.
[131] Horkheimer and Adorno 2.
[132] Horkheimer and Adorno 2.

Technology is no longer seen as a consequence or application of knowledge but as its very essence: "Power and knowledge are synonymous."[133] The means by which thinking achieves this is abstraction, that is the withdrawing from the material content of the immediate experience. "Abstraction, the instrument of enlightenment, stands in the same relationship to its object as fate, whose concept is eradicated: as liquidation."[134] In thought the individual qualities of its object are "dissolved"[135] and the object is reduced to a "mere exemplar"[136] of a higher kind. "Under the leveling rule of abstraction, which makes everything in nature repeatable"[137] modern science disposes of the "sanctity of the *hic et nunc*"[138] and the uniqueness and non-exchangeability of its objects. For Adorno the liquidation of the individual is one of the hallmarks of Auschwitz, where it was no longer the individual who was killed, but the *speci*men.[139] The individual is "debased to a species" and hence called 'the Jew' "without distinction."[140] How this dialectic of enlightenment works can be illustrated with the help of the following example: While the French Revolution's call for equality was meant to elevate the individual, at the same time it accomplished precisely the opposite: it leveled differences and made everyone an interchangeable equivalent. As Adorno and Horkheimer argue, "[b]ourgeois society is

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[133] Horkheimer and Adorno 2.
[134] Horkheimer and Adorno 9.
[135] Horkheimer and Adorno 9.
[136] Horkheimer and Adorno 7.
[137] Horkheimer and Adorno 9.
[138] Horkheimer and Adorno 6.
[139] See Adorno, Negative Dialectics 362.
[140] Horkheimer and Adorno 144.

ruled by equivalence. It makes dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities."[141] As Adorno writes in Negative Dialectic,

> What the sadists in the camps told their victims: tomorrow you will be smoke rising from these chimneys into the sky, names the indifference of the life of every individual, which history is moving towards: already in their formal freedom they are as fungible and replaceable as under the boots of the liquidators.[142]

For Adorno this indifference to the individual is deeply rooted in a form of thinking that conceives of knowledge as "recognition in a concept," that is "the subsuming of difference under sameness."[143] That at whose expense this kind of thinking is practiced is what Adorno calls 'the non-identical'; it is that which eludes the totalizing force of the abstract concept. This kind of thinking exhibits an analogous indifference to the individual as the one the sadists in the camps exhibited in murdering millions of individuals as mere specimen of 'the Jews' or as the indifference we nowadays display in our attitudes and behaviour towards those creatures we indiscriminately designate as ("non-human") "animals". Yet, by acting in this way, so goes Adorno's claim, we merely act in accordance with the most cherished thought principle. It is against this background that Adorno is right when he says that in the once venerable concept "the destruction of non-identity is ideologically lurking."[144] Hence Adorno's first claim that Western philosophy is complicit in the atrocities of the Holocaust in so far as it proliferates a disregard or indifferent blindness for the concrete, sensuous, particular in favour of the abstract and universal. "Objectifying thinking ... in forgetting the matter,

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[141] Horkheimer and Adorno 4.
[142] Horkheimer and Adorno 4.
[143] Horkheimer and Adorno 148.
[144] Adorno, Negative Dialectics 362.

does to it in thought the violence which later will be done in practice."[145] I believe that we would misunderstand Adorno if we read him as condemning this kind of thinking *per se*. To criticize conceptual thinking would be as pointless as it would be inconsequential because it constitutes a dimension of our thinking that we cannot escape. Yet, and I believe that this is Adorno's point, when the abstract and universal is elevated to the status of the only truth and the other of this relationship (i.e., the particular, concrete, idiosyncratic) is relegated to an inferior status, "the stereotyped schemata of both thought and reality, bring calamity."[146] How exactly this works in the case of non-human animals will become more evident in the second part of this thesis.[147]

For now, there are two further important aspects of this kind of objectifying thinking that need to be mentioned: First, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that, "[h]uman beings purchase the increase of their power with estrangement from that over which it is exerted."[148] As a direct consequence of this kind of abstract grasping, individual things become increasingly alien to most people and their understanding of them is reduced to the knowledge of how to manipulate things *for their own advantage*. "Their 'in-itself' becomes 'for him' [*sic*]."[149] What a thing is, is hence reduced to the meaning this thing has for myself. Although Adorno and Horkheimer do not discuss the example of animals, I believe that it is safe to say that this also holds for animals. As a matter of fact their reduction to the status of things or products (e.g., meat, leather, etc.) clearly undermines our ability to experience them as (potential) extensions of our existence and

[145] Horkheimer and Adorno 158.
[146] Horkheimer and Adorno 158.
[147] See especially section 2.3.4.
[148] Horkheimer and Adorno 6.
[149] Horkheimer and Adorno 6.

as fellow beings, and not only as mere instruments. Instead, they become the "absolute object, existing merely for the exercise of power [*verfahren werden soll*]."[150] Yet, this estrangement is not a bad side-effect of this thinking, but rather one of its most central aspects if not the condition of its possibility: "In thought, human beings distance themselves from nature in order to arrange [*hinzustellen*] it in such a way that it can be mastered."[151] It is in this ability to distance ourselves that human autonomy supposedly lies. Reduced to the status of an absolute object that is to be merely administered, the perpetrator can proceed with the victim like the scientist in the laboratory. Again, for Adorno and Horkheimer this attitude is not something deviant but parallels the attitude that modern science displays towards nature. The disenchantment of nature means that, "Scientific calculation of events annuls the account [*Rechenschaft*[152]] of them which thought had once given in myth."[153] While this might be a little stretch, I believe that for Adorno and Horkheimer our modern rationalistic outlook in estranging us from the outer world has eroded our capacity for empathizing with the same world. "[T]hat we no

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[150] Horkheimer and Adorno 137. The German "verfahren" already anticipates the *administered* murder of the individual. As Adorno and Horkheimer argue a little later, "The disregard for the subject makes things easy for administration."(Horkheimer and Adorno 167)

[151] Horkheimer and Adorno 31. While in the translation of Edmund Jephcott the German "hinzustellen" is translated as "arranged", the German "hinstellen" will instantaneously evoke Heidegger's *Ge-stell*, which in "The Question Concerning Technology" he identifies as the essence of modern technology. Although there are of course many differences between the two accounts, the fact that Heidegger claimed that, the "motorized food industry [is] in essence the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps," shows that, like Adorno and Horkheimer Heidegger saw a connection between modern technology and its underlying understanding of nature and the horrors of Auschwitz.

[152] It is important that the German "*Rechenschaft*" can also mean "account*ability*". In other words, what Adorno and Horkheimer have in mind here is not just the lack of meaning but also an absence of *responsibility*. I shall take a closer look at the mechanisms that constantly erode and undercut our responsibility for our treatment of non-human animals in the second part of this thesis.

[153] Horkheimer and Adorno 5.

longer know, what we used to feel before the dog-catcher's van, is both the triumph of culture and its failure."[154] This exemplifies once again what Adorno and Horkheimer mean by dialectic of enlightenment and shows the downside of the change from the "[b]odily adaptation to nature"[155] to its (abstract) recognition in the concept. In de-animizing nature and everything it comprises we have cut a bond that connected us with the rest of the animal kingdom. The abyss that the modern enlightened mind has thus created turns the creatures of nature on the other side of the abyss into something radically alien. From our inability to feel ourselves into these radically alien creatures it is but a small step to the complete denial that there is anything (e.g., an animal mind) to feel ourselves into: our inability to fathom what it must be like for animals to suffer at our hands is turned into the denial of the existence of their suffering.

To say that in Auschwitz it was not the individual that died but the specimen, still does not explain what this "species" represented to attract the hatred of the Nazis. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, for the Nazis the Jews represented "the negative principle as such."[156] The Jews thus embodied that on whose "extermination the world's happiness depends."[157] In other words, the defeat or "overcoming" of the Jews was not a mere necessity or side-note but was instead wedded to a promise of a better world.[158] Now I believe that one of Adorno's and Horkheimer's most significant insights is that

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[154] Adorno, Negative Dialectics 366.
[155] Horkheimer and Adorno 148.
[156] Horkheimer and Adorno 137.
[157] Horkheimer and Adorno 137.
[158] "[T]he blacks must be kept in their place, but the Jews who are to be wiped from the face of the earth, and the call to exterminate them like vermin finds an echo among the prospective fascists of all countries." (Horkheimer and Adorno 137)

that which repelled the Nazis in the Jews was in reality "all too familiar"[159] to them. Adorno and Horkheimer borrow this idea from Sigmund Freud's theory of pathic projections. "The psychoanalytic theory of pathic projection has identified the transference of socially tabooed impulses from the subject to the object as the substance of that projection."[160] They hence argue that, "Anti-Semitism is based on false projection."[161] While in the case of mimesis the subject adapts itself to its surrounding, in the case of pathic projections it "makes its surroundings resemble itself."[162] What does the Jew exactly represent according to Adorno and Horkheimer?

> No matter what the makeup of the Jews may be in reality, their image, that of the defeated, has characteristics which must make totalitarian rule their mortal enemy: happiness without power, reward without work, a homeland without frontiers, religion without myth. These features are outlawed by the ruling powers because they are secretly coveted by the ruled. The former can survive only as long as the latter turn what they yearn for into an object of hate. They do so through pathic projection, since even hatred leads to *the union with the object – in destruction.*[163]

While this analysis is certainly far from uncontroversial, it is important to keep in mind that Adorno and Horkheimer are merely *describing* the perceived (or projected) characteristics of 'the Jews'. What matters more than the concrete characteristics is their overall claim that these features represent something that is "secretly coveted" by those who officially despise these traits. Moreover, the object of hate is essential for the survival of the hat*er* whose stable identity stands and falls with that of the object that constitutes its polar opposite. The negative that the Jew represents is not merely an abstract evil but also the perceived responsibility of the actual evils. Adorno and

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[159] Horkheimer and Adorno 149. Adorno and Horkheimer here refer to Freud's famous theory of the 'uncanny' (*Das Unheimliche*).
[160] Horkheimer and Adorno 158.
[161] Horkheimer and Adorno 154.
[162] Horkheimer and Adorno 154.
[163] Horkheimer and Adorno 164/165 ; emphasis added. See also section 2.3.4.1.

Horkheimer hence write, "He [the Jew; NF] is indeed the scapegoat, not only for individual maneuvers and machinations but in the wider sense that the economic injustice of the whole class is attributed to him [*sic*]."[164] The mechanisms of false projection and of scapegoating hence seem to go hand in hand. Kenneth Burke in his analysis of Hitler's *Battle* speech explains how this works:

> The 'curative' process that comes with the ability to hand over one's ills to a scapegoat, thereby getting purification by dissociation ... Hence if one can handover his [*sic*] infirmities to a vessel, or 'cause', outside the self, one can battle an external enemy instead of battling an enemy within.[165]

To sums things up, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, for the Nazis the Jew *as such* represented something that both needed to be overcome and something that was all too familiar. Before the Nazis could destroy any individuals Jew*s* they, so to speak, had to "invent"[166] the object of their hatred *out of themselves* and equip "the Jew" (by means of pathic projection) with those traits they were taught to loathe beyond comparison. As we shall see in the next section, the concentration of both familiar and despised characteristics in the (philosophical) figure of the animal is the result of a very similar mechanism.

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[164] Horkheimer and Adorno 144.
[165] Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'," The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings, ed. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003) 109.
[166] Horkheimer and Adorno 171.

1.4 The Animalization of the Animal

The underlying idea of this section is that it is not the "foolishness and mortal danger that comes of blurring boundaries between human and nonhuman"[167] that is at the root of the problem, but the onto-theological distinction (with all its implications) between the human and the animal in which, and this is crucial, in the history of Western the animal has come to constitute a kind of 'negative principle' that is comparable to that which the Jews constituted for the Nazis. What most voices that warn us about the alleged dangers of blurring of the human-animal boundary overlook is the question how it came about that one *could* vilify people by equating them with or depicting them as animals. In other words, they already take for granted the devaluation of the animal as a matter of fact. The overall goal of this part is to undermine this self-evidence and to ask how the animal came about to become the human anti-image.

Throughout the history of Western philosophy we can find at least three different recurrent kinds of claims about animals: that they are inferior, that they are made for humanity's sake, and finally that they embody or represent something that is both part of of ourselves (the impure or imperfect part) and that we need to transcend or vanquish in order to become fully human. The first and third claim are closely related and have usually been used to justify the second claim. I believe that it is neither the "fact" that animals cannot suffer, nor that they are dumb, nor that they exist for our sake which is to blame for the (intellectual) hatred that animals have aroused throughout history, but rather that they represent this "anti-human" part of ourselves.

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[167] Clark 168.

I shall attempt to prove the alleged (philosophical) "impurity" of the animal in two respects: animals are impure because they are more (if not entirely) corporeal than spiritual, at the mercy of their passions and desires, and hence *immoral*. And secondly, they are caught in the particular, immediate, and sensuous and hence eternally caught in the realm of *untruth*. In other words, the animal represents two of the main "anti-values" or anathemas of Western philosophy: that of vice and that of untruth. Both anti-values come together in and arise from the animal's supposed lack of reason.

It is important that we do not understand the "animalization of the animal" to mean merely the association of the animal with the inferior and vilified part of our existence. If this was all then all we could do would be to accept this. Yet, this vilified part of our being is at the same time also something which we can and must strive to "overcome", "transcend", or vanquish; fleshed out in non-philosophical terms I believe that this means nothing less than "destroyed" or "exterminated". Just as the Jews constituted a foreign body to the German community that allegedly threatened it from the inside with degeneration and decay, so was the "animal within" likewise regarded as a force that posed the permanent threat of disintegration to our human existence. Like in the case of the Jews it is important that the image of the animal as beast is a (false) projection. As many thinkers from Plutarch to Canetti all knew: to call our most base and evil behaviour "bestial" is an insult to the animals, for when it comes to our potential for depravity and viciousness human beings outshine any other creature that ever set his or her foot on this planet.

As I have already indicated I believe that the animalization of the animal, by which I mean the pathic-projective process of the vilification of the animal, stems from two separate sources. On the one hand, we have a tradition of theories that identifies the animal with the passions, desires, drives of the body or the flesh. While already in Plato and Aristotle we find a division of the soul in different parts and functions, and the idea that the "higher" (rational) parts of the soul should dominate the "lower" (bodily) ones, it was only in Christianity that the distinction of the soul and the flesh became complete. While in the *Phaedo* Plato argues that soul and body are separable, he doesn't deny that animals have a soul altogether. In Christianity, in contrast, this distinction is both clear and an all-or-nothing matter. This distinction mirrors the divide within human beings, who although they also have a body have an immortal soul, and animals which are only body or flesh. On the other hand, we have those philosophies that consider the animal trapped in the particular, immediate, sensibly given, and thus excluded from the realm of truth which lies in the general, abstract, discursive, and supposedly eternal. I believe that both ideas taken together explain why the animal is not considered merely dumb or bestial but both, and hence becomes the embodiment of the anti-image of the human ideal.

1.4.1 The Animalization of the Animal I : The Animal as Flesh/Passion/Drive[168]

In the sketch titled "Interest in the Body" Adorno and Horkheimer write: "Beneath the known history of Europe there runs a subterranean one. It consists of the fate of the human instincts and passions repressed and distorted by civilization."[169] I believe that "mortification [*Erniedrigung*] of the flesh"[170] and our mutilated relationship to the body is one of the keys to the understanding of the animalization of the animal. As Adorno and Horkheimer rightfully point out, Christianity "vilified the flesh as the source of all evil."[171] I believe that while this idea is indeed a Christian invention, we can find certain precursors already in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. In the case of the former I believe the reason for this is his adherence to the theory of metempsychosis, whereas in Aristotle's case it is the fact that he did not conceive of body and soul as two separable entities.

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[168] It goes without saying that due to the spatial constraints the following characterization cannot always respect the complexity of the ideas and theories discussed, which, however, does not imply that every attempt is not made to represent these ideas as faithfully as possible. Moreover, I took the utmost care that my selectiveness does not comprise or distort the fundamental gist of the theories and views presented here. As Michel Foucault argues in an interview with Gilles Deleuze, "to point the finger of accusation, to find targets, is the first in the reversal of power and the initiation of new struggles against existing forms of power." (Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 214) The aim of this investigation is not to blame individual thinkers for the current situation, but to show that our current treatment of non-human animals does not stand in opposition to the ways the great thinkers of Western philosophy have depicted the animal as such. As a matter of fact, I believe that the phenomenon I call animal holocaust is very much in accordance with certain recurrent ideas about the animal as such as we find them throughout the history of Western philosophy.

[169] Horkheimer and Adorno 192.

[170] Horkheimer and Adorno 192.

[171] Horkheimer and Adorno 192.

1.4.1.1 Plato and Aristotle

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato compares the soul to a winged team of horses and their charioteer. This allegory is to illustrate the tripartite division the soul of mortal beings. According to Plato the soul consists of a noble and good part, one that is "opposite in its nature"[172] and a middle part that has the task of mediating between the two. Of the bad or "unruly"[173] part Plato says that it is a "companion of excess and boastfulness ... hardly yielding to whip and goad."[174] In Book IV of Republic Plato advances his theory of the constitution of the human soul in connection with his ideas of justice and virtue. According to this theory the soul consists of three parts or forms or elements: the calculating part (*logismos*), the spirited part (*thumos*), and the appetitive or irrational part.[175] As far as the latter is concerned Plato links it explicitly to bodily pleasures of "nourishment and generation."[176] For Plato there is a natural hierarchy among these parts that puts the spirited part in an auxiliary position to the calculation part, and which subordinates the appetitive part to both of them.[177] Justice or virtue in the individual consists of each of the parts minding its own business.[178] As Plato argues, "to produce justice [is] to establish the part of the soul in a relation of mastering, and being mastered by, one another that is according to nature, while to produce injustice is to establish a

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[172] Plato, The Collected Dialogues of Plato, including the Letters. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 246a.
[173] Plato 254c.
[174] Plato 253e. Already at the earliest stages of Western philosophy, we find this idea that shall remain central to the philosophical thinking about animals: "The affect is equated with an animal which the human being is subduing." (Horkheimer and Adorno 38; footnote 5)
[175] Plato 439d.
[176] Plato 436a.
[177] See Plato 441a/e and 443d.
[178] See Plato 441d/e.

relation of ruling, and being ruled by, one another that is contrary to nature."[179] What we hence find in Plato is the idea that the soul consists of different parts, which are by nature hierarchically ordered (the appetitive part of the bodily desires under the calculation, rational part); and it is in this natural order that justice and virtue reside. While it is important that for Plato the appetitive part is not inherently immoral or evil, it must itself be ruled or "harnessed"[180] by the higher parts. It is also important to note that while it is not quite clear whether Plato denies non-human animals the spirited part he clearly denies them the highest, rational part of the soul.[181]

In contrast to Plato, Aristotle rejects the idea that the body and the soul could be separated and that the former is the tomb of the latter or imprisons it like an oyster.[182] The soul is neither the same nor completely separable from the body, the two rather stand to each other like the "wax and the shape molded in it, or generally with the material of each thing and that of which it is the material."[183] In On the Soul he writes, that "the soul has its thinghood as the *form* of a natural body."[184] In other words, everything that is alive has a soul for Aristotle: "that which is ensouled is distinguished from what is soulless by living."[185] According to Aristotle, the soul has different potencies or powers: nutrition, perception, motion, and thinking things through.[186] These powers are hierarchically ordered and those living things that have one of the higher powers also

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[179] Plato 444d.
[180] Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views", 114.
[181] See Plato 441a/b. That animals have the appetitive part (and maybe only this part) becomes clear in 439b.
[182] See Plato 250c.
[183] Plato 412b.
[184] Plato 412a 10 ; emphasis added.
[185] Plato 413a 20.
[186] See Plato 414a 30. The latter is also called "intellect" or "contemplative faculty".

have the lower ones. With regard to perception Aristotle further argues that, "if the perceptive potency is present, then so is that of appetite, for appetite consists of desire and spiritedness and wishing ... in that in which sense perception is present there is also pleasure and pain ... and where these are present so is desire, since it is an appetite for the pleasant."[187] Like Plato, Aristotle concedes certain "soul-functions" to animals, yet he stops short of attributing the highest to them and instead reserves them for (adult, male, free) human beings. Although there is no sharp distinction between body and soul as we shall find it in St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas for instance, both Plato and Aristotle explicitly argue for the subordination of the lower (appetitive, bodily) functions of the soul under the higher, rational ones. As Aristotle writes in the Politics, every living creature consists of a body and a soul, "and of these two, the one is by nature the ruler, and the other the subject."[188] Yet these parts are not seen as something inherently bad that needs to overcome but as aspects of the same principle which we find both in humans and in animals (albeit in a more rudimentary form). It is only when the body rules over the soul that the living thing finds itself in a state of corruption, "in an evil and unnatural condition."[189] According to Aristotle, "the soul rules the body with a despotical rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites with a constitutional and royal rule. And it is clear that the rule of the soul over the body, and of the mind and the rational element over the passionate, is natural and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful."[190] As such the soul stands in an analogous relation to

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[187] Plato 414b.
[188] Aristotle, Politics (New York: Arno Press, 1973) 1254a 35.
[189] Aristotle, Politics 1254b.
[190] Aristotle, Politics 1254b.

the body as the human being stands to the animal (or the free human being to the slave): "Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals ... the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master."[191] In other words, the human dominion over the animal kingdom is analogous to the internal mastery of the rational element over the lower, non-rational parts.

