Being, Eating and Being Eaten: Deconstructing the Ethical Subject

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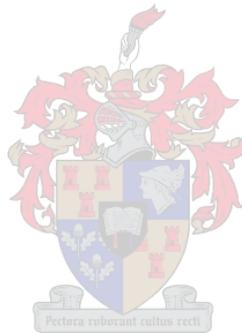
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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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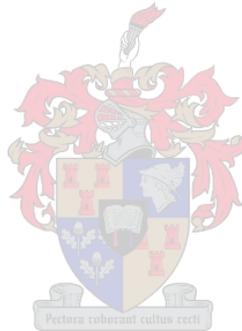
Abstract

This study constitutes a conceptual analysis and critique of the notion of the subject, and the concomitant notion of responsibility, as it has developed through the philosophical history of the modern subject. The aim of this study is to present the reader with a critical notion of responsibility. This study seeks to divorce such a position from the traditional, normative view of the subject, as typified by the Cartesian position. Following Derrida, a deconstructive reading of the subject's conceptual development since Descartes is presented. What emerges from this reading is that, despite various re-conceptualisations of the subject by philosophers as influential and diverse as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Levinas, their respective positions continue to affirm the subject as human. The position presented in this study challenges this notion of the subject as human, with the goal of opening-up and displacing the ethical frontier between human and non-human. It is argued that displacing this ethical frontier introduces complex responsibilities. These complex responsibilities resist the violence inherent to normative positions that typically exclude the non-human – particularly the animal – from the sphere of responsibility.
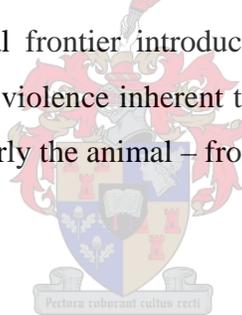
Abstrak

Die studie behels 'n konseptuele analise en kritiese ondersoek van die subjek, asook die verwante konsep van verantwoordelikheid, soos ontwikkel in die filosofiese geskiedenis van die moderne subjek. Die doel van die studie is om 'n kritiese beskouing van verantwoordelikheid te ontwikkel. Die studie poog om so 'n beskouing te skei van die tradisionele, normatiewe sienings wat voortspruit uit die Cartesiaanse posisie. In navolging van Derrida, word 'n dekonstruktiewe lesing van die subjek se konseptuele ontwikkeling sedert Descartes voorgestel. Hieruit blyk dit dat ten spyte van die verskeie herkonseptualiserings van die subjek deur invloedrykende en uiteenlopende filosowe soos Nietzsche, Heidegger en Levinas, word die subjek steeds as menslik voorgehou. Die posisie wat in hierdie studie ontwikkel word daag die idee van die subjek-as-mens uit, en beoog om die etiese grens tussen die menslik en die nie-menslik te oorskry en te verplaas. Daar word geargumenteer dat die verplasing van hierdie etiese grens komplekse verantwoordelikhede skep. Hierdie komplekse verantwoordelikhede bied weerstand teen die inherente geweld van normatiewe posisies, soos veroorsaak deur die uitsluiting van die nie-menslike – spesifiek die dier – van die sfeer van verantwoordelikheid.

To My Family

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Autumn Cannibalism

Salvador Dali

Introduction

Being, Eating, and Being Eaten

I
A difficult subject

Throughout the history of philosophy, the challenge inherent in formulating the subject has fuelled numerous discourses on the question of the subject. At a glance, the question of the subject seems straightforward enough: we all understand and define ourselves as subjects, and generally do not find ourselves in serious doubt with regard to what our subjectivity entails. However, like most significant philosophical problematics, the self-evidence of the subject betrays the difficulty of demonstrating precisely *who* or *what* the subject is. Given the plenitude of ideas and writings available, making a beginning and carving out a line of analysis in a discourse where there is no consensus on what the final meaning of the subject is, became the challenge that instigated this study.

The line of analysis that will be investigated in this study traces the modern history of the subject beginning with Descartes. Though some of the main arguments against the Cartesian position (most notable, Nietzsche's and Heidegger's arguments) are elucidated, this analysis does not center on undermining Descartes' discourse. Rather, the critique presented against the Cartesian position presents us with an idea of where we now stand in terms of the subject and serves as a springboard for further investigation with regard to the subject. The primary aim of this study is therefore to think the *unthought*[1] of the subject.

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[1] In the context of this study the term '*unthought*' denotes the unchallenged space of the subject that emerges once the important changes and displacements in the history of the modern subject are elucidated. This unchallenged space should not only be read as a theoretical omission, but also as that against which the modern tradition of thinking about the subject resists. This space is marked in particular by the question of the animal, since it is the *unthought* of the animal upon which anthropocentric and general notions of the subject are based. Consequently, Derrida (2004:64) argues that '[t]he relations between humans and animals *must* change'. Otherwise stated, these relations must be *thought* anew. This, Derrida (64) contends, is both an '"ontological" necessity and an "ethical" duty.' The reason why Derrida (64) places these words in quotation marks is because the paradigm shift instigated by these new thoughts, will inevitably alter the

The significance of the *unthought* of the subject becomes apparent when we ponder on the danger inherent in dogmatic beliefs: today, perhaps more than ever before, we need to heed the responsibility of continuously questioning and challenging the concepts and assumptions that we employ in our decision-making and actions. The concept of the 'subject' is, I believe, the most important problematic currently deserving of our untiring attention. This is because the way in which we define ourselves influences the ways in which we come to view our responsibilities. An extreme example which serves to illustrate this point is terrorism: we have all borne witness to the havoc wrecked by fundamentalists, who, in subscribing to certain ill-conceived notions of what a 'correct' subject is, view terrorism as a necessary political responsibility. Less radical examples (which are more aligned with the aims of my study) are to be found in contemporary debates on stem cell research, cloning, abortion, euthanasia, genetic modification, AIDS etc. Each of these examples center on at least one of the following two significant questions: 'Who or what is the subject?' and 'What are our responsibilities to this notion of the subject?'

When we consider these contemporary debates, both the urgency and the challenge of formulating the subject in an ethically responsible manner become apparent. However, any attempt to do so invariably leads us back to the question implied in the opening paragraph, namely 'How should one define the subject?' In the absence of a final answer, I would suggest that the most ethical place to begin is precisely with the *unthought* of the subject. Such an analysis serves to highlight the prejudices that inform current notions of subjectivity, as well as open up new avenues for exploring the notions of the subject and subjectivity.

The moral issues that mark contemporary debates (including the ones mentioned above), as well as future debates will never receive final justification. However, as much calculation and consideration as possible must be undertaken (and moreover, undertaken

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very sense and value of present day ontological and the ethical concepts. As such, this change will also affect our notions of what constitutes both the subject and its related predicates, thereby bringing to light new, previously unexplored or *unthought* terrains of the subject.

constantly) in order to engage in these discourses in an ethically responsible manner (Derrida, 2005:6,7; Derrida, 2002a:298; Derrida, 1995:272). These considerations and calculations cannot halt at current concepts of the subject, but must move beyond these discourses to new terrains of thought. This is the imperative of responsible thought and action. Furthermore, this imperative cannot be delayed given the challenges of the current political, technological, social and ecological climates.

In light of the new developments that challenge our concepts of the subject, innovative avenues of thought have become very necessary. The purpose of this study is therefore to attempt to uncover new ways of thinking about the subject and its responsibilities.

Derrida has been chosen as the main thinker to guide this analysis. Though the question of the subject does not constitute his main philosophical focus, Derrida's insights on both the subject and the corresponding predicates of subjectivity are nonetheless very illuminating and conducive to the aim of this study. This study has been further limited by only focusing on a select number of the texts in which he deals explicitly with the topic of the subject. Primary amongst these texts is an interview entitled '"Eating Well" or the Calculation of the Subject' presented in 'Points...Interviews, 1974-1994' (1992). My interest in this particular text lies in the fact that here, Derrida reckons with the historical discourse on the subject, but does so mainly to pave the way for future discourses on the subject. These future discourses, to which he points, raise the question of the animal[2], which comes to mark the *unthought* of the subject.

In the remaining part of this chapter I shall give an illustration of the methodological analysis (called deconstruction) that Derrida employs to 'unearth' the *unthought* of the subject. I shall also introduce the reader to Derrida's initial thoughts on the question of the subject. Lastly, I shall present the reader with a brief overview of the content and structure of this study.

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[2] Derrida has a number of pieces that deal specifically with the motif of the animal. Work that will not be referenced in this study but which provides further avenues for exploring the question of the animal include: '*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger's Hand,' (trans. J. Leavey) in Sallis, S. (ed.) (1987) Deconstruction and philosophy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; and 'Apories: Mourir – s'attendre aux limites de la vérité,' in Le Passage des frontieres: Autour du travail de Jacques Derrida. Paris: Galilée, 1993.

II

Hungry for love: Illustrating the deconstructive method

The manner in which Derrida paves the way for new thoughts in a particular discourse or on a specific subject matter is primarily through a deconstructive strategy. Claire Denis' film entitled 'Trouble Every Day' (2001) will be used as an illustration of what this strategy entails. The reason for choosing this example is because the subject matter of this film alludes to the title of this study, namely 'Being, Eating and Being Eaten'.

In this film the two lead characters suffer from a mental illness whereby the expression 'hunger for love' takes on a literal meaning. In other words, the two characters are overcome by the urge to bite, and as far as humanly possible, devour their respective lovers. Most reviewers have condemned the film for its 'explicit portrayal of sexually motivated cannibalism' (Travers, 2003) However, other critics have also praised it for having genuine artistic merit. These reviewers interpret the film as being a portrayal of and questioning on the space of the human body. They praise the film on the grounds that the body is recorded 'not with a perverse salacious relish' but rather as 'a thing of beauty, the stimulus of our own, most basic, desires.' (Travers, 2003). The reason for interpreting the portrayal of the body as a stimulus of desire, is that in 'sumptuously filming naked flesh as if it were an anonymous carcass of meat, [Denis suggests] that carnal desire has a double meaning: the need to make love and eat meat are two facets of the same primeval instinct.' (Travers, 2003)

In drawing our attention to the double-meaning of carnal desire, Denis seeks to focus our attention on 'the *unthought* of the body (rather than the conspicuous taboo of sex as a carnivorous act)'. In other words, according to this interpretation, Denis's aim is not to give a moral reading of sex, but rather to attempt to expose the viewer to the unquestioned space that the body occupies in the act of love-making. This space finds its expression in the 'carnal conflagration' acted out in 'Trouble Every Day', which ultimately provides an outlet to a 'latent sexual repression or taboo' (Met, 2003).

Though the meaning accorded to the film by its enthusiasts seems accurate enough, the double meaning of carnal desire could be even further explicated by focusing more on the deconstructive elements at work in the film. I would suggest that a close reading of the film reveals that in 'Trouble Every Day', Denis attempts a deconstruction of the traditional opposition between love and hunger.

Typically, a deconstructive strategy involves two steps: the first step is aimed at reversing a dominant hierarchy. Derrida (1981:41) writes of this step: '[i]n a traditional philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful coexistence but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms dominates the other (axiologically, logically etc.), occupies the commanding position.' This creates the need to 'at a particular moment...reverse the hierarchy.' 'Trouble Every Day' can be read as playing on the traditional hierarchy that exists between an idealised and pure love and a base and carnivorous hunger. In this hierarchy, the idealised term love occupies the commanding position in our system of meaning and a carnivorous hunger is posited as the submissive term. How this opposition works, for example, is to characterise lovemaking as the joining of two souls and to dismiss the material, carnal elements that inspire lovemaking. Denis visually confronts us with a hierarchical reversal, by demonstrating how hunger precedes the act of lovemaking, in that the carnal hunger for the other is the stimulus for love-making and ecstasy. In doing so, Dennis illustrates how the submissive term (hunger) actually precedes or anticipates the commanding term (love). Thus, by demonstrating how the argument which elevates love ('love is the ultimate stimulus of sex') can be used to favour hunger, one manages to reverse the commanding term. This uncovers and undoes the traditional hierarchisation, thereby bringing about a significant displacement (Culler, 1983:88).

This displacement signifies the second step of a deconstruction since, '[i]t is on [this] condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of *intervening* in the field of oppositions it criticises and which is also a field of non-discursive forces' (Derrida, 1973:195). This displacement reveals what a certain history may have concealed or excluded, thereby 'constituting itself as history through this repression in which it had a stake' (195). In this example, the history of lovemaking has oppressed the *unthought* of

the body, which has resulted in a latent sexual repression or taboo. Thinking the *unthought* of the body gives an outlet to this repression and allows us to rethink the system of meaning that informs our sexual constructs. Deconstruction therefore works within the terms of the system in order to breach them (Culler, 1983:86), and in the above example, renegotiates the line between a conspicuous taboo of sex as a carnivorous act and an explicit carnal conflagration (Met, 2003). This is achieved by showing how the terms 'love' and 'hunger', rather than acting in opposition to each other, are both implicated in the act of lovemaking. Another way of stating this is to say that the limit or boundary between love and hunger is mediated by *différance* [3].

III

Beyond a simple liquidation

Derrida employs the deconstructive method, illustrated above, in his analysis of the subject. He warns that in our current philosophical discourses, it is often too simplistically assumed that the notion of the 'subject' has already been sufficiently deconstructed. Those who no longer notice the deconstructive opportunities present in our current notions of the subject, wrongly conclude that all we are now left with is the

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[3] The notions of *différance* is intimately linked with Derrida's purpose for doing deconstruction. Through reversing and displacing violent oppositional hierarchies, Derrida shows how the border demarcating two terms cannot act as an oppositional demarcation. Rather, such a border must be mediated by *différance* – a term which sounds exactly the same as the French term *différence* (meaning 'differing' or 'deferring'), but which, through means of the ending 'ance', produces verbal nouns and hence the new meaning of "difference-differing-deferring' (Culler, 1983:97). This new meaning 'designates both a "passive" difference already in place as the condition of signification and an act of differing which produces differences' (97).

In the term 'love' for example, the '"passive" difference already in place as the condition of signification alludes to the difference between this term and all other terms of signification – In other words, the term 'love' has no positive content but instead derives its meaning by means of the place it occupies in the relational network which defines a system of signification. Therefore, we understand the term 'love' through understanding how it is different to the term 'dog', 'hat', 'grass', 'anger' etc.

However, the second sense of *différance* - namely the 'act of differing which produces differences' (97) - prohibits us from forever fixing the meaning of the term 'love'. In the above deconstruction it was illustrated how the term 'hunger' for example always already intervenes and is implicated in the term 'love'. The boundary marking these two systems of signification can therefore not be a static and closed boundary. Rather, this boundary is mediated by *différance* defined as 'the systematic play of differences, of traces of differences, of the spacing [espacement] by which elements relate to one another' (Derrida, 1981:27).

This continual play of differences implies that '[n]othing, either in the elements or in the system, is anywhere simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces' (26).

question: 'Who comes *after* the subject?' (Derrida, 1995:255) For Derrida, this question rests upon two problematic assumptions. Firstly, the question presupposes that something named 'the subject' can be identified; and secondly, the question assumes a 'liquidation of the subject' (255).

According to Derrida, this 'liquidation' exposes an illusion if not an offense. However, it can also be interpreted as a retaliation, as an implicit promise, which reads: '[w]e will do justice, we will save or rehabilitate the subject' (256). This slogan assumes both 'a return to the subject' and 'the return of the subject' (256). Derrida brands this line of questioning as 'confused' because for him, '[t]he ontological questioning that deals with the *subjectum,* in its Cartesian and post-Cartesian forms, is anything but a liquidation' (257).

In order to illustrate the illusion of the subject's liquidation, Derrida seeks to problematise the traditional ontological questions regarding the conditions of possibility of thinking, intentionality, self-consciousness, conscience etc. He does this in order to identify what is designated in our philosophical tradition under the concept of the subject, that once deconstructed, radically affects the unity of the concept [subjectivity] and the name [subject] (Derrida in Howells, 1998:155)[4].

In other words, Derrida seeks to deconstruct the traditional ontological questions so as to undermine the anthropocentric notions that constitute our understanding of the subject and its predicates. Of specific importance to Derrida (1995:259) is how these notions link the subject 'to the law, as subject subjected to the law, subject to the law in its very autonomy, to ethical or juridical law, to political law or power, to order...' Derrida views any other strategy for accomplishing this aim as misguided, since it is *futile* to hope 'to

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[4] Another way of stating the above is as follows: how we view the predicate of subjectivity influences how we draw the boundaries around the subject. In other words, the predicate of subjectivity determines the criteria according to which we model 'the system of the subject'. The way in which we frame these boundaries in turn influences what will be included/excluded in terms of the critical determinants of our subjectivity. To truly engage with the *unthought* of the subject/subjectivity one therefore needs to rethink the very 'boundaries of subjectivity, theory and praxis as conceived throughout the Western philosophical tradition' (Williams, 2001:109).

break with the metaphysical underpinning of subjectivity [including the idea that the subject has been liquidated]…*without* considering the conditions of possibility that give rise to these conceptualizations of the subject' (Williams, 2001:111).