1.4.1.2 Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the Christian Tradition

The vilification of the flesh and its identification with the animal as we find it among the Christian philosophers is in its radicality rather foreign to Greek philosophy. What we have in Plato and Aristotle is a taxonomy of the different parts of the soul, and at least in Aristotle a clear subordination of the body under the soul. Yet, as John D. Caputo argues in Against Ethics, when we talk about the body in the Judeo-Christian tradition, we are no longer talking about the "active, athletic, healthy, erect, white male body"[192] that we encounter in Plato and Aristotle. Instead we encounter the body as *flesh*, that is as the carnal, sensuous, sensual, vulnerable, leprous and most importantly as fallen and sinful body. Not only is this body the scene of suffering and temptation but it is also diametrically set over and against the soul. These ideas can be found both in the proto-canonical books of the Bible and the deutero-canonical ones. In Galatians 5, for

[191] Aristotle, Politics 1254b 15. The fact that animals have appetite and *thumos* but not reason is important in Aristotle's ethical writings. In the Nicomachean Ethics he writes repeatedly that animals lack deliberated choice (*prohairesis*). Their actions are hence voluntary but "done on the spur of the moment." (111b 5)

[192] John D. Caputo, Against Ethics. Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) 194.

instance, we find the following remarks: "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5,16/17). And in the same chapter: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, / Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, / Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, / Meekness, temperance" (Gal 5,19-23). Similar remarks can also be found in the Book of Wisdom. In chapter 9 it reads, "the corruptible body weigheth down the soul, And the earthly tabernacle oppresseth the much pondering mind" (Wisd. 9,15). The last idea is reiterated by Saint Augustine in his On Music where he argues that, "the love of acting on the stream of its bodily passions turns the soul away from the contemplation of eternal things, diverting its attention with the care of sensible pleasure."[193] Christianity operates with a sharp distinction of the body and the soul, dichotomy in which "every soul is better [than] every body."[194] It is God's command not to give in to the "concupiscence of the flesh"[195] which arouses "false visions"[196] in us. The temptations of the body are not limited to the realm of sexual lust but also apply to the "concupiscence in eating and

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[193] Saint Augustine, On Music (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1992) 364. In The Problem of Free Choice, Augustine compares the passions [*libido*], which he also calls "blameworthy desire" [*cupiditas*] (43), to raging tyrants who "throw into confusion the whole soul and life of men with storms from every quarter" (57/58).
[194] Saint Augustine, On Music 365. See also Saint Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice (Westminster: Newman Press, 1955) 56.
[195] Saint Augustine, The Confessions of St.Augustine (Garden City, N.Y.: Image books, 1960) 256. (Book X., Chapter 30, Section 41).
[196] Saint Augustine, The Confessions of St. Augustine 256.

drinking."[197] In either case we must bring our "body into subjection"[198] and resist the snares of the flesh. The subjugation of the flesh, which is part of the trial which earthly existence constitutes for human beings[199], is wed to the promise of redemption. As Gary Steiner explains, "In turning back toward God, we acknowledge God's command 'to control our bodily desires' and properly subjugate our bodily drives, which place us on a par with mere 'beasts,' to our recognition of the divine law."[200] While human beings are created in the image of God and have an immortal soul, animals lack such souls and are hence but earthly creatures.[201] Since our soul is created in the image of God who is pure spirit and absolutely good, it cannot be the source of moral depravation. It is hence the earthly, bodily part of us that gives rise to the constant temptations and allurements of lust, gluttony and other corrupting pleasures against which must "wage daily warfare."[202] While there is no escape from this struggle during our earthly life we must "at least see to it that, with God's help, we do not succumb to the desires of the flesh which lusts against the spirit."[203] The subordination of irrational motions of the soul (i.e., the passions) under the spirit and the body under the soul is just as much part of the just order of nature as is

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[197] Saint Augustine, The Confessions of St. Augustine 260. (Chapter 31, Section 47)
[198] Saint Augustine, The Confessions of St. Augustine Chapter 31, Section 43.
[199] See Saint Augustine, The Confessions of St. Augustine Chapter 28, Section 39.
[200] Gary Steiner, Anthropocentrism and its Discontents (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005) 118. See also Saint Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice. There Augustine writes that as long as reason controls the motions of the passions human beings obey the right order because "eternal law has granted mind control over passion." (55)
[201] Aquinas does not deny animals souls altogether. In the *Summa Theologiae*, however, he argues that unlike the souls of human beings the souls that animals have are not self-subsistent and hence perish with the body. (See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae.* A Concise Translation (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1989) 109/110.)
[202] Saint Augustine, The Confessions of Saint Augustine, Book 10 Chapter 31, 43.
[203] Saint Augustine, The City of God Against the Pagans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 921.

the subordination of animals under human beings.[204] The truly wise human beings are those who are "controlled by mind, and who are disturbed by no power of passion."[205] As Augustine says, "Whatever it is by which man [*sic*] is superior to beasts, whether mind or spirit ... if this governs and controls all the other elements of which man is composed, then man is duly ordered."[206] Animals, in contrast, live and even a have a soul [*anima*], but they are without reason or understanding (the part of the soul Augustine calls *animus*)[207], and thus they cannot live by the eternal and unchangeable law of reason.[208] Instead "every action of animal life is concerned with seeking bodily pleasure and avoiding pain."[209]

In his On Evil, Thomas Aquinas likewise blames the body explicitly for the corruption of the soul: "It seems that original sin inheres in the flesh and not in the soul."[210] According to Aquinas animals are essentially unfree (they have no free choice). They do not act upon deliberation but they are passively moved by their drives or by external stimuli. While "an intelligent agent acts for the sake of an end, in the sense that it determines the end for itself," animals act from natural impulses, which means that they do not determine the ends of their actions themselves but are rather "moved toward

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[204] Saint Augustine, The City of God Against the Pagans 921
[205] Saint Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice 55.
[206] Saint Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice 52.
[207] See Saint Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice 50/51.
[208] See Saint Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice 48.
[209] Saint Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice 53.
[210] Thomas Aquinas, On Evil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 209. A little later in the same section Aquinas writes that, "The rational has the impurity of original sin from its union with the flesh, not from itself of from God." (210)

an end determined for it by another being."[211] The reason why animals do not have free choice is because "the whole of freedom is located in reason,"[212] which is only found in human beings. Although there is the resemblance of judgment, which Aquinas calls "instinctive judgment,"[213] in animals this judgment is inferior to that of human beings. "[A]nimals judge instinctively, but not freely: sheep decide by nature, not by argument, to run away from the wolf; but men make up their own minds ... Because they reason they are free to make their own decisions. Freedom is self-determination."[214] Since animals lack reason they are at the mercy of their passions. "What animals fight about is their pleasures: food and sex."[215] And while in humans these appetites are controlled by reason which enables them to distance themselves from their power, "animals react straightaway to feelings of pleasures or aggression ... for no higher appetite opposes them."[216] Since animals lack deliberate mastery over their passions and appetites, they are by nature enslaved to them. It is important to note that although animals as such lack self-determination for Aquinas this does not mean that they are incontinent all the time. I am even tempted to say that it is not how any *individual* animal actually behaves in reality. Like in the case of the Jews their extermination was justified *solely* on grounds of

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[211] Thomas Aquinas, On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles (Garden City, N. Y.: Image Books 1955) III, Part 1, Chapter 3, 39.
[212] Thomas Aquinas, The Disputed Questions on Truth (Garden City, N. Y.: Image Books 1955) III. In the section "Is there free choice in brutes", Aquinas argues further, that "Brutes have a certain semblance of reason inasmuch as they share in a certain natural prudence ... This semblance consists in the well-regulated judgment from a natural estimate which they have about certain things. But they have this judgment from a natural estimate, not from any deliberation ... 'they are moved by things seen,' as Augustine teaches; and as Damascene says, they are driven by passions ... They are accordingly under the necessity of being moved to flight or pursuit by the sight of a particular thing or by a passion which is aroused."
[213] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 125.
[214] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 128.
[215] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 125.
[216] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 125.

their "race membership," the same holds for all the living beings we lump together as animals. In either case, the individual is merely seen as a representative or specimen of the respective race or species (that is the higher category) they belong to; and in both cases these individuals arouse our disdain (or worse) because of the characteristics we have made them to represent as animal or as Jew.

1.4.1.3 Immanuel Kant

When it comes to the question of the animal, Immanuel Kant whom Nietzsche famously called "the most Christian philosopher" and who in the field of epistemology brought about the great Copernican revolution, seamlessly aligns himself with many of his predecessors by directly linking vice of the supposed animal part of human nature, that is, our inclinations. For Kant, "[t]he state of vice is one of *enslavement* under the power of inclination [and] The more a man [*sic*] is virtuous, the more he is free."[217] It hence does not surprise, that Kant's views on animals are inextricably connected to his views on morality and anthropology. Before we can discuss Kant's position on animals it will hence be helpful to recall some of his central beliefs about human nature and morality before we shall examine how these are related to his views on animals. Since a familiarity with Kant's idea can be reasonably assumed I shall limit my remarks to a minimum.

According to Kant a human being is both "a natural being and a free being."[218] As the former human beings are necessarily determined by the laws of nature. As the

[217] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 125 ; emphasis added.
[218] Immanuel Kant, Lectures on Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 262. (Henceforth "Ethics")

latter, however, a human being has the power "to act *in accordance with his* [*sic*] *idea of laws* – that is, in accordance with principles – and only so has he a *will*."[219] The latter is the prerogative of rational beings and the ground for their worth not as a means to an end but as an end in themselves.[220] "*Autonomy* is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature."[221] As rational, free agents human beings are able to set themselves ends independent of external (e.g., another person's will) or internal (e.g., feelings, inclinations etc.) factors. Moreover, "my actions are good insofar as I can consider my will to be self-legislating therein,"[222] that is to say, the goodness of my actions is independent of the consequences of my actions but merely depends on whether the actions were done out of duty, that is those actions that were done out of "*pure* reverence for the practical law."[223] Because of this Kant can say that "morality lies in the relation of action to the autonomy of the will"[224] which in turn "greatly elevates our worth."[225] It is important to note that freedom is an *Idea*, which means that it is a necessary "assumption" that we have to make in order to make sense of the idea of morality at all. As Kant writes in the third chapter of the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: "we have been quite unable to demonstrate freedom as something actual in ourselves and in human nature: we saw merely that we must presuppose it if we wish to conceive a being as rational and as endowed with consciousness of his [*sic*] causality in

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[219] Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) 42 (AK 412). [Henceforth "Groundwork"]
[220] See Kant, Groundwork 61f. (AK 433)
[221] Kant, Groundwork 63. (AK 436)
[222] Kant, Groundwork 34. (AK 403)
[223] Kant, Groundwork 34. (AK 403)
[224] Kant, Groundwork 66. (AK 439)
[225] Kant, Ethics 246.

regard to actions – that is, as endowed with a will."[226] In other words, the idea of freedom is not an empirical one, but one that needs to be proven *a priori.*[227] It is this belonging to the intelligible world which is essential to humanity, which "consists in the totality of all the properties of man [*sic*], considered as an intelligent being, and whereby he is set in contrast to the *homo brutus* in his animality."[228]

For Kant, like many of his predecessors, animals are essentially unfree, which sets them in sharp contrast to human beings. The hungry animal *must* eat if he or she has food in front of him or her. "Animals are necessitated *per stimulus,*"[229] and unlike human beings can hence not refrain themselves in such situations. "All animals have the capacity to use their powers according to choice. Yet this choice is not free, but necessitated by incentives and *stimuli.* Their actions contain *bruta necessitas* [animal necessity]."[230] To say that animals are not free does not mean that their actions are random. Unlike human beings animals belong entirely to the sensible world and they are thus under the laws of nature.[231] From the fact that animals lack rationality and hence a will, it follows that they are not members of the "kingdom of ends."[232] Since animals do not stand under the moral law human beings have "no immediate duties to animals."[233] It is particularly this idea that made Kant one of the philosophical anathemas for thinkers who are favourable of the animal rights movement. For fairness' sake, it should,

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[226] Kant, Groundwork 74. (AK 449)
[227] Kant, Groundwork 73. (AK 447/8)
[228] Kant, Groundwork 74.
[229] Kant, Ethics 60.
[230] Kant, Ethics 125. See also Kant, Ethics 234: "animals have no free choice, their action being necessarily determined by their sensory impulses."
[231] See Kant, Ethics 126 and Kant, Groundwork 77 (AK 452).
[232] Kant, Groundwork 61. (AK 433)
[233] Kant, Ethics 212. See also Kant, Ethics 177.

however, be said that the idea that the animals' lack of reason categorically excludes them from the (human) moral community and the sphere of rights – which concretely means that "human beings owe animals no duties of justice whatsoever"[234] - dates back to the Stoics.[235] Since animals are determined by their impulses, they cannot be made responsible for the "actions" and hence cannot partake in the business of morality that presupposes the freedom that makes responsibility possible. Although Kant does not advocate gratuitous cruelty towards animals, he is explicit that this is not a duty towards animals but an indirect duty to humanity.[236] Again, I believe that even the rather skeptical reader cannot overlook the analogies between the general exclusion of animals from the moral community and the denaturalization of the Jews from the German community which was but the first step towards their ultimate fate. In both cases, the exclusion from the moral or legal community facilitates the eventual extermination without reprisal. Despite the enormous influence of and problems inherent in Kant's ideas about our indirect duties to animals, if taken alone they only represent one half of the picture. Of course, the mere exclusion of animals from the moral community while

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[234] Steiner 78.

[235] Gary Steiner has convincingly documented this in Anthropocentrism and its Discontents.

[236] See Kant Ethics 212. Kant explains these duties by arguing that cruelty to animals oftentimes hardens human beings also towards other human beings. However, cruelty *is* acceptable as long as it occurs for a good purpose. At another point Kant elaborates the prohibition against cruelty to animals further: "[I]t cannot be denied that a hard-heartedness towards animals is not in accordance with the law of reason, and is at least an unsuitable use of means. Any action whereby we may torment animals, or let them suffer distress, or otherwise treat them without love, is demeaning ourselves. It is inhuman, and contains an analogy of violation of the duty to ourselves, since we would not, after all, treat ourselves with cruelty; we stifle the instinct of humaneness within us and make ourselves devoid of feeling; it is thus an indirect violation of humanity in our own person." (Kant, Ethics 434) While these ideas certainly constitute an advancement over the idea that cruelty against animals is acceptable, it is important to note that in the above passage Kant repeatedly refers to the role of the heart and our feelings which, as is well known, only take on a secondary role in Kant's ethics.

evidently *facilitating* the "non-criminal putting to death" (Derrida) [237] of animals says nothing about the *rationale* for the extermination. In order to understand the latter we need to turn to Kant's thoughts on *bestiality* or "the beast in him [*sic*]"[238] which are more pertinent in this regard and which will complete the picture.

As we saw above, for Kant the animal lacks autonomy, they act on inclinations and *stimuli*. In human beings, conversely, there are "two foundations for our actions: inclinations, which are animal in nature, and humanity, to which the inclinations have to be subordinated."[239] If we act from an inclination our actions can at most *conform* to the moral law, yet they are not done *for the sake of the moral law.*[240] As such actions from inclination are heteronymous and determined by a contingent, empirical ground. To base morality on sensuous motives, however, "rather undermine[s] it and totally destroy[s] its sublimity, inasmuch as the motives of virtue are put in the same class as those of vice."[241] Moreover, unless we bring the various impulsions from feeling and inclination under the single principle of the pure thought of duty, not only can they "guide us only by mere accident to the good, but very often also evil."[242] Kant gives the sexual impulse as an example where our inclinations lead us astray from the path of morality (and hence humanity):

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[237] See section 2.2, page 110.
[238] Kant, Ethics 198.
[239] Kant, Ethics 127.
[240] See Kant, Groundwork 21. (AK 390)
[241] Kant, Groundwork 69. (AK 442)
[242] Kant, Groundwork 41. (AK 410/1) The idea that the many feelings and inclinations throw our soul into disarray sounds reminiscent both of Augustine's claim that, "the passions rage like tyrants, and throw into confusion the whole soul and life of men with storms from every quarter" (Saint Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice 57/58) and of Adorno's and Horkheimer's reading of the Odyssey in Dialectic.

> Since the sexual impulse is not an inclination that one human has for another, *qua* human, but an inclination for their sex, it is there a *principium* of the debasement of humanity ... Thus humanity becomes an instrument for satisfying desires and inclinations; but by this it is dishonoured and put on a par with animal nature. So the sexual impulse puts humanity in peril of being equated with animality.[243]

There are two things that are worth pointing out: Firstly, whenever we act from an inclination we violate the moral law by viewing either ourselves or another rational being as a means to satisfying our inclination and not as an end in themselves. This alone puts us on par with the animals. Secondly, it seems that the sexual impulse as such is animal in nature and must hence be mastered and subordinated to the claims of universal reason; because by following their sensible or animal nature (the *homo brutus*) that human beings jeopardize their very humanity. For animals the only impulsions [*Triebfedern*] are the seeking of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Although it seems that for Kant not every inclination is necessarily a bad one, there are several passages in Ethics where he puts inclination and morality in direct opposition: "since a man's [*sic*] sensory inclinations are the ground whereby he is affected in such a way as to act contrary to the moral law, and whereby his actions therefore become moral in a subjectively contingent fashion."[244] And a little later in the same section: "The struggle of inclination with the moral law, and the constant disposition ... to carry out his [*sic*] duties, therefore constitutes what we call *virtue*. The very Latin word *virtus* originally signifies nothing else but courage, strength and constancy."[245] In other words, virtue consists in a steadfastness in relation to our inclinations[246] and an obedience to our duties as given by the moral law. If human beings

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[243] Kant, Ethics156.
[244] Kant, Ethics 260.
[245] Kant, Ethics 260/261.
[246] At another point, Kant calls virtue "a victory over inclination." (Kant, Ethics 216)

were only *noumenal* beings they would not need a morality, because in that case they would either be holy or like God, who since he has "no animal nature, incurs no duties, since in Him there is no necessitation, and His actions have, on the contrary, only pure objective and subjective necessity."[247] A purely *noumenal* being would in virtue of its constitution alone have "no motive for transgressing the moral law."[248] These motives are exclusively located in our animal nature. This part of the human nature is "by nature [that is to say, by *animal* nature ; NF] raw and wild"[249] and must be disciplined or "otherwise we rear men [*sic*] to be savages."[250]

As we already saw above, while the state of morality is that of freedom (which is at the same time its transcendental prerequisite), heteronomy or enslavement is (in many cases) tantamount to vice. As a matter of fact there are different, conflicting classifications of the vices in the Lectures on Ethics, which, however, I believe do not stand in direct competition with each other but rather highlight different aspects of the same taxonomy. I feel that for the current examination, the classification according to the quality of the vices will be the most instructive. On the most general level Kant distinguishes between those vices that are still human insofar as they "accord with his [*sic*] nature,"[251] like for instance lying, and the ones that "lie outside humanity, and cannot be reconciled at all with the nature and character of man [*sic*]. "[252] Among these

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[247] Kant, Ethics 216.
[248] Kant, Ethics 261.
[249] Kant, Ethics 216.
[250] Kant, Ethics 216.
[251] Kant, Ethics 152.
[252] Kant, Ethics 152.

vices Kant distinguishes again between the *beastly* vices and the *devilish* vices.[253] The beastly vices comprise the vices of the body and the ones that have to do with pleasure or physical enjoyment.[254] These vices include gluttony and drunkenness and are violations of our self-regarding duties towards ourselves (in this case moderation). Kant argues that, "By each of these a man [*sic*] lapses out of humanity, and becomes equal to the brute; he thus degrades himself below humanity."[255] While in this passage Kant seems to argue that these vices put human beings *on par with* "brutes" in other passages he claims that the beastly vices put human beings *below* the animals.[256] It thus seems that Kant is contradicting himself. This ostensive contradiction is insofar of interest as it raises the question of the nomenclature of the so-called "beastly vices". Does Kant think that animals display such reprehensible behaviour? And is this behaviour reprehensible in animals? It could be argued that animals cannot be gluttonous since they have no concept of moderation. In another passage Kant gives some explanation to what he might mean with the claim that these vices make us equal to the brute: "Thus the bestial vices also demean man [*sic*] the most, in that partly they make him equal to the beast, e.g., drunkenness and gluttony, so that he becomes incapable of using his reason."[257] The reason why the beastly vices put human beings below animals is that while the animal

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[253] See Kant, Ethics 153.
[254] As examples Kant names drunkenness and gluttony, but it is not clear whether there are not more.
[255] Kant, Ethics 372.
[256] Kant Ethics 153. Kant argues here that, "By his beastly vices, man puts himself below the beasts." It could be argued that the claim that human beings put themselves below the animals pertains only to the *crimina carnem contra naturam*. We find support for this interpretation on page 381 where Kant argues that the *crimina carnem contra naturam* involves a bestial element insofar as they "demean man below the beasts."
[257] Kant, Ethics 420.

cannot act otherwise, humans have the choice to resists their inclination, and in this consists their very humanity. If humans, therefore, act in a way that dishonours their humanity they fail to act according to their nature whereas animals whenever they act "beastly" they (supposedly) act in accordance with their nature. The seeming contradiction can hence be reconciled in the following way: when humans act like animals they become equal to them; yet at the same time since by doing this they dishonour their nature they fall below animals who, at least, act in accordance with theirs. Among the beastly vices, the vices that excel all the others in baseness and brutality, are the *crimina carnis contra naturam*. Like the *crimina carnis secudum naturam* these "crimes against nature" are contrary to self-regarding duty and involve a misuse of the sexual impulse.[258] Kant defines the *crimina carnis contra naturam* as involving, "a use of the sexual impulse that is contrary to natural instinct and to animal nature."[259] In all these vices (*onania, sexus homogenii,* and sodomy) human beings degrade themselves below animals and dishonour their humanity. The reason why human beings degrade themselves below animals is that, "no animal is capable of any such *crimina carnis contra naturam*."[260]

Although, I believe, that point is clear, we shall finally briefly turn to the devilish vices because even there Kant sees "a sort of animality"[261] at their root. To the devilish vices Kant counts ingratitude, envy, and *Schadenfreude* [malicious joy], which represent

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[258] Kant, Ethics 160.
[259] Kant, Ethics 161.
[260] Kant, Ethics 162. The reason why Kant nevertheless considers these vices as belonging to the beastly vices is that they are bodily vices or crimes of the flesh.
[261] Kant, Ethics 162.

the "maximum of brutishness."[262] In these vices human beings seem to have made it their "business to pursue evil."[263] Although Kant believes that human beings have no immediate inclination towards evil *qua* evil (and thus no propensity for devilish vice) he still thinks that there is an indirect tendency towards evil in the human soul.[264] Kant calls this indirect tendency "a sort of animality, whereby man [*sic*] retains something of the beast in him, which he cannot overcome."[265]

1.4.1.4 Concluding Remarks

The most obvious response to my claim that the animal represents or embodies immorality and vice is of course that the animal has no sense of good and evil or just and unjust[266]; which in turn makes the claim that the animal could ever do anything morally reprehensible absurd because after all ought implies can.[267] While I believe that this apparent contradiction ultimately rests on a fundamental flaw in our thinking about animals, for now I shall attempt to offer two suggestions as to how to resolve this contradiction: The first that could be said is that the claim that animals have no sense of right and wrong is far from uncontroversial. As a matter of fact we talk and behave at least *as if* animals could be blamed or praised for their actions. While it could be argued that this pre-critical or anachronistic anthropomorphizing practice is fundamentally

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[262] Kant, Ethics 162.
[263] Kant, Ethics 162.
[264] See Kant, Ethics 198.
[265] Kant, Ethics 198.
[266] See Aristotle, Politics 1253a 15.
[267] In both Thomas Aquinas and Kant we find the claim that the basis of evil lies in the freedom of the will, something that both thinkers deny non-human animals. In Ethics, for instance, Kant writes explicitly that freedom "is the basis for the most dreadful vices." (Kant, Ethics 127)

flawed, there is no denying that it is very common all the same, and that unless we want to ascribe it to an irrationality on the part of us human beings, we have to take it seriously. Secondly, even if it is true that *individual* animals cannot sensibly be subjected to moral judgments, I believe that the animal *as such* has from Plato to (at least) Kant come to represent or embody certain traits or a part of human nature which *in humans* we deem morally reprehensible or depraved (though, at least not always, in animals). This is reflected in attributions of *bestial* behaviour to those human beings whose behaviour we see in stark violations of standards of humaneness, or those who act like *savages*, that is the primitive or uncivilized. Instead of facing the unmatched human potential for vileness we rather distance ourselves from these specimens by equating them with the supposedly lowly animal. Finally, with regard to the claim that after all it is the will that is the origin of evil, I believe that is nonetheless safe to say that the passions or the flesh have ever since Plato at least been *associated* with vice or immorality, and that this alone is sufficient reason to make the animal as such a symbol of these counter-values. In other words, although we know that ought implies can, this has not stopped us from making the supposedly *a*rational animal the symbol and name giver of (our) allegedly *ir*rational bestiality.[268]

Without making any claims as to whether the subjugation and devaluation of the human body preceded that of animals or if it is the other way around (a question which I believe is less interesting than the one about the mechanisms that mutually reinforce both subjugations), it is hence my belief that the animalization of the animal has in part to be

[268] Even on the graphic level, we can observe the externalization of guilt: instead of questioning our supposedly flawless *reason* we project the root of evil into an external and alien entity; which graphically we indicate by means of the prefixes "a-" and "ir-".

understood in the (broader?) context of the subjugation of the (human) body. According to Judith Butler the ontological distinction between soul (consciousness, mind) and body, which "begins with Plato and continues through Descartes, Husserl, and Sartre,"[269] both facilitates and justifies the material subjugation of the body and the bodies both of human beings and animals. In Butler's view, this subjugation can be seen as the mind's attempt at realizing "the fantasy of fleeing its embodiment altogether"[270] and realizing the redemptive promise of attaining freedom and happiness. Yet, what we are unable to perform on ourselves, we approximate in our treatment of non-human animals: I believe that the bloody, dismembered cadaver of the *animal* is both the result of and symbolizes the grotesque "victory" of the *human* mind over its own vilified body. As such the animal does not merely function as the *scapegoat* but it is the material surrogate that we make to stand in for our own vilified corporeality.