Once we go back, and get beyond the confusion of this *doxa,* we can show that through various philosophical strategies, the subject has been 'reinterpreted, displaced, decentred, re-inscribed' *without* having been 'liquidated' (Derrida, 1995:258). At this point, one arrives at two new and serious questions, both evoking the *unthought* of the subject: firstly, *'Who or what 'answers' to the question 'who'?'* And, secondly, *'What becomes of those problematics that seemed to presuppose a classical determination of the subject (objectivity, be it scientific or other – ethical, legal, political, etc.)'* (258) (my italics).

<u>Who or what 'answers' to the question 'who'?</u>

In this first question, Derrida recalls that which is precisely already an open question (Williams, 2001:4-5): in defining the 'who' and its corresponding predicates as an open question, Derrida is designating 'that place "of the subject" that appears precisely through deconstruction itself' (Nancy, see Derrida, 1995:258). The reason for this move is that Derrida wishes to draw attention to the deconstructive moves that are necessary to transform, reposition or reconstitute the very question of subjectivity (Williams, 2001:8). This is, however, a tricky position to assume. By exposing the concept of the subject as a *construct* that must be repositioned, Derrida juggles two contradictory views: firstly, he must reckon with the *fiction* of 'a being who, throughout the history of metaphysics…has dreamt of full-presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of the game' (Derrida, 1978:264). Secondly, (and simultaneously) Derrida must aim neither to resurrect a deconstructed subject, nor to ignore its insistence and its significance[5] (Williams, 2001:8-9).

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[5] See pages 34-41 for a discussion of the nature of this problem, as well as a means of working with this problem.

This ultimately ties any attempt at repositioning the subject to, what Williams (2001:8) terms the paradox of the subject. Kierkegaard (1985:37) describes this paradox as 'wanting to discover something that thought cannot think'. In other words, the concept of a fictional subject must necessarily be viewed as both a requirement of analysis and something that must be radically displaced (Williams, 2001:9) In light of this paradox, the ultimate question and strategy for Derrida is to reconfigure the subject both dynamically and creatively, in a way that brings to light the persistence of Cartesian underpinnings of various conceptions of the subject. This is done in order to 'rearrange the subject' without resurrecting that which it seeks to question – hence, 'to no longer…speak about [the subject], but to write it, to write "on" it as on the "subjectile," for example' (Derrida, 1995 268).

Derrida's first question that recalls the *unthought* of the subject is used to direct this analysis in three ways: firstly, it is necessary to reckon with the significance of a deconstructed subject. In order to do so, I shall trace the Cartesian subject's displacement and repositioning so as to highlight the implications of an anti-rational humanist subject. Secondly, one must bring to light the persistence of Cartesian underpinnings of various conceptions of the subject. The way I shall go about this, is to reinvestigate the deconstructive history of the subject, in order to identify which premises continue to be informed by rational humanism[6]. Thirdly, one must redirect attention to the open

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[6] A conceptual distinction must be made between three forms of humanism that will be used in this study, namely: **Renaissance humanism**, **rational humanism** and **anthropocentric humanism**.

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Renaissance humanism denotes a period during the Renaissance where philosophical inquiry centered on accumulating 'a rich perspective, both on the natural world and on human affairs, as we encounter them in our actual experience' (Toulmin, 1990:27). These philosophical writings displayed 'an urbane open-mindedness' and a 'skeptical tolerance' (25).
In terms of 'an urban open-mindedness', all varieties of human fallibility 'began to be celebrated as charmingly limitless consequences of human character and personality' (27). As such, the plurality, ambiguity and lack of certainty that characterised human experience were not viewed as a shortcoming or error (30), but rather seen as testimony to the complexity and diversity at play in our daily lives (28).
Likewise, the 'skeptical tolerance' that characterised Renaissance humanist thinking portrayed the belief that it is as futile 'to deny general philosophical theses' as it is 'to assert them' (29). The term 'skepticism' as we understand it today, is therefore far removed from the way in which it was employed by the Renaissance humanists. Since the time of Descartes, we understand skepticism to denote a 'destructive nay-saying: the skeptic denies the things that other philosophers assert' (29). No genuine skeptic however, 'doubts or denies or disbelieves any theory, any hypostudy, or any belief'. This unfounded pretence to knowledge was viewed as a great sin by true skeptics, and such arrogance was variously called 'rashness, conceit, pride, dogmatism, presumption, and culpable ignorance' (Suber, 1996:1). Thus the essence of the

true skeptic's position is continual inquiry (2). In fact, the motto of Michel de Montaigne, arguably the most important skeptic of the 16th century, was *'Que sais-je?'* ('What do I know?'). This motto evokes the belief that nothing can be absolutely certain or trustworthy (Nickles, 2000). Any appeal to certainty, begs the question as Montaigne explains in the 'Apology':

> To adjudicate [between the true and the false] among the appearance of things we need to have a distinguishing method (*un instrument judicatoire*); to validate this method we need to have a justifying argument; but to validate this justifying argument we need the very method at issue. And there we are, going round on the wheel' (as qnouted in Rescher, 1977:17).

Thus, Renaissance humanists 'had a delicate feeling for the *limits* of human experience' (Toulmin, 1990:27). Accordingly, they felt that abstract 'philosophical *questions*…reach[ed] beyond the scope of experience in an indefensible manner' (27). Philosophers were encouraged to keep their inquiry at the level of the particular instead of the level of the general and certain. Furthermore, philosophers also felt it proper to limit their 'ambitions to the reach of humanity'. Such modesty was seen as doing the Renaissance humanists credit (30). It is for this reason that Renaissance humanism marks out 'the space of all human beings, and of them alone' (Todorov, 2002:30).

This philosophical inquiry into the space of human beings, and them alone, is superficially similar to the goal of rational humanism. However, in this study we will show that Renaissance humanism does not presuppose the same arrogance or result in the same negative consequences, as is the case with rationalist humanism.

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It was during the 17th century, that the Renaissance humanist insights were lost, and replaced by a rational humanism. Rational humanism reaches its apex in the philosophical debate initiated by Descartes (Toulmin, 1990:30;31). This position served to discredit the status of practical philosophy, previously characterised by 'the oral, the particular, the local, and the timely' (30).

Whereas before, rhetoric and logic were accorded the same status, the period of rational humanism discarded the value of 'public utterances before audiences' (i.e. oral argumentation) in favour of proofs. A characteristic of these proofs is that their soundness and validity can be established and judged in the written form (31). Likewise, the method of using particular case studies (referencing detailed circumstances) for making moral judgments was replaced by 'general abstract theory, divorced from concrete problems of moral practice' (32). As such, rational humanism was primarily concerned with 'comprehensive general principles of ethical theory' based on 'timeless and universal principles' (32). Rational humanists also judged former inquiries into 'ethnography, geography, and history' as naïve and irrelevant fascinations of the Renaissance humanists (32;33). These inquiries were substituted by a rationality that imposes on philosophy a need to seek out the abstract axioms by which particulars could be connected together (33). This model of inquiry consequently dispensed with 'a whole realm of questions that had previously been recognized as legitimate topics of inquiry' (33). In seeking to bring to light these universal, abstract, permanent structures 'underlying all changeable phenomena in Nature' (34), rational humanism also forwent an interest in the transience and timeliness of decisions and actions. Context and time-dependent matters were dismissed as trivial (33).

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This rational humanist paradigm, which defines the history of modern philosophy, is what Heidegger understands under the essence of humanism (see 'Letter on Humanism'; 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth'). Though reaching its apex in the philosophy of Descartes, Heidegger contends that the beginning of rational humanism originates in Plato's thoughts where 'human beings are given a central and privileged place among beings' (Calarco, 2004:178). In this context human beings are defined metaphysically as 'rational animals' directed 'to the liberation of their possibilities, to the certitude of their destiny, and to the securing of their 'life'" (Heidegger, 1998:181). In Plato, 'truth is located in the correct representation of "objects" by human "subjects" (Calarco, 2004:178).

For Descartes, this search for correct representation becomes a search in determining 'an absolute, unshakeable ground of truth' (178). As we will illustrate in chapter one, this ground is found in 'the self-presence and self-consciousness of the human *subjectum* which underlies representations and assures their correctness' (178).

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It is precisely this **rational humanist** paradigm– which appeals to the modernist conditions of the possibility of thinking, intentionality, self-consciousness, conscience etc. – that I will seek to undermine in

question of the 'who' in order to reposition the subject. This repositioning brings to light the previously *unthought* premises of subjectivity. This I hope to accomplish by subjecting the enduring rational humanist premises to a deconstruction in order to show what the modern history of the subject has repressed.

What becomes of those problematics that seemed to presuppose a classical determination of the subject?

Apart from uncovering and challenging the history of the subject, thinking the *unthought* of the subject also directs us to Derrida's second question, which raises the issue of our ethical responsibility: the general ethical significance of the subject lies in the fact that any notion of the subject cannot be divorced from the corresponding ethical and political implications that accompany these notions. This is because 'the status of the subject is inseparable from the status of the question [at any given moment] precisely because our mode of questioning, our framing of a project may also gesture towards certain exclusions' (Williams, 2001:6) Thus, Derrida's repositioning of the subject is not only concerned with exposing the fallacy of the subject's liquidation; but also with the ethical and political implications of a deconstructed subject that still bears Cartesian traits, and that continues to link the ontological question with the *subjectum* (7). Recognising the interrelatedness of subjectivity, ethics and politics, begs the following two questions: 'What does it mean for the subject to be constructed or constituted by certain presuppositions rather than others?' and 'What, moreover, are the philosophical, [ethical] and political effects of [a certain] construction of the concept of the subject?' (6).

In order to address the above two questions, I intend to show how displacing the idea of a classical Cartesian subject with the notion of a deconstructed subjected, has important

the study. The post-Cartesian positions discussed in this study will thus be used to illustrate a traditional **anti-rational humanist** position. Derrida however shows how these anti-rational humanist positions are themselves still a form of, what I will term **anthropocentric humanism** since these discourses remain bound by human notions of subjectivity. In the third chapter of this study, I shall briefly investigate some of Montaigne's thoughts (hence **Renaissance humanism**) in order to illustrate how this type of humanism has a greater affinity with the position that I take with regard to the subject, than either rational or anthropocentric-humanism.

implications for responsible action within an immanent context. Already by the end of the first chapter, some of these important implications are uncovered and explicated by means of ideas borrowed from complexity theory and Derrida's own notion of *différance*. It is my contention however, that recognising these additional responsibilities cannot simply be equated with 'being responsible'. This is because a truer awareness of responsible action is not only contingent upon the theoretical recognition of what the notion of differentiated, open and immanent subjects entails – in other words, the recognition that we are complex beings in a complex world – but also the incorporation of this theoretical point in the dominant philosophical discourse that defines the very predicates of subjectivity.

If the unity of the subject and subjectivity is not radically affected, philosophically speaking - i.e. if the traditional ontological questions, the traditional determinate predicates, continue to inform our notions of subjectivity – then, in concrete terms, any appeal to responsibility within an immanent and complex context, will halt at the current philosophical conception of the subject (presently marked in the discourse by the subject's supposed 'liquidation' (Derrida, 1995:255-258)). As such, the significant insights drawn from complexity theory regarding the attributes of a deconstructed subject can potentially become another avenue of repression. This is because these implications can be superficially appropriated, thereby threatening that which, ethically-speaking, is at stake. Any true awareness of what responsible decisions and actions may entail can only be gleaned once we rid the dominant philosophical model of all forms of determinism, and hence of metaphysics. Only then can the insights gained from complexity theory be put to use and made to truly work in future discourses on both the subject and subjectivity.

IV

Following the course of Being

At this juncture, it is necessary to explain the significance of the title[7] of this study, since it illustrates both what the *unthought* of the subject may entail, and the trajectory of analysis that will be followed:

Through investigating both the Cartesian and Post-Cartesian history of the subject, I intend to demonstrate where we now stand in terms of '*Being*', hence the first part of the title. This aim is achieved in the first two chapters of this study. Chapter one investigates the important changes that have occurred in the history of the modern subject, as well as the implications that these changes have had. In chapter two, the philosophical history of the Post-Cartesian subject will be turned back upon itself so that its premises can be reevaluated. This is done in order to expose the hidden rational humanist remnants that continue to inform subjectivity, and the related notions of responsibility.

In chapter three a deconstruction of the anthropomorphic grounds on which current day conceptions of 'Being' are still based will be undertaken. This deconstruction refocuses our attention on the materiality of 'Being', primarily the animal. Traditionally, the animal has always been repressed and excluded from the dominant schema of subjectivity (Derrida, 1995:278). Through means of reversing and displacing this schema, the question of the animal - both in terms of the animal *as* animal, and the animal-in-the-human/the-human-in-the-animal – comes to occupy a meaningful role in a new schema. The question of the animal also necessitates that we reckon with a whole array of previously unchallenged assumptions at work in the schema of subjectivity including need, desire and sacrifice. These assumptions are all related to a metonymical '*Eating*', which comes to define not only the second part of this title, but also the previously *unthought* premises of 'Being'.

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[7] In the title the term 'Being' is used to signify what I refer to elsewhere as 'the subject'.

However, 'Eating', as Derrida (282) shows us 'does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but *learning* and *giving* to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to-eat.' In other words, subjectivity is not only constituted by the fact that 'Beings Eat', but also by the fact that '*Being*[s] [are] *Eaten'* (the third part of this title). Metonymical eating takes on an ethical significance in the discourse of subjectivity as we are responsible for eating the human-animal other as well as eating the Good. '*Being Eaten'* can, however, also be read as an acknowledgement that the concept of 'Being' - traditionally understood as a self-present, idealised interior - must give way to a continual questioning of what or who now constitutes 'Being'. In the conclusion of this study the ethical implications of a metonymical eating - which demands infinite responsibility, even in the absence of not knowing precisely how to demarcate 'Being' - will be investigated.

Chapter 1

The history of Being (Part 1): Displacing the *cogito*

Since the time that Descartes confidently asserted that 'I know clearly that there is nothing that can be known to me more clearly and evidently than my own mind' (Descartes, 1960:116), the subject has – as mentioned in the introductory chapter – undergone many 're-interpretations, restorations and re-inscriptions'. (Derrida, 1995:257). This has led some to believe that the concept 'subject' is completely liquidated (255). Though Derrida is quick to reproach those who speak of the subject's simple liquidation, the truth remains that concepts of the subject have changed considerably since the time of Descartes' *cogito*.

It is important to emphasise and reckon with these changes for two key reasons: firstly, in doing so, one highlights the fiction of the subject. This, as already stated, implies that there is no real subject to which we can return, and hence no thinker of subjectivity (Calarco, 2004:186). And, secondly, in spite of this recognition, the re-interpretations, displacements and re-inscriptions that mark the historical discourse on the subject undermine the ethical certainties on which early constructs of subjectivity are based. These changes facilitate a re-think of the important premises and implications of a contemporary subject.

In this chapter, I shall be investigating the modern history of the subject. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the changes that have taken place in this history. These changes facilitate both an understanding of the characteristics of a rational humanist and anti-rational humanist subject; and the ethical-political problematics that underlie these characterisations. In undertaking this investigation, I hope to illustrate where we now stand (philosophically-speaking) in terms of the subject.

The tradition of the subject that that will be investigated in this chapter runs from Descartes, through Nietzsche to Heidegger[8]. The reasons for focusing on these three philosophers are as follows: Descartes' subject marks the birth of modern philosophy's preoccupation with the subject. The Cartesian dualism between mind on the one hand, and body on the other, as well as the consequent separation of a realm for 'pure thought' (*res cogitans*) from the 'sensual, reactive and non-discriminatory site of the body' (*res extensa*), has had a profound effect upon the subsequent history of modern philosophical thought (Williams, 2001:14). Indeed, as Williams (14) states 'no philosophy of the subject can take its bearing without reference to Descartes'. Many philosophies contest the Cartesian subject on epistemological grounds, demonstrating that Descartes' subject is merely one conception of the subject amongst many. However, despite this, it nevertheless remains clear that 'the construction of a modern, rational subjectivity was inaugurated by this dominant Cartesian problematic' (14). As a result, it is important to take note of this problematic.

Nietzsche and Heidegger are two of the most prominent early Post-Cartesian philosophers to assert themselves in opposition to this Cartesian subject. Both these philosophers criticise the centrality of consciousness within the original problematic adopted by Western metaphysics. In so doing, they help to expose the myth of a fully self-present subject (117). As such, these early deconstructive readings of the subject, though developed along different trajectories, radically altered the idea of the subject. These readings also influenced Derrida's own position, in that he has drawn on and developed Nietzsche's and Heidegger's positions (117). For these reasons the respective philosophies of Nietzsche and Heidegger are a good springboard from which to examine Post-Cartesian developments in the philosophical discourse on the subject.

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[8] Though Derrida (1995:259) suggests that the history that should be traced should run through Descartes to Kant and to Husserl, I have instead chosen to focus on Nietzsche and Heidegger (instead of Kant and Husserl). The reason for doing so is because these early deconstructions of the Cartesian subject have important complex implications for how we understand the subject and its related responsibilities. Therefore, both Nietzsche and Heidegger's more radical take on the subject serve to highlight the complexities which will be developed in this study.

I

Descartes and the Birth of the Modern Subject

'...I, who am certain that I am, do not yet know clearly enough what I am...'
– René Descartes, 'The Second Meditation'

Battling with a malicious demon:

The birth of the Cartesian subject – marking the beginning of the modern philosophical history of the subject – saw its origins in 'Descartes Discourse on Method'. Of specific importance is 'The Second Meditation,' wherein he contemplates the nature of the human mind, and the fact that it is easier to know the mind than the body.

In 'The Second Meditation' Descartes conducts a thought experiment in order to help him gain both surety of and clarity on the nature of his existence. The self-evidence of the subject is, however not presupposed in his analysis. As such, the Cartesian subject is not grounded in any definite certainty regarding the *cogito*, but rather in an 'epistemological insecurity' (term used in Bordo, 1987). This insecurity arises from Descartes' deep skepticism regarding the possibility of gaining any certainty of reality from the viewpoint of the subject (Williams, 2001:14).
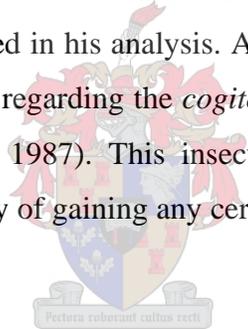
After 'The First Meditation', Descartes is in radical doubt about whether any certainties *can* exist. He has begun by assuming that everything he sees is false and has consequently convinced himself that nothing that his 'deceptive memory' has represented to him has ever existed. He thinks himself without his senses, body, figure, place, extension and movement since he contends that these 'are all fictions of [the] mind' (Descartes, 1960:107). Accordingly, he is left only with the question: '[w]hat is left that we can think of as true?' (108)

In this thought experiment, he imagines that a malicious demon exists, a 'malignant genius, whose resources and diligence are all directed towards deceiving [him]'. '[W]hat' he asks 'am I to say?' (110). On both counts, Descartes (110) comes up with one impregnable certainty: namely the *ego cogito ergo sum.*

'And now I have found it; for thought is the one attribute that cannot be wrenched from me. I am, I exist: that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I think. If I ceased to think, I might very well cease to be, or to exist, at that moment. So now I am admitting nothing but what is necessarily true; I am, by definition, a thinking thing [substance], that is to say, a mind or soul, an understanding or a rational being, terms of which the meaning has hitherto been unknown to me. I am a real thing, truly existent'

Thus, the only certain evidence that we have to prove that we are indeed 'something' and not 'nothing' rests in our ability to think. In other words, Descartes eliminates his anxiety by focusing on an authentic *cogito*, capable of distinguishing in a rational way between different existential states (Williams, 2001:15).

Caught in the prison of the skull:

In his analysis of the subject, Descartes is concerned with developing a formal theory of the subject, one with universal validity (Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:227). This general assumption of universality allows Descartes to quite unproblematically use his own experience as a paradigm example of existence, defined as a universal, certain and indubitable attribute of all selves (227). Furthermore, the emphasis on rationality, that in part characterised the Enlightenment Ideal, allows Descartes to frame his questions independently of context. This method of analysis facilitates the development of a 'timeless, permanent structure of the self that does not change in a contingent world' (227;228). Both Descartes' assumption of universal validity and his employment of a rationality that does not depend on context, has led to major problems concerning his philosophical methodology; as well as the implications that it has for a world inhabited by people 'caught in the prisons of their own skulls' (229).

Nietzsche addresses the first problem of Descartes' methodological imprudence by showing how Descartes, despite perceiving a minor trap, nevertheless remains blind to a much larger trap (Kofman, 1991:183): Descartes starts his analysis by radically doubting any certainty in reality, yet succumbs to 'the old metaphysical inheritance incorporated in

language and grammatical categories' (183). Kofman (183) describes Descartes' 'entrapment' in metaphysics as follows:

> 'Descartes naïveté is to have believed that he could "think" without language, that he could "rid himself" of language in favour of reason, at the very moment he was obeying the unsurpassable constraints of language, at the very moment he was interpreting things according to a schema inherent to language - a schema belonging not to a pure mind but indispensable to a living man determined to appropriate the world and affirm his power.'

In the next section we will be examining Nietzsche's criticism of the subject, but at this point it must be noted that the *cogito* cannot be a rational truth, or an immediate certainty. This is because any attempt to think of the *cogito* as a fixed and universal attribute (Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:228) immediately ignores 'a series of mediations that separate me always already from myself and that are so many beliefs, opinions, prejudices, "articles of faith," imaginative fictions.' (Kofman, 1991:180).

Furthermore, to contemplate the essence of the *cogito* as inherent to the mind and sufficient to know it with, has serious solipsistic implications for an individual who is 'trapped inside his own head and [who] reflects upon images of the external world that reach his mind[9]' (Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:228). Most notable of these implications is that 'other people cannot be trusted or considered when forming a cognitive picture of the world' (228). In the following section, the reason for subscribing to the idea of a self-present cogito, as well as the implications that this has for the subject, will be examined in more detail.

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[9] The theory alluded to in this quote is a theory of representationalism, which refers to the idea that '.... the only things we can know are our representations of the world (e.g. ideas, perceptions, beliefs etc.), not the world itself.' (On-line dictionary of Philosophy). In other words, a *representation* can be defined as something that stands in for a relevant environmental feature, with the power to guide behaviour. That which it stands for is its content; and its standing in for that content is *representing* it (Haugeland, 1991:62). Luntley (1999:5-7) differentiates between two views of respresentationalism: the simplest version of representationalism is the Cartesian model, which states that 'propositional attitudes should be conceived of as relations to Ideas, and Ideas are non-physical entities uncovered by introspection.' The more contemporary view of representationalism is the physicalist view, which defines our possession of content in terms of properties of states independent of the world, and these independent states are justified in terms of causal properties that are externally related (i.e. representations are independent of that which they represent) and are therefore context-free.

Man as a fragment of the whole:

According to Bauman (in Cilliers & de Villiers, 228-229), the Enlightenment Ideal and the corresponding modernist approach to the world arose from 'the (shocking) realisation that there is no order *inherent* to the world; everything is contingent' (228). As a result, it was necessary to *impose* order upon the world, in order to tame the natural, chaotic world and subject it to regular, repeatable, and predictable patterns (228). The same logic applies to the subject: Descartes wants to structure, classify and universalise the subject in order to discover what is certain and indubitable about man (228;229). Descartes thus reduces objective truth to subjective certainty, which according to Heidegger, sets in motion the process that would eventually lead to 'will to mastery' (Taylor, 2001:83).

Heidegger contends that this 'will to mastery' became the goal of both science and technology. This goal characterises a world in which thinking is reduced to calculating and ordering both nature and men in a way aimed at total and exclusive mastery (Krell, 1993:309). In this context man becomes 'content with maintaining its scientific claim to truth, desiring [only] the presence of the object to thought'[10] (Williams, 2001:118). As such, man abandons thinking which, according to Heidegger (1993:220), is something 'in sofar as thinking, belonging to Being, listens to Being'.

The implications of this Cartesian view lead to a fundamental insensitivity to the way in which the subject is constituted by ethical and political interactions with others in the world (Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:229). As a result, Descartes' egoism becomes a subjectivity that, according to Heidegger (1977:152-153), only gains in power until we have reached a 'a planetary imperialism of technologically organised man, [in which] the subjectivism of man attains its acme. [From this point] it will descend to the level of organised uniformity and there firmly establish itself.' In other words, the solipsistic implications of the *cogito* make it impossible for us to relate to each other as

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[10] See both Heidegger's discussion of rational humanism in footnote 6, and a description of representationalism in footnote 9.

'constitutively companion species' (Harraway, 2003:2). Our interactions with each other become as external, mechanical and uniform as that of cogs in a wheel. For Heidegger (1977b:152), '[t]his uniformity becomes the surest instrument of total, i.e. technological, rule over the earth'.

This view has devastating consequences for our humanity as it leads to a sense of isolation and fragmentation. Schiller (1965:40) describes the repercussions the Cartesian subject as follows: '[e]ternally chained to only a fragment of the whole, man himself grew to be only a fragment...he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of imprinting humanity upon his nature he becomes merely the imprint of his occupation, of his science.' The message here is that in order for man to develop any type of meaningful self-identity, it is necessary to forego the simplistic assumptions on which the self-transparent and certain Cartesian *cogito* is based. Otherwise stated, it is necessary to introduce the complexities and subtleties essential to an embodied subject, fully at home in the world.

The illusion of faith:

The above analysis demonstrates how Descartes attempted to overcome the specter of doubt and uncertainty regarding the conditions of true knowledge by positing the *cogito* as the 'source of all claims to truth and objectivity' (Williams, 2001:17). However, the analysis also shows that Descartes was unsuccessful in this aim due to the fact that he relies 'on "unshakeable articles of faith" that deprive his doubt of radicality and seriousness' (Kofman, 1991:180). These unshakeable articles of faith enter his discussion on the subject at the very moment that 'he preaches a radical and hyperbolic doubt' (180). Descartes' failure continues to haunt post-Cartesian philosophies, which remain inextricably linked to the epistemological insecurity that initiated Descartes' deliberations on the subject. In fact, one could go as far as to say that this epistemological insecurity defines '*a fissure within all* [latter] *discourses of subjectivity'* (Williams, 2001:17). This fissure has led to the many aforementioned 'reinterpretations, displacements and re-inscriptions' of the subject.

Such displacements seek to challenge the basic premises on which a Cartesian notion of the subject and the corresponding rational humanist tradition relies. These premises include the radical dichotomy between mind and body, where mind is viewed as the privileged term; Descartes' enthusiastic endorsement of 'immediate certainties'; and a whole array of assumptions regarding both the 'I' (or the ego), as well as the act of thinking. Derrida (1995:264) writes: '[c]oncerning Descartes, one could discover…aporia, fictions, and fabrications…This would have at least the virtue of de-simplifying, of "de-homogenizing" the references to something like The Subject.'

In the following two sections, both Nietzsche and Heidegger's early deconstructions and displacements of the Cartesian subject will be investigated in more detail. The respective philosophies that they pose for gaining a more 'truthful' understanding of subjectivity will also be examined. This more 'truthful' account attempts to reintroduce some of the complexities and subtleties needed to understand the subject as a meaningful entity, rather than a mere fragment, or imprint of his science.

II

Deconstructive turns
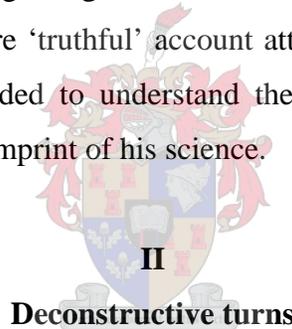
'Whoever ventures to answer…metaphysical questions at once by an appeal to a sort of intuitive perception, like the person who says, "I think, and know that this, at least, is true, actual, and certain" – will encounter a smile and two question marks from a philosopher nowadays. "Sir," the philosopher will perhaps give him to understand, "it is improbable that you are not mistaken; but why insist on the truth?"-'
– Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Beyond Good and Evil'

Nietzsche and a complex process of becoming:

When we look at the different definitions of deconstruction, we can see that Nietzsche's displacement of the Cartesian subject comes very close to Culler, the Derridean scholar's, definition of deconstruction. Culler (1983:92) states that '[t]o deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies, by identifying in the text *the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of the argument*, the key concept or premise.' (my italics)

The first rhetorical operation that needs to be identified is Descartes' belief in the immediate certainty of thought (also defined as a metaphysics of presence). Culler (1983:93-94) argues that there are numerous concepts employed in the history of the philosophical tradition that depend on the value of presence. Some of these concepts relevant to the proof of the *cogito ergo sum* are: 'the presence of ultimate truths to a divine consciousness'; 'a spontaneous or unmediated intuition'; and 'truth' as that which 'subsists behind appearances'. Culler's point is that when Descartes concludes that the '*I am, I exist,* is true of necessity every time I state it or conceive it in my mind' (Descartes, 1960:108), he makes a sort of appeal to presence, in that he claims that the *cogito* 'is present to itself in the act of thinking or doubting'(Culler, 1983:94). Furthermore, the act of 'demonstrating', 'revealing' and 'showing what is the case' – all of which are methodological principles of Descartes' proof - also invoke presence (94).

Derrida's deconstruction of the Cartesian position (as appropriated by Culler) is derived from Nietzsche's critique of Descartes. In 'Beyond Good and Evil', Nietzsche (1996:23) highlights Descartes reliance on a metaphysics of presence which Derrida (1978:279) describes as the only metaphysics we have ever known. This is because 'all names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated the constant of a presence'. Here Nietzsche shows how (1996:23) the notion of 'I think' is such a fundamental:

 'There are still harmless self-observers who believe that there are "immediate certainties"; for example, "I think," or as the superstition of Schopenhauer put it, "I will"; as though knowledge here got hold of its object purely and nakedly as "the thing in itself," without any falsification on the part of either the subject or the object. But that "immediate certainty," as well as "absolute knowledge" and the "thing in itself," involve a *contradictio in adjecto* [contradiction between the noun and the adjective], I shall repeat a hundred times; we really ought to free ourselves from the seduction of words!'

This *contradictio in adjecto*, or contradiction in terms, refers to the fact that the *cogito,* far from being the product of reason, is rather a product of the imagination – a mere supposition, fiction, invention or illusion (Kofman, 1991:180). As such, one will find that

whenever an argument cites or relies upon particular instances of presence in order to lay the foundations for further arguments or developments, these instances of presence are already themselves complex constructions (Culler, 1983:94). Despite being presented as simple or elementary constituents, as mere givens, these instances of presence are always already an outcome or product. As a result, these dependent or derived instances can never have the authority attributed to pure presence (94).

If simple or elementary constituents of presence do not exist, one can no longer reduce objective truth to subjective certainty. This insight undoes a number of other rhetorical devices at play in the history of thinking about the Cartesian subject, revealing these devices as a series of 'daring assertions' rather than simple instances of absolute truths (Nietzsche, 1996:23). In an aphorism in 'Beyond Good and Evil', Nietzsche (23) identifies the following as assertions on which Descartes' conviction in the *cogito ergo sum* is based: 'that it is *I* who think'; 'that there must necessarily be something that thinks'; 'that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of the being who is thought of as a cause'; 'that there is an "ego"'; and, 'that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking – that I *know* what thinking is'.

In the following aphorism, Nietzsche (24) proceeds to show how such 'daring assertions' acted as grounds for Descrates' actual proof of the *cogito ergo sum* whereby thought is viewed as a necessary predicate of the ego:

> 'With regard to the superstitions of logicians, I shall never tire of emphasizing a small terse fact, which these superstitious minds hate to concede – namely, that a thought comes when "it" wishes, and not when "I" wish, so that it is a falsification of the facts of the case to say that the subject "I" is the condition of the predicate "think." *It* thinks; but that this "it" is precisely the famous old "ego" is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an "immediate certainty." After all, one has even gone too far with this "it thinks" – even the "it" contains an *interpretation* of the process, and does not belong to the process itself. One infers here according to the grammatical habit: "Thinking is an activity; every activity requires an agent; consequently-"'

What Nietzsche essentially achieved in his deconstruction of the Cartesian subject was to problematise the ontological question of the *sum* which Descartes apparently neglected or ignored (Derrida, 1987a:15). In the above aphorisms, Nietzsche shows that when we try to define the subject behind our 'truths, thoughts and ideas', we in effect forget the 'complex process of becoming' which 'give rise to all forms, ideas and subjectivities' (Williams, 2001:120). For Nietzsche, this process of becoming is marked by a 'multiplicity' (Nietzsche, 1967:270) which is the generation and the becoming of a will to power (Williams, 2001:120). In his philosophy, Nietzsche juxtaposes the 'will to power' with the 'will to truth', where the latter aims at rationalising knowledge and ordering relations in such a manner so as to suppress that which is 'dangerous, impure and disruptive – in particular, the body and its effects' (120). According to this view, we cannot be pure unmediated consciousness, but rather emergent, embodied selves, dependent on an embedded context. It is within this embedded context that we not only see and know (i.e. create meaning) perspectivally, but also form our identity through action (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:3).