1.4.2 The Animalization of the Animal II - The Untruth of Animality

I shall now turn to the second anti-value that the animal has come to represent.[271] As we saw, animals are defined by their lack of reason. Now this lack of reason does not only turn animals over to their impulses, drives and passions thereby excluding them from the realm of the good but it equally excludes them from the realm of truth. Or, where this is too strong, at least from the realm of higher truths. Having discussed the

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[269] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1999) 17. Butler is referring to Elizabeth V. Spelman's article "Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views", published in Feminist Studies, 8, No.1 (Spring 1982).
[270] Butler 17.
[271] Since this is not my main point I will leave the question open in how far the talk about a second anti-value is justified or if we should rather regard vice as a form of untruth, namely untruth in the realm of morality.

relationship between the animal's supposed lack of reason and his or her immorality in detail, I shall limit my discussion to a rather schematic overview.

1.4.2.1 Plato and Saint Augustine

Lacking reason, animals are confined to their senses. As such their "knowledge" of things is restricted to the world of appearances, that is, to the world that since Plato has been considered inferior and the locus of falsehood. The world of appearances is inferior for three reasons: It consists of 1) things in flux, 2) contradictory things, and 3) multitudes of particulars. As Plato puts it in Republic, the world of appearances is that in which things are constantly in flux, wandering around between "coming to be and decaying."[272] As Plato repeatedly asserts in Republic, there is no knowledge and truth to be found in this realm, for "knowledge [is] of what always is, not of what comes into being and passes away."[273] As Plato had already written in the *Theaetetus*, "[perception] has no part in apprehending truth [*aletheia*], since it has none in apprehending existence [*ousia*] ... Nor, consequently, in knowing either."[274] Besides acquainting us with the ever-changing, our senses never bring us in touch with the *cause* of the multitude of things. Plato explains this point with regard to the beautiful: "The lovers of sights and sounds like beautiful sounds, colors, shapes, and everything fashioned out of them, but their thought is unable to see and embrace the nature of the beautiful itself."[275] The important thing is that the senses can never grasp the unifying thing in which the many

[272] Plato 485b.
[273] Plato 527b.
[274] Plato 186e.
[275] Plato 476b.

particular things participate. The senses are thus confined to the many about which we can only opine.[276] Another reason why the senses (alone) are essentially unfit to bring us in touch with being and truth is that oftentimes "sense perception seems to produce no sound result"[277] and instead declares a thing to be one thing and its very opposite. To illustrate this point Plato mentions cases where our sense "reports to the soul that the same thing is perceived by it to be both hard and soft."[278] In cases like this where our senses tell us that something is at the same time one thing and its opposite understanding (reason) is summoned to reveal that the contradiction is merely apparent. Without the power to reflect on the contradiction we would be helplessly given over to the contradictory apparent. Hence Plato's claim that "knowledge does not reside in the impressions but in our reflection upon them. It is there, seeming, and not in the impressions that it is possible to grasp existence and truth."[279] I believe that with this division of the world into a visible, apparent one and the intelligible one, as well as the debasement of the former and the elevation of the latter to the world of "truth and being"[280] Plato created the conditions that would allow all following generations to make the claim to truth the exclusive prerogative of the human.

Saint Augustine's views on the role of reason in the quest of truth can be considered to be very much a replica of Plato's views, at least in the respects that are of interest here. Like Plato, Augustine argues that the animal's lack of reason bars it from

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[276] Plato 476d.
[277] Plato 523b.
[278] Plato 523e.
[279] Plato 186d.
[280] Plato 525c.

ascending from the changeable world of the "many things"[281] to the unchangeable, eternal truth. The arguments against the truth of the senses are very similar to the ones we find in Plato. In Eighty-Three Different Questions, Augustine writes, "Everything which the bodily sense touches and which is called sensible is constantly changing."[282] The fact that the sensible is constantly in flux entails that "there is no sensible object which is not similar to the false so as to be indistinguishable from it."[283] I take this point to be very similar to Plato's insight into the contradictory nature of the sensible. Again, the becoming of the sensible is in Augustine's view incommensurable with our knowledge of these things:

> But what does not remain stable cannot be perceived, for that is perceived which is grasped by knowledge, but that cannot be grasped which changes without ceasing. Therefore truth in any genuine sense is not something to be expected from the bodily senses.[284]

Due to this Augustine admonishes us that our only way to grasp the true is "to turn away from this world, which is clearly corporeal and sensible, and to turn with all haste to God, i.e., Truth, which is grasped by the intellect and the inner mind."[285] Whereas the turn to the Eternal is *our* path to salvation, the animal cannot withdraw itself from its experiences and thus remains confined to the "lower world"[286] of the senses.

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[281] Saint Augustine, Confessions 7, XVII, 23.
[282] Saint Augustine, Eighty-Three Different Questions (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982) question 9, section 9.
[283] Saint Augustine, Eighty-Three Different Questions question 9, section 9.
[284] Saint Augustine, Eighty-Three Different Questions question 9, section 9.
[285] Saint Augustine, Eighty-Three Different Questions question 9, section 9.
[286] Saint Augustine, Confessions 7, XVII, 24.

1.4.2.2 Aristotle and Aquinas

According to Aristotle's Metaphysics the difference between humans and animals consists in the fact that the latter "live by impressions and memories ... but the human race lives also by art [*techne*] and reasoning [*logismois*]."[287] Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not reject the work of the senses altogether. However, he clearly subordinates it to the higher faculties of the soul. For Aristotle the work of memory is responsible for the synthesis of the various impressions of the same object into a single experience.[288] Aristotle further argues that, "Art is produced when from many notions of experience a single universal judgment is formed with regard to like objects."[289] Aristotle hence concludes that experience is the knowledge of particulars whereas art, one of the human prerogatives, is knowledge of universals. This knowledge of universals is in so far superior to that of experience which deals with particulars because the former not only knows "the fact" but also the "wherefore and the cause."[290] The superiority of humans over even the most perfect animals consequently consists in the fact that only human beings "possess a theory and know the causes."[291] The ultimate ordering of values occurs at the end of the first section:

> [I]t is generally assumed that what is called Wisdom is concerned with the primary causes and principles so that ... the man [*sic*] of experience is held to be wiser than the mere possessor of any power of sensation, the artist than the man of experience, the master craftsman than the artisan ; the speculative science to be more learned than the productive. Thus it is clear that Wisdom is knowledge of certain principles and causes.

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[287] Aristotle, Metaphysics (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933 t.p. 1980) 80b.
[288] See Aristotle, Metaphysics 981a.
[289] Aristotle, Metaphysics 981a.
[290] Aristotle, Metaphysics 981a.
[291] Aristotle, Metaphysics 981b.

The most formidable principles are those that are primary and most universal. According to Aristotle, they are not only "the furthest removed from the senses", but she or he who has knowledge of these principles know "in a sense all the particulars which it comprises."[292] These two characteristics taken together not only remove the animal furthest from the highest truth, a thought that we already encountered in Saint Augustine, but also show how our human knowledge encompasses all possible sensual knowledge. Aristotle is very explicit that the knowledge of the most universal principles is "the most perfect knowledge", and that it is through these and from these that other things come to be known, and not these through the particulars which fall under them."[293]

In his Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle, Aquinas aligns himself very much with Aristotle's views. He argues that art and science (i.e., knowledge of the wherefore and the causes) are superior to mere experience in so far as they include the ability to meet objections in disputes. Aquinas writes, "in a dispute the one who has an art is able to meet the objections raised against that art, but one who has experience [alone ; NF] cannot do this."[294] The reason why I believe that this stipulation is important is that it brings in the factor of language and discourse. In the *Theaetetus* Plato had already stated that knowledge is "true belief with the addition of an account [*logos*]."[295] But it is only in Aristotle that this account is related to the ability to refute objections, which is a discursive event. This move is insofar highly significant as it

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[292] Aristotle, Metaphysics 982a.
[293] Aristotle, Metaphysics 982a. "It is clear that we must obtain knowledge of the primary causes, because it is when we think that we understand its primary cause that we claim to know each particular thing." (Aristotle, Metaphysics 983a)
[294] Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle (Chicago: H. Regenery Co., 1961) 13.
[295] Plato 201c.

provides an alternative to Plato's proof of the animal's exclusion from the realm of truth and knowledge. To make knowledge dependent on the ability to refute objections in a discourse clearly relegates any non-discursive (that is, in principle non-human) forms of "knowledge" to the status of a second-rate or ingenuine kind of knowing. If animals do not know (in the strong, human sense) that, for instance, that a particular plant is poisonous then an animal's avoidance of this plant must be attributed to another source: e.g., instinct. At this point, we can see how the epistemological debasement (the animal's inability to grasp and reflect on the general) overlaps with the moral debasement (the animal's inability to act from a voluntary, reasoned decision). The advantage of Aristotle's account is, however, evident: While Plato needed to locate truth and knowledge in the immaterial ideas, to move it out of the reach of the animal Aristotle can prove the human superiority in a much more parsimonious way: namely, by tightening the conditions for knowledge *attributions*.

1.4.2.3 Locke and Hume, and the German Idealists

How this account becomes much more important with the advent of modern science is not hard to see. With the rise of modern science the apparent or sensible world could no longer be denied. Moreover, the claim that animals lacked thought was also no longer tenable within an increasingly empirically-oriented *Weltanschauung*. It is within this environment that David Hume writes that it is "Next to the ridicule of denying an evident truth ... and no truth appears to me more evident, that that beasts are endow'd with thought and reason as well as men [*sic*]. The arguments are in this case so obvious,

that they never escape the most stupid and ignorant."[296] Philosophers had hence to divest new ways to stigmatize the animal. They undertook different routes: The empiricists basically followed Aristotle's distinction between "primitive universals" and higher universals. Thus, Locke for instance claimed that all knowledge was grounded in experience, which animals were undoubtedly capable of (this had been admitted since Aristotle), yet they lacked the capacity for abstraction. Locke's distinction implies another general description of the animal, namely that of the passive receiver:

> *Brutes* come far short of Men [*sic*]. For though they take in, and retain together several Combinations of simple *Ideas* ... I *do not* think they do of themselves ever compound them, and *make complex* Ideas. And perhaps even where we think they have complex *Ideas*, 'tis only one simply one which directs them.[297]

According to Locke, "'tis in this, that the Species of *Brutes* are discriminated from Man [*sic*]; and 'tis that proper difference wherein they are wholly separated, and which at last widens to so vast a distance."[298] As Aristotle had "proven" the higher concepts or universals are more formidable (Locke calls the having of general ideas an "Excellency")[299] than the lower ones since they in a way contain them. The value of more abstract universals moreover lies in the fact they while simple ideas are merely *received* it is the enlarging power of abstraction that allows human beings to combine simple ideas to more complex ones.[300] The problem with this account is of course that

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[296] David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 118.
[297] John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 158.
[298] Locke 160.
[299] Locke 159.
[300] "It seems as evident to me, that they do some of them in certain Instances reason, as that they have sence; but it is only in particular *Ideas*, just as they receiv'd them from their Senses. They are the best of them tied up within those narrow bounds, and *have not* (as I think) the faculty to enlarge them by any kind of *Abstraction*." (Locke 160)

the complexity of the ideas is always already measured from the standpoint of detached reason which in turn is never justified or problematized.

For David Hume, whose most extensive reflections on animals can tellingly be found in his treatise of *human* nature, animals were essentially lacking the "force of reflection or penetrations"[301] required to perceive "any real connexion among objects ... They can never by any arguments form a general conclusion, that those objects, of which they have had no experience, resemble those of which they have."[302]

The other route to be taken was that of the German idealists, above all Kant and Hegel, with their idea that the determinations of thought of the (human) subject do not stand over and against objective reality but lie at the very root of this reality. All the objects to which we might ever refer (i.e., reality) are initially determined by the *a priori* forms of human cognition. If the fundamental structure of reality is determined by our forms of cognition, where does this leave the *a*logical animal? The effects of the Kantian 'Copernican Revolution' on and for the animal are indeed a highly interesting subject. Due to the tremendous scope that the examination of this question would surely require, I can but promise my reader to take on this great endeavour at another point in time. What holds for Kant, by *a fortiori* applies to Hegel's absolute idealism which in this respect poses an even greater challenge. Again, I see myself unable to approach this challenge in a satisfactory way, a way that does justice to the the intricateness of Hegel's monumental ideas, at this point and must hence contend myself with the hope to pursue this question in the future.

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[301] Hume 255.
[302] Hume 211.

1.4.2.4 Heidegger – From the Lack of Reason to the Perishing of the Animal

Heidegger's thinking about the animal constitutes a culmination of the predominant thinking about animality within Western philosophy. While Heidegger aligns himself with his predecessors in so far as he concurs that the animal lacks *logos* the consequences he "draws" from this are quite new. I say "draws" because it is rather a making explicit of a connection that was always there but to my knowledge at least in its explicitness no other philosopher before him dared to make. I hence believe that Heidegger's most important contribution to our thinking about animals lies in his spelling out how the idea that the animal is without *logos* ultimately justifies the extermination of the animal *en masse*.

Heidegger's most detailed examination of the animal occurs in The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, more precisely in the second part where Heidegger discusses the question 'What is world?' Heidegger starts his examination by means of three guiding theses: *the stone is worldless, the animal is poor-in-world* [*weltarm*], *man is world-forming*.[303] What does it mean that the animal is poor-in-world? In order to be able to answer this question we need a (fore-)understanding of what 'world' means. Heidegger's initial suggestion is that world is the sum total of accessible beings. To say that the animal is poor-in-world hence means that the animal "somehow possesses less"[304] which in turn means that the animal has "[l]ess in respect of what is accessible to it … against the richness of all those relationships that human Dasein has at its

[303] Martin Heidegger, The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics. World, Finitude, Solitude (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995) 176. [Henceforth "Metaphysics"]
[304] Heidegger, Metaphysics 193.

disposal."[305] From this understanding of poverty as a possessing-less, Heidegger moves to the claim that, "Being poor does not simply mean possessing nothing, or little or less than another. Rather being poor means *being deprived* [Armsein heißt *Entbehren*]."[306] The important advance from Heidegger's initial position is that, "the poverty in question does not express a purely quantitative difference"[307] but a difference in *kind*. This change goes along with a change in Heidegger's concept of world. Before we can grasp this change, we need to understand how the poverty of the animal expresses a qualitative difference in the relationship between the animal and the world. To say that the poverty of the animal does not express a purely quantitative relation means that the animal has his/her own way of relating to the objects of the world, which is, however, marked by some kind of deprivation. How does the animal relate to the objects that make up his/her environment? Heidegger approaches the question by giving the example of the lizard basking in the sun on a rock.

> The lizard basks in the sun. At least this is how we describe what it is doing, although it is doubtful whether it really comports itself in the same way as we do when we lie out in the sun, i.e., whether the sun is accessible to it *as* sun, whether the lizard is capable of experiencing the rock *as* rock.[308]

Properly speaking we cannot say that the lizard basks in the sun. Or, if we do so, we have to keep in mind that this is what the lizard is doing *from our human perspective.* Heidegger hence suggests that whenever we say something like a lizard is lying on a rock, "we ought to cross out the word 'rock' in order to indicate that whatever the lizard is lying on is certainly given *in some way* for the lizard, and yet is not known to the lizard

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[305] Heidegger, Metaphysics 193.
[306] Heidegger, Metaphysics 195.
[307] Heidegger, Metaphysics 195.
[308] Heidegger, Metaphysics 197.

as a rock."[309] Yet, the rock is neither given to the lizard as something else (or a "lizard-thing"), but "whatever it is is not accessible to it *as a being*."[310] While Heidegger is very clear that *life*, as the way of being of the animal, is not entirely without access to whatever it is surrounded by, yet these surrounding things are never accessible as beings. If by world we now understand the *accessibility of beings*, it follows that the poverty-in-world of the animal hence means that the animal has and does not have world.[311] The animal has world in so far as it has some access and is hence not worldless like the stone, and it doesn't have world in so far as it essentially lacks access to beings as beings.

This general constitution of the animal has crucial consequences for the behaviour of the animal. Heidegger characterizes the behaviour of the animal with the word 'captivation' [*Benommenheit*]. "The behaviour of the animal is not a *doing and acting*, as in human comportment, but a [instinctually] *driven performing*."[312] What distinguishes the instinctual drivenness of the animal from human comportment is that only the latter displays "a recognitive self-directing toward objectively preset things"[313] whereas the former exhibits merely a behaving. For example, in its comportment towards a source of food the animal is simply "given over to" [*einfach überlassen*] or captivated by the food "*without being able to grasp either of these as such,* without being able to reflect upon them as something thus grasped" [ohne dergleichen als solches zu erfassen *und als Erfaßtes für Überlegungen zu verwenden*].[314] Since the animal lacks access to beings as

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[309] Heidegger, Metaphysics 198.
[310] Heidegger, Metaphysics 198.
[311] See Heidegger, Metaphysics 199.
[312] Heidegger, Metaphysics 237.
[313] Heidegger, Metaphysics 243.
[314] Heidegger, Metaphysics 247.

such, his/her behaviour is never guided by a *Ver-nehmen* (an apprehending of something as something) but is only a *Be-nehmen* (being taken, captivation). Since the animal lacks the "as such" it cannot actively *vernehmen* objects but is passively *hingenommen* (being taken) by these objects. Whereas in humans an action is occasioned by the proper apprehension of something as something and an ensuing act of reflection, the animal's behaviour is occasioned [*veranlassen*] by the object it relates itself towards. Heidegger summarizes these thoughts as follows: "The *captivation* of the animal therefore signifies, in the first place, essentially *having every apprehending of something as something withheld from it.*"[315] And it is precisely because the possibility to apprehend an enemy *as* enemy or to relate to a source of food *as* source of food is withheld [*genommen*] from the animal "that the animal can find itself so utterly taken by [*hingenommen*] something else."[316] It is in this captivation that Heidegger locates the essence of animality.

> The animal as such does not stand within the manifestness of beings ... The animal in principle does not possess the possibility of attending either to the being it itself is or to beings other than itself, because the animal is directed in its manifold instinctual activities on the basis of its captivation and of the totality of its capacities.[317]

The fact that the animal cannot attend to the being it itself is sets it in sharp contrast to Dasein which, as Heidegger famously writes in Being and Time, is in its being "concerned *about* its very being."[318] The poverty-in-world of the animal is hence related to the not-having manifestness of beings which in turn is related to its captivation and its being taken by: "this not-having any manifestness of beings, this manifestness as

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[315] Heidegger, Metaphysics 247.
[316] Heidegger, Metaphysics 248.
[317] Heidegger, Metaphysics 248.
[318] Martin Heidegger, Being and Time (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996) 10.

withheld from the animal, is at the same time a being taken by"[319] [*dieses Nichthaben von Offenbarkeit des Seienden ist als Genommenheit der Offenbarkeit zugleich eine Hingenommenheit durch*...] Yet, why does the animal not stand in the manifestness of beings? In order to answer this question we need to turn to Heidegger's later lecture The Nature of Language. By doing this we shall close the circle.

In its essence The Nature of Language[320] is an analysis of a line from a Stefan George poem: "Where word breaks off no thing may be."[321] [*Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht*] Heidegger's main thesis in this lecture is that "The being of anything that is resides in the word ... Language is the house of Being."[322] The word is not something secondary that comes to be attached to a particular thing, but it is only in virtue of the word that this something appears as the particular thing it is.[323] The word "not only stands in a relation to the thing, but ... the word is what first brings a given thing, as the being that is, into this 'is'."[324] Consequently, "we have an understanding of things when the word for them is available. Then the thing 'is'."[325] According to Heidegger, this relation is not a new discovery but has been underlying the Western concept of *logos* since the ancient Greeks:

> [T]he relation between thing and word is among the earliest matters to which Western thinking gives voice and word, and does so in the form of the relation between being and

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[319] Heidegger, Metaphysics 248.
[320] The Nature of Language is part of On the Way to Language.
[321] Martin Heidegger, On the Way to Language (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 60. [Henceforth "Language"]
[322] Heidegger, Language 63.
[323] See Heidegger, Language 65.
[324] Heidegger, Language 82.
[325] Heidegger, Language 80.

> saying ... The word is *logos*. It speaks simultaneously as the name for Being and for Saying.[326]

With this in mind we have a better understanding of Heidegger's claim that the objects that constitute the "environment" of the animal are not merely, as it were, animal things. For, this very animal thing's being would have to reside in another (i.e., animal) language, because only the word "gives Being."[327] The manifestness of beings is irrevocably tied to language which in turn "manifests itself in speaking."[328] Because of its very constitution which is essentially marked by the lack of language, Heidegger argues, that

> it is *not* simply a question of a *qualitative otherness* of the animal world as compared with the human world, and especially not a question of quantitative distinctions in range, depth, and breadth -- not a question of whether or how the animal takes what is given to it in a different way, but rather of whether the animal can apprehend something *as* something, something *as* a being, at all. IF it cannot then the animal is separated from man by an abyss.[329]

The ultimate originality of Heidegger's contribution lies in the connection that he makes between *logos* and death. "Mortals are they who can experience death as death," he writes, "Animals cannot do so. But animals cannot speak either."[330] Although animals come to an end this end is not a death understood as something that 'is' for them. For it is only language that "releases the 'is' into lighted freedom and therewith into the security of its thinkability."[331] This difference between Dasein and animal life is also reflected in Heidegger's distinction between the *perishing* of "what is only alive"[332] and

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[326] Heidegger, Language 80.
[327] Heidegger, Language 88.
[328] Heidegger, Language 96.
[329] Heidegger, Metaphysics 264.
[330] Heidegger, Language 107.
[331] Heidegger, Language 108.
[332] Heidegger, Being and Time 224.

the death of Dasein which is "*the ownmost nonrelational, certain, and, as such, indefinite and not to be bypassed possibility of Da-sein.*"[333] What distinguishes human beings from animals is while the end of the latter is but an event, "Da-sein *is* always already *toward* its end, that is, is constantly coming to grips with its own death."[334] Language discloses death to Dasein as its ownmost potentiality-of-being. It makes death thinkable for us as something whose possibility we can anticipate. The animal, in contrast, lacks language and therewith the certainty and possible anticipation of its own demise, thus enclosing the animal in its present state. Although this is not what Heidegger is saying, it appears plausible to argue along these lines that insofar as the death of the animal is not a thinkable possibility it in principle lacks the horrifying component that death has for us humans. By implication it could be argued that since the animal is not aware of its death as its ownmost potentiality-of-being the animal cannot fully value or appreciate the value of its life; for the animal lacks the comparative basis against which the value of life becomes disclosed. Whether one wants to equate this life with what the Nazis called a "life unworthy of life" can be left open at this point; for irrespective of whether we want to make the explicit *verbal* connection I believe that conceptually the affinities are harrowingly obvious. If we did not already have sufficient reason before, I believe that after Heidegger we can no longer view the comparison between the Nazi Holocaust and 'the animal holocaust' as more than an aberrant juxtaposition of entirely different phenomena.