On the final count, Nietzsche proposes to challenge our very constructions and conceptions of the subject and of Western thought in general. Nietzsche calls this 'visual contract' (Williams, 2001:120) which dates back to the time of Descartes, and which orders the history of modern metaphysics, *occularcentrism*. And, through his deconstructions, Nietzsche (1989:119) urges us to *see* differently:

> '…to think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something,* are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of an eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing"; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be.'

Heidegger and the reintroduction of Being

Heidegger is another prominent thinker who sought to overthrow the hegemonic force of modern philosophy's rational humanistic conception of man, which views consciousness as the fundamental point of departure in any thinking about the subject (Glendinning, 1998:61). In 'Being and Time', Heidegger's main contention with rational humanism is that concepts such as spirit, consciousness and person - all of which appear to oppose the materialisation or reification of the person - fail to take into account the real question of the being of Being (Howells, 1998:138).

Heidegger contends that the rational humanist tradition, epitomised in Descartes' philosophy, is characterised by an inattention to the 'question of the being of Being'. This is because Descartes does not present us with any ontology of the subject, since thought is deemed to be one with substance (Williams, 2001:16). As such, Descartes neither analyses the experience of existence of the self, nor the presence of others as a requirement for verifying the *cogito's* powers of speech (16). Therefore, on the Cartesian view, 'the essence of subjectivity is given by the cognitive capacities of the self alone, which require no spatio-temporal relation to the world and others, but are discovered through inward-turning and internal reflection on the power of the intellect' (17). It is this 'pure, wholly a-temporal [*sic*], self-enclosed, reflective consciousness' (17) that Heidegger sets out to contest.

Heidegger's critique of the traditional, Cartesian conception of the subject rests on its challenge to two central rational humanistic assumptions: namely, that the world is something 'blankly external' to human consciousness; and that a subject's behaviour is merely an 'outward effect' of its inner mental workings (Glendinning, 1998:63). What makes Heidegger's critique all the more striking is that he challenges both these assumptions with a single line of thought, which postulates that 'the kind of Being-in-the-world that we *are* is world-disclosing' (63).

Heidegger's (1993:59) strategy is to orientate his inquiry around the 'everydayness' of '*Dasein*', or the way of Being-in-the-world with which we are already familiar. This everydayness cannot take place within the context of an isolated subject who 'has an intentional consciousness of some object present-at-hand.' (Glendinning, 1998:63). Rather, this everdayness characterises our basic state of 'Being [as] outside alongside' objects in the world and the fact that 'we are what we do' (63). In order to illustrate this, Heidegger (1993:63) writes: '[e]verybody understands, "The sky *is* blue," "I *am* happy,' and similar statements.' Heidegger (47) calls this Being-in-the-world which is open to objects 'readiness to hand': 'Being is found in thatness and whatness, reality, the being at hand of things [*Vorhandenheit*], subsistence, validity, existence [*Dasein*], and in the "there is" [*es gibt*]'. Furthermore, Heidegger contends that since we, as *Dasein,* are 'already at home in the world of the ready-to-hand', everydayness 'is something to which we can, in principle, attest [to] without prejudice or distortion' (Glendinning, 1998:63).

Thus what distinguishes Heidegger's account of the subject from the Cartesian view of 'a self-present 'subject' related in some way to undiscriminated 'objects'", is precisely the everydayness of *Dasein*, or the fact that we have immediate access to the world *as such.* Here the *as such* refers to the fact that entities are disclosed to us '*as* the very things, that in their Being, they are.' (64;63). Heidegger (1962:149) writes: '[i]n dealing with what is environmentally ready-to-hand…we 'see' it *as* a table, a door, a carriage, or a bridge…Any mere pre-predictive seeing of the ready-to-hand is, in itself, something which already understands…' Therefore, the 'everydayness of Being' serves to undermine both the Cartesian theses that the world is something 'blankly external' to human consciousness, and that a subject's behaviour is merely an 'outward effect' of its inner mental workings. This, then, marks Heidegger's first attack on the Cartesian subject.

Like Nietzsche's challenge to *occularcentrism* - which calls for a perspectival reading or seeing of reality - Heidegger launches a second attack on the Cartesian subject that serves to challenge a metaphysics of absolute presence by focusing on a specific notion of

difference. This notion of difference ultimately gives rise to a certain indiscernibility at the very heart of the subject.

Heidegger argues that, despite the fact that '"Being" is a self-evident concept" and despite the fact that '"Being" is used in all knowing and predicting, in every relation to beings and in every relation with oneself', this 'average comprehensibility [of "Being"] only demonstrates [its] incomprehensibility' (Heidegger, 1993:44). Therefore, the fact that Being is not only understandable, but *also* 'shrouded in darkness' means that we need to recall the question of the meaning of 'Being' (44). We need to conceptualise Being in its own right, as 'essentially distinct from the concepts in which beings receive their meaningful determination.' (46-47). In other words, 'Being can only be approached by thinking *differently*, more specifically, by thinking the ontico-ontological difference (the difference between Being and being)' (Williams, 2001:118). Krell (see Heidegger, 1993:53) writes that this distinction between 'ontic' and 'ontological' is contrasted throughout 'Being and Time': whereas the 'ontological' for Heidegger refers to the 'Being of beings' or 'an account of the same', which is traditionally linked to discourses of metaphysics; the 'ontic' refers to 'any manner of dealing with beings that does *not* raise the ontological question' - hence, Being by existence in the world (53). Heidegger (1993:58) writes of this distinction:

> 'The ontico-ontological priority of Dasein is therefore the reason why the specific constitution of the Being of Dasein – understood in the sense of the "categorical" structures that belongs to it – remains hidden from it. Dasein is ontically "closest" to itself, while ontologically furthest away; but pre-ontologically it is surely not foreign to itself'

The origin of this difference between being and Being is Being itself. Therefore, being belongs to Being, but Being is also essentially different to being. It is both the difference and the belongingness of being to Being that is obliterated by the history of metaphysics. The reason for this is that in this history Being has always been interpreted 'as the grounds in which every being as such is grounded' (Heidegger, 1974:32) and which persists in the oblivion of Being (Heidegger, 1993:224). For Heidegger, the difference between Being and being constitutes the 'unthought of metaphysics' (Williams,

2001:119). Heidegger (1993:66;68) thus criticises the rational humanist tradition, arguing that:

> 'Insofar as certain distinctive domains of Being become visible in the course of history and henceforth chiefly dominate the range of problems (Descartes' *ego cogito*, subject, the "I," reason, spirit, person), the beings just cited remain unquestioned with respect to the Being and structure of their being, this corresponding to the thorough neglect of the question of Being…With the *cogito sum* Descartes claims to prepare a new and secure foundation for philosophy. But what he leaves undetermined in the "radical" beginning is the manner of being of the *res cogitans* [pure thought]*, more precisely, *the meaning of the Being of the "sum".'*

Heidegger's critique of rational humanism is thus based on two arguments: firstly, Heidegger undermines the distance of the Cartesian consciousness from the world of beings by pointing to the everydayness of Dasein as a '*being in the world*' which 'belongs essentially to Dasein' (55). Secondly, Heidegger challenges the self-presence of the Cartesian consciousness by showing how a Dasein is 'ontically distinguished by the fact that in its Being this being is concerned *about* its very Being' (53). In other words, to say that a being is concerned about its very Being, is also to recognise the ontico-ontological difference between being and Being. As such, self-presence gives way to a questioning of the meaning of the Being of the *sum*.
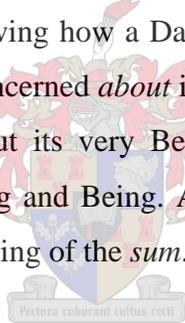
Thus, in basic language, Heidegger's position can be summarised as follows: contrary to Descartes, other people must be trusted or considered when forming a cognitive picture of the world, but this cognitive picture will never give one total access to Being as such.

III
An open subject

'The "subject" of writing does not exist if we understand by it some sovereign solitude of the writer. The subject of writing is a system of relationships between layers: the mystic writing pad, the psyche, society, the world. Within this scene, the "punctual" simplicity of the classical subject cannot be found.'
− Jacques Derrida, 'Writing and Difference

<u>An alternative to the Cartesian *cogito:*</u>

Both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's respective critiques of the Cartesian *cogito* highlight the myth of a pure, whole, a-temporal, self-enclosed and reflective consciousness. In this section the implications of these early deconstructive readings of the subject will be investigated:

Nietzsche defined the subject as characterised by the will to power which (amongst other things) manifests as a complex process of *becoming*. This process of becoming entails that '[t]he self is not something given, it is a superadded invention, stuck on to the tail' (Nietzsche, 1968:267). If the self is not something given, this implies that in order to give form to the self, an arena 'in which the performance can be played out' (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:5) is required. This arena is constituted by an 'inter-human horizon of meaning in which the [subject] acquires significance and thus a form of endurance' (5).

This worldly domain, according to Nietzsche (in Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 5), can be understood as a space of appearances, in which we encounter and interact with one another. In other words, the worldly space is 'the field of appearances and relations that condition the belief in the self as a coherent entity' (6), and from which our perspectives, positions and meanings emerge (6). The implication here is that we will never know an object for itself or the world as a thing-in-itself. Rather, we come to understand ourselves and the world through interpretations and schematisations of the chaotic actions and reactions sustained by the will to power (6-7). Nietzsche thus understands the will to power as 'an abstract and unlocalized figurative (interpretative) process' (Spivak, see Derrida:1976:xxv). Consequently, 'One may [also] not ask: 'who then interprets?' for the interpretation itself is a form of the will to power, exists (but not as a 'being' but as a process, a becoming) as an affect' (Nietzsche, 1968:302). In this schema, the binary oppositions between terms such as 'truth' and 'error' dissolve and truth becomes merely 'man's *irrefutable* errors'[11] (Nietzsche, 1974:219)

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[11] In 'The Genealogy of Morals', Nietzsche illustrates how the concept of morality and the notion of the good is one such an irrefutable error. Morality, he argues, in general arose not only from an 'objective calculus of objectivity' (Williams, 2001:121), but also out of a 'pathos of distance' from the lowly elements of society, deemed to be, in opposition to evil (Nietzsche, 1989:26). Furthermore, this notion of the good

Furthermore, every interpretation is contingent on a background of many other interpretations, and in this sense reality (as determined by our interpretations) is infinite (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:7). It is therefore senseless to think of ourselves as over and against the world: 'the self is worldly: *who* one is, is embedded in the sum of temporal relations that conditions one's *becoming* anything at all' (7). The implications of this view are that, firstly, if we are the sum of temporal relations, then self-formation cannot be equated with self-knowledge. This is because we come to know ourselves through means of our perspectival seeing or the conceptual schema that we share with others (7). And, secondly, the self cannot be a unity, but rather a plurality of drives and forces that bear traces of dissonance that cannot be assimilated in a finite account of a single life (7).

According to Heidegger, rational humanism reaches its end with 'Nietzsche's reversal of Platonism and critique of the Cartesian cogito' (Calarco, 2004:178). However, Heidegger (in Calarco, 2004:178) argues that 'the Nietzschean reversal of Platonic and Cartesian metaphysics itself remains locked within the closure of the history of metaphysics insofar as Nietzsche's thought is grounded in a subjectivist understanding of values and a perspectivist account of truth'. In 'Of Spirit', Derrida (1987a:73) extrapolates on Heidegger's argument against Nietzsche stating that: '[t]here are two symmetrical sides to unconditioned subjectivity: rationality as spirit on the one hand, animality as body on the other' (73). On this reading, the will to power is 'no longer that of willing which *knows itself,* i.e. that of spirit [the Cartesian position fashioned after a will to truth], but the absolute subjectivity of body, of impulsions and affects: the unconditioned

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always signifies 'one who *is,* who possesses reality, who is actual, who is true' (29). Nietzsche illustrates how the notion of good must necessarily rely on this history of modern metaphysics which identifies man as *animal rationale.* This is because the political power accorded to this notion of the good must contain its opposite, namely the base animal: '[the good] seeks its opposite only so as to affirm itself more gratefully and triumphantly' (37).

Nietzsche thus makes use of the conceptual opposition of 'rationality and spirit on one hand' and 'animality as body on the other' in order to illustrate how, when 'certain privileged concepts are posited as properties of the subject, they come to mirror established norms concerning truth and objectivity, and thus become knowledge' (Williams, 2001:121). Thus, 'metaphysical knowledge responds to, reflects and repeats the desires and anxieties of the subject for purity and stability in meaning, it drives to create the world in its own image'. (121-122).

subjectivity of the will to power' (73). Therefore, for Heidegger (1961:200) 'the unconditional essence of subjectivity necessarily unfolds [in Nietzsche] as *brutalitas* of *bestialitas.* […] *Homo est brutum bestiale.*'[12] In defining man in terms of materiality, Nietzsche continues to characterise the essence of man as *'animal rationale'* (Derrida, 1987a:73). However, contrary to the Cartesian position, the stress now falls on the animal. On the final count, Nietzsche does not transcend the history of the *subjectum*, but instead inverts it, by choosing sides with the animal.

This critique against Nietzsche is relevant; however, one could argue, in light of the preceding analysis, that Heidegger misses a certain radicalism in Nietzsche through posing the essence of Nietzsche's man as a 'subjectivist lording over or dominating of worldly objects' (Calarco, 2005:178). Derrida, though not seeming to deny the general tenets of Heidegger's argument, nevertheless affirms this second reading, stating that 'Nietzsche, far from remaining *simply* (with Hegel and as Heidegger wished) *within* metaphysics, contributed a great deal to the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos, and the related concept of truth or the primary signified'[13] (Derrida, 1972:19, trans. Spivak).

In thinking the 'ontico-ontological difference between being and Being,' (in Williams, 2001:118) Heidegger's displacement of the subject is more *explicit* than Nietzsche's own displacement of the subject. However, despite acknowledging many important elements in Heidegger's questioning of the history of Being (119), Derrida nonetheless argues that

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[12] The following passage from 'The Gay Science' illustrates not only Nietzsche's material position, but also his weariness of the Cartesian cogito: '[t]he unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective, ideal, purely spiritual goes to frightening lengths – and often I have asked myself whether, taking a large view philosophy has not been merely an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*.' (Nietzsche, 1974:34-35) An even more revealing statement reads as follows: '[o]ur most sacred convictions, the unchanging elements in our supreme values, are judgments of our muscles' (Nietzsche, 1968:173). These remarks lead Spivak (see Derrida, 1976:xxv) to ponder with Heidegger whether for Nietzsche, 'the controlling figurative practice that constitutes all our cognition is being handed over to the body'.

[13] Spivak (see Derrida, 1976:xxi) identifies two illuminating passages in Derrida's writing that list what we should look out for in Nietzsche: 'the systematic mistrust of metaphysics as a whole, the formal approach to philosophic discourse…the suspicion of the value of truth ('well applied convention'), of meaning and of being, 'of meaning of being', the attention to the economic phenomena of force and of difference of forces, and so forth' (Derrida,1972:362-363, trans. Spivak) And, 'Radicalizing the concepts of *interpretation, perspective, evaluation* [and] *difference*' (31-32, trans Spivak). Both these passages illustrate the extent to which Nietzsche has liberated the subject from the superiority of the Cartesian *cogito*.

Heidegger's thought falls prey to logocentrism and a metaphysics of presence. The reason for this is that he characterises difference as a presence marked on the *horizon of Being*; and, that through proper analysis, we can 'expose [this] horizon for the most original interpretation of Being' (Heidegger, 1993:60).

For Derrida, difference can have no 'root or origin of authentic Being; it requires no movement of signification, no authentic phoneme, and no transcendence of the system of metaphysics.' (Williams, 2001:130) An origin – such as Heidegger's horizon of Being – will always cover 'over the trace, the *différance*, upon which metaphysics must inevitably falter' (130). Therefore, in order to avoid sliding back into metaphysics, we should 'think the present starting from/in relation to time as difference, differing, and deferral' instead of relating it back to an origin (Derrida, 1976:166). Derrida (1982:11) writes '*Différance* is the nonfull, nonsimple, structured and differentiating origin of differences. Thus the name origin no longer suits it.' Heidegger's difference is positively defined as a difference which can be overcome, instead of a difference mediated by the logic of *différance*. On the final count, Heidegger therefore succumbs to the same subjectivist metaphysics that he identifies in Nietzsche by defining the horizon of Being positively, as the most original interpretation of Being.