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[333] Heidegger, Being and Time 239.
[334] Heidegger, Being and Time 239.

What I believe Heidegger has above all shown is that the fact that the animal lacks *logos* not only excludes it from the realm of truth and gives it over to its instincts, but that it affects the way the animal relates to its demise, or at least how we humans conceptualize this relation. In relating the mere living of the animal to its perishing, which we must not forget is the animal's essential way of dying, Heidegger inadvertently shows the affinities between our treatment of animals and the ways the Nazis treated the Jews. In both cases the reduction[335] of their existence to a state of mere, naked or "bare life"[336] not only facilitates their extermination without impunity but at the same time, and more importantly, I am tempted to say, constitutes "simply the actualization of a mere 'capacity to be killed'"[337] inherent in the condition of both the Jews and the animal as such. In other words, the perishing of the animals in reality is, at least according to this account, merely the *proper* way of dying of the animals as such! It appears that Heidegger recognized the inevitability of these consequences and the ingenious self-fulfilling prophecy at the very core of this concept of the animal. I surmise that this could explain his grappling with the question of the inferiority of the animal. I believe that in spite of Heidegger's explicit avowals to the contrary[338], he could not dispel the impression that his account of animality is irrevocably intertwined with rank-order or

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[335] In how far we are indeed dealing with a reduct*ion,* that is, the result of a *process* of reducing, will become clearer in the second part of this thesis.

[336] See Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[337] Agamben, Homo Sacer 114.

[338] E.g., "Is the essence of man higher than the essence of the animal? All this is questionable even as a question." (Heidegger, Metaphysics 194) "[T]he essence of life can become accessible only if we consider it in a deconstructive [*abbauender*] fashion. But this does not mean that life represents something inferior or some kind of lower level in comparison with human Dasein. On the contrary, life is a domain with which the human world may have nothing to compare." (Heidegger, Metaphysics 255)

value-judgment hierarchies that mirror the ones the Nazis used to prepare the Holocaust. Whether Heidegger's claim that his remarks "must not be taken as a hierarchical evaluation"[339] is ultimately convincing is I believe less interesting than how his account shows the implications of the way Western philosophy has for the longest time characterized non-human animals and the ways in which this characterization unambiguously has implications that move the killing of animals within the ideological vicinity of the Nazi Holocaust.

1.5 Concluding Remarks

All this is to show that the animalization of the animal is not a mere side note in the history of Western philosophy. On the contrary, it is inextricably intertwined with the overall privileging of a particular system of values. To say, as Adorno and Horkheimer do in Dialectic, that the animal's "lack of reason is the proof of human dignity"[340] is only half of the story. What this statement does not mention (although I believe that the fundamental idea is in principle contained in Dialectic) is that we were only able to prove our dignity through their unreason *after* we had sufficiently vilified everything that we consequently made them to embody and represent. In "Man and Beast" Adorno and Horkheimer mention man's ancient fear of being transformed back into an animal. "To be imprisoned in an animal body is regarded as damnation."[341] The transformation of

[339] Heidegger, Metaphysics 194.
[340] Horkheimer and Adorno 203.
[341] Horkheimer and Adorno 205.

humans into animals is seen as a terrible "*Unglück*" [misfortune] and a "punishment."[342] As I tried to show in the section on Heidegger, the animalization of the animal teleologically leads not only conceptually to the perishing of the animal, but leads to their material annihilation.

Since in my introduction I made it my objective not to so much to answer questions and resolve resolutions, I want to end this first chapter with a question that is built on the above analysis. As we saw, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the mechanism of pathic projections is fundamental to the vilification of the Jews. In the eyes of the oppressors, "It makes no difference whether the Jews as individuals really display the mimetic traits which cause the malign infection or whether those traits are merely imputed."[343] For long enough we have been told to mistrust our own perceptions and not to seek truth in the particular. What matters is what these individuals personify *as* Jews. "No matter what the makeup of the Jews may be in a reality", Adorno and Horkheimer write, "their image ... has the characteristics which must make totalitarian rule their mortal enemy: happiness without power, reward without work, a homeland without frontiers, religion without myth."[344] These properties, and this is Adorno and

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[342] The following enumeration is just to bring some of the most famous transformations back to the reader's mind: Lykaon's transformation into a wolf as described by Ovid in the Metamorphosis, King Nebuchadnezzar's transformation into an oxen as told in The Book of Daniel, the prince's transformation into a frog in The Frog King by the Brother Grimm and of course Gregor Samsa's transformation into vermin in Kafka's Metamorphosis. Richard Kearney argues, "In the realm of the imaginary (which blurs the [*heimlich/unheimlich*] distinction we find creatures of our own repressed unconscious returning to haunt us as phantom 'doubles' – *frères ennemis* ... The divided self seeks to protect itself against its own inner division by projecting its 'other self' onto someone other than itself. But the foreigner thus scapegoated is, of course, nothing other than our own estranged self coming back to ghost us." (Richard Kearney, Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003) 74)

[343] Horkheimer and Adorno 152.

[344] Horkheimer and Adorno 164/165.

Horkheimer's central point, "are outlawed by the ruling powers because they are *secretly coveted* by the rule."[345] Applied to the case of the animal, could it be that their "animality" is but a word of the sum total of those aspects of our identity that we have been taught to despise and later indiscriminately externalized upon "the animal"? Could it be possible that by making the animal the negative principle as such we have demonized that which we secretly desire, thus masking our envy? Are animals an anathema to philosophers because they *happily* dwell in the space that philosophy has always despised: the now, the sensuous, the transitory? Does the animal *have* to perish because it is lucky enough only to perish? 'Nonsense!', someone will probably say. Michel de Montaigne might, however, disagree: "Presumption is our natural and original malady,"[346] he writes in the "Apology for Raymond Sebond". "The most vulnerable and frail of all creatures is man [*sic*], and at the same time the most arrogant."[347] As Montaigne knew already in the 16th century, "[animals] do still other things which are far beyond our capacity, which we are so far from being able to imitate that we cannot even imagine."[348] And yet, of all the creatures it is the human being who declares these capacities worthless or inferior. Should that not give us at least some reason to be suspicious of claims like this one? As Nietzsche, the great symptomologist, writes in

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[345] Horkheimer and Adorno 164/165 ; my emphasis.
[346] Michel de Montaigne, The Complete Works: Essays, Travel Journals, Letters (New York: A.A. Knopf, 2003) 401.
[347] Montaigne 401.
[348] Montaigne 417. We have admittedly managed to compensate our deficits by inventing tools that mimic and oftentimes even excel their animal prototypes; yet we have only done this as a *species* leaving us as naked individuals in the same situation that Montaigne found. This may be one of the reasons why even today the dog's sense of smell or the echolocation that bats, whales and dolphins use or the eyesight of an eagle, not to mention the mysterious sixth sense of cats do not cease to amaze us.

Twilight of the Idols: "Radical hostility, mortal hostility towards sensuality is always a thought-provoking symptom: it justifies making certain conjectures as to the general condition of one who is excessive is this respect."[349] Recall that Adorno and Horkheimer think along very similar lines when they write, "[they] who always go short, economically and sexually, hate without end."[350] What does the animalization of the animal say about the condition of those who animalize without distinction and mercy? Is it possible that they are engaged in an even more ingenious and vast "act of spiritual revenge?"[351] Again, Nietzsche's words of exhortation and suspicion might be instructive: "[I]n the struggle with the beast, making it sick *can* be the only means of making it weak."[352] The analogy with what Nietzsche had to say about the slave revolt in morality in On the Genealogy of Morals, might be a stretch. But I believe we would be well advised to question "the secret of how *ideals are made,*" and to descend into the workshop where "Weakness is being lied into something meritorious [*Die Schwäche soll zum Verdienste umgelogen werden*]."[353] Yet, the truth that we might find there may not be very flattering. Again, I believe that we have reason to be suspicious. I do not profess to have any criterion to determine whether the animal is the collateral victim [*der zufällig Leidtragende*] of a certain tendency or whether these tendencies are aimed directly against the animal. So much is clear, the legacy of Western philosophy is built on their

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[349] Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols (New York: Penguin, 1968) 53.
[350] Horkheimer and Adorno140.
[351] Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic: By Way of Clarification and Supplement to My Last Book, Beyond Good and Evil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 33.
[352] Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols 67.
[353] Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals 47.

exclusion.[354] As Richard Kearney points out in Strangers, Gods and Monsters, "our most feared monsters can serve as uncanny doubles for our all-too-human selves."[355] Maybe animals are hence but the external embodiments of our "inner alienation reminding us that we are not at home with ourselves."[356]

Besides having tried to have indicated how we have been made to feel not at home with ourselves, I hope that at the very least the preceding investigation has made the reasons for my predicament of defining and delimiting the "the animal question" a little clearer. I hope to have shown that the process of animalization cannot be understood independent of a range of other fundamental distinctions and value choices that philosophy which ultimately coincide with the becoming human of the human. In other words, let us stop pretending that something is wrong with *them* and turn instead to ourselves. As Julia Kristeva put it so beautifully,

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[354]Adorno's and Horkheimer's first excursus in Dialectic "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment" in which they offer a reading of Odysseus's journey as an allegory of the emergence of the modern (human) self or the "prehistory" (Horkheimer and Adorno 60) of subjectivity. For Adorno and Horkheimer Odysseus's self-identical modern subject forms itself in the process of resisting the multitude of temptations that aim at the dissolution of the self. It is in the dialectical struggle that "the [human] self ... takes on its solidity only through this antithesis, and its unity through the very multiplicity which myth in its oneness denies." (Horkheimer and Adorno 38) [*das Selbst ... formt in seiner Starrheit sich erst durch diesen Gegensatz, Einheit bloss in der Mannigfaltigkeit dessen, was jene Einheit verneint.*] As such the "the identity of the self is so much the function of the nonidentical" (Horkheimer and Adorno 39) The temptations that Odysseus has to resist represent the different guises of the Other of modern reason, that is those incommensurable embodiments and dimensions of human existence which throughout the history of Western philosophy have been marginalized, excluded and oppressed from the dominant and domineering concept of humanity. As Adorno and Horkheimer argue in the first Excursus, the modern uniform self emerges in the process of denial. This process works externally through the objectification, exclusion and subjugation of the Other (that is the not-Self) and internally through the suppression or sacrificing of heterogeneous dimensions of the self. While there are of course innumerable techniques of exclusion the slaughter of domesticated animals has rarely been considered in relation to the process of the subjugation of the self, despite it being one of the most persistent and important ones in the history of 'civilization'.

[355] Kearney 50.

[356] Kearney 50.

> Strangely the foreigner lives within us: he [*sic*] is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns 'we' into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible, The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities.[357]

In other words, the first (theoretical) imperative of any philosophy of animal liberation is at the same time one of the most ancient and famous ones: *Nosce te ipsum*. For only after we have come to embrace that which we have made the animal stand for, only if we stop denying the fact that we have made ourselves strangers to ourselves, we can tackle another denial, namely that which takes the form of negating (animal) others.[358]

Interlude : Luc Ferry or The Dangers of a Scientific Ethics

Given our longstanding intellectual and philosophical disdain for animals it is not surprising that some thinkers are still very reluctant to acknowledge that the human-animal boundary has been breached. According to Luc Ferry, for instance, the idea that there are no fundamental differences between humans and other animal species but only differences in degree blurs the boundary between humans and animals and thereby paves the way for exporting or applying practices that were so far limited to the (supposedly unproblematic) treatment of animals to that of humans; in Boria Sax's opinion this is precisely what lead to the extermination of the Jews.[359] Due to this reason and because the human We is defined over and against the animal Them, the species borders continue

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[357] Julia Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 1.
[358] See Kearney 73.
[359] See Boria Sax, Animals in the Third Reich: Pets, Scapegoats, and the Holocaust (New York: Continuum, 2000).

to be policed in order to, as it were, keep species nationals in and aliens out.[360] According to Ferry, the idea that there is a continuity between humans and non-humans – which is of course not the invention of some sentimental "animal lovers" but rather what most people in the Western world nowadays consider at least *biologically* proven by Charles Darwin - is at least problematic and at most dangerous because "in keeping with this continuity, we suppose the existence of intermediary beings," which is the framework within which "we must pace the emergence of the problematics of the *Untermensch.*"[361] The thought that human beings as a species are continuous with other life forms seems to open the possibility for ranking humans according to their level of humanness from "brutish" or "primitive" to "civilized" or "fully human". As Ferry rightfully points out, this idea is flawed because "there is no single yardstick of human history" by which we can measure the "humanity" of different cultures. Since Ferry agrees that there is no single yardstick for the development of the human species, it is surprising that he does not question the same kind of reasoning with regard to the human-animal hierarchy.[362] In other words, if there is no single human ideal as the *telos* of the development of humankind (for example a particular culture or a specific type of human beings), why should there be one with regard to living beings in general? And even if we could make sense of this idea, it still remains to be shown in a non-question begging way why the human species should be the end of this development. As Jeremy Bentham

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[360] See Kearney 65.
[361] Luc Ferry, The New Ecological Order (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 13.
[362] I believe that the same flawed reasoning underlies those accounts that stress that in terms of their intelligence many animals fare at least as well if not better than human children or mentally handicapped people.

argues in his famous passage[363] on animal suffering, which despite its familiarity deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

> The day has been, I grieve to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing, as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still. The day *may* come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog, is beyond comparison more rational, as well as a more conversible animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?"

I believe that is important to note that in this passage Bentham does *not* argue that there is no difference between human beings and non-human animals, but that despite the many undeniable differences there is something which we share with them: the capacity to suffer, that is, the capacity to experience physical and emotional discomfort and pain. Although a seemingly benign move, Ferry argues that an ethics based on the natural phenomena of suffering or pleasure and pain is anti-humanistic insofar as it levels the important differences that exist between human beings and non-human animals, which yields highly hazardous consequences (I already indicated that I believe that Bentham's move does not level these differences - I shall come back to this in a moment). Why this accusation is beside the point is made clear by David Wood who argues that, "[n]o one is

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[363] It is interesting and also quite telling that one of the most often quoted passages in the modern animal liberation discourse occurs in a *footnote* in Bentham's Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation. The passage preceding the above paragraph reads: "What other agents then are there, which, at the same time that they are under the influence of man's direction, are susceptible of happiness? There are two sorts: 1. Other human beings who are styled persons. 2. Other animals, which on account of their interests have been neglected by the insensibility of the ancient jurists, stand degraded into the class of *things*." (Bentham 282)

disputing that there are many things that *many* can do that no other animal can do,"[364] and vice versa. What is problematic though is "the move from these and other facts to the judgment of animals as only partial realizations of the human ideal, as subhuman rather than as importantly different."[365] Secondly, Ferry argues that this medicalization or scientification implies the idea of an 'objective' ethics. Just as science establishes indisputable, demonstrable facts, so does a naturalistic ethics, at least in theory. Such an ethics assumes that the imperative to always act in the way that we avoid inflicting unnecessary pain enables us to solve every moral conflict with scientific clarity. According to Ferry this idea is incompatible with the reality of a pluralistic society. Gianni Vattimo puts this point very poignantly in "'Weak Thought' and the Reduction of Violence" when he says, "When Hitler exterminated 6 million Jews, I find it hard to believe that he did so on the basis of an 'opinion'. His actions were, on the contrary, based on an 'objective truth', a 'scientific fact.'"[366] For both Ferry and Vattimo, "that state in which questions are lacking, is not the end product of violence, but its origin."[367] There is, however, another reason why the appeal to suffering and the promise of objectivity wedded to it is problematic. As Boria Sax points out, not only are our values and moral judgments culturally relative but even "the perception of suffering in animals is intuitive and influenced by culture."[368] Moreover, he argues that it is far from obvious that elimination is the only "proper" response to the occurrence of suffering: "In general,

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[364] David Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger* – Deconstruction and Humanism," Animal Others : On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life, ed. H. Peter Steeves (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999) 20 ; emphasis added.
[365] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 20.
[366] Vattimo, "'Weak Thought' and the Reduction of Violence" 454.
[367] Vattimo, "'Weak Thought' and the Reduction of Violence" 455. See also Ferry 87.
[368] Sax 147.

traditional practices attempt to give meaning to pain while modern ones seek to eliminate pain."[369] While it seems to me that the first claim is true insofar as *all* our perceptions are influenced and shaped by our culturally inherited or learned sensitivities and thus a historic product, the second one appears highly dubious. It is certainly true that people can give different meanings to pain and suffering. However, to justify the pain we knowingly and deliberately inflict on innocent others with *our* meaning is highly fascist, if anything is. Ferry makes a similarly baffling point, when he says that suffering may have a significance for me, its ethical significance is no way clear.[370] Again, I believe that Ferry is building a straw man, because he makes it look as though pain and pleasure are the only ethically significant things. However, even if this is not the case, as it might very well be, I believe that if we *deny* the ethical significance of (individual) suffering we open the door to apologetic strategies that will all too easily defend the infliction of pain and distress in the name of supposedly "higher" goals.[371]

While Ferry's concern about the consequences or abuses of a blurring of the "species" boundary might have some appeal to someone who is not particularly fond of animals, Cary Wolfe has shown why this appeal is spurious.

> [B]ecause the discourse of speciesism, once anchored in this material, institutional base, can be used to mark *any* social group, we need to understand that the ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a posthumanist theory of the subject *has nothing to do with whether you like*

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[369] Sax 147.

[370] See Ferry 39.

[371] A third point which neither Ferry nor Sax mention explicitly but which is at least implicit in Ferry's work is the question of how animal rights could possibly be put into practice without "rigorously planning consumption" (Ferry) thus restraining the liberties of the individual. Would this not necessitate that we rigorously cross (or at least redefine) the public-private frontier? I do indeed believe that one of the things that the Holocaust comparison shows us is that we need to redraw this line to thoroughly redefine the scope of what can reasonably be considered an untouchable "private" decision, and I shall have to say more about this in section 2.3.3.3.

> *animals*. We all, human and nonhuman alike, have a stake in the discourse and institution of speciesism.

In other words, the vilification of others as animals (for example by portraying them as pigs, dogs, cockroaches or rats) only works so neatly and effectively because animals have been sufficiently vilified themselves. Racism and speciesism have indeed proven to work well together as long as the animal constitutes an inferior and devalued entity.

While both Ferry and Sax argue that we must resist any attempt to "blur" the boundary between humans and non-human animals, they seem to overlook the fact that we *do* constantly "blur" the boundary between humans and animals when we eat them and thus incorporate their bodies into our own. If we ignore the debates over whether or not the consumption of animal flesh is ethical or not, the practice of eating animals itself has received rather little attention. One of the few and noteworthy exceptions is Cora Diamond's interesting though rarely mentioned article "Eating Meat and Eating People". From the beginning Diamond points out that our concept of what an animal is, is irrevocably intertwined with the countless ways we relate to them. "Animals – these objects we are acting upon – are not given for our thought independently of such a mass of ways of thinking about and responding to them."[372] I believe that it is fair to say that for most people in the Western world, the most important way of relating to those living things they call animals is the oral consumption of them, an act by which, as I contended above, the boundary between the two is constantly blurred. Most of us are in George Bernard Shaw's famous words the living graves of murdered beasts. Yet, as Diamond

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[372] Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People" 331. "Eating Meat and Eating People" appeared in Cora Diamond, The Realistic Spirit. Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

points out in her article, the practice of eating animals at the same time *establishes* the boundary between humans and animals. As Diamond argues, "We learn what a human being is in – among other ways – sitting at a table where *we* eat *them*. We are around the table and they are on it."[373] In other words, the "edibility" of the animal is not a contingent feature but inscribed in the very concept of what an animal is.[374] We hence find ourselves in the paradoxical situation that our very concept of an animal requires us to blur the boundary between us and animals, that is so important to justify this practice in the first place. As Diamond points out, we maintain this boundary (both in practice and theory) knowing perfectly well that the differences between humans and non-human animals are but a matter of degree and not of kind.

In the next part I shall look at precisely this phenomenon of eating animals and its role in undercutting our ability to sympathize with animals. When Ferry argues that the prevention of animal suffering is not in our interest[375] and that we hence need freedom to distance ourselves from "our" interests, he overlooks an entire "anthropological machine" (Agamben) that has always already preconfigured our judgments and feelings towards the animal other thus at the same compromising our ability to distance us from "our"

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[373] Diamond 324.

[374] To this someone might object that *de facto* we only eat a very limited number of animals, and that hence the right to eat them only covers a certain class of animals. As Diamond points out, to so say that it is morally wrong to eat our pets is a contradiction in terms because "people who ate their pets would not have pets in the same sense of the term." (Diamond 323) To this I would reply that at least most people would indeed not eat their pets. What animal one considers his/her pet is, however, quite arbitrary which makes the category of pets depend entirely on the emotional reactions of the people who have pets.

[375] Ferry uses this argument to prove the superiority of the human capacity to break away from our selfish nature. "Why would I accept to no longer eat fine foie gras if I am indifferent to the suffering of the overstuffed geese, if I feel no *sympathy* for them? In short, if I do not have the capacity to act in an *antinatural* manner." (Fery 40)

interests.[376] As Kundera reminds us in Testaments Betrayed, "we think we act, we think we think, but it is another or others who think and act in us: that is to say, timeless habits, archetypes, which - having become myths passed on from one generation to the next - carry an enormous seductive power and control us ... from 'the well of the past'."[377] Since we are not only materially sealed tight within our "fleshy ephemeral boundaries" but also intellectually constituted by elements that "come from the universe outside and previous";[378] to us, we shall descend into this 'well of the past' in the following part.

[376] Again, we find a very similar thought in Dialectic, where Adorno and Horkheimer write "False projection is the usurper in the realm of freedom." (Horkheimer and Adorno 161)
[377] Kundera, Testaments Betrayed 11.
[378] Kundera, Testaments Betrayed 12.

Das Wort "Tier" - alle Unzulänglichkeit
des Menschen in diesem einen Wort.
(Elias Canetti)

Part 2: Some Thoughts on Derrida and Animals

At the end of the last chapter we examined the paradoxical character of the practice of eating animals in regard to the claim of blurring differences. We saw that in the act of eating animals we both (physically) blur and at the same time institute the human-animal boundary that this very practice of eating animals is predicated on in the first place. I also claimed that the phenomenon of eating animals itself has received rather little attention which is mainly due to the primacy of the ethical aspect of the question with which most philosophers have approached it. In this chapter I want to examine some of Jacques Derrida's ideas regarding the human-animal boundary as well as their implications for our carnivorous being-in-the-world. I believe that Derrida's contribution constitutes a rare exception to the above rule. In particular, I shall examine in how far Derrida himself complies with his exhortation that the "obligation to protect the other's otherness is not merely a theoretical imperative [*Ce devoir n'est pas seulement un imperative théorique.*]."[379] While David Wood is certainly right when he says that "[a] carnivorous diet ... is only the most visible and violent form of our undeclared war on the creatures with whom we share the planet,"[380] I believe that it should be added that it is at the same time the most complex manifestation of our attitude

[379] Jacques Derrida, "'Eating Well', or the Calculation of the Subject" 276 / "'Il faut bien manger' ou le calcul du sujet" 106. [Henceforth "Eating Well" / "Bien Manger"] "Eating Well" appeared in Jacques Derrida, Points... Interviews, 1974-1994 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995)
[380] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 32.

towards the so-called animal other. In this chapter I want to address some of the criticisms that David Wood has leveled against Derrida in his article "*Comment ne pas manger* – Deconstruction and Humanism". I shall particularly analyze David Wood's claim that Derrida's remarks about our sacrificial attitude towards non-human animals and about vegetarianism in his interview with Jean-Luc Nancy titled "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject ", if not *deliberately*, then at least *de facto* undermine the possibility of, or, if that is too strong, at least leave "little motivation for *practical* transformations of our engagement in sacrificial behaviour."[381] While I strongly sympathize with Wood's concern for a practical change of our relating to non-human animals and while I share his attitude towards vegetarianism, I believe that his attack against Derrida rests on a failure to grasp the true significance of Derrida's contribution. I shall hence attempt a defense of Derrida against Wood, not because I consider Derrida our "pastor or physician" (Calarco) but because I believe that Wood misjudges the potential impact of Derrida's work. At the very least, Derrida's ideas (which admittedly often remain fairly elliptic if not cryptic) point in a direction that I believe is worth pursuing.

2.1 From a New 'Logic of the Limit' to Another Ethics of the Limit

Derrida has repeatedly argued that "the way in which philosophy, on the whole but particularly since Descartes, has treated the question of THE (so-called) animal is a major sign of its logocentrism."[382] According to Derrida, the concept of animality and all

[381] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 31 ; emphasis added.
[382] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 63.

the supposed essential attributes that philosophers for the past 2500 years have associated with the idea of the animal "are human artifacts, indeed, artifacts that are difficult to wield; and their effect is to *efface* differences, to homogenize."[383] In other words, there is no such thing as the animal as such but only "an immense multiplicity of other living things that cannot in any way be homogenized, except by means of violence and willful ignorance."[384] Instead of advocating a blurring of difference, Derrida attempts to show, "how drawing an oppositional limit *itself* blurs the differences, the differance, and the differences not only between man and animal, but among animal societies,"[385] and, one must add, among human societies as well. The force of these statements may tempt one to overlook a crucial tension within Derrida's "work" on the animal question, which complicates his "position". It seems that he is taking back a lot of what he says elsewhere, when he states that,

> the autobiography of the human species, the whole history of the self that man [*sic*] recounts to himself, that is to say the thesis of a limit as rupture or abyss between those who say 'we men', 'I, a man', and what this man among men who say 'we', what he *calls* the animal or animals. I won't take it upon myself for a single moment to contest that thesis, nor the rupture or abyss between this 'I-we' and what we *call* animals.[386]

I believe that we must be careful not to read Derrida's apparent rejection of the idea of continuity and its insistence on an abyssal rupture as a falling back into the traditional idea of an oppositional human-animal boundary. However, although Derrida says that this supposedly homogeneous border needs to be deconstructed, he is at the same time very explicit that he is not advocating the blurring of differences either. To deconstruct

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[383] Derrida, "On Reading Heidegger" 173.
[384] Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am," in Critical Inquiry, 28 (2002) 416.
[385] Derrida, "On Reading Heidegger" 183.
[386] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 398.

the logocentric opposition between 'man' and 'the animal' for Derrida neither means to neutralize or sublate it, nor does it mean to confirm it, thereby leaving everything as it is. Since some of the worst forms of interspecies violence have found their justification in the purported essential difference between humans and animals, it is understandable why some thinkers have argued for the "abolition" of the human-animal boundary and its replacement with a concept that encompasses both. From a Derridaen standpoint the problem with this move is that it is itself a form of violent homogenization that robs the animal of its specificity. It is rather obvious how "in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy [in which] One of the terms governs the other,"[387] a constellation which reinforces and/or legitimizes the domination of a group or species over (all) the other in reality. While it may be less evident, even the seemingly benign idea of 'differences in degree' is essentially not immune against the risk of being used to hierarchize. The reason for this is that the idea of a continuity is too easily associated with the idea of a (linear) progression, and thus runs the risk of reintroducing hierarchizing "hidden teleology."[388] As long as the so-called human being remains the measure of this progress, the animal other runs the risk of being reduced to the status of a proto-human. I believe that Derrida's rejection of the notion of continuity is at least potentially a liberating gesture that frees "the animal" from its infra-human status and instead emphasizes and protects its alterity. Derrida attempts to go beyond the classical continuity-difference (i.e., difference-in-degree vs. difference-in-kind) binary by

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[387] Derrida, Positions 38.
[388] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 20.

replacing it by "another logic of the limit."[389] If David Wood is right, and I believe he is, and the human-animal opposition is "a set of oppositions which anesthetizes and hierarchies at the very same time as it allows us to continue to order our lives"[390], then it seems highly plausible that if we replace this relation of opposition with a relation of différance (i.e., a new logic of the limit) this will ostensibly have enormous implications for all those practices that are based on this very opposition.[391] Instead of pursuing this question and asking what exactly this new logic of the limit would look like, I shall look at how we came to posit this limit in the first place. In doing this I hope that I will open some possibilities for a new ethics of the limit.

2.2 Derrida on 'Eating Well'

As Derrida argues in "Eating Well", "[d]iscourses as original as those of Heidegger and Levinas disrupt, of course, a certain traditional humanism [but] they nevertheless remain profound humanisms *to the extent that they do not sacrifice sacrifice* [*en tant qu'ils ne sacrifient pas le sacrifice*]."[392] By this Derrida means that despite the undeniable originality of the discourses of Heidegger and Levinas, they, like "the whole canonized or hegemonic discourse of Western metaphysics or religion," in their very structure, leave a place open for "a noncriminal putting to death" and ingestion of the animal other [*une mise a mort non-criminelle: avec ingestion, incorporation ou*

[389] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 397.
[390] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 29.
[391] See David Wood's comments in "On Reading Heidegger", 183.
[392] Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 279/108.

introjection du cadavre]."[393] Since it is precisely with regard to these ideas that Wood develops his critique of Derrida I shall build my "defence" of Derrida (which as I said above is more of an exegesis) around these same claims.

The two passages that in my opinion are not only the most central in Derrida's account but at the same time the most unpalatable for Wood's rather straightforward defense of an ethical vegetarianism (which makes Wood's overall dissatisfaction with Derrida's stand understandable) are the following:

> I am trying especially to underscore the *sacrificial* structure of the discourses [i.e., the discourses of Western metaphysics or religions – NF] to which I am referring. I don't know if 'sacrificial structure' is the most accurate expression. In any case, it is the matter of discerning a place left open, in the very structures of these discourses (which are also "cultures") for a non-criminal putting to death. Such are the executions of ingestion, incorporation, or introjection of the corpse. *An operation as real as it is symbolic when the corpse is "animal"* [*Opération réelle, mais aussi symbolique quand le cadavre est 'animal'*] (and who can be made to believe that our cultures are carnivorous because animal proteins are irreplaceable?), a symbolic operation when the corpse is "human". *But the "symbolic" is very difficult, truly impossible to delimit in this case* [*Mais le "symbolique est très difficile à delimiter dans ce cas*], hence the enormity of the task.[394]

The second passage deals with what Derrida calls the "metonymy of eating" which is, as we shall see, crucial to his thinking about our consumptive practices:

> For everything that happens at the edge of the orifices (of orality, but also of the ear, the eye – and all the "senses" in general) the metonymy of 'eating well' [*bien manger*] would always be the rule. The question is no longer one of knowing if it is "good" to eat the other or if the other is "good" to eat, nor of knowing which other. One eats him regardless and lets oneself be eaten by him ... *Vegetarians, too, partake of animals, even of men. They practice a different mode of denegation.* [*Les végétatiens* [*sic*] *eux aussi mangent de l'animal et meme de l'homme. Ils pratiquent un autre mode de denegation.*][395]

If I understand Wood correctly it is especially the claim that the symbolic is impossible to delimit that he finds bothersome (if not irresponsible) in Derrida's account. I shall have

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[393] Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 278/107.
[394] Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 278/107 ; italics added.
[395] Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 282/109.

to say more about this in the next section. For now, I will digress for a moment and approach this question from a different angle. Although some of Derrida's central remarks seem indeed on the surface rather counterintuitive, it seems even more counterintuitive that given Derrida's awareness of today's conditions of factory farming and industrial slaughter and the passionate terms in which he describes it[396] he would deliberately undermine the possibility of an (ethical) vegetarianism. In other words, I do not think that Derrida's assessment of vegetarianism is too restricted or too cautious. As Derrida repeatedly stresses, he has sympathy with all those who feel themselves sympathy and who protest for all the tortured and slaughtered animals.[397] Given the fact that the overwhelming majority of animals nowadays are killed for human consumption, and that the abstention from the consumption of animal flesh is too obviously a significant and praiseworthy attempt to reduce the violence against animals, it would be highly implausible to assume that Derrida overlooks this. In the recently published L'animal que donc je suis Derrida gives quite a different assessment of vegetarianism than the ones he seems to buttress in "Eating Well" and "Violence against Animals". In a passage on Adorno, Derrida says, "Aucune noblesse éthique ou sentimentale ne doit nous dissimuler cette violence, que les formes connues de l'écologisme ou du végétarianisme *ne suffisent pas* pas à interrompre, même si elles valent mieux que ce à quoi elles

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[396] See, for instance, Derrida "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 394.

[397] In "Violence Against Animals" Derrida says: "I have *sympathy* (and I insist on this word) for whose who revolt: against the war declared on so many animals, against the genocidal torture inflicted on them often in a way that is fundamentally perverse, that is, by raising them en masse, in a hyperindustrialized fashion, herds that are to be massively exterminated for alleged human needs; not to mention the hundreds of species that disappear each year from the face of the earth through the fault of humans who, when they don't kill enough, let them die." (Derrida, "Violence Against Animals" 67) See also Derrida, "Eating Well" 278.

s'opposent."[398] I shall return to this passage in a moment. But suffice to say that I believe that it is fair to say that Derrida does not deliberately undermine the possibility of vegetarianism. But why then does Derrida hold his support for an ethical vegetarianism in abeyance in spite of his acknowledgment that vegetarianism is "better" [*valent mieux*] than the attitude against which it opposes itself? I believe that his ambivalent or critical attitude is not aimed at vegetarianism itself but is at least in part based on an aversion against the attitude of good conscience that vegetarianism can produce. It is this good conscience or self-righteousness which brings every thinking process to a halt. In other words, I believe that what Derrida is trying to do here is to curb our enthusiasm about vegetarianism. He invites us to pause for a moment, not because he believes that vegetarianism is not a worthwhile idea but because we should not think that vegetarianism alone will solve the problems that give rise to the need for it in the first place. As we saw above, Derrida is highly critical of the idea of a homogeneous continuity between 'humans' and 'animals'. However, the idea that there is a continuity of interests (Singer's sentience thesis) is still one of the predominant arguments against the abuse of animals and for an ethical vegetarianism. Despite its apparently benign character this move not only disregards the animal's otherness but it also makes his/her moral considerability dependent on his/her likeness to us humans.[399] We can now see

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[398] Jacques Derrida, L'animal que donc je suis (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2006) 140 ; italics added. "No ethical or sentimental nobility must conceal this violence which the known forms of ecologism and vegetarianism do not suffice to interrupt, even if they are better than that against which they are opposed." (My translation)

[399] An interesting variation of this criticism can be found in Catherine MacKinnon, "Of Mice and Men," in Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions, ed. Cass R. Sunstein and Martha C. Nussbaum (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). While MacKinnon criticizes all those approaches that miss "animals on their own terms" (MacKinnon 264) she is particularly

why this form of vegetarianism is insufficient in Derrida's eyes, namely because it is still essentially humanistic. Note that this is the same criticism that Derrida levels against Heidegger and Levinas, and that Wood in turn levels of Derrida in "*Comment ne pas manger*". I shall return to this problem at the end of this chapter. For now, suffice it to say that far from resting on a too restricted and cautious assessment of the significance of vegetarianism Derrida turns the table on the vegetarian and exhorts us to see that unless we remain critical of our present forms of vegetarianism it is *we* who underestimate its significance and potential. In the following section I want to take another look at Wood's criticisms against Derrida, for I believe that this examination will shed some light on the true significance of Derrida's remarks. For the sake of clarity I believe that Wood's critique should be broken down into four claims:

1. Derrida's ambivalence towards vegetarianism rests on a too restricted and cautious assessment of its significance.
2. More importantly, Derrida assimilates real and symbolic sacrifice (i.e., the killing of animals and the consumption of their flesh) so that real sacrifice becomes an instance of symbolic sacrifice.
3. To the extent that sacrifice in the broad sense seems unavoidable, there would be little motivation for any practical transformations of our engagement in sacrificial behaviour.

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suspicious of the fact that whenever the question is raised whether animals are sufficiently like us, "us" usually means "adult, white male." (MacKinnon 267) Yet, why should animals have to measure up to humans' standards at all? Why should they be sufficiently like "us" to be let alone, "to be free of the predations and exploitations and atrocities people inflict on them, or to be protected from them?" (MacKinnon 267)

4. Finally, despite his contrary intentions Derrida reverts to the very humanism he tries to outflank.

Having already stated my opinion with regard to Wood's first criticism I shall now turn to his second claim which for brevity's sake I shall henceforth refer to as the 'assimilation thesis'. Wood's second criticism is in my opinion not only the most central one but its resolution will at the same time shed light on the other criticisms.

2.3 The Assimilation Thesis

Does Derrida assimilate real and symbolic sacrifice? Wood contends that, "First he [i.e., Derrida ; NF] assimilates – there is no other word for it – real and symbolic sacrifice so that real sacrifice (killing and eating flesh) becomes an instance of symbolic sacrifice."[400] Although Wood's choice of words ("there is no other word for it") gives one the impression that Derrida's 'assimilating' gesture is beyond doubt, I do not think that Derrida would agree that he is *assimilating* symbolic and real sacrifice here or anywhere else. As a matter of fact I believe that Derrida actually does two quite different things, neither of which corresponds to what Wood appears to mean by "assimilate".[401] Instead of approaching our guiding question head on, I first want to look at the implicit assumptions on which the very possibility of this question rests. To say that Derrida assimilates the two implies that we could draw a sharp distinction between them in the first place. Moreover, the way Wood constructs his argument against Derrida betrays the fact that not only does he consider the two aspects distinct but he also seems to conceive

[400] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 31.
[401] I rather think that Derrida respectively either argues that the symbolical and the real are always already intertwined or that there are is more than one way to incorporate the animal other.

them as standing in an oppositional relation towards each other. For reasons that will become clearer as we go along I believe that both of these assumptions are false. In part, Wood's "misinterpretation" ensues from his (ethically motivated) seemingly exclusive preoccupation with the *act* of sacrifice which ignores the *role*, this word must be stressed, of the sacrific*er* whose reality and identity (for instance as a priest or as butcher, but ultimately also as a human being[402]) are themselves always and inescapably symbolically constituted. This idea is in my opinion crucial for the proper understanding of Derrida's remarks. Wood's assumption that we could abstract from the symbolic or discursively mediated aspect of sacrifice and its underlying "pure" reality (not Wood's words) overlooks the fact that we can only access this real reality yet through another discourse or language (hence symbolically) which claims to describe things how they really are. While it must be said that Wood does not explicitly state these things, it seems that his criticism relies at least in part on one or more of these assumptions. If, however, we look in the text - an oral interview! - it will become clear that this is only one possible interpretation of Derrida's remarks. Derrida says that the sacrifice and ingestion of the animal "corpse" is real "but also [*mais aussi*]"[403] symbolic, whereas when the "corpse" is human this operation is only symbolic. The first part of the sentence allows for two readings: On the hand it could mean that when it comes to animals we sacrifice and eat them both materially (Wood's 'real sacrifice') *and* symbolically. The second passage that

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[402] I am alluding to Nietzsche's remark in The Gay Science that, "the individual hides himself in the general concept 'man', or in society, or adapts himself to princes, classes, parties, opinions of his time and place" ; quoted in Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton, Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thoughts (New York: Continuum, 2004) 3.
[403] Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 278/107.

I quoted above[404] lends support to this interpretation because Derrida says here that while their mode of negation is admittedly a different one, vegetarians too partake of animals ["*manger de l'animal*"].[405] Although Derrida says elsewhere that he is skeptical that vegetarianism is "rigorously tenable, without a compromise or without a symbolic substitution,"[406] he of course does not say that "vegetarians" and "carnivores" partake of animals in the same way, or that there is no qualitative difference between their modes of denegation. I believe this interpretation is quite plausible and I shall have more so say about it at a later point.[407]

There is, however, a second interpretation for which we can also find support in the text. According to this interpretation every act of "real" sacrifice also contains a symbolic component. In other words, not every sacrifice falls nicely in one of the two categories. I think that this interpretation can be supported by Derrida's important question/observation: "who can be made to believe that our cultures are carnivorous because animal proteins are irreplaceable?"[408] In "Violence against Animals" Derrida elaborates this elliptical remark:

> But without offering praise for some elementary form of vegetarianism, one can recall that the consumption of meat has never been a biological necessity. One eats meat not simply because one needs protein – and protein can be found elsewhere. In the consumption of meat ... there is a sacrificial structure, and therefore a cultural phenomenon linked to archaic structures that persist and that must be analyzed.[409]

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[404] "*Vegetarians, too, partake of animals, even of men. They practice a different mode of denegation.*" (See section 2.2, page 110)
[405] Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 282/110.
[406] Derrida, "Violence Against Animals" 67.
[407] See section 2.3.4.
[408] Derrida, "Eating Well" 278.
[409] Derrida "Violence Against Animals" 71. Some evolutionary biologists and anthropologists have pointed out that human lack the physical characteristics typical for natural carnivores. Among these characteristics are the shape of our teeth, the structure and movement of our jaws, the lack of sharp claws, rather weak stomach acids, a fairly long intestinal tract and last but not

The ambiguity of the above passage is, I believe, inherent to the text, and the confusion is mainly due to the ambiguity of the following sentence: "But the 'symbolic' is very difficult, truly impossible to delimit *in this case* [*Mais le 'symbolique', est très difficile, en vérité impossible à delimiter* dans ce cas]."[410] I do not think that it is clear beyond doubt whether "in this case" refers to the human sacrifice or whether it refers to the question of sacrifice in general. In contrast to Wood, I do not believe that we necessarily have to choose here which reading is the more appropriate one because I believe that throughout his work on the animal question Derrida takes up both of these paths and each time enriches our understanding of our treatment of and attitudes towards non-human animals. The way Wood understands Derrida is that the "real" sacrifice becomes an instance of the broader category of "symbolic" sacrifice, an assimilation which could itself be called carnivorous. According to Wood, "the way he [i.e., Derrida ; NF] sets up the issue is so as to incorporate and interiorize the actual eating of animals inside the symbolic eating of anything by anyone."[411] While one could wonder about Derrida's inflationary use of the word "eat", David Wood's main concern is that the unavoidability of some form of sacrifice, or "sacrifice in the broad (symbolic) sense" as he calls is, leaves little motivation for transforming our sacrificial practices. I believe that, on the contrary, it is precisely this unavoidability that makes the need for transforming our practices ever more necessary and urgent. For is it not precisely because we eat or

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least an natural aversion against the killing of animals. Moreover, there are numerous studies that link the consumption of meat to a various forms of cancer and other diseases. (See John Robbins, The Food Revolution)

[410] Derrida, "Violence Against Animals" 71 ; italics added.

[411] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 30.

sacrifice the animal other "regardless [*de toute facon*]" that we should strive to "eat" (understood in the broader Derridaen sense) her, him, or them in the most respectful and least violent way? In other words, just because we cannot avoid all violence, it doesn't mean that we should not try to minimize it.[412] Although Wood's focus on the real-vs-symbolic sacrifice problem is understandable, his zeal to reclaim the importance of "real" sacrifice over symbolic forms of sacrifice make it seem as if these are the only two categories into which we could distinguish sacrificial practices. If my second interpretation of Derrida's remark is right, however, and real and symbolic violence are inextricably intertwined, maybe we should try to introduce another taxonomy into our sacrificial world, one that at the same time highlights the connection between different "modes of denegation" and allows for the most effective kind of resistance and transformation of these practices; for we would certainly misunderstand Derrida if we took his claims as an excuse for the status quo. On the contrary, I believe that they are meant as an exhortation for a more thorough examination of these practices. As Cora Diamond has warned with regard to the obtuseness of the usual arguments in favour of a vegetarian diet, our arguments have to get near the considerations that are really involved in our eating animals, even if they are more complex and intricate than the claim that they do not suffer (and who can be made to believe that we kill and eat animals because we think that they do not suffer?). I believe that it is precisely because of this proneness to simplicity that Derrida holds his support for vegetarianism in abeyance. Hence to say

[412] In other words, while it appears that Derrida's inflationary use of the word "eat" is problematic, maybe we should rather wonder if it is not rather the (here) unexplained and undifferentiated concept of violence in the background of Derrida's account that makes it rather hard to swallow.

that Derrida's main concern is the good conscience might after all only be too simplistic if we do not bother to understand the full extent and implications of this good conscience. I believe that Derrida's ideas and arguments certainly target precisely all simplistic accounts of our sacrificial practices as well as the equally simplistic forms of opposition that have been devised against and modeled on these simplistic accounts. Derrida's remarks on the supposed biological necessity of eating meat are especially instructive in this regard. They are moreover reminiscent of the famous question Plutarch raises in On the Eating of Flesh, namely if one could really ask what reason Pythagoras had for abstaining from eating flesh:

> For my part I rather wonder by what accident and in what state of soul or mind the first man [*sic*] who did so, touched his mouth to the gore and brought his lips to the flesh of a dead creature, he who set forth tables of dead, stale bodies and ventured to call food and nourishment the parts that had a little while before bellowed and cried, moved and lived.[413]

I believe that the thrust of Derrida's and Plutarch's ideas is not totally dissimilar insofar as both attempt to shift the focus of the question. Instead of explaining why people should not be eating animal flesh, both start from the observation that it is rather curious that people *did* start to devour animals at one point. Their questions disrupt the veiling normalcy of a violence that shields us from a radical self-examination. The brevity Derrida's remark that eating meat has never been a biological necessity and that it instead is a "cultural" phenomenon runs the risk of missing the full significance of this seemingly passing remark. Derrida's claim is twofold: First, the consumption of animal flesh has from its beginning been inscribed within a sacrificial, that is ritualized, context, and

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[413] Plutarch, On the Eating of Flesh, 993A-B (cited in Kerry S. Walters and Lisa Portmess, eds. Ethical Vegetarianism : From Pythagoras to Peter Singer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999))

secondly, these archaic structures persist even today. Based on these two passages, I believe what Derrida wants to say is that there is more to "real" animal sacrifice than meets the eye. In his very choice of words "animal *sacrifice*", which admittedly at first sight seems rather awkward and anachronistic, Derrida already signals that the real and the symbolic are indeed inextricably intertwined, and that the act of killing and eating animals communicates a certain self-understanding or truth about ourselves that needs to be decoded and analyzed. In pointing to this, Derrida in fact aligns himself with Wood's view that vegetarianism is "not just about substituting beef for beans."[414] What it *is* about and what is at stake in the debate about vegetarianism can, however, not be properly assessed without taking into account the symbolic dimension in which the killing and eating of animals is (unbeknownst to most people) always embedded. This idea is tantamount to the claim that 'animals' are never given apart from and outside the myriad ways in which we relate to them. The "real" killing of animals and the consumption of their flesh and consequently any critique of it are well advised to take into consideration the broader context of meaning in which the sacrifice of animal is ineluctably caught up. Instead of thinking the real and the symbolic dimension of animal sacrifice as pertaining to opposing forms or modes of sacrifice I shall hence attempt to use the symbolic aspect to shed light on the "real". I hope to show the mythical traces in our current seemingly benign and normal acts of eating the killing of animals. Unearthing the symbolic dimension will not only enable us to get near the considerations which are involved in our eating animals, which is *not* a biological need; but it will also give us a better understanding of the contingent status of the claim to biological need. I shall argue that

[414] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 33.

there is a crucial relation between our violent destructiveness towards non-human animals, particularly in the form of killing and eating them, and our self-understanding as *civilized* humans, and why therefore, "Giving up *what we do* comes to be equated with giving up *who we are*."[415] The underlying goal is to bring to light some of the archaic truths that we continue to convey through our carnivorous being-in-the-world. The symbolic dimension will give us access to the underlying problematic self-understanding which, if left untouched, risks compromising the potential significance of an ethical vegetarianism and turning it itself into a missed opportunity to profoundly renegotiate the human-animal relationship.