Yet, despite this shortcoming, Heidegger, like Nietzsche, did much to expose the ontological inadequacy of the Cartesian view of the subject by thinking the difference between being and Being. From Heidegger onwards, all forms of post- or anti-rational humanism continue 'this displacement of man from the center of beings under different rubrics and with different aims' (Calarco, 2005:178)

In the next chapter, we shall return to Heidegger's position in order to further uncover the hidden rational humanist premises on which a Western conception of subjectivity is *still* based. In other words, it will be illustrated why Derrida presents Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian disruptions of rational humanism not as forms of 'an *anti*-humanism, but instead as [forms of] *another* humanism' (178). For the purpose of this study, I shall call this other form humanism that Calarco refers to 'anthropocentric humanism'.

At this juncture, however, it is necessary to investigate the main premises of a transformed, deconstructed and anti-rational humanist subject. Up until now we have seen how the history of the subject's deconstruction has brought about one crucial shift in our thinking about the subject, namely the displacement of the metaphysical rational humanist subject and consequently, the subject's relation with the other (Derrida, 1995:264). This shift characterises the essential difference between the classical subject and all post-Cartesian motifs of the subject.

Thinking *différance*

In order to explicate the consequences of a deconstructed, post-Heideggerian subject, it is insightful to briefly turn to some of Levinas' remarks. Though his own philosophical insights will not be explicated at this point, Levinas is nevertheless useful to mention since he begins his own analysis 'within the horizon of anti [rational] humanism, accepting much of the anti [rational] humanist critique of classical [or rational] humanism' (Calarco, 2004:178-179). Levinas thus offers us a good summary of the main tenets of anti-rational humanism.
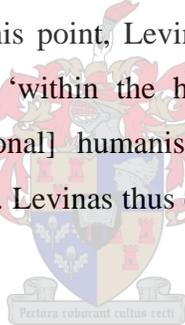
According to Levinas, the main characteristic of anti-rational humanism in all its various forms is 'a contestation of the primacy of the inward world of classical [or rational] humanism. Prior to and more basic than man preserving in his own being and self-presence, anti [rational] humanism discerns an *openness* to otherness at the very heart of the subject that renders self-presence derivative and compromised.' (in Calarco, 179). (my italics) Levinas (in Calarco, 179) understands this openness to mean three things: 'the openness of every object to all others, in the unity of the universe' (Levinas, 1987:145); 'the openness to the call of Being' (Heidegger); and, 'the openness of radical passivity of the subject' (in Calarco, 2005:179). I shall return to the third meaning of 'openness' in the following chapter as this form of openness is unique to Levinas' writings. For now, let us look at the implications of the first two meanings of openness:

According to Derrida (1976:166), openness implies that we should no longer posit presence 'as the absolute matrix form of being but rather as a 'particularisation' and 'effect', which is 'no longer that of presence but of *différance'*. In other words, we should 'think the present starting from/in relation to time as difference, differing, and deferral' (166).

What are the implications of this anti-rational humanist insight for a subject? Derrida (1995:270) argues that such a subject is marked by an exappropriation that does not close in on itself nor totalises itself: as such 'the subject assumes presence, that is to say substance, stasis, stance. Not to be able to stabilize itself *absolutely* would mean to be able *only* to be stabilizing itself: relative stabilization of what remains *unstable*, or rather non-stable'. Derrida (265-266) writes:

> 'We were speaking of dehiscence, of intrinsic dislocation, of différance, of destinerrance, and so forth. Some might say: but what we call "subject" is not absolute origin, pure will, identity to self, or presence to self of consciousness, but precisely this non-coincidence with self. This is a riposte to which we'll have to return. By what right do we call this "subject"? By what right conversely, can we be forbidden to call this "subject"? I am thinking of those today who try to reconstruct a discourse around a subject that would not be pre-deconstructive, around a subject that no longer includes the figure of mastery to self, of adequation to self, centre and origin of the world, etc….but which would define the subject as the finite experience of non-identity to self, as the underivable interpellation inasmuch as it comes from the other, with all the paradoxes or the aporia of being-before-the-law, and so on. Perhaps we'll pick up on this again later.'

What comes prominently to the fore in this quotation is that Derrida is torn between his recognition that 'no one ever really believed in the autonomous, classical subject', and his 'continuing desire to define his own views in opposition to it' (Howells, 1998:143). This tension was already briefly addressed in the introduction to this study. However, since this tension is central to Derrida's discussion of the subject, the matter needs to be investigated in more detail:

In the interview 'Eating Well', the interviewer, Nancy, explicitly asks Derrida whether the "subject" has always only been 'a surface effect, a fallout that one cannot impute to the thinkers', given that deconstruction amounts to showing the distance that resides 'at the very heart of presence'? Nancy proceeds to ask 'What', if the latter scenario is the case, 'is…subjectivity?" (Nancy, see Derrida, 1995:264).

What Nancy is in effect getting at here is that if deconstruction repositions the subject 'as an inherently unstable and contingent metaphysical form', does this theoretical enterprise not reduce the subject to something 'devoid of critical import'? (Williams, 2001:133) In other words, how can we still continue to speak about, never mind oppose ourselves against, something whose very existence is merely a construction? In 'The Logic of Disintegration' Peter Dews (1987:32) takes up this same point, arguing that Derrida's subject, defined merely as a fable and a surface effect, makes it difficult to conceive of any subjectivity at all. This is due to the fact that it only offers us a choice between 'a view of the subject as an immobile centre, a core of self-certainty, or the acceptance that there is no subject at all, except as an "effect" of the play of the text.' (32)

Derrida's response to Nancy's concerns and the related criticism by Dews ultimately hinges on the idea that it is not enough only to understand the subject as a surface effect: one has to develop this effect in a dynamic and productive way. This implies that rather than imposing a reductive reading upon the subject, one should aim to 'open up' the notion of the subject in such a way that produces 'differential relations' and 'multiple effects' (Williams, 2001:133). In the following section the manner in which this sense of 'opening up' the subject can be understood will be addressed.

A complex subject:

In order to understand what is meant by a dynamic and productive yet dislocated and non-stable self-affirmation within an embedded context, it is necessary to turn our attention to the field of complexity theory.

Complex systems are defined as 'systems that have a large number of components that can interact simultaneously in a sufficiently rich number of parallel ways so that the system shows spontaneous self-organization and produces global, emergent structures' (Depew & Weber 1995:81). Complex systems also operate far from equilibrium. This implies that the interactions between components in a system and the systems themselves are non-linear (Taylor, 2001:142). The rich interactions that constitute complex systems, as well as the non-linearity of these interactions, mean that we cannot replace a specific set of constituents with another, simpler set of constituents (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:9). Another way of saying this is that '[t]he structures that result from spontaneous self-organization emerge from but are not necessarily reducible to the interactivity of the components or the elements of the system.' (Taylor, 2001:142). As a result, complex systems are incompressible. Complexity and compressibility are thus indirectly proportional: the more complex, the less compressible and vice versa (139). This means that formal a priori models of complex systems can never be complete since the only comprehensive description of a complex system is the system itself. (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:9).
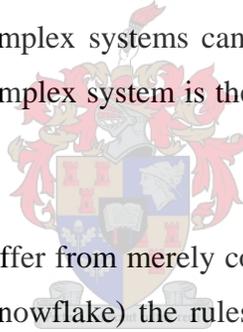
In this respect complex systems differ from merely complicated systems. In complicated systems (such as for example a snowflake) the rules generating the system are simple (and hence compressible) (Taylor, 2001:142). The structure of a complicated system also does not change over time (142). In terms of the snowflake example, this would imply that the relationships between the molecules of the snowflake are fairly fixed (Cilliers, 1998:5). Furthermore, no real feedback and evolution takes place in a complicated system (5). Unlike complex systems, complicated systems are also not really open systems: they remain in a state of temporary equilibrium, which implies that they cannot adapt to their environments and therefore quickly lose their structure (5). This is different to emergent complex systems, since emergence can only take place 'in a narrow possibility space lying between conditions that are too ordered and too disordered. This boundary or margin is "the edge of chaos," which is always far from equilibrium.' (Taylor, 2001:143).

Defining complex systems as open systems means that we also need to take the environment in which the system functions into account. Due to the intricate interaction between a system and its environment, it is often difficult to determine the borders of the system. As a result, the dialectic between the system and its environment is neither active nor passive (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:9). Furthermore, the environment itself is usually quite a complex system. For this reason the system functioning within a certain environment needs to be able to store information about its environment, and be flexible enough to adapt to its environment (9). Otherwise put, the system deals with contingencies by organising itself in a way that both incorporates its own unique history (memory), and adapts to the elements external to it (9). In sum, complex systems cannot be fixed or static. Rather, they are defined as open and adaptive systems (Taylor, 2001:143).

One can make several interesting points when applying the above characteristics of complex systems to the subject:

Complex systems consist of a large number of elements: The subject is not a preformed, pure, whole, and self-enclosed entity as Descartes would contend. Instead, the subject emerges as a result of social interactions with other people in the world and with its environment (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:10). These social interactions between the subject and its environment are complex, and therefore the self (as an emerging product of these relations) is also a complex plurality as opposed to a unitary entity (10). We have already been introduced to this insight, but Derrida (1969:57) does well to recall its significance, stating that 'Nietzsche has reminded us that, if there is style [in living and interpreting], it must be *plural*.'

There are dynamic, non-linear interactions between these elements/constituents of complex systems: The relations between the self and the environment are constantly shifting and therefore the interactions are unpredictable and non-linear (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:10-11). Linear causality must 'give way to recursive relations in which effects are disproportionate to the causes from which they emerge' (Taylor,

2001:143). We can highlight the impact that this point has on our purposes (causes) and actions (effects) by quoting Nietzsche who stated that '(e)very single time something is done with a purpose in view, something fundamentally different and other occurs.' (Nietzsche, 1968:351). As a result, truth (including self-truth) cannot be deciphered or disclosed. Instead, interpretations are figured in a way in which 'nothing is ever comprehended, but rather designated and distorted' (301).

Complex systems are open systems in that they interact with their environment in a way which is neither active nor passive: The meaning of the self is determined by *différance* and a dislocated self-affirmation which is neither active nor passive. This statement can be explained as follows: meaning can only be generated by the differences that exist between the interrelated constituents of a system (Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:236). If, for example, we look at Saussure's model of language, we find that signs are not endowed with any positive content, but rather gain meaning through their relationships with other signs in the system (235). Derrida calls this relationship between two signs in a system a trace. Typically these traces operate together in order to 'generate a pattern of meaning which they constrain, but cannot fix... To establish a meaning in a given instance is to alter the traces, and this will influence future interpretations. Meaning cannot be static'' (236). If meaning (as a network of traces) is not static, then it necessarily must always to be deferred. Meaning is constantly transforming as a result of the information and energy flow in an open system. Thus the process by which meaning is created is always suspended between the active and the passive (236). In other words, meaning is created by a process of *différance*[14]*,* where the '*a* of *différance* indicates this indecision as regards activity and passivity, that which cannot yet be governed and organized by that opposition...of intervals without which the 'full' terms could not signify, could not function' (Derrida, 1981:97).

Furthermore, to say that the self is characterised by *différance* and a dislocated self-affirmation is also to imply that the self is an open system. This in turn means that it is impossible to determine the exact point where the self ends and the world begins

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[14] For a more comprehensive definition of *différance* see footnote 3.

(Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:11). Moreover, Derrida (in Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:227) states that the Cartesian ideal of pure consciousness is impossible as '…a pure identity which is identical to itself is simultaneously identical to death'. This is because the flow of energy and information needed to sustain a system and create meaning cannot operate at an equilibrium (235).

Complex systems have memory and possess the ability to adapt to the environment, both of which are needed for the system to evolve over time: The self is constituted, in part by its own unique and contingent history and context. Yet, the self is also adaptive, meaning that our 'memory' of what we are is not static, but is constantly changing as a result of the dynamic interactions between new information and previous experiences (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:11). Another way of saying this is that consciousness, far from being an a-temporal, universal point of reference, is an emergent property of this network (11). This, however, does not imply that consciousness is a random collection of constituents. Consciousness has an identifiable structure, which allows it to continuously transform into something new (11). Therefore, there is no contradiction in talking about someone's identity, whilst still avoiding an essentialist account of the self, as long as this identity is understood as inseparable from its embeddedness in social conditions (11). In other words, the self is able to adjust to the environment, as well as actively participate in and transform this environment (11).

In light of the above discussion, Derrida's view of the subject as a dynamic and productive, yet dislocated self seems completely plausible. Furthermore, this view is also more realistic than a Cartesian a-temporal and essentialist account of subjectivity. Identity can never be pure or present to itself, but rather emerges on the basis of *différance* and history. This allows us to know who 'we' are, in the sense of a relative stablisation of what remains essentially *unstable* (or rather non-stable). As such there has never been, nor will there ever be, a unique self, or a master identity (Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:237).

The insights gained from the above application of complexity theory principles to the concept of the subject can be summed up as follows: *'[t]he self [must be] understood in terms of a 'fabric of relations', a node in a network, and not in terms of atomistic units standing by and for themselves'* (Cilliers, 1998:16) (my italics). I shall return to this definition in the conclusion in order to further elaborate on the implications of this view. At this point, however, it is necessary to make some preliminary remarks on the consequences that this view holds for our notion of responsibility.

In the realm of the ethical-political

To say that no unique self or master identity exists, and moreover to say that identity cannot be separated from an embedded context where meaning is generated by a system of *différances,* implies that *the self will always have an ethical-political dimension* (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:11). This is because we come to be selves (i.e. emerge as unique identities) as a result of the decisions and actions we undertake (Cillers & de Villiers, 2000:242). Since there is no pure description of how we should act or be, we inevitably *have* to make choices (to abstain from certain actions is an equally formative ethical-political choice) (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:16). This is, however, not to say that our choices are completely arbitrary or relative, since systems are characterised by patterns and self-organisation. As such we cannot just come up with any description of reality because we are constrained by our environments (12).

Furthermore, we are responsible for these choices as a result of the fact that our descriptions are never neutral. This in turn implies that we have to make choices based on constructs and interpretations of responsibility as opposed to meta-rules (13). This creates a dilemma of being responsible for our choices, whilst simultaneously not being totally free to make them. Yet, this is a bind with which we have to live, because as already stated, these choices constitute us (13-14). Another way of making this point is to say that embodied, embedded subjects are always already in the realm of ethics (13).

Ethical systems that appeal to neutral or universal descriptions of the subject's responsibilities are called normative systems. Normative ethics is typically based on the view of the subject as an objective and pure entity that responds and is subject to ethical criteria deduced from a certain ethical framework (11). However, in light of the insights gained from complexity theory, we see that normative ethics does violence to the subject in question. This is because this type of ethics presumes that we know what a subject is, and therefore how to treat the subject (11) (Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:242). Such an approach inevitably leads to a disregard for the differences, traces and alterity that constitute a subject, and will result in a homogenised and impoverished environment (242).

Typically, normative ethical systems are based on the rational humanist paradigm. In this chapter it was demonstrated how Post-Cartesian philosophers, such as Nietzsche and Heidegger, present us with anti-rational humanist positions. These positions have done much to save us from the violence inherent in the Cartesian or rational humanist's understanding of a 'fully slaked subject'. The problem that now creeps in is that, on closer investigation (as will be demonstrated in the next chapter), these disruptions of rational humanism occur not as forms of 'an *anti*-humanism, but instead as [forms of] *another* humanism' (Clarco, 2004:178), which I have termed anthropocentric humanism. Though exceptions can be found, this point generally holds for both the Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian discourses (181). If anti-rational humanism slides back into an unchallenged anthropocentric humanism, we run the risk of still perpetuating the violence identified in the normative ethical systems, which are characterised by the rational humanist paradigm. This is because anthropocentric humanism continues to presume that certain characteristics can be attributed to the subject, implying that both the definition of the subject and responsible treatment of the subject can be delineated in advance. Only once philosophy unseats the humanist subject (in all its forms) and replaces it with an indeterminate and repositioned subject, will it be possible to align the above complexity insights regarding responsible action in a complex environment with the philosophical notion of responsibility.