2.3.1 Animal Sacrifice - Ritualized Killing and Human Self-understanding

To say that in the killing of animals a sacrificial structure prevails first of all means that we cannot treat it merely as an act of excessive, irrational violence but that what we are dealing with is a ritualized violence.[416] I believe that this idea is already implicit in Derrida's account, indicated by his very own choice of words "animal sacrifice". To conceive of animal sacrifice in terms of ritualistic practices allows us to apply certain analytic distinctions to it. In this chapter I want to discuss three crucial distinctions:

1) The function of animal sacrifice as a form of ritual vs. the function of ritual*ization*

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[415] Wendy C. Hamblet, The Sacred Monstrous. A Reflection on Violence in Human Communities (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004) 8.

[416] "In war and peace, arena and slaughterhouse, from the slow death of the elephant overpowered by primitive human hordes with the aid of the first planning to the perfected exploitation of the animal world today, the unreasoning creature has always suffered at the *hands of reason*." (Horkheimer and Adorno 204 ; emphasis added)

2) The function of sacrifice (implicit and explicit) vs. the (symbolic) meaning expressed in this sacrifice – this distinction squares roughly with Nancy Jay's distinction between the instrumental aspects of sacrifice and its expressive aspects.[417]

3) Finally, the meaning of sacrifice vs. its justificatory discourse or rationalization.

In order to illustrate these different aspects or dimensions of sacrifice I shall use the example of the Greek alimentary blood sacrifice. While it is my fundamental conviction that we probably should not attempt reduce the current practice of killing and eating animals as well as the accompanying justificatory and critical discourses to a single source of origin, I nevertheless believe that our intellectual indebtedness to the ancient Greeks justifies a closer look at the culinary practices against and by which our philosophical thinking about animals was formulated and shaped.

But is there really value in studying the meaning of ancient animal sacrifice? Is there not an abyssal gap between our situation today and theirs, which makes this undertaking idle for a defence of an ethical vegetarianism in the 21st century? As I said before, whether or not we are aware that there are connections between the past and the present or not, the fact that on the whole we should understand ourselves as part of a tradition requires us to take the possibility that we might learn something from the study of the past seriously. As Hans-Georg Gadamer writes in Truth and Method, "the important thing is to recognize temporal distance as a positive and productive condition enabling understanding [both of the past *and* of the present ; NF]. It is not yawning abyss

[417] Nancy Jay, Throughout Your Generations Forever. Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 4.

but is filled with continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which everything handed down presents itself to us."[418] Gadamer argues throughout Truth and Method that to understand the past is not a form of appropriating an alien, external object but a way of relating, a way of allowing the past to speak to us.[419] At the risk of going too fast and of overlooking certain differences, I think that Derrida seems to agree with Gadamer about the value of this relating, when he says that our current, new situation "can be determined only on the basis of a very ancient one" which is why "[w]e must continuously move along this coming and going between the oldest and what comes of the exchange among the new, the 'again', and the 'anew' of a repetition."[420] If Gadamer is right, then our initial skepticism regarding the relevance of the study of the past can be easily dismissed because it implies that understanding a past event or practice and the application of this understanding to our present situation are two separate processes. Yet, as Gadamer continuously stresses, "understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well."[421] Gadamer's position hence offers an alternative middle way between certain ahistoricist strands within the animal liberation discourse that claim that certain fundamental structures persist on the one hand, and the idea that past and present are self-contained without any trace of the latter in the former on the other. While no one is of course denying the manifest differences between the ways we raise and kill animals today and the ways our ancestors did this two and a half thousand years ago, to claim that our present practices show no relation to those of our ancestors would

[418] Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Continuum, 2004) 297.
[419] Gadamer 311.
[420] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 393.
[421] Gadamer 296.

not only mean to blind oneself against a lot of contrary evidence and to adopt a naive attitude towards the significance of custom and tradition and the extent to which a lot of our contemporary behaviour, no matter how sincere and authentic it may appear, is "imitation and continuation,"[422] but it would also mean to deprive ourselves of more and different ways of undermining the current rationales for our continuing slaughter of animals.

2.3.1.1 René Girard on the Function of Sacrifice – From Murder to Ritual

In this section I want to look at René Girard's account of the origin and function of sacrifice as he develops it in his seminal book Violence and the Sacred. Girard starts out from the intuition that human beings must have been subjected to some particularly overwhelming experiences to have been led to kill their fellow beings. According to Girard, on the most fundamental level, the transition from killing to sacrifice marks the transition from harmful, unjust, illegitimate violence to beneficial, legal and ultimately holy violence.[423] In its most minimal form sacrifice arose like this:

> First comes violence, spontaneous and senseless; then comes sacrificial explanation, genuinely sacrificial in that it conceals the senseless and basically intolerable aspect of the violence. The sacrificial explanation is rooted in an act of terminal violence, violence that can only be labeled sacrificial retrospectively because it brought all hostilities to an end.[424]

According to Girard violence is endemic to human societies. He argues that if left unappeased, violence "will accumulate until it overflows its confines."[425] The function of

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[422] Kundera, Testaments Betrayed 12.
[423] See René Girard, Violence and the Sacred (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977) 23, 37, 115.
[424] Girard 124.
[425] Girard 10.

sacrifice is to "redirect violence into 'proper' channels,"[426] to protect the community from the effects of its own, unchecked internal violence, and thereby to restore harmony in the community as well as to reinforce the social order. In order for the community's aggressive impulses to be properly diverted, Girard argues, they need to be directed towards a random *surrogate victim* who constitutes an "outlet for those violent impulses that cannot be mastered by self-restraint."[427] Girard hence posits an original murder at the beginning of human culture.[428] The intra-communal violence had its peak in the mob-killing of an innocent victim. The shock ensuing from this killing aroused the need to rationalize the deed. The original killing was *retrospectively* interpreted as the moment that restored cultural order. The violence was thus conceived to be cathartic.[429] Girard argues that due to the powerful impression of the original killing, "The community is both attracted and repelled by its origins. It feels the constant need to reexperience them, albeit in a veiled and transfigured form."[430] This is precisely the function of ritual in general: to commemorate an event that "initially made a very strong impression."[431] Girard claims that (animal) sacrifice in particular is the repetition of the original, spontaneous killing of a random victim. To be more precise, sacrifice is the preventive reenactment and imitation of the initial collective murder.[432] It is preventive in so far as its function is to quell violence within the community thereby preventing the outbreak of conflicts. In this context, a surrogate victim becomes the "repository of all the

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[426] Girard10.
[427] Girard 18.
[428] See Girard 93.
[429] See Girard 30.
[430] Girard 90.
[431] Girard 92.
[432] See Girard 97.

community's ills."[433] The community believes that in destroying the surrogate victim, it rids themselves of a present, potentially detrimental ill.[434] It follows, and this is crucial for Girard's account that, "The sacrifice itself is not the first, but the ritualized form of the *original* outburst of violent unanimity."[435] The ritualized killing of the sacrifice is supposed to perpetuate and renew the beneficial effects the community had retrospectively ascribed to the original killing.[436] According to Girard, what remains hidden from the view of the community are at least two basic functions that he detects in any ritualization (that is, functions that transcend any particular ritual). First, ritualization understood as the repetitive reenactment of an original event aims at *conferring legitimacy on the original murder* by *hiding its true senselessness* as well as the randomness of the victim. Moreover and secondly, ritualization *displaces the responsibility* for this (and every consecutive) killing. This happens in two different ways: On the one hand, the community can externalize its "origin," for instance onto the divine who (supposedly) *demands* the sacrifice[437] – in this case the sacrificial killing is reinterpreted as a mere reaction that is expected from the community by an external authority. On the other hand, the accountability for the killing within the context of the ritual is conferred onto the symbolic *roles* in which the participants act during the ritual (e.g., the role of the priest). Girard contends that eventually the practice gave rise to religion which provided the justificatory narrative and which weaves everything together

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[433] Girard 77.
[434] See Girard 82.
[435] Girard 107.
[436] See Girard 92.
[437] See Girard 7.

into an all-encompassing whole.[438] "Religion ... humanizes violence; it protects man [*sic*] from his own violence by taking it out of his hands, transforming it into a transcendent [like, for instance, our eternal struggle for survival ; NF] and ever-present danger to be kept in check by the appropriate rites."[439] The important thing is the chronology. According to Girard, first came the murder, then the shock and feelings of guilt gave rise to its ritualization, and finally the (mythical) rationalization, which while aspiring to give a legitimizing account of the origin and function of the ritual violence "deprives men [*sic*] of the knowledge of the violence inherent in themselves with which they have never come to terms."[440] This structure brings to mind Nietzsche's aphorism, "The ugly which could not be removed is hidden; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime."[441] In other words, the justificatory narrative which accompanies the sacrifice stems from and arose out of the need to create an illusion to mask the discomforting truth of our own murderousness. An important consequence of the contingent relation between the practice and the justificatory narrative is that the same practice can give rise to different mythical explanations. Since the latter is always *ex post,* later generations can reinterpret the same ritual within a different light. As Wendy Hamblet argues, due to their contingent relation, rituals can remain functional even when they are fully disconnected from their original stories and meanings. Before I turn to a particular sacrifice I want to mention two further functions that are intrinsic to sacrifice. As a form of ritual, animal sacrifice carves out the self-identity of a group and confers

[438] The creation according to Genesis is undeniably one of the most significant narratives in this context.
[439] Girard 134.
[440] Girard 82.
[441] Girard 90.

cohesion on it. Furthermore, it conveys a particular worldview that orders and regulates the life of the group. The following analysis is both exemplary insofar as it aims at illustrating some of the above-mentioned dimensions of (animal) sacrifice (particularly its instrumental and expressive aspect), and is for the aforementioned reasons meant to be instructive with regard to our present practices of animal slaughter and meat consumption.

2.3.1.2 The Greek Animal Blood Sacrifice

After having taken a look at one theory of the origin and fundamental function of sacrifice, we shall now turn to one particular sacrifice: the alimentary blood sacrifice of the ancient Greeks, the so-called *thusia*. As Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, for instance, have shown, the Greek animal blood sacrifice was from ancient times laden with symbolic meanings, meanings that nowadays we have widely forgotten. As Detienne writes in "Culinary Practices and the Spirit of Sacrifice", in ancient Greece there was an "absolute coincidence of meat-eating and sacrificial practice."[442] This means that all meat that was considered consumable was obtained from ritually slaughtered animals. In other words, sacrifice, butchering, and consumption of meat were part of the same ritual which the Greek designated with the single term *thusia*. The unity and indissociability of these different aspects of the sacrifice was personified in the *mageiros*, the butcher-cook-sacrificer.[443] The main function of the alimentary sacrifice

[442] Marcel Detienne, "Culinary Practices and the Spirit of Sacrifice," in The Cusine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks, ed. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 3.
[443] See Detienne 11.

was the communion[444] with the divine. It was characterized as *therapeia* which is a form of service to the gods to who the sacrificial victim was given as an offering.[445] The strict rules, restrictions and constraints that the procedures of the sacrifice had to follow wove together an elaborate network of meanings.[446] The partaking in the sacrificing of an animal instituted, for instance, the affiliation to a socio-religious group thus serving as a social amalgam. Aside from uniting the worshipers in one moral community, at the same time the sacrifice differentiated this community from the rest of the world.[447] As Etienne points out, "To refuse to eat meat is not only to behave in a manner different from one's fellows it is to decide not to carry out the most important act in civil religion."[448] In other words, by giving or withholding one's support for animal sacrifice one could *ipso facto* show one's approval for or criticize the official theology, which then was also the policy. Vernant argues that the religious intentionality of the consumption of the animal flesh was central insofar as it "aims to honor the gods by inviting them to take part in a feast [which] evokes the memory of the ancient commensality when, seated together, men and

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[444] This shows that there was a specific relation between the act of killing and the act of eating whose meaning goes well beyond that of mere nourishment. In other words, although in ancient Greece there was an absolute coincidence of meat-eating and sacrificial practice, the killing was *not* done in order to satisfy the biological need of the participants for meat, but to enable the communion of the participants and the gods. In contrast to the alimentary sacrifices whose function was to join people together in an alimentary communion, Nancy Jay notes that, "in many sacrificial traditions, expiatory sacrifice [i.e., sacrifice whose main function was that of ridding or purifying the community of some form of misfortune or guilt] is not eaten." (Jay 27). Again we can see that the consumption of the animal victim had a clearly circumscribed function and meaning.

[445] See Jay 23.

[446] See Detienne 17.

[447] See Jay 19.

[448] See Detienne 6.

gods made merry day after day at shared meals."[449] The sacrifice not only establishes order between the community and the 'external world', but also within the community. Social order is established according to the parts of the sacrificial animal that the participants receive. Due to the different strict separation of those parts of the animal body that we intended for the gods and those that were consumed by the human attendants of the sacrifice, the sacrifice upholds an unsurpassable distance between the gods and the humans. At the same time, the act of cooking, in which pieces of raw and bloody flesh of the sacrificed animal are transformed into meat, or as Vernant calls it "a civilized dish,"[450] reinforces the contrast between human beings and those wild animals that feed on raw flesh, thereby instituting the sharp distinction between culture and wildness. The sacrifice thus places human beings "midway between animals and gods."[451] It follows that the consumption of animal flesh or 'meat' is not only not a biological necessity, but that it was even conceived as a means of *distancing* human beings from their biological nature. The sacrificing of animals is not merely a phenomenon *of* culture but at the same time one that is understood as instituting culture, or at least a special kind of culture that sets human beings apart from the rest of the creation.

Another important aspect of this kind of sacrifice is that it was obligatory for the sacrificial animal to be a *domesticated* one. As Jonathan Smith has pointed out, since "animal sacrifice is universally performed as a ritual killing of a *domesticated* animal

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[449] Jean-Pierre Vernant, "At Man's Table," in The Cusine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks, ed. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 24/25.
[450] Vernant 42.
[451] Vernant 47.

[sacrifice] is, in part, a meditation on domestication."[452] This observation is important for two reasons: it tells us something about the victim and about the sacrificer. Moreover, it marks a crucial advancement from the origins of ritual killing, for as we saw in Girard's account, in the beginning there was no *essential* difference between human and animal victims[453], since the decisive characteristic of the victim was that there was no crucial *social* (which is quite different from the supposed *essential* differences that were later used to justify the killing of animals) link between the community of sacrificers and the victim, so that the latter "can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal."[454] Tying sacrifice to domestication reveals its connection to a fundamental relation to nature in general, namely that of domination which marks a crucial shift in the self-understanding of human beings in relation to their non-human fellow beings. As Barbara Noske points out in Beyond Boundaries, "In hunter-gatherer societies people do not make a sharp distinction between the human and the non-human ... Species boundaries are not that pronounced."[455] Noske backs this claim up with the observation that in many hunter-gatherer societies members believe "their ancestors to have been members of other species."[456] Far from adhering to the New Age idea of a universal, organic oneness of everything, these peoples order their universe in a way that "crosscuts both humanity and

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[452] Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, Violent origins / Walter Burkert, René Girard & Jonathan Z. Smith on ritual killing and cultural formation (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987) 197ff. See also Gilhus 36.
[453] Girard 10.
[454] Girard 13.
[455] Barbara Noske, Beyond Boundaries. Humans and Animals (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997) 41.
[456] Noske 41.

nature and does not parallel species boundaries."[457] While in hunter-gatherer societies the difference between predator and prey is only functional and relative (one living being can at the same time be another animal's predator and prey), the advent of domestication replaces the more "egalitarian" predator-prey taxonomy with a more hierarchal (and reifying) husband-herd distinction.[458] Although the Greeks viewed the idea of domestication and the relation of the husband to the herd as a contract relationship that benefited both parties[459], it is obvious to the impartial eye that in reality this contract was *imposed* by one party on the other, and hence that we are dealing with a hierarchal relationship. This relationship finds its culmination in the absolute *Verfügungsgewalt* (i.e., the unconditional authority and sovereignty) the husband displays in the act of killing the (supposedly) "willing" animal. What is hence much more fundamental in the human–animal relationship than the question of suffering is the right over life and death. This idea is basically the same as the idea of human sovereignty which when taken to its extreme conclusion is tantamount to the "unlimited authorization to kill."[460] Besides the alleged voluntariness of the sacrificial animal, this *Verfügungsgewalt* derives from another source. The ancient Greeks clearly made a sharp distinction between domesticated and wild animals. If humans came to be placed halfway between animals and the gods, domesticated animals inhabited, so to speak, the liminal space between wild

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[457] Noske 42.
[458] This advancement not only brought about more power over the inferior animal but at the same time distanced human beings further from the rest of the animal kingdom. As Adorno and Horkheimer put it so poignantly, "Human beings purchase the increase in their power with estrangement from that over which it is exerted." (Horkheimer and Adorno 6)
[459] See Gilhus 36.
[460] Agamben, Homo Sacer 89.

animals (nature) and humans (culture), making them the rightless "bastards"[461] of the unholy union of the human and the natural.[462] While domesticated animals are sufficiently denaturalized and dehumanized to no longer be considered part of the sanctity of pure nature, at the same time, they are still animal enough to be subjected to treatments from which humans are usually excepted.[463] It is precisely this status that is responsible for their most unfortunate and horrific fate.

The connection between the domestication and the destruction of animal life and the seemingly 'infinite perpetuation' of the circle of birth and slaughter are arguably unique to the human-animal relationship. As Carol J. Adams notes, "The story begins with the birth of the animal, who would not have existed if meat eating did not require the animal's body ... We give them life and later we can take it, precisely because in the beginning we gave it."[464] We hence become guilty against these animals more than against anything and anyone else. We put them in the world *so* they can suffer. Derrida summarizes this circle as follows:

> The annihilation of certain species is indeed in process, but it is occurring through the organization and exploitation of an artificial, infernal, *virtually interminable survival*, in conditions that previous generations would have judged monstrous, outside every

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[461] The inner corruption of our concept of the "humanized nature" materializes perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the monstrosities of today's factory farming practices. (See also Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 394)

[462] Compare section 1.3.3, p.43.

[463] Barbara Noske discerns a similar attitude towards domesticated animals in great parts of today's environmentalist movement: "To many environmentalists the only animals embodying 'nature' are those which can still be counted as fauna, as part of the environment. Animals that have been domesticated and put to human use such as pets, farm animals and laboratory animals have somehow ceased to be targets for nature conservationists since they are no longer recognized as nature." (Noske 2)

[464] Carol Adams, The Sexual Politics of Meat. A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory (New York: Continuum, 1990) 93.

> supposed norm of life proper to animals, that are thus exterminated by means of their continued existence or even their overpopulation.[465]

While the fact that we are not dealing with an extinction in the "normal" sense makes it unquestionably harder to raise awareness about the urgency of this matter, I believe that it is precisely the potentially interminable horror and disavowal of this configuration that justifies the preeminence of the question of vegetarianism for the present discussion. Without wanting to belittle the depravity humans display in other forms of subjecting or exploiting animals, it is in the practice of raising and killing animals for food that the perversity of our relation to animals reaches its utmost peak.

If the sacrifice of a domesticated animal points to and reveals the civilization of the sacrificer, it could be argued that this does not explain why instead of a cultivated animal, people did not sacrifice a cultivated plant. This brings us to another aspect of the symbolic meaning of the animal victim which I can only sketch, namely the relation to a certain understanding of gender. The significance of eating meat cannot be adequately understood without considering the meaning that other-than-meat foods carry. As Carol Adams argues in The Sexual Politics of Meat, animal flesh or meat has in the Western world long been considered a virile food while vegetables, fruits and other non-animal foods were viewed as women's food.[466] One of the explanations that Adams offers for this association is a subconscious reminder of the days of Woman the Gatherer.[467] Another explanation for this association is the propinquity of the supposedly passive,

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[465] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 394 ; italics added.
[466] See Adams 26/27.
[467] See Adams 33.

dull, placid and subservient nature of women.[468] What makes vegetables the ideal food for women is the supposed likeness of their natures, whereas the consumption of meat corresponds to the nature and ideal of the virile (i.e., strong) man. One of the reason for this is that the consumption of animal flesh promotes strength, and "in eating the muscle of strong animals, we will become strong."[469] Adams notes that even nowadays we still find the idea that shunning meat makes a man effeminate.[470] This goes to show that our concept of (human) subjectivity is not just closely tied up with the subjection the animal but that its prime representative is actually the meat-eating male.

As we saw above, the consumption of "meat" came to be seen as an integral part of the process of civilization. The advent of animal sacrifice thus characterized marks humankind's progress to a higher level of cultural development. The reason for this is that meat eating requires the superior intellectual knowledge of tool-making (for hunting) and fire (for cooking) which sets human beings apart not only from the lower plant-eating animals but also from the higher predatory animals.[471] As Adams argues, the practice of butchering is a uniquely human prerogative.[472] Human beings by nature do not possess the physical and bio-chemical features to devour and digest animal flesh as other genuine predators/carnivores do, and instead require implements, which seems to disadvantage them in comparison to other natural carnivores. However, their capacity to make these

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[468] According to Adams the subordination of women in patriarchy is isomorphic to the subordination or subservience of vegetables as side dishes (i.e., vassal) to the centre of the plate or meal, the piece of meat. Vegetarians subvert this hierarchy by dethroning "king meat". (See Adams 34)
[469] Adams 34.
[470] See Adams 38.
[471] See Adams 30/31.
[472] See Adams 50.

implements allows them to overcome this biological deficit, thus demonstrating and asserting the essence of their humanity (i.e., the ability to distance themselves from their biological nature) as well as their superiority over the rest of the animal kingdom. In the human consumption of animal flesh, far from being a mere biological necessity, we thus find an expression of the very essence of humankind, whereby human beings vanquish those limits that restrain them as natural beings. To put it very succinctly, what distinguishes human flesh-eaters from other flesh eaters is that only the former make the killing and eating of pieces of animal flesh into an art. In other words, if we understand the essence of humanity in its capacity to break away from our biological condition[473], the killing and consumption of animals should neither be seen as a (moral) aberration nor as a triviality but as a practice that exemplifies the essence of humanity.

While I am aware that even for the most favourable reader, the above statements are bound to provoke disagreement, I hope that these observations show at the very least that the idea that we can make a clear distinction between the symbolic and the real aspect of the animal sacrifice, which is admittedly more convenient than one that complicates the relation between these two supposedly separate realms, is extremely problematic. One could of course argue that the religious intentionality of most meals in the so-called Western secularized societies has almost completely vanished. Irrespective of whether this is right or not (maybe the religious intentionality has merely changed its guise and we now worship other idols), this does not dispel Derrida's exhortation that if we want to turn the tables on the modern, urban carnivore we need to take seriously the

[473] See Ferry 16f.

symbolic aspect of the consumption of animal flesh, and need to reveal the network of meanings that are attached to the consumption of animal flesh.

2.3.2 "*On ne mange jamais tout seul*"

As we saw above, only humans consume "meat", whereas all other carnivores consume flesh. During the course of culinary treatment (a practice and discourse as strictly regulated as any other) the animal flesh is transformed into the cultural artifact 'meat', and while the consumption of the former is usually associated with savagery, bestiality, and barbarism, the latter supposedly constitutes and discloses culture. The kind of macrocosmic "forgetting" with regard to the cultural origins of our meat-eating practices that my above remarks have intended to counter, finds its microcosmic counterpart in another forgetting, which in our contemporary society is one of the most important aspects of the transition from 'flesh' to 'meat'. As Carol Adams points out, "Behind every meat meal is an absence, the death of the animal whose place the meat takes."[474] This fact is, however, concealed by the very fact that the process of rendering the animal-as-living-being absent is always already a *fait accompli*. The process by which the animal is rendered absent is both conceptual and physical: the animal is dismembered into different cuts, so that the carnivorous gourmet can choose between steak, ribs, etc. This process is accompanied by another renaming by which *a* chicken becomes 'chicken', a pig 'pork', a steer 'beef'. Individuals are massified and rendered indistinguishable by generic terms like "beef", "pork", or "chicken". This anonymization (usually successfully) forecloses the possibility of a direct identification with what or

[474] Adams 63.

rather *who* one "assimilates", making it the perfect, victimless crime. We find a very similar thought in "Eating well", where Derrida reminds and exhorts us that, "One never eats entirely on one's own [*On ne mange jamais tout seul*]."[475] I believe that behind this seemingly trivial observation lurks another wide-ranging insight, namely one that evokes the inescapably communal character of every meal. David Wood has criticized Derrida for his supposed failure to give a non-anthropocentric content to this statement, arguing that "It is unclear who the Others are here."[476] Although I think that Wood's criticism is unjustified, I nevertheless believe it is instructive, for it opens up another important dimension of our carnivorous being-in-the-world. Wood's criticism can be understood in two different ways: On the one hand, Wood criticizes Derrida for his failure to give this statement a content that is not explicitly humancentric, but one that acknowledges the fact that we also (if not primarily) interact with the *animal* victims of our meals. On the other hand, there is a second possible interpretation of Wood's critique, one that would be more charitable towards Derrida: on this reading, the unclarity about who in eating one enters into a "communion" with is inherent in our contemporary condition. In other words, the indeterminateness of Derrida's claim is not a shortcoming of his argument but rooted in the nature of our reality. Derrida leaves open who the others are because the thought that we could possibly delimit the answer to this question *without further reflection* is itself mistaken. In either case Derrida reminds us that eating is never a trivial matter and that any form of eating, any appropriation of some other always raises the question of how to eat well. In eating we enter into a whole web of relationships, which remains all too

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[475] Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 282/110.
[476] Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger*" 31.

often concealed from us due to our culinary shortsightedness. While the "literal" or "most real"[477] victims of our appetites (i.e., the animals on whose flesh we feast) appear to be rather easy to identify, Derrida cautions us, that the sole focus on these victims is but another pitfall of good conscience. I believe that many discussions of the significance of (an ethical) vegetarianism suffer from this one-dimensionality, in so far as they treat the question of how to relate to the animal other as if this animal other was directly given.

For the urban carnivore living in the affluent countries of the Western world this century, this relationship presents itself, however, in a much more complex way. The shibboleth of 'globalization' shall at this point only serve as a reminder of a hyper-connectedness that needs to be incorporated into a discussion that aspires to go beyond the academic debate between abstract principles of human superiority and animal rights. While I believe that certain fundamental ideas have not changed in this debate, we nevertheless need to acknowledge that most of the people who discuss this and other related questions in an academic environment no longer procure their 'meat' from the neighbour farmer who personally butchers the animals, but instead receive their portion of animal flesh pre-packed from the corporate supermarket. The fragmented animal can be seen as the symbol for the fragmentary image or conception that most urban carnivores have of the industrialized killing of these animals, or what eating meat has come to designate, which is of course another huge factor in our ongoing disavowal of

[477] If I hierarchize here, this is not do deny the significance of the impact that our "food choices" have on human populations whose existence and misery is oftentimes equally disregarded as that of the animal victims. David Clarke hence raises an important and disturbing question when he asks, "At what point could one distinguish between the destruction of an agricultural way of life and the people living that life?" (Clark 185.)

the plight of our animal fellows.[478] This changes the question in so far as we now need to reckon with additional variables that before did not enter our ethical reality. If, for instance, we think of the workers in today's gigantic meat-packing plants, some of whom have to kill more animals in a single shift than most people consume in their entire lifetime[479], for these people the question of sacrifice is not an abstract debate about rights or interests but the material reality. I believe that the most fundamental change in this altered relation is that of an added absence which brings us back to the "all-encompassing context of guilt"[480] that we already encountered in the first part.[481] Whether we want to think of the casualties of our transition from "food grain to feed grain"[482] or the rural

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[478] As a matter of fact I find it quite interesting how in his discussion of today's industrial animal farming practices Derrida takes this knowledge for granted: "It is all too evident ... All this is well known ... Neither can one seriously deny ... Everybody knows ... Everybody knows ..." (Derida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 394/395) Could Derrida be that mistaken about our ostensible knowledge? Or should we perhaps rather read these words as a *provocation*, a provocation to know? If Derrida is right, what does this say about our "knowledge", about us who "have" this knowledge?

[479] The dehumanizing reality of today's industrial slaughterhouses has been hauntingly described in Gail Eisnitz's Slaughterhouse. The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S. Meat Industry (New York: Prometheus Books, 2006). In their 2005 report titled "Blood, Sweat, And Fear. Workers' Rights in the U.S. Meat and Poultry Plants" Human Rights Watch has recently condemned the "systematic human rights violations embedded in meat and poultry industry employment" (2)

[480] Adorno, Metaphysics. Concepts and Problems, 112. Adorno uses this expression in the context of living after Auschwitz, but I believe that the validity of his words goes beyond his own example: "It should be said, at any rate, that the guilt in which one is enmeshed almost by the mere fact of continuing to live can hardly be reconciled any longer with life itself. Unless one makes oneself wholly insensitive, one can hardly escape the feeling ... that just by continuing to live one is taking away that possibility from someone else, to whom life has been denied; that one is stealing that person's life ... If we – each of us sitting here – knew at every moment what has happened and to what concatenations we owe our own existence, and how our own existence is interwoven with calamity ... if one were fully aware of all these things at every moment, one would really be unable to live. One is pushed, as it were, into forgetfulness, which is already a form of guilt. By failing to be aware at every moment of what threatens and what has happened, one also contributes to it; one resists it too little; and it can be repeated and reinstate at any moment." (Adorno, Metaphysics. Concepts and Problems 112/113)

[481] Compare section 1.3.2, page 40.

[482] Jeremy Rifkin, Beyond Beef. The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture (New York: Plume,

populations of many Latin and South American countries who for generations have depended on subsistence agriculture and whose land multinational corporations have either converted into pasture for cattle grazing or use to grow grains to fatten cattle for the North American or European market[483], and for who the ecological consequences (desertification, deforestation, depletion of fresh water reserves, pollution of rivers and lakes, etc.) are already far more real than for the primary benefactors of these practices[484]; these Others all too easily fall through the cracks of our dubious good conscience. The human toll (emotional, economic, political) is all too easily overlooked and ignored. To the extent that this situation complicates the question of retrospective responsibility (i.e., causal responsibility or agency) it also makes the question of a forward-looking responsibility more complicated. One could even argue that it calls for a new understanding of responsibility, a responsibility that goes beyond the direct and immediate duty that I have to the present other(s). I believe that it is at least in part due to the unprecedented causal impact of even the most trivial actions that Derrida's call for an "infinite hospitality"[485] is more urgent than ever. It is because our lives themselves have become infinitely enmeshed with the lives of others (both human and non-human),

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1992) 160.

[483] See Rifkin 147-150. Rifkin himself sums up these two points: "We have managed to hoist ourselves to the top of a carefully constructed man-made protein ladder from which we consume the bounty of the planet via an animal intermediary, the steer. Yet the question of entitlement is rarely raised among the American people. Consuming large quantities of grain-fed beef is viewed as a right and a way of life. The underside of the beef culture, in which displaced people search desperately for their next meal, is never brought into the light of day to be scrutinized and agonized. The beef-consuming people are too far removed from the unseemly side of the cattle complex to know or care how their dietary preferences affect the lives of others and the political affairs of nations." (Rifkin 164)

[484] See Rifkin 185/186.

[485] Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 282/110.

that the proper response to this must incorporate this moment of infinity. One of the important questions after Derrida is, how we can flesh out this infinite hospitality, or, if this is too broad, how can we flesh out this hospitality at the dining table. I believe that one of the important challenges is to show that the question of *what* or *who* we should eat cannot be separated as neatly from the question *how* we should eat (well), as Derrida seems to suggest in "Eating Well".[486] I would even contend that certain 'what-choices' are, or at the very least *have become*, incompatible with any idea of eating well. I hence believe that a modern defence of vegetarianism can be sustained on nothing other than this premise. What is needed is a new, more timely conception of responsibility suitable for the fragmented experience of the animal other. The imperative 'Thou shalt not kill' has not only been outlived by our *possibilities* to interact with and do violence to the animal other but by their grim *realities*. When or where 'eating meat' *was* a face-to-face affair, the question of whether or not one should eat this animal was rather straightforward. This straightforwardness is no longer given. It could be objected that I have been complicating the question of vegetarianism unnecessarily. To this I would like to respond that if this is indeed the case, it is due to the realities which give rise to these very questions, and which are themselves more complicated than it is often acknowledged. If anything, I have tried to argue that the absence multiplies our guilt. In eating we do not only inflict violence (by proxy) on countless faceless animals but also on equally faceless executioners of our will to meat. Before we can adequately answer if

[486] In the passage in question Derrida says, "The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this or not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal, but since *one must* eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat ... *how* for goodness' sake should one *eat well*?" (Derrida, "Eating Well"/"Bien Manger" 282/109-110)

we should eat this or that, we hence need to understand what eating this or that means *in concreto* and *in praxi*. If we consider all these questions, I believe we can see how and why the question of how to eat well (not just for Derrida but in general) takes precedence over the question of what/who one should eat. The reason for this is, that the object (the 'what') is never directly given like the question wants to make us believe.

2.3.3 Deconstruction is Not Veganism Either

If I am right about these issues then vegetarianism is indeed not just about substituting beans for beef, but at least potentially the enactment of a new self-understanding of humankind, one that is built around a more benevolent attitude towards non-human animals. In this case it would indeed be surprising if Derrida held his support for vegetarianism in abeyance. Maybe Derrida's claim that the 'symbolic' is impossible to delimit is best understood as a warning never to believe oneself free of violence or wronging towards some other to whom my responsibility is boundless (which I also take to mean that it is not bound by prevailing boundaries, whether they are related to gender, race and species). If we could delimit the symbolic this would mean that there would be a sphere "beyond" that is free of (material) violence. And is the belief that we could attain such a state, or even worse, that we have already reached this state, not a more dangerous thought than the thought that some form of sacrifice is unavoidable because it is precisely this state of thinking oneself free of violence and injustice that leaves little if not no motivation to constantly keep reforming and criticizing our practices? What Derrida wants to say is that we can never fully escape our violent being-in-the-world, and

that even we vegetarians are not free from wronging animals let alone "the living in general."[487] Matthew Calarco has suggested that one way of giving a more tangible content to the real-symbolic distinction and the different modes of denegation is by applying it to the distinction between vegetarianism and veganism. As Calarco rightfully points out, "Perhaps we do not eat steak of chicken wings, but we do consume and use a whole host of products that involve the killing of animals."[488] Indeed, we live in a world that revolves around the use and abuse and killing of animals to an extent that goes way beyond the mere consumption of 'meat'. Whether we talk about the dairy and egg industry, or the millions of animals that are killed every year for their skin or fur, or those animals that are used in product testing as well as in medical or military research; whether we think of wild animals that are deliberately killed for "sport" by today's high-tech equipped "hunters" or their cousins who are "accidentally" driven into extinction due to the ever increasing destruction of their natural habit, oftentimes in order to create ever more grazing land (or *Lebensraum*) for ever more farmed animals who deliver us the flesh we crave so voraciously; or whether we think of those animals who are killed in "entertaining" spectacles like bullfighting or the race horses who once their entertainment value has dropped end up at slaughterhouses; or we might also think of those animals whose dignity we sacrifice so they make us laugh or gasp in circuses, or those pet animals we once considered our most dear and faithful companions who end up at shelters where they are put to death without remorse and dignity. This list could easily be prolonged by less frequent forms of animal sacrifice like for instance the retaliatory

[487] Derrida, "Eating Well" 279.
[488] Matthew Calarco, "Deconstruction is not vegetarianism," in Continental Philosophy Review 37 (2004) 194.

killings of sharks or bears whose attacks fatally remind us of our vulnerability. Our seemingly boundless reliance and dependence on animals, their products and their services makes the idea that we could ever achieve a state of non-violence utopian at best. It is before this background of our boundless denegation of the non-human animal that even our individual vegetarianism may appear to shrink to the significance of a symbolic protest. Although I believe that Calarco's point is well taken and raises a lot of important questions, I think that it fails to capture Derrida's distinctions between the different forms of denegation (or, "real" and "symbolic" sacrifice). As Derrida argues in "Violence Against Animals":

> It is not enough to stop eating meat in order to become a non-carnivore. The unconscious carnivorous process has many other resources ... Even in the case of someone who believes he can limit himself to bread and wine ... 'vegetarians', like everyone else, can also incorporate, symbolically, something living, something of flesh and blood"[489].

In other words, the symbolic sacrificing of animals that even vegetarians partake in has little to do with the forms of appropriation/assimilation that vegans try to further reduce.

In the following analysis I hope to shed some light not only on the ways in which vegetarians still incorporate animals but I also, and arguably more importantly, want to connect Girard's analysis of the origin of animal sacrifice with Derrida's recurrent critique of the general singular "the Animal".

2.3.4 The Metonymy of Eating and the General Singular "the Animal"

Throughout the passages in which Derrida deals with the 'metonymy of eating' Derrida repeatedly alludes to the significance of the process of incorporation or eating the

[489] Derrida, "Violence Against Animals" 68.

other within the discourse of psychoanalysis. Using these psychoanalytic concepts of internalization and incorporation I will examine the workings of the consumptive process of cognition and its relation to language, particularly the general singular "the Animal." I will attempt to show that our seemingly benign desire to know the animal is wedded to the carnivorous desire to possess and appropriate it. At the same time the general singular "the Animal" provides the most powerful screen to protect us from experiencing the originary guilt and terror arising from the killing of animals. Instead of being grounded in a shared essence of animality, the general singular "Animal" is maybe better understood as a "fantasy" which under the pretext of our carnivorous desire to know, that is, to appropriate, the animal other without remainder, appeases our (unconscious) need to ease our conscience. In the first section my focus will be, on the one hand, on the relation of the concepts of identification, internalization and naming, which all have in common the moment of the annihilation of the singularity of the other (in the process of sacrifice the animal becomes a medium/means[490]). Viewed in this light, I suggest reading Derrida's remarks on the impossibility of vegetarianism as a reminder of the inevitable violence of conceptual thinking which analogous to the physical act of eating always reduces the other to an instance of the same. In the second part I will try to show that Derrida's critique does not stop here, and that he has much more to say.

2.3.4.1 Eating, Naming and Annihilation

Within psychoanalytic discourse, the process of internalization in its broadest sense is usually understood as a fundamental mode of our relation to the external world.

[490] Compare footnote 498 on page 148.

According to Moore and Finn, internalization is "the process by which aspects of the outer world and interactions with it are taken into the organism."[491] The process of incorporation marks "the most primitive, least differentiated form of internalization"[492] in which the object is entirely devoured and ingested and thus loses its distinctness and is fully assimilated into the subject. According to Meisner the process of incorporation is "somehow analogous to the physical [i.e., oral ; NF] process of ingestion."[493] The process of incorporation can hence be regarded as being closely related to Freud's oral phase in which "the object that we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such."[494] While there are numerous ways an object or relationship can be internalized, one of them is the symbolic or lexical encoding of an aspect of the object. Once a word has taken on the role of standing in for a particular thing in its absence, the word or concept hence becomes a substitute for the object that is to be internalized. Instead of directly incorporating the object itself we may thus internalize it symbolically via the word or symbol that has come to stand in for it, thus achieving the fantasized ingestion.[495] In both cases the subject aims at the conquering assimilation of a desired object by making it part of his/her internal world. This moment of assimilation/annihilation is nicely illustrated in the following scene, described by

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[491] Quoted in Kenneth C. Wallis and James L. Poulton, Internalization. The Origins and Construction of Internal Reality (Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2001) 6. The difference between the terms incorporation, introjection and identification, which are usually understood to describe different modes in which internalization works, cannot be dwelled on at this point.
[492] Wallis and Poulton 9.
[493] Wallis and Poulton 9.
[494] Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (New York: Bantam Books, 1965) 47.
[495] See Wallis and Poulton 6.

Derrida, in which he finds himself naked in front of his cat, a scene in which the real-vs-symbolic issue appropriately resurfaces:

> [T]he cat that looks at me in my bedroom or in the bathroom ... does not appear as a representative, or an ambassador, carrying the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline race ... If I say 'it's a real cat' that sees me naked, it is in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity ... It is true that I identify it as a male or female cat. But even before that identification, I see it as *this* irreplaceable living being ... Nothing can ever take away from me the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized.[496]

Derrida's words draw attention to the violence of conceptualization that we already encountered in Adorno's and Horkheimer's analysis of the 'dialectic of enlightenment'.[497] The act of conceptualizing and identifying can be seen as structurally similar to the acts of sacrifice and eating in so far as in both cases the integrity and singularity of the object of the process of conceptualization or sacrifice is compromised and violated. The violence of concepts consists in the betrayal of the singularity of the being thus conceptualized and that, having abdicated its irreplaceability comes henceforth to be seen as a mere representative or instantiation of this discursive concept.[498] To conceptualize means to subsume or assimilate the individual under the concept. At the same time, in order to conceptualize at all we need to reduce the individual in its heterogeneity to a unified totality. Since no concept can fully represent the richness of its object, every concept hence inevitably carries within itself a moment of reduction that betrays the complexity of the object. According to Iris Marion Young, this "desire to think things

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[496] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 379.
[497] Compare section 1.3.3.
[498] This is again strikingly similar to the "representative character of sacrifice [*die im Opfer gelegene Stellvertretung*]" (Horkheimer and Adorno 40) in which the individual is reduced to the status of a (communicative) means for the communion/communication with the divine.

together in a unity, to formulate a representation of a whole, a totality"[499] stems from the wish to unify "the thinking subject with the object thought, that the object would be a grasping of the real."[500] Young's comment clearly shows the link between the unifying violence of concepts and the carnivorous process of internalizing the animal other (its unification with the thinking subject). Even before the actual act of eating, the representation of the animal as something edible (which as I argued earlier are not to be understood as two clearly distinct ideas) is already a form of violence in so far as it purports to fix the ever-elusive dynamic multiplicity of the animal other (like a pig in a knocking pen or a lab animal in a restraining device) and reduces his/her significance to the use value s/he has to satisfy my hunger. The animal other is hence reduced to his/her edibility, which is perhaps the most archetypal appropriative relation. In the actual act of eating I then physically import the other in me, and that which I sink "my teeth into is assimilated, the forces that were in the other become *my* forces, become me."[501] The act of interiorizing the other is the ultimate denial of his/her infinite exteriority and reduces him/her to a constituent of the same (i.e., the *I*). Far from being the most just person, as Levinas has it, the person who eats exemplifies the violence of identity thinking in its most concrete form. What Derrida hence seems to be saying is that the mere act of speaking of the animal in a single voice betrays our "carnivorous" wish to take away the animal's otherness and appropriate (that is, eat) it. This is so because every identification is a double assimilation: First, the assimilation of the individual under the selfsame

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[499] See Iris Marion Young, "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference," in: Feminism/Postmodernism, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990) 303.
[500] Young 303.
[501] Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity. An Essay of Exteriority (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press 1969) 129.

concept which in turn facilitates a second assimilation, namely that of the individual via the concept to the thinking subject (the I). As Derrida, quoting Levinas, says in "Violence and Metaphysics": "'If the other could be possessed, seized, and known, it would not be the other. To possess, to know, to grasp are all synonyms of power.' To see and to know, to have and to will, unfold only within the oppressive and luminous identity of the same [*idem*]."[502] It appears that for Derrida the notions of otherness and singularity are inextricably linked. It is precisely *this* particular and unique being in its materiality that is sacrificed in the process of conceptualization. To say that we have an existence that refuses to be conceptualized also means that the process of subsuming an individual under a concept that according to Kant allows us to cognize (i.e., internalize) this individual can never be completed, except by means of violence. This unassimilability pertains to the other and irreplaceable individual, something that is denied him/her in the moment we conceptualize this existence.

2.3.4.2 The Generative Power of Language and the General Singular "the Animal"

It appears plausible that what holds for the word or general concept 'cat' *a fortiori* also applies to the even more general concept "animal" and that it is the symbolic consumption of the animal via the word 'animal' that Derrida wants to draw attention to. If the general singular 'the Animal' was nothing but a more general version of the general concept 'cat', then Derrida's critique of the former would be nothing but a generally futile deploring of the violence of concepts, which would hardly warrant the significance that I have attributed to Derrida's ideas; for as we already saw in the first part, "Opposition to

[502] Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 91/92.

general concepts is absurd. [*Der Kampf gegen Allgemeinbegriffe ist sinnlos.*]"[503] Derrida's point must hence be a different one. I believe that one of the reasons for Wood's failure to grasp the true significance of Derrida's ideas lies in his inability[504] to connect Derrida's thoughts on the symbolic sacrifice with his critique of the general singular 'the Animal'. The problem with this account is that it takes the object-ingestion as primary and conceptual internalization as secondary. What the cat-scene, however, shows is that the act of naming marks the moment in which the sharp distinction between the real and the symbolic collapses. For not only does the individual lose its particularity in the concept but in the process of conceptualizing the individual in a particular way we also confer onto this individual being (e.g., a so-*called* 'cat') the whole network of symbolic meanings (ideas, prejudices, ultimately its "essence") of the conceptual cat thus putting the two in a "representative relation". While it seems that the "real" consumption of animals precedes the cognitive internalization, in order for there to be a real *animal* as our object-to-be-consumed the conventional codification of this particular being *as* animal must already have taken place. Throughout his work, Derrida repeatedly challenges the self-evidence of the general singular 'the Animal', which he takes to be "perhaps one of the greatest, and most symptomatic idiocies of those who call themselves

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[503] Horkheimer and Adorno 182.