<center>**IV**</center>

<center>**Responsible moves**</center>

<center>*'[W]hat could be the responsibility…[toward] a consistent discourse which claimed to show that
no responsibility could ever be taken without equivocation and without contradiction?'*
− *Jacques Derrida, 'Passions: "An Oblique Offering"'*</center>

<u>Summary and next steps:</u>

At this stage it is already clear that the philosophical notion of responsibility that will be developed in this study cannot (indeed, *must not*) rest on a finally demarcated notion of the subject. This is because it is impossible to model 'the system of the subject', since the ethical-political dimension of a truly complex subject implies 'a responsibility that is limitless in the face of the impossible infinity of its object' (Howells, 1998:155). In other words, admitting that we do not know how to demarcate the subject – at least in the ethically responsible sense – implies that responsible action is always still to come. It is with regard to this sense of responsibility that the ongoing task of deconstruction is carried out (Derrida, 2002a:373). Applied to the ethical-political responsibilities of immanent beings, deconstruction 'necessarily includes the deconstruction of responsibility, along with the associated concepts of intentionality, will, freedom, conscience, subject, community, decision etc., in a way that might make it appear irresponsible at the moment when it is the most highly involved with the responsibility of its task', namely 'to keep us from returning to our "dogmatic slumber"' (Derrida in Howells, 1998:155). In other words, deconstruction reverses and displaces normative hierarchies, so as to prevent a homogenised ethics that covers over or conceals the alterity, difference and traces that constitute our subjectivity.

The rest of this study is devoted to deconstructing current conceptions of the subject in order to highlight how, philosophically-speaking, we must understand the notion of responsibility. In this chapter I have illustrated how the subject has evolved from a self-present, rational humanist subject to an open, displaced and deconstructed anti-rational humanist subject. I have also, however, alluded to the anthropocentric remnants that still characterise this displaced and deconstructed subject. In the next chapter these

anthropocentric remnants will be uncovered in order to pave the way for the deconstruction of current notions of the subject in the third chapter.
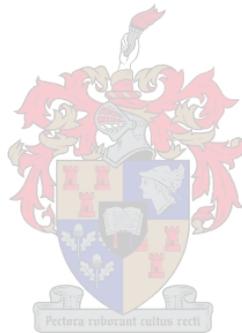
Chapter 2

The history of Being (Part 2): Limits to the subject's displacement

Derrida views the 'preservation and necessity of free questioning as being itself ethical…in that it "authorises" ethics' (Derrida in Howells, 1998:123). In other words, ethical questioning is concerned with uprooting entrenched notions of subjectivity which fix the meaning of the subject and its responsibilities. In order to fulfill the ethical mandate necessitated by free questioning, Derrida (as stated in the introductory chapter) seeks to deconstruct the traditional ontological questions regarding the conditions of the possibility of thinking, intentionality, self-consciousness, conscience etc. (Derrida in Howells, 1998:155). In this chapter the ontological categories that underlie current conceptions of subjectivity (and therefore also responsibility) will be investigated. This will be done firstly to illustrate what, since the birth of the Cartesian subject, *still* remains the same in our conceptions of subjectivity; and secondly, to pave the way for the deconstruction of the anthropocentric subject.

In this chapter, the Heideggerian discourse on subjectivity/spirituality will serve to guide the analysis. The reason for doing so is twofold: firstly, Heidegger's work has had a profound influence on contemporary post- or anti-rational humanist positions and therefore constitutes an important discourse for understanding the basis of current day conceptions of the subject. Secondly, Heidegger's discourse shelters the unthought premises that still inform the ontological categories from which current day notions of subjectivity are derived. The 'Levinasian Other' characterises an important and radical present day notion of subjectivity, and will therefore be used as an illustration of how the unchallenged premises of the Heidegger's discourse continue to mark post-Heideggerian discourses.

The guiding text for this chapter will be Derrida's 'Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question' (1987). This text should be read in two ways, both of which serve the aim of this analysis:

On one level, 'Of Spirit' can be understood as demonstrating Heidegger's 'seeming failure of responsibility toward his own thinking' (Spivak, 1994:24). Already in the opening remarks, Derrida suggests that 'Heidegger's entire earlier philosophy was dependent on the question of the spirit that was merely avoided or foreclosed' (24). In these opening remarks, Derrida (1987a:9-12) identifies four interlacing knots or nodes that inform Heidegger's conception of *Geist* (spirit), understood as comprising both *geistlich* (spiritual, religious) and *geistig* (intellectual, mental)[15]. These four nodes are the question of technology, epochality, the privileging of the question, and the discourse of animality. On this reading, 'Of Spirit' demonstrates how these nodes inform Heidegger's conception of *Geist,* and also pave the way for 'the entry on stage of spirit itself' (31).

This conception of spirit is not at odds with 'Being and Time, as 'spirit does not seem to belong to subjectivity' (Spivak, 1994:24). However, in referring to Heidegger's Rectoral Address, Derrida illustrates how Heidegger reinscribes spirit in an 'oppositional demarcation' as that which is opposed to biologism or genetic racism. As such, spirit comes to define the 'unilaterality of subjectivity' (Derrida, 1987a:39). In other words, spirit 'no longer remains prior to – or outside of - all differences between subject and whatever is not subject. It belongs to the subject(s) who rallies (or rally) in its name' (Spivak, 1994:24-25).

In the first section Derrida's analysis of these four nodes will be traced in order to demonstrate how Heidegger's conception of spirit amounts to a metaphysics of subjectivity or an anthropocentric humanism. This analysis therefore illustrates what, since the birth of the Cartesian subject, *still* remains the same in our conceptions of subjectivity.

Through a different strategy of reading, however, Derrida identifies an alternative way in which the question of the subject can be preserved in Heidegger. Derrida (1987a:132-133) describes the aim of this second reading as follows: '[b]eyond an always necessary

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[15] Collins: German/English, 2000

exegesis, this rereading sketches out another typology for new tasks, for what remains to be situated of the relationships between Heidegger's thought and other places of thought.' Otherwise stated, Derrida opens up the Heideggerian project in such a way that yields to the 'absolutely unprecedented responsibilities of "thought" and "action"' (40). In doing so, Derrida saves the Heideggerian project from unilaterally identifying the subject or spirit with subjectivity. In other words, Derrida is able to radically affect the unity of the name [subject] and the concept [subjectivity], thereby following the track of a more *radical* notion of responsibility that 'Heidegger himself gave up, halfway to its testing in its setting-to-work' (Spivak, 1994:43).

This second, more constructive reading of Heidegger will also be investigated since it lays both the groundwork, and illustrates the necessity of the deconstruction which is to follow in the third chapter.

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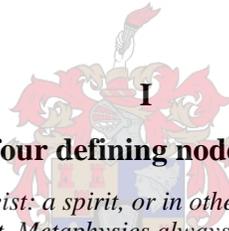
The four defining nodes of *Geist*

'...Geist is always haunted by its Geist: a spirit, or in other words...a phantom, always surprises by returning to the other's ventriloquist. Metaphysics always returns, I mean in the sense of a revenant [ghost], and Geist is the most fatal figure of the revenance [returning, haunting]. Of the double which can be never separated from the single.'
− Jacques Derrida, 'Of Spirit'

The question of technology:

In order to identify the anthropocentric humanist remnants that continue to mark the tradition of the subject, it is necessary to return to the very beginning, namely the Cartesian subject, and Heidegger's criticisms of the implications of this subject. As the reader will recall, Heidegger's main contention regarding the implications of the Cartesian subject centers around a loss of thinking which he defines as something of Being, belonging to being and listening to being (Heidegger, 1993:220). By reducing man and the world to regular, repeatable and predictable patterns, Descartes also reduced a thinking being to a mere calculating being, and thereby set in motion 'the will to

mastery' aimed at total and exclusive technological control of the world and of beings (Krell, see Heidegger 1993:309).

For Heidegger this question of technology is intimately related to his concept of *Geist,* and likewise presents a serious problem for any authentic sense of what it means for a being to be open to the question of Being. In Heidegger's analysis, the question of technology hinges on the central study that 'the essence of technology is nothing technological' (Derrida, 1987a:9), but rather 'a way of revealing the totality of being'. In its totality, technology reveals itself to be so 'pervasive and fundamental in our time…that we cannot "opt" for technology or "opt out" of it' (Krell, see Heidegger, 1993:309) – 'Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it' (Heidegger, 1993:311). The main problematic for Heidegger thus concerns the rigorous non-contamination of thought or speech by technology (Derrida 1987a:9). However, Derrida (10) argues that, according to Heidegger, it is not just thought and speech that should avoid contamination, but *Geist* itself:
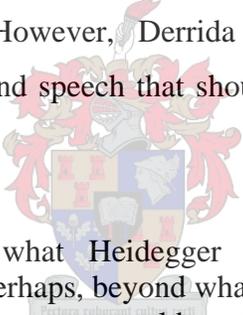
> 'Yet *Geist*…also names what Heidegger wants to save from destitution *(Entmachtung).* It is even perhaps, beyond what must be saved, the very thing that saves *(rettet).* But what saves would not let itself be saved from this contamination. What happens here will be in the difference between *Geistigkeit* and a certain (non-Christian) *Geistlichkeit* of the *Geist* whose purity Heidegger wants to save, a purity internal to spirit, even though he recognises that evil *(das Bose)* is spiritual (*geistlich).*'

For Heidegger then, the *question concerning technology* relates to *the question concerning the sacredness and the preservation of the very core of subjectivity*. This sacredness is threatened by the entire Cartesian project and the implications of (what Heidegger terms) this 'epoch of subjectivity'.

Epochality:

In 'Eating Well', Derrida (1995:265) argues that the Heideggerian delineation of the epoch of subjectivity is a little troublesome: whilst he admits that Heidegger's critique of the 'ontological inadequacy' of the Cartesian view of subjectivity is very necessary, he maintains that such a critique is inadequate as it links 'subjectivity to *representation*, and the subject-object couple to the presuppositions of the principle of reason in its Leibnizian formulation.' [16]

If we revisit the definition of deconstruction (Derrida, 1981:6), we see that one of the central aims of deconstruction is to determine 'what [a certain] history may have concealed or excluded, constituting itself as history through this repression in which it has a stake.' Applied to the history of the subject, which is linked to the tradition of representation, meaning comes to be defined only in terms of its relation to being; it understands the subject as *subjectum*, as the grounds of truth-claims (Williams, 2001:111). Accordingly, the tradition of representation 'constrains us, imposes itself on our thought through a whole dense, enigmatic, and heavily stratified history' (Derrida, 1981:6).

Derrida (1995:265) argues that what Heidegger conceals or excludes in his delimitation of 'the epoch of subjectivity' (also described by Derrida (265) as 'a modern hegemony of the subject of representation or of the principle of reason') is the foreclosure of Spinoza. For Derrida (265) this foreclosure presents a great rationalism that does not depend upon the principle of reason, as privileging both representation and the final cause such as in

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16 It is a generally emphasised study that Leibniz is 'fundamentally committed to subject-predicate logic'. However, he does not hold this position in full generality, but only with regard to 'propositions about substances i.e., about existents or possible existents' (Rescher, 1967:23). Thus, his version of subject-predicate logic is not to be viewed logically, but rather metaphysically. His analysis of a proposition about a substance consists of two steps, namely (23):

 1. To scrutinize the list of properties of the substance that is the subject of the proposition in order to determine what is and what is not included in its complete individual notion.
 2. To determine whether the properties imputed by the predicate of the proposition to the substance are in fact included in this list (or is a derivative of properties so included).

the case of Leibniz. Furthermore, Derrida (265) contends that Spinoza's 'substantialist rationalism' also provides a critique of finalism and Cartesian representationalism[17]. The

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17 Although Heidegger criticises the Cartesian cogito for transforming philosophy into anthropology, he nevertheless contends that this Cartesian subject, with its unmistakable grounds of certainty, forms the dominant 'paradigm of modern forms of thinking even as it reifies that thought' (Williams, 2001:18). For Heidegger then, a view such as Spinoza's 'anti-anthropomorphism' represents a somewhat misplaced perspective in the genre of modern philosophy (18). It is exactly for this reason that Derrida has 'always been a little troubled by the Heideggerian delimitation of the epoch of subjectivity', and why he now wishes to bring attention to the Spinozian foreclosure, which stands as an 'anomaly' against a Cartesian conception of the subject, but which nevertheless has interesting consequences for the philosophy of the subject in contemporary thought (18).

Spinoza's 'substantialist rationalism' displaces the primacy accorded to the cogito in Descartes' thoughts by placing 'the subject within a complex schema of interconnected relations where its volition, its desires and its self-understanding of the world are viewed not as self-causes but rather as effects of a systematic, rational order, that which he calls substance' (19). Spinoza's concept of 'substance' should be understood both in a concrete or real sense, as well as in a metaphoric sense.

It is metaphoric, since substance remains an empty concept if it is not thought of conceptually in terms of 'the infinity of its possible attributes' (19). In other words, the very possibilities for being and knowledge must be conceived of as 'an openness to possible modes of being' and hence, to the 'endlessly divisible attributes of substance' (19). For Spinoza (1951:15) then, 'the more things the mind knows, the better does it understand its own strength and the order of nature'. This mode of thinking metaphorically about substance, presents, as Derrida notes, a critique on finalism.

However, as mentioned above, substance is also real in that 'it is natural, material, it pertains to life; it is not simply an ethereal and abstract substance' (Williams, 2001:19). It is on the basis of this 'materiality of substance' that Spinoza launches his attack on Descartes conception of the subject: Spinoza criticizes Cartesian dualism (which considers the mind/intellect in splendid isolation to the body and the world of objects) for splitting the subject into two contradictory realms: one bearing an abstract semblance to God; and the other partaking in a dislocated sense of being without any real sense of embodiment or temporal expression (19). For Spinoza, the form of knowledge that emerges from this dualist mode of thinking ultimately grants full power to the imagination, where the constructions and rationales of the imagination become proofs for the absolute presence of God (20). On the Cartesian view, the absolute presence of God is 'the guarantor, the certifier and the cause of clear and distinct ideas' (16). Therefore, Cartesian knowledge remains an artificial construction that fails to recognise the way in which an idea and its corresponding object is constituted (19). Consequently the philosopher 'mistakes for reality the way his imagination is affected' (Spinoza, 1992:61).

This Cartesian form of knowledge (defined as an artificial construction bearing no relation to the world of objects as such) is exactly what concerns Heidegger in his analysis of the pervasive domination of technology that threatens even *Geist* itself. However, if one includes the Spinozian foreclosure, an understanding of the form of subjectivity and the structure of knowledge cannot be separated from the body, passions and the way in which 'concrete existence affects the claim to absolute knowledge' (Williams, 2001:19). As such, consciousness can never extend outside of its environment, and is furthermore severely limited by natural and material substance, and therefore cannot be directed by the absolute presence of God (20). Spinoza (1992:69;95) writes: '[t]he essence of man is constituted by definite modifications of the attributes of God [Substance]' and 'in the mind there is no absolute, or free, will. The mind is determined to this or that volition by a cause, which is likewise determined by another cause, and this again by another, and so ad infinitum.'

Spinoza thus understands mind and body as two (separate) alternatives within an infinity of attributes of common substances. As such, he maintains that the subject should be conceptualised as 'situated within this rational totality…as a [particular] mode of being or a modification of substance' (Williams, 2001:21). In offering a critique of Cartesian philosophy, Spinoza attempts to subvert the primacy of the subject. And, it is for this reason that Derrida insists on a Spinozian foreclosure when trying to delineate an 'epoch of subjectivity' (Derrida, 1995:265). Spinoza argues that Descartes can only guarantee the primacy of the

(import)ance of this foreclosure is made all the more significant in that the 'epoch of subjectivity' coincides with a 'epoch of rationality' (265).

Derrida's foreclosure thus points to another essential thread of Heidegger's thinking of spirituality identified in 'Of Spirit', namely that of *epochality* (Derrida, 1987a:12). Here Derrida argues that it is this thread of epochality that is 'in itself' and 'in the way it is put to work' into what he calls 'a little provocatively' 'the hidden teleology or the narrative order' of Heidegger's thinking on the spirit and subjectivity (12). One could claim that Derrida brings this dimension of epochality to light, not in order to discard it completely, but rather to focus attention on the historical dimensions of philosophy's bearings, which in this case, is linked to the history of representationalism and Plato's metaphysical conception of the subject as 'animal rationale' (Heidegger, 1998:181). Once Derrida uncovers this hidden teleology, he focuses our attention on certain foreclosures which necessarily lead to different narratives of this history.