[504] For the sake of fairness and accuracy it must be said that Wood might not have been aware of this aspect of Derrida's thinking on animals when he wrote "*Comment ne pas manger*", which appear three years before the publication of Derrida's important "*The Animal that Therefore I Am*". I hence ask my reader not to read as a *personal* critique of Wood but rather as an advancement of his thoughts.

humans."[505] According to Derrida, the scandal of Western philosophy, which in this scandal aligns itself with commonsense, consists in the fact that,

> through and beyond all their disagreements, philosophers have always judged and *all* philosophers have judged ... that on the other side of that limit [i.e., the human-animal boundary] there is an immense group, a single and fundamentally homogenous set that one has the right, the theoretical or philosophical right, to distinguish and mark as opposite, namely the set of the Animal in general, the animal spoken of in the general singular.[506]

On this account, the general singular "the Animal" is grounded in and warranted by an essential continuity between all those diverse living beings we call "animals". Derrida sharply distances himself from this view and argues instead, that there is no such thing as an animal as such but only "an immense multiplicity of other living things that cannot be homogenized, except by means of violence and willful ignorance."[507] This homogenization is, however, more than a mere, sloppy trifle. In a brilliant allegory Derrida describes the function(ing) of this concept as follows:

> Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite article ('the Animal' and not 'animals'), as in a virgin forest, a zoo, a hunting or fishing ground, a paddock or an abattoir, a space of domestication, are *all the living things* that man [*sic*] does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers. And that in spite of the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee, the camel from the eagle, the squirrel from the tiger or the elephant from the cat, the ant from the silkworm or the hedgehog from the echidna.[508]

This en*camp*ment, a word I am convinced Derrida chose very carefully, far from being a merely biological or descriptive undertaking, reduces the existence of the animal, as we saw in Heidegger, to the state of bare or mere life. While seemingly justifying our

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[505] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 409.
[506] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 408/409.
[507] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 416.
[508] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 402.

treatment of them, the general singular "the Animal" in the first place constitutes, so to speak, the conceptual space in which the laws of (human) morality do not apply, a space or state of permanent willed exception in which all moral rules that exhort us to kindness towards animals can be suspended *ad libitum*.[509] Derrida's allegory nicely illustrates the relation between the conceptual violence (necessary to homogenize these living beings) and the physical violence, and presents us with another reason why we would be ill-advised to treat the conceptual or symbolic violence and the physical (Wood's "real") violence we inflict on animals as two distinct or unrelated phenomena. The reason for this is that there is a direct connection between the conceptual encampment of "the animal" in the general singular "Animal" and the physical violence we inflict on literally countless animals. The word "animal" marks and, as it were, rounds up all the living things we do not recognize as our fellows.[510] In this regard its function is quite similar to that of a ritual, namely to establish the membership or non-membership of an individual in a certain group.[511] The abstraction from the individual living creature that the concept of the animal accomplishes anticipates and facilitates their faceless and anonymous annihilation in the slaughterhouse.[512] The general singular "the Animal" thus provides us with a conceptual justification for the mistreatment of the beings we hold captive within this conceptual enclosure. At the same time the general singular "the Animal" works as

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[509] See Agamben, Homo Sacer 168.

[510] This encampment is only a preliminary step towards their annihilation, for as Henry Friedlander has convincingly argued, genocidal killing operations are only "the most radical method of excluding groups of human beings from the ... community." (Friedlander 1) And exclusion is nothing but "institutionalized human inequality." (Friedlander 17)

[511] Compare section 2.3.1.2. Again it is hard not to see the parallels to the Nazi eugenics policy where while first "exclusion was applied to the handicapped ... [it] was later extended to include everyone whose behaviour was alien to the community [*gemeinschaftsfremd*]." (Friedlander 17)

[512] Compare section 1.3.3.

an "ethical proxy," and emotional screen which both predetermines and regulates what counts as a normal and reasonable reactions and responses towards the living beings we identify as animals. In other words, what unites the lizard, the dog, the dolphin, the parrot, to name just a few, is not a shared essence (their "animality"), as Western philosophy has traditionally argued, but the disavowal they suffer at the hands and mouths of those who call *themselves* human and at the same time designate *them* as animals. I believe that it is this fact that Derrida refers to when he elsewhere says that the animality of the living beings we call animals is a human artifact.[513] Note that Derrida does not say that animality is an illusion. The "animality" of animals is real in so far as the violence we inflict on them is real. The commonality between these living beings consists in the disavowal they suffer at our hands; their "animality" is so to speak a self-fulfilling prophecy ("nightmare" might be more apt), one that is in no way less devilish than the one the Nazis devised for the Jews.[514] The animality of the animals (whether we want to understand this in terms of their poorness-in-world or the perishing (Heidegger), or their facelessness (Levinas)) is nothing but the hellish condition into which we humans have turned their lives. The apparent contradiction between on the one hand Derrida's statement that there is no such thing as an animal as such, and his claim that 'animality' is a human artifact can thus be resolved if we make a sharp distinction between the empirical "animals", who are the real victims of the violence we inflict on them, and animality or being-animal as absolute category, whose exact ontological status yet remains to be determined but which, on Derrida's account, we must suspect to have no

[513] See Derrida, "On Reading Heidegger" 173.
[514] "The anti-Semites are realizing their negative absolute through power, by transforming the world into the hell they have always taken it to be." (Horkheimer and Adorno 165)

reality in and of itself but only within the violence, oppression, exploitation and disavowal against which it is formulated.

If the overt inadequacy of the term "animal" to represent all the beings it is supposed to capture undermines the plausibility of the thesis that the general singular derives from the shared "animal essence" (e.g., Heidegger's poorness-in-world), where does it derive from? What Derrida's various allusions to the symptomatic character of the general singular "the Animal"[515] suggest is, I believe, that instead of looking for this concept "out there", we should rather turn inward and suspect its origin in ourselves. In other words, we might be well advised to treat the general singular "the animal" as a "symptom"! In this new approach Derrida suggests to start from the word 'animal'. As Derrida reminds us, 'animal' is first and foremost a word. But it is not a word like any other, but rather one that is of exceptional importance for us humans: "it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves [and no one else! - NF] the right and the authority to give to another living creature."[516] Human beings are, in other words, before all "those living creatures who have given themselves the word [i.e., the general singular "the animal" ; NF] that enables them to speak of the animal with a single voice."[517] What these passages show is twofold. First, it reminds us that 'animals' exist only ever in language, that there is no pre-discursive reality that our reality merely represents and that consequently the human-animal difference is not pre-given. And secondly, the word or appellation 'animal' is hence in a double sense part of our "auto-

[515] Compare Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 400 and 409.
[516] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 392. In the account presented in the Genesis, for instance, it is justified by the highest authority, i.e., God.
[517] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 400.

definition" (Derrida) as human beings: both as predicate and as the accompanying right to predicate. By making this predicate and the right to apply it their exclusive prerogative committed the first act of violence which consisted in naming "the animal" and divesting it of any possibility to reappropriate its name.[518] It is both in (that is, by nam*ing*) and through the (completed) naming of the animal that the human instantiates itself.

> That wrong was committed long ago and with long-term consequences. It derives from this word or rather it comes together in this word *animal* that men [*sic*] have given themselves at the origin of humanity, and that they have given themselves in order to identify themselves, in order to recognize themselves, with a view of being what they say they are, namely men, capable of replying and responding in the name of men.[519]

I believe that this is what the term '*sacrifice fondateur*' refers to. It designates the primary identification of human beings *as* human beings. It is the originary sacrifice that "founds" our identity as humans by marking it off from 'the animal' through the exclusion of the latter.[520] It marks the moment of performative truth that institutes the boundary and *ipso facto* the two categories ('human' and 'animal') on each side of the limit which must hence be seen as necessary complementaries that mutually codetermine each other.

It gets better though. Analogous to Girard's original killing, the violence of the *sacrifice fondateur* must be masked. To do this and to mask the true function of the appellation "animal", we elevate it to an absolute category to ensure its rightfulness and legitimacy. The legitimacy of this move is ultimately guaranteed by the idea of the *animal as such*. Far from being grounded in the intellectual grasp of the Platonic idea of

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[518] See Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 389.
[519] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 400.
[520] I believe that this is precisely the point of Cary Wolfe very succinct remark "the 'human' ... is not now, and never was itself." (Wolfe 9)

the animal or the universal property of animality, that is in our discovery of *their* shared identity (Derrida's theoretico-philosophical right[521] which legitimizes the universal designation "animal"), in reality the word "animal" instead serves to establish *our* identity. While we think that we have discovered the 'as such' of the animal, we have merely externalized and reified our need for such a thing. The general singular 'the Animal' reifies the multiplicity of beings into one representation to give us humans a stable and fixed counter-image (or anti-imago) against and by means of which we can henceforth identify ourselves as humans. The animal is something we humans need to identity ourselves which in turn is necessary to set us apart from the rest of the living beings onto which we can thus inflict incomparable suffering without remorse. 'The animal' is hence constructed as an absolute category, as the negative to which the human constitutes the positive, and which serves to guarantee the unity on the side of the human being. 'The Animal' is hence something that we produce (in Derrida's words, a self-interested "artifact") *because* we need it as that over and against which we can identify ourselves. 'The Animal' is, so to speak, our master excuse/justification for our inability to live peacefully with our animal fellows. Elias Canetti was aware of this dependency when he wrote: "*Von den Tieren sind wir abhängiger als sie von uns: sie unsere Geschichte, wir ihr Tod. Wenn es sie nicht mehr gibt, werden wir sie alle mühselig aus uns erfinden.*"[522] The reason for this is that animals are the "comparative basis without

[521] Compare Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am" 408.
[522] Canetti 45. "We are more dependent on the animals than they are on us: they [are] our history, we [are] their death. When they do not exist anymore, we will laboriously invent them out of ourselves." (my translation)

which it would be impossible to understand ourselves as a species."[523] Moreover, in so far as this concept yields us the important *as such* of the animal, the access to which characterizes an essentially and exclusively human property that distinguishes the human from the animal[524], by exposing the phantasmatic character of the concept of animality Derrida undermines *ipso facto* the idea of a single attribute that singles out human beings from the rest of the animal creation and warrant their special (and supposedly superior) position: their access to the *as such*.

What these remarks show is that as a matter of fact the symbolic sacrifice of the animal takes, in an important sense, precedence over their real sacrifice, for we can only sacrifice 'animal's *after* having created them or confer the status of a real entity to them in the first place (yet, once this is done we can sacrifice them *with ease*!). We can see now, what I meant when I said above[525] that the reality of us humans is symbolically constructed. To conclude this section, I think that the true scandal of philosophy is not only the willful ignorance with which "the animal in general" has been conceived but the fact that no philosopher was able to see through the motivation behind this chimera, as well as a the reluctance to take a closer look at the realities that are responsible for our continuing need of "the Animal".

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[523] Gilhus, 265.
[524] See section 1.4.2.4.
[525] Compare p.115.

2.3.4.3 Derrida's Critique of Vegetarianism Reconsidered

With these remarks in mind, I believe that we are able to better understand Derrida's skeptical remarks about the efficacy of an ethical vegetarianism. In "II" Derrida argues that we are engaged in,

> une guerre sacrificielle aussi vieille que la Genèse. Et cette guerre n'est pas une façon d'appliquer la technoscience à l'animal *alors qu'une autre façon serait possible* et envisageable; non, cette violence ou cette guerre ont été, jusqu'ici, constitutives du projet ou de la possibilité même du savoir technoscientifique dans le processus d'humanisation ou d'appropriation de l'homme par l'homme ... Aucune noblesse éthique ou sentimentale ne doit nous dissimuler cette violence, que les formes connues de l'écologisme ou du végétarianisme ne suffisent pas à interrompre, même si elles valent mieux que ce à quoi elles s'opposent.[526]

This passage expresses a radical skepticism towards the prospect of rectifying our disavowal towards animals. It reminds us why it is not enough to focus on the "real" violence we inflict on animals, as Wood has it. As Derrida argues, it is simply not enough ("*ne suffisent pas*") to relate to those living beings we call animals in a non-violent way. The reason for this is that the very interpellation "animal" forever carries within itself the violent asymmetry of the *sacrifice fondateur*. Derrida argues that we delude ourselves and misrecognize the character of the interpellation 'animal' if we believe that we can fundamentally change the situation of those beings we have come to call animals by merely treating them better (e.g., stop eating them). Neither is it enough to redraw the line between "us" and "them". To think that, for instance, we can remedy the current situation by extending the concept 'animal' to cover both "human and non-human animals" is spurious, because it forgets the nature of the concept 'animal' and instead of eliminating it, does precisely the opposite: it elevates a fantasy into the order of

[526] Derrida, L'animal que donc je suis 140 ; emphasis added.

truth. Although it appears to neutralize the fateful human-animal opposition, in reality it remains faithful to the very framework it is supposed to debunk. For as we saw above, the category animal receives its meaning purely in contrast to the category human.[527] It thus seems that the attempt to neutralize the opposition in the end achieves the very opposite, it confirms it.[528] At the same time, it is not enough merely to multiply differences on the animal side of the binary (a move which Derrida clearly considers to be necessary) and the leave the other side intact. As a matter of fact, if we do so, it could be argued that we have not deconstructed the binary human-animal opposition at all but merely erased the word "animal" from our vocabulary. This seems to be a palatable shortcut. But as Derrida reminds us over and again, this cannot replace the painstaking work of "interminable analysis"[529]. Again the temptation of a good conscience is as understandable as it is treacherous. We must hence avoid proceeding "too quickly to a *neutralization* that *in practice* would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of *intervening* in the field effectively. We know what always have been the *practical* (particularly *political*) effects

[527] A similar point with an admittedly slightly different emphasis has been made by Susanne Kappeler: "Whether the criterion for animal now be *sentience* – judged not only from a human point of view, but from that of white Western scientific experts – or a *life worth living* [which is I have tried to show more than merely reminiscent of the Nazi terminology; NF] judged by a similar self-appointed assembly of human experts, these approaches ... have nothing to do with challenging the power hierarchy ... Even the most radical animal rights position, which would grant rights to all species of animals is no different *in theory* from that which denies such rights ... it continues to arrogate to itself the right to grant rights." (Kappeler 335)

[528] It thus appears that the neutralization of a binary opposition and its confirmation cannot in all cases be understood as two different options, as Derrida suggests in Positions, when he says that the general strategy of deconstruction is to "avoid both simply *neutralizing* the binary oppositions of metaphysics and *residing* within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming it." (Derrida, Positions 3)

[529] Derrida, Positions 39.

of *immediately* jumping *beyond* oppositions."[530] I believe that this is the fundamental insight behind Derrida's exhortation that we need to deconstruct the human-animal *binary*, and not just the general singular "Animal".

To sum things up, we saw how on a first level the word 'animal' facilitates the appropriation-consumption of "the animal" by other means. On a second level we saw that the human-animal opposition rests on the belief in a shared essence of animality which turned out to be but a fantasy that is both necessary for and constitutive of our own identity as human beings which in turn creates a spacing that (supposedly) legitimizes our continuing "war" on the rest of the animal kingdom and protects us from experiencing sympathy with our fellow creatures.

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[530] Derrida, Positions 39.

Conclusion: Humanism – Incurable Evil or Inevitable Prerequisite?

As I said at the beginning of this thesis, it would be inappropriate to end this investigation on a positive note. Instead, I want to offer a sketch of the problems and questions that will occupy us in the wake of the preceding analysis. It appeared in the second part that Derrida's work on the animal question could pave the way for a radical critique of the humanism which constitutes a major obstacle for an improvement of the situation of our animal fellows. How is it then that David Wood charges Derrida with ultimately reverting to this very humanism that he is trying to overcome? Is it possible at all to *overcome* humanism? I believe that there are certain insurmountable, if not *a priori* limits to the project of overcoming humanism. As Nietzsche put it, "We behold all things through the human head and cannot cut off this head."[531] To think that we can overcome humanism and its trail of (animal) blood just like we could overcome white supremacy and slavery would be to misrecognize its true nature. Due to this it cannot be our task to overcome humanism but to purge it of its speciesist overtones which albeit go much deeper than most animal liberation theories acknowledge. We have to remind ourselves that our concept of the human is after all malleable and not beyond history.

While the "first generation" of animal liberation thinkers tried to improve the status of animals by appealing to the *similarities* between human and non-human animals, and showing the ethical irrelevance of certain differences that are usually used to justify the different treatment, it has become more fashionable to argue that animals deserve ethical consideration not because of what they have in common with us humans,

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[531] Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All-Too-Human: A Book for Free Spirits (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 9 [15]

but due to what makes them *different* from us. Animals are valuable precisely because they embody a life that is unlike our own. This move is supposed to displace the alleged anthropocentrism or humanism which the defenders of the first generation were still under the grip of, and who instead of displacing the very foundations of our mistreatment of animals *de facto* merely wanted to enlarge the "like-us crowd" (Cary Wolfe). As Kristeva paraphrasing Freud writes, "Civilization humanizes nature by endowing it with beings that look like us – it is such an animistic process that enables us to 'breath freely [and] feel at home in the uncanny [so that we] can deal by psychical means with our [previously] senseless anxiety.'"[532] In our helplessness, human beings humanize animals in order to be able to apply available patterns of moral behaviour to them. This happens both in recognition of the undeniable similarities but also for lack of a better way of relating to that which is and is not like us. There is, however, a twofold problem with this reasoning: 1) After all and despite its contrary intentions it fails to be non-anthropocentric since it prioritizes the differences, or the *otherness*, of the animal other, and grounds their value in the value *we* accord to otherness. This move is fundamentally anthropocentric insofar as it takes *our* value of otherness to be crucial. However, in reality it is on the contrary because of the *similarities* that we humans and other animals share that it makes sense for us to act as if animals indeed cared about the way we treat them. I believe that this is the idea underlying Levinas' claim that,

> It is clear that, without considering animals as human beings, the ethical extends to all living beings. We do not want to make an animal suffer needlessly and so on. But *the prototype of this is human ethics*. Vegetarianism, for example, arises from the

[532] Kearney 189.

> *transference to animals of the idea of suffering.* The animal suffers. It is *because we, as human, know what suffering is that we can have this obligation.*[533]

The second problem of the 'pro-otherness' stand is that it treats the otherness of the animal other as a self-evidently given, thereby ignoring the concrete, historic ways and modes in which this otherness is produced. As I have tried to show, the boundary between 'man' and 'animal' is not immediately given but instituted in a variety of ways. This institution is never purely representative, descriptive or "objective", if by that we mean that it is free of the vested interests of that particular group which has the power to administer this limit. At this point it might instructive to recall a thought we encountered at the end of the first part: "The compulsively projecting self can project nothing except its own unhappiness, from the cause of which, residing in itself, it is yet cut off by its lack of reflection."[534] As we saw at the end of the first part, our concept of animality is substantially shaped by a certain pathic-projective mechanism by means of which for centuries we have conferred those traits on animals that we were made to despise in ourselves. While we do not want to resist any leveling absorption of the animal and preserve the animal's alterity it is unclear to me how we can do this without proliferating the *negative* stereotypes that have consistently shaped this very *animal* otherness? Moreover, our talk about *the* otherness of *the* animal will as an outcome of these findings likewise have to be closely scrutinized.

While these battles will be hopefully be fought out in the realm of academia, in the meantime we must not overlook that there are other issues that need to be addressed;

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[533] Emmanuel Levinas, "The Paradox of Morality: An Interview With Emmanuel Levinas," in The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other, ed. R. Bernasconi and D. Wood (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988) 172 ; emphasis added.
[534] Horkheimer and Adorno 158.

for let us be honest: it is *not* due to our inadequate theories that animals still suffer so greatly (which does not mean, that there is no need for a continued discourse on this phenomenon). I believe that the prioritization of the opposition to the physical violence we inflict upon literally countless animals is more than a mere prejudice. As Adorno wrote in Negative Dialectics, "to lend a voice to suffering speak is a condition of all truth."[535] I believe that the value of our theories will ultimately be measured by the success in reducing violence and suffering. In the meantime, I agree with Cary Wolfe that we should be "happy, practically speaking" to support any initiative that targets animal suffering, "and this 'practically speaking' should not be taken as a gesture of derision and demotion, since the stakes here ... are frighteningly high for millions, even *billions*, of nonhuman animals even as I speak."[536] We do, however, not even have to go as far as supporting organized initiatives, for, as I have attempted to show, it is oftentimes our everyday normality that is responsible for the continuing assault on the animal kingdom. While it is indisputable that it would be laudable to support such initiatives I believe that there we can actually outdo the good of these initiatives by making slight adjustments in our ordinary habits. It might sound suspicious if not depressing to suggest that the goodness of our moral character might depend on the sum total of utterly trivial actions. Yet, might in not precisely be in the absence of the pressure of the extreme, the exceptional, the heroic that our morality finds its true test? To the academic reader this may sound too "unprogrammatic" to pass as a serious concern for philosophy. In order to reply to this bias let us recall one more time Derrida's encounter with his cat. While I

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[535] Adorno, Negative Dialectics 17/18.
[536] Wolfe 192.

have suggested that we can read this scene as a critique of conceptual thinking I believe that viewed in the light of the light of what Derrida says in Gift of Death we can also understand Derrida's seemingly anecdotal story about his encounter with his cat as an allegorical reminder of the fundamental incongruity between our ontological dependency on the conceptual, general and the subordination of this dependency under the requirements of the ethical. As Derrida argues throughout Gift of Death, the absolute responsibility that the address of the other calls for requires me in my absolute singularity and uniqueness. Our absolute responsibility towards the animal other requires me, or maybe better, strips me naked of the cloak of our human generality.[537] In other words, the ethical precedes, perhaps even shatters, the demands of a systematic and programmatic thinking in which the human-animal relationship is *generally* regulated. This being said, it might appear that I am opposing the philosophical and the non-philosophical dimension of the animal question. However, to conceive of the physical and the theoretical or conceptual violence against animals as two clearly separable issues misconstrues their mutual dependency, as I attempted to show in the second part of this thesis. It is therefore mandatory that we do not content ourselves with the theories that are currently in place and operative in those initiatives. For although it might be a little too simplistic to say that they are "inadequate" (Wolfe), we have to keep in mind that every theory, idea, and concept carries within itself an ultimately indefensible decision that breeds a violence of another kind. Our vigilance must hence extend into both directions, fortifying what we have already achieved while at the same time remaining weary of a dogmatization and ideologization of the ideas at work. I believe that one of

[537] Compare footnote 402.

the most important theoretical challenges will remain to formulate an ethico-political framework that is built on a "generous acceptance" and "a recognition of their [i.e., the animals' ; NF] *particularities*" instead of a merely "leveling absorption."[538] For even if this is done in good faith, we have to salvage the distinctive and distinguishing features of the "animals" to the benefit of a "humanism capable of swallowing everything surprising and unknowable."[539] In other words, we must continue to carefully tune the "real" or physical swallowing versus their conceptual and ideological appropriation. In doing this, we should heed Kristeva's advice and "not seek to solidify, to turn the otherness of the foreigner into a thing. Let us merely touch it, brush by it, without giving it a permanent structure."[540] And first and foremost, we must resist exploiting the animal's otherness and particularity for our identity-building. I hope that this thesis has provided at least some food for further thought on this and related questions. As I said at the very outset of my analysis, in the end I hope that the value of this thesis will not be measured by the ideas it presented and the conclusion it drew from these ideas but by how much these thoughts will manage to "rock to the boat" and to inspire and incite further discussion and debate.

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[538] Kristeva 122.
[539] Kristeva 122.
[540] Kristeva 3.

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