Derrida does not seek merely to undermine Heidegger's interpretation of the history of the subject through making the Spinozian foreclosure. Rather, he seeks to show how the history of the subject, and Heidegger's *Dasein,* has constituted itself through this repression in which it has a stake, and which now problematises the whole discourse (Culler, 1983:86). Whilst Derrida (1995:266) recognises both the 'force and necessity' with which Heidegger substitutes 'a certain concept of *Dasein* for a concept of subject still too marked by the traits of being as *vorhanden, and hence by an interpretation of time,* and insufficiently questioned in its ontological structure'; he also argues that 'the displacement [from the traditional subject to *Dasein*] opened up a gap,…left fragile, or recalled the essential ontological fragility' of the main predicates on which both Cartesian and Heideggerian notions of subjectivity still rest, namely the idea of ethical, judicial and political foundations which 'were and remain essentially sealed within a philosophy of

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subject by constituting it as the 'primary object of knowledge'. On the final count, it is this position that Spinoza contests. In her book 'Part of Nature', Lloyd (1994:56) summarises Spinoza's position as follows:

> 'for Spinoza,…the self is not at all the primary object of knowledge. Self-knowledge becomes a reflective dimension on our knowledge of the world – a world whose existence is never in doubt. Knowing begins as immediate awareness of substance under the attribute of extension.'

the subject'[18] (266). What this means is that in framing his project in the Cartesian and Leibnizian tradition of representationalism, Heidegger essentially fails to break out of the metaphysical determinants of this tradition. This will become clear in the following two sections:

The privileging of the question:

To say that the very ideas of our ethical, judicial and political foundations remain sealed within a philosophy of the subject is to expose the ground of the Heideggerian gesture. Derrida (1987a:9) identifies this ground as *Dasein's ability to ask questions*. Derrida (9) argues that, the first and foremost thread of Heidegger's conception of *Geist* leads 'precisely, to the *question*, to the question of the question, to the apparently absolute and long unquestioned privilege of the *Fragen* – of, in the last instance, the essentially questioning form, essence and dignity of thought or the path of thought'. Though Derrida (9) notes the ways in which Heidegger differentiates modes of questioning, he nonetheless argues that Heidegger '*almost* never stopped identifying what is highest and best in thought with the question, with the decision, the call, or the guarding of the question, this "piety" of thought.'(9)[19]

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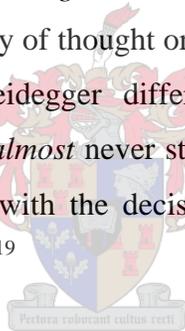
[18] See page 83-84 for a discussion of what Heidegger's position on this point entails.

[19] Heidegger initially portrays great wariness with respect to *Geist* or spirit, which he identifies with Descartes'' mistaken assumption of 'a self and a subject which [are] immediately given' (Howells, 1998:138). However, in 'Of Spirit' we see how Heidegger later comes frighteningly close to using the term *Geist* in 'spiritualising Nazism', both in praise of its 'spiritual grandeur', as well as 'will power' (139). He ultimately achieves this by exalting in an anthropocentric humanism, by which we can awaken spirit and guide it out of its resignation. This is achieved by leading *Geist* once more through the responsibility of questioning, thereby 'calling it back to the care of the question of Being' which has been 'entrusted', 'assigned' and 'destined' to 'our people' (Derrida, 1987a:67;68). Heidegger (in Derrida, 67) writes:

> 'Spirit is the full power given to the potencies of entities as such and in totality. Where spirit reigns, the entity as such becomes always and on every occasion more entity. This is why the questioning toward entities as such in totality, the questioning of the question of Being, is one of the fundamental questions for a reawakening of spirit, and thereby for the originary world of a historical *Dasein,* and thereby to master the danger of a darkening of the world, and thereby for the taking up of a historical mission of our people, inasmuch as it is the middle of the West.'

As such, two prominent criticisms that Derrida launches against Heidegger concern the understanding of Dasein (characterised by the ability to think or question) as the unveiling of the ontological determinant of man; and Heidegger's recourse to a metaphoric language, where Dasein is viewed as 'home, homeland, shelter etc.' (Williams, 2001:119) This further authenticates Heidegger's position and serves both to position his philosophy in the linguistic structures of Western metaphysics, as well as to resurrect 'dominant [anthropocentric] humanist motifs' (119).

However, it is not only the ability to ask questions but more specifically, *our* ability to ask questions *regarding our own Being*, that Derrida identifies as the basis for the Heideggerian ontological primacy of man. Indeed Derrida (1995:267) argues that:

> '…the chosen point of departure [of the Heideggerian gesture], the exemplary entity for a reading of the meaning of Being, is the entity that *we* are, *we* the *questioning* entities, we who, in that we are open to the question of Being and of the being of the entity we are, have this relation of presence and proximity, this relation to self, in any case, that is lacking in everything that is not *Dasein*'

The fact that we, as *humans*, are open to the question of Being, introduces a certain responsibility into the concept of *Dasein.* This responsibility is not a responsibility towards beings in general but rather a responsibility towards Being-with [*Mitsein*] others in the world (Derrida, 1995:279-280), where 'others' is defined as 'those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself – those among who one is too' (Heidegger, 1962:118). And, 'those from whom…one does not distinguish oneself' are those whose character is that of *Dasein* or *ek-sistence* (which refers to Dasein's ability to '"stand out" into the truth of Being') (Krell in Heidegger:1993:228)).

Heidegger (1993:228) writes: '[e]k-sistence can be said only of the essence of man, that is, only of the human way "to be." For, as far as our experience shows, only man is admitted to the destiny of ek-sistence. Therefore ek-sistence can also never be thought of as a specific kind of living creature among others.' In other words, what can be said of humans in this regard cannot be said of animals[20]. And, it is this distinction between man

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[20] In the introduction it was stated that Heidegger's definition of Spirit is not at odds with 'Being and Time' since here spirit does not belong to subjectivity. It was, however, also stated that reinscribing Spirit in an oppositional demarcation once again makes it a unilaterality of subjectivity. During the Rectoral Address we see how, for the first time, *Fragen,* defined 'as will: will to know and will to essence' (Derrida, 1987a:35), becomes one of the primary determinants of Spirit. Heidegger writes of the Spirit (as determined by the Fragen): 'If we the essence of science in the sense of *this manner of holding firm, questioning [fragenden] and exposed in the midst of the uncertainty of entities in their totality,* then this will to essence creates for our people its most intimate and extreme world of danger, in other words its true *spiritual* world' (Heidegger in Derrida, 36). Here Derrida argues that 'the spiritual force' which defines the 'destiny of the West' turns back 'against its "subject"' (39). This is because 'one binds the philosophical a-partness of spirit by determining it into a narrow sense' (Spivak, 1994:25) as that which is demarcated from and therefore opposite to 'anything but spiritual interpretation of "earth and blood"' – namely, 'forces which would not be spiritual, but natural, biological, racial…' (Derrida, 1987a:25). As such, spirit 'loses its (non)character of guarding question no longer remains prior to – or outside of – all differences between

and animal that still ties Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* to the anthropocentric humanism that also defines traditional metaphysics (Derrida in Glendinning, 1998:62).

It must be noted here that Derrida is not trying to undermine questioning as such, but rather the mode (or restriction) of questioning utilised by Heidegger, since this restriction becomes the chosen point of departure for a reading of the meaning of Being. This restriction amounts to the fact that only humans are open to Being in that '*we*', having Dasein, which is lacking in everything else, are 'the *questioning* entities' (Derrida, 1995:267). As Heidegger (1962:62) himself acknowledges, 'even in this "being-outside" alongside the object, Dasein is still "inside"'. Later, Heidegger even goes as far as determining Dasein *in a certain way* as the '*solus ipse*' (188). For these reasons it is right to suggest, as does Derrida (1995:258) that 'Dasein comes to occupy…the place of the "subject", the *cogito* or the classical "Ich denke". From these it retains certain essential traits.'

Thus, for Heidegger, questioning remains not only the privilege of the subject, but also the grounds on which the privilege of the subject (and all the various ethical, judicial and political responsibilities (259) constituted by and for the *Mitsein*) is based. Consequently, the point of departure for the existential analytic (Heidegger) who seeks to deconstruct notions of absolute subjectivity, is the '*relation to self as such and of reappropriation*' (267). And, on the final count, this relation is as common to transcendental idealism, to speculative idealism and to the thinking of absolute subjectivity itself (267).

The discourse of animality:

Defining questioning as the privilege of the human subject leads us to the final thread of Heidegger's spirituality, namely the *discourse of animality* (Derrida, 1987a:12). This discourse marks 'the inevitable return of the distinction between the *human* relation to self…and a *non-human* relation to self' (Derrida,1995:268). Whereas the human relation

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subject and whatever is not subject. [Spirit] belongs to the subject...[i]t becomes negotiable. It is made to take sides [with the subject] and thus becomes unilateral' (Spivak, 1994:25) The *Fragen* has become the human privilege.

is capable of consciousness, language, relation to death etc., the non-human relation is incapable of phenomenology as such. Consequently, we are left with the question of the animal (268). Heidegger's 'deconstruction of ontology insofar as it unseats the Cartesian-Hegelian *spiritus* – by withdrawing it from subjectivity – is [therefore] claimed to be threatened, or rather, compromised, by the [question of] the animal' (Spivak, 1994:32)

Derrida (1995:268) argues that 'this distinction between animal (which has no or is not Dasein) and man has nowhere been more radical nor more rigorous than in Heidegger'. However, Heidegger's discourse on the animal is also 'violent, awkward, [and] at times contradictory' (277) and 'leaves intact, sheltered in obscurity, *the axioms of the most profoundest metaphysical humanism'* (my italics) (Derrida, 1987a:12). Derrida (12) explains this statement as follows:

> 'This [profound metaphysical humanism] is particularly manifest in the *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, around some guiding theses…the stone is without world *(weltlos)*, the animal is poor in the world *(weltarm)*, man is world-forming *(weltbildend)*…Why does Heidegger present such propositions as "theses," which is something he practically never does elsewhere, and for essential reasons? Do these "theses" affect in turn all the concepts used in them, beginning with those of life and world? One can already see that these difficulties communicate with that of the *Fragen* (the animal isn't really capable of it), with that of technology, and, finally, again, with that of spirit: what of the relationship between spirit and humanity, spirit and life, spirit and animality?'

To understand the implications of the above quote in full, it is necessary to investigate Heidegger's discourse on the animal in greater detail, beginning with the space in the world that Heidegger attributes to the animal:

Heidegger defines the world as a '*spiritual* world' (in Derrida, 1987a:47) and proceeds to state that "*Das Tier hat keine Welt, auch keine Umwelt'* – the animal has no world, nor any environment (47). If the animal has no world, and if the world is defined as a spiritual world, the above statement would imply that '[a]nimality is not *of* spirit' (47). But the matter is not so simple. In the above quotation, Heidegger states that the animal is *weltarm* or poor in the world; whereas the stone, for example, is *weltlos* or without world

(12). In other words, '[t]he *without* of the *without-world* does not have the same sense and does not bespeak the same negativity for animal and stone: privation is one case, pure and simple absence is the other.' (50).

Heidegger attributes a place in the world for the animal in the mode of 'not-having' - 'the animal has no world, the animal has a world. And therefore the animal has and does not have spirit' (51). This negative formulation of 'not-having' points to the Heideggerian idea that '*[t]here is no category of original existence for the animal*' (Derrida, 1995:277) (my italics). Otherwise put, the animal 'has access to entities but, and this is what distinguishes it from man, it has no access to entities *as such*' (Derrida, 1987a:51).

Heidegger illustrates the animal's lack of 'access to entities *as such'* by pointing to the example of the bee and the lizard: '[t]he worker bee' says Heidegger (in Derrida, 51-52):

> 'knows the flower, its colour, its scent, but it does not know the flower's stamen *as* a stamen, it does not know the roots, the number of stamens, etc. The lizard…does not relate to the rock and the sun *as such*, as that with regard to which, precisely, one can put questions and give replies. And yet…we know that it has a relationship with the sun – and with the stone, which itself has none, neither with the sun nor with the lizard.'

Heidegger marks the animal's lack of 'access to entities *as such'* by placing the entities under erasure or crossing-through them. Heidegger (in Derrida, 52) writes:

> 'When we say the lizard is stretched out on the rock, we should cross through (*durchstreichen)* the word "rock," to indicate that what the lizard is stretched out on is doubtless given him in *some way (irgendwie, italicized)*, but is not known *as (als, italicized)* rock. The crossing-through does not only mean: something else is apprehended, as something else, but: it is above all not accessible *as entity (uberhaupt nicht* als Seiendes *zuganglich).*'

This erasure of entities points, in our language, to the inability of the animal to name. Derrida (53) argues that this inability to name 'is not primarily or simply linguistic, it derives from the properly *phenomenological* impossibility of speaking the phenomenon whose phenomenology as such, or whose very *as such,* does not unveil the being of the

entity.' Elsewhere, Derrida (1995:277) notes that Heidegger's animal is sad, and that this sadness is determined in the animal's phenomenology: 'as if the animal remained a man enshrouded, suffering, deprived on account of having access neither to the world of man that he nonetheless senses, nor to truth, speech, death, or the Being of being as such' (277).

The point which Derrida (1987a:53) is trying to underscore in his analysis of Heidegger's animal is that the animal has no *Dasein,* and that the crossing-out of entities for the animal is complete: 'it is as if, for the animal lacking access to the entity as such, the latter, i.e. the Being of the entity, were crossed out in advance, but with an absolute crossing-out, that of privation.' In other words, '[i]t is closed to the very opening of the entity.' (54). Thus *Dasein's* definitive predicate 'is always a matter of marking an absolute limit' (54) between *Dasein* and the animal, where 'the animal is absolutely off-limits to the deconstruction of ontology' (Spivak, 1994:31).

Derrida (1987a:55) attributes a certain teleology to Heidegger's thought, especially with regard to his discussion of the animal. However, Derrida contends that this teleology should not be interpreted in progressive or evolutionist fashion, but should rather be seen as marking 'an absolute limit between the living creature and the human *Dasein*' (54). This limit characterises his theses, and implies a certain hierarchisation and evaluation, especially with regard to concepts such as 'poverty' and 'privation' (56). Thus 'every inauguration of the world by *Dasein* is struck through by the inaccessible animal. Heidegger's philosophy "responds" against its grain to the animal by the formalizable logic of contamination[21] – not just a threat, but a compromise' (Spivak, 1994:31).

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[21] In modelling complex systems such as the subject, one needs to reduce the complexity of the system in order to work with it and attribute meaning to it. Yet, since complex systems are by definition irreducible, some constituents will necessarily be excluded when circumscribing the system. Therefore, the 'contamination' referred to in Spivak's quotation denotes the violence one undertakes in 'modelling' concepts of the subject. Contamination is inescapable. However, one needs to always ask the question pertaining to what constitutes the least grave form of contamination (even though this question cannot have a final answer). In delineating the difference between man and animal in terms of a binary opposition, Heidegger forgoes both this question and the absolutely unprecedented responsibilities of thought and action demanded by this question.

In 'Of Spirit' Derrida (1987a:57) concludes his discussion of Heidegger's animal by describing this compromise as follows:

> 'But as…the animal is not a *Dasein,* nor is it a *Vorhandensein* or *Zuhandensein* for us, as the original possibility of a *Mitsein* with it is not seriously envisaged, one cannot think it or talk of it in terms of *existential* or of *categorical*, to go back to the pair of concepts which structure the existential analytic of *Sein und Zeit.* Can one not say then, that the whole deconstruction of ontology, as it is begun in *Sein und Zeit* and insofar as it unseats, as it were, the Cartesian-Hegelian *spiritus* in the existential analytic, is here threatened in its order, its implementation, its conceptual apparatus, by what is called, so obscurely still, the animal? Compromised, rather, by a *study* on animality which presupposes- this is the irreducible and I believe dogmatic hypostudy of the study – that there is one thing, one domain, one homogenous type of entity, which is called animality *in general,* for which an example would do the job. This is a study, which in its *median* character, as clearly emphasized by Heidegger (the animal *between* stone and man), remains fundamentally teleological and traditional, not to say dialectical.'

Derrida's critique of Heidegger's discourse on the animal is therefore threefold: firstly, 'it massively underestimates the innumerable structural differences that in fact separate one species of animal from another' (Glendinning, 1998:68). This is because Heidegger only envisages 'one domain, one homogenous type of entity, which is called animality *in general'*. Consequently, he does not go beyond grudgingly acknowledging a certain 'abysmal bodily kinship with the beast' (Heidegger, 1993:230). Secondly, Heidegger does not seriously envision the possibility of a *Mitsein* with the animal (Glendinning, 1998:68). In other words, as mentioned before, there is 'an absolute limit between the living creature and the human *Dasein*'. It is precisely this sharp distinction between man and animal that is so problematic. And, thirdly, Heidegger's discourse on privation 'cannot avoid a certain anthropocentric or even [rational] humanist teleology' (Derrida, 1987a:55).[22]

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[22] These last two criticisms feed into a much larger criticism of Heidegger's philosophical project, namely that Heidegger recoils from rational humanism, which criticises the metaphysics of the subject, not because it sets the subject too high, but rather because it doesn't 'set the *humanitas* of man high enough' (Heidegger, 1993:233-234). For Heidegger then, man as *animal rationale* still 'remains *too much* of an animal' (Glendinning, 1998:70). Thus, when Heidegger states that man is ontologically distant from himself, this is not a distance that defines him, but rather a 'fall from grace, a sign of inauthenticity' (Howells, 1998:133). Therefore, as Derrida notes, '[w]e see that *Dasein*, if it is not man, is none the less nothing other than man' (Derrida in Howells, 133). In opposing rational humanism which 'has no real

However, it is not just Heidegger that remains firmly embedded in the anthropocentric humanist tradition: in the Western philosophical discourse the animal will never have an unconscious (Freud[23]) nor a relation to the Other – there is no 'animal face' (Levinas[24]) (Derrida, 1995:268). In other words, *the animal can never be a subject, since the discourse continues to link subjectivity with man* (268). Furthermore, if the animal is not a subject, then nor can it ever be party to notions such as 'responsibility, freedom, truth, ethics and law', since these very notions characterise the definitive predicates of subjectivity, both in its Cartesian and Post-Cartesian forms[25] (269). Therefore, as stated before, Heidegger's entire deconstruction of ontology insofar as it unseats the Cartesian - Hegelian *spiritus* – by withdrawing it from subjectivity – is claimed to be threatened, or rather, compromised, by the animal. It is in this context that Derrida 'brings up the question of a specific political responsibility again' (Spivak, 1994:32) by posing the question of whether the subject of subjectivity is necessarily human. Derrida (1995:268-269) states:
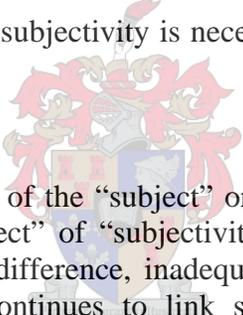
> 'Why have I rarely spoken of the "subject" or of "subjectivity," but rather, here and there, only of "an effect" of "subjectivity"? Because the discourse on the subject, even if it locates difference, inadequation, the dehiscence within auto-affection, and so forth, continues to link subjectivity with man. Even if it acknowledges that the "animal" is capable of auto-affection (etc.), this discourse obviously does not grant it subjectivity – and this concept thus remains marked by all the presuppositions that I have just called.'

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conception of the true dignity of man', Heidegger in effect, is calling for 'a deeper recognition of man's humanity' (Howells, 1998:133).

[23] Derrida's contention that Freud's animal does not have an unconscious is perhaps an interesting avenue for further exploration. Freud develops a very material model of the brain, compatible with contemporary neural theory (see 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' – published posthumously (Freud 1950)) (Cilliers, 1998:45). In Freud's model, 'neurons interact through pathways which channel the energy in the brain. This energy comes both from outside the body (perception), and from internal sources.' (45) In this explanation, there appears to be nothing essentialist or metaphysical in Freud's understanding of the brain. In fact, Freud himself stipulates that '[t]he intention [of his project] is to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science'. Therefore, there seems to be no reason to presume that the same physiology that characterises the human brain should not characterise the animal brain.

[24] See pages 69-72 for a more detailed discussion on this point.

[25] See page 83-84 for a more detailed discussion on this point

Still **human, all too human**

You know, I often use a quote from Rosensweig or even from Levinas which says that the "yes" is not a word like others, that even if you do not pronounce the word, there is a "yes" implicit in every language, even if you multiply the "no", there is a "yes". And this is even the case with Heidegger.'
— Jacques Derrida, 'An Interview with Jacques Derrida', by Nikhil Padgaonkar

The violence of the animal-machine:

The above analysis demonstrates how it was ultimately around the privileging of the question of Being - questioning in turn being a *human* privilege - that 'the metaphysics of subjectivity' was constituted (Derrida, 1995:262). Therefore, when we pose the question that was asked in the introduction of this study, namely 'Who or what 'answers' to the question 'who'?'', we find that despite both Nietzsche and Heidegger's mistrust of subjectivist metaphysics, as well as the serious differences that lie between them, both thinkers still continue to 'endorse the question "Who?" by subtracting the "who" from their respective deconstructions of the subject (263). In other words, when confronted by 'the question "Who?"', both Nietzsche and Heidegger identify this 'who' as already being there as the force or power to ask questions (Heidegger's Dasein) (261); or, this 'who' might amount to - and this is the same point phrased differently - the question 'What is made possible by its power, by its being able to ask questions about itself [Who is who? Who is it?]' (261). In other words, what privilege does the act of inquiring about 'the question "Who?"' grant the subject?

Before turning to a more interesting reading of 'the question "Who?"', the two main consequences of denying the animal subjectivity on the basis of its inability to question must be investigated: firstly, in privileging the human, spirit also becomes the privilege of man who rallies in its name. As such, spirit cannot remain either prior to or outside of the difference between subject and non-subject (Derrida, 1987a:39). As such,

Heidegger's attempt at using *destruktion*[26] to ward off the identification of subject with spirit fails: '*[d]estruktion* cannot be used to avoid the unilaterality of subjectivity when spirit is bound by a stand taken in its name. That as it were, is the limit above.' (Spivak, 1994:33).

Secondly, Heidegger uses *Destruktion* to ward off the identification of spirit with the animal. This is because Heidegger believes that the animal is an unquestioning entity and hence not worthy of being a *Dasein*. In doing this, however, Heidegger denies the animal-in-the-human. The consequence of this is that the limit that marks the space of the animal, which is also the limit from below, prevents Heidegger's philosophy from being a philosophy of life since it does not contend with the space of the body and materiality. Heidegger is therefore incapable of filling life (and therefore death) with meaning (33). It is this limit from below, the total crossing-out of the animal, which leads to a perverse reading of Heidegger. This reading is not characterised by the animal (the animal is out of reach), but the animal-machine. This animal-machine is incapable of giving itself over to its own animality…it has no typographical arsenal of recalling [the] limit(s)' (33) Derrida (1987a:134) writes of this perverse (but possible) reading:

> 'To dream of what the Heideggerian corpus would look like one day when, with the application and consistency required, the operation prescribed by him at one moment or another would indeed have been carried out: "avoid" the word "spirit," at the very least put it in question marks, then cross through all the names referring to the world whenever one is speaking of something which, like the animal, has no *Dasein,* and therefore no or only a little world, then place the word "Being" everywhere under a cross, and finally cross through all the question marks when it's a question of language, i.e. indirectly, of everything, etc. One can imagine the surface of a text given over to the gnawing, ruminant, and silent voracity of such an animal-machine and its implacable "logic." This would not only be simply "without spirit," but a figure of evil.'[27]

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[26] *Destruktion* or its synonym *Abbau* translates as 'quarrying, dismantling, or decomposing'. *Destruktion* is therefore not only concerned with a negative act of destruction, but with the act of 'un-building' or 'de-construction' (i.e. *ab – bauen*) (Thomson, 2005:7-8).
[27] The primary reason why Nietzsche remains 'a less dark figure' for Derrida is precisely 'because he reckons with the living animality of the human' (Spivak, 1994:32).

<u>Beyond the question: A complex call:</u>

There is a beyond to this nightmarish vision described in the quotation above: in 'Of Spirit', Derrida identifies a second strategy for reading Heidegger's project and, it is to this strategy and the implications that it has for 'the question "Who?" to which we now turn:

Derrida[28] states that Heidegger kept saying that thinking started with questioning and 'that questioning (fragen) is the dignity of thinking' (and therefore also the dignity of the human subject, which Heidegger defines as the only questioning being). But then, without contradicting this statement, he suddenly said: '"yes, but there is something even more originary than questioning, than this piety of thinking"'. This more originary phenomena is what Heidegger called the *Zusage*[29] which means 'to acquiesce, to accept, to say "yes", to affirm.' This *Zusage* is 'not only prior to questioning, but it is supposed by any questioning.'

With regard to 'the question "Who"?' the *Zusage* has the positive benefit of warding off the nightmarish vision of the Heideggerian project by opening up this project to the beyond of the question. In other words, the *Zusage* 'overwhelms the question itself, reinscribes it in 'an "affirmation," of a "yes" or an "en-gage"' (Derrida, 1995:261). Derrida describes the consequences of the en-gage in 'Of Spirit' Derrida (1987a:130) as follows:

> 'The question is thus not the last word in language. First, because it is not the first word. At any rate, before the word, there is this sometimes wordless word which we name the "yes." A sort of pre-originary pledge [*gage*] which precedes any other engagement in language or acion. But the fact that it precedes language does not mean that it is foreign to it. The *gage* engages in language – and so always in *a* language. The question is thus pledged…by the pledge of *Zusage.*'

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[28] 'An Interview With Jacques Derrida' by Nikhil Padgaonkar
<<<http://www.csun.edu/CommunicationStudies/grad/jd.nik.html>>>
[29] According to Derrida (1987a:129), '[t]he moment [of introduction of the *Zusage*] - which is not a moment – is *marked* in Heidegger's text. When he speaks of the promises and the "*es gibt,*" of course, and at least implicitly, but in literal and extremely explicit fashion in "Das Wesen der Sprache," in *unterwegs…*'

From the above quotation we see that the strength of the *Zusage* lies in its ability to save Heidegger's project from the violence of anthropocentric rational humanism. Consequently, Derrida (131) argues that this 'thought of an affirmation anterior to any question… must have an unlimited incidence…on the *quasi*-totality of Heidegger's previous path of thought'. Furthermore, '[t]his step transforms or deforms…the whole landscape to the extent that that landscape had been constituted *before* [devant] *the* – inflexible – *law* of the most radical questioning…[and that this] retrospective upheaval can seem to dictate a new *order*…that now everything has to be begun again, taking as the point of departure the en-gage…of the *Zusage* so as to construct a quite different discourse…' (131).

Derrida's description of the *Zusage,* however, can also be read as threatening his immanent position by postulating the space of questioning beyond the human, thereby risking a relapse into metaphysics. Whilst this critique is undoubtedly relevant, it could be argued that there is a more productive way of reading the *Zusage,* as a realm which resists categorisation whilst simultaneously avoiding metaphysics. If we ascribe the incalculability of the *Zusage* to the multiplicity of differences that exist as a result of the complexity inherent to our immanent position, then it is possible to read the *Zusage* as that indeterminate space generated by the interaction of immanent beings. In other words, the *Zusage* becomes the space of incalculable possibilities which characterises our immanent position, and which always precedes any question, decision and action.

In order to resist the violence of rational and anthropocentric humanism it is necessary to take seriously this space of possibility, since, as stated in the first chapter, we are also in the realm of the ethical-political. Whilst every decision is a contamination to some extent, the realm of the *Zusage* wards off the fixed boundaries of categorisation that lead to the worst kind of contamination, namely contamination without responsibility (which occurs once we attribute certain definable predicates to subjectivity). In this scenario 'ethics is reduced to the very antistudy of ethics by reducing the aporia of judgment in which the

possibility of justice resides to the mechanical unfolding of a positivist calculation'. (Derrida, 2004:69).

Therefore when the implications that this 'retrospective upheaval' has for the subject are judged, it is helpful to bear in mind the discussion of the complex subject presented at the end of chapter one. The reader will find that the language used and the points made are not at odds with the insights gained from complexity theory. However, a more detailed discussion of the *Zusage* will serve to integrate and develop the previous discussion on a complex subject with the philosophical discourse on the subject:

The *Zusage* or dislocated affirmation, which is neither human nor without subject, serves to creates a relation to the self in which 'something like a subject, man or whoever it might be can take shape' (Derrida, 1995:261). This 'dislocated affirmation' is besieged by *différance* and the trace, which means that it can only *become* in a singular instance. In other words, the 'subject assumes presence' as 'sub-stance, stasis, stance' and, therefore, in not being able to 'stabilise itself *absolutely'* assumes a 'relative stabilisation of what remains *unstable,* or rather *non-stable.'* (270). This implies that the self is a necessarily complex system that cannot define itself outside of a 'fabric of relations' or the specific place that it occupies at a specific time. The 'yes, yes' of the *Zusage* therefore precedes the so-called autonomous determinations of the subject, and as such the finite subject comes after the infinite and non-determinate realm of the *Zusage* to which responsibility belongs (268). In other words, the *Zusage* embodies all unforeseeable possibilities that the self as a node in a network may come to occupy.   As a result, it is 'in the relation to the *Zusage* presupposed in every question that one must seek a new (post-deconstructive) determination of the responsibilities of the "subject"' (268).   Otherwise stated, the complex system that is the *Zusage* must be considered when trying to determine the responsibilities of a subject embedded in a fabric of relations.

Derrida suggests that to achieve these ends, it is necessary '…to forget the word [subject] to some extent. Not to forget it, it is unforgettable, but to rearrange it, to subject it to the laws of context that it no longer dominates from the center. In other words, no longer to

speak about it, but to write it, to write "on" it as on the "subjectile," for example' (268). Another way of saying this is that we must dispense with the view of the self as an atomistic unit standing by and for itself and reckon with the implications of what it means to be a mode in a network of interrelated elements.

Only once these markings have been made, will it be possible to escape subjectivist metaphysics, which defines responsibility always in terms of the other as *human*, where human is understood as 'the personality, the nonbiological character of life that must be saved, and that is at issue in [contemporary] discourse[s]' (Derrida, 2002a:308). Derrida argues that when we refer to 'the sacredness of life' (and the related topic of responsibility) within these discourses, we don't refer to 'life itself, but human life par excellence, the human being, the singularity of the human being. There will never be a moral or political discourse on animal life, or rarely, even for the singularity of animal life. This is a very serious question.' (309).

Reopening the notion of responsibility implies that we need to reckon with this very serious question and therefore, we cannot begin with a responsibility that originates within the question of the finite, and therefore calculable, subject (the 'to *whom* are we responsible?'). Responsibility must pass through the realm of the *Zusage*, or 'through the proofs of the incalculable or the undecidable' (273). To fail to conceive responsibility in this manner is to reduce everything 'to calculation, program, causality, and, at best, "hypothetical imperative' (273). The other is therefore, an irreducible other, and responsibility therefore carries within it 'an essential excessiveness' (272). Another way of saying this is that the realm of the *Zusage* is a necessarily irreducible and therefore complex system, rather than a merely complicated system.

Complex responsibilities:

To say that the realm of the *Zusage* is complex, is not to say that calculation is unimportant. Derrida himself states that 'the subject is also a principle of calculability' (272). In other words, when determining our responsibilities, we have to reckon with the

aporia which exists between the calculable and the incalculable. This same aporia which is present in Derrida's concept of responsibility also features in the logic of hospitality. Derrida writes that '[p]ure hospitality consists in welcoming whoever arrives before imposing any condition on him, before knowing and asking anything at all' (Derrida, 2005:7). This is 'the unconditional law of unlimited hospitality': to not close 'the door on the future and the foreigner' (6). In other words, this unlimited hospitality is simultaneously a preparation for the before and the after of the subject, in that the Zusage is beyond language (Derrida, 1987a:129). Therefore, the *Zusage* initiates infinite hospitality and responsibility towards that which comes after the human subject (including the animal).

Yet, hospitality, like the subject, demands a certain calculability. Hospitality also 'implies that one addresses [the other], singularly, that he be called therefore, and that he be understood to have a proper name: "You, what is your name?"'(Derrida, 2005:7). As such, according to the law of hospitality, 'these rights and obligations [are] always conditioned and conditional' (6). The singularity of the other thus prevents us from levelling the other to humans or even animals *in general.* In other words, responsibility also necessitates that we take important differences into account, that we recognise that '[w]e are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly other to each other, in specific difference...' (Haraway, 2003:2-3).

This aporia - that marks the subject, responsibility and hospitality - manifests in 'the unstable site of strategy and decision' (Derrida, 2005:6) and therefore severely complicates the task of reckoning with or calculating the subject. It has already been demonstrated to some extent how this aporia prevents us from determining the other as a human other. This is because the *Zusage* forces us beyond our general categories of humanity and subjectivity, forces us to forego the privilege of the subject previously based on the privilege of the question, and thereby compels us to reckon with the possibility of the animal.

Reckoning with the possibility of the animal also implies taking seriously questions dealing with the animal, including: whether the animal can hear the call that originates responsibility?; whether the animal questions?; whether the call heard by Dasein comes originally from the animal?; whether there is an advent of the animal?; whether the voice of a friend can be that of an animal? (Derrida, 1995:278). In other words, the pre-originary pledge of the *Zusage*, which precedes any other engagement in language or action, compels us to ask *whether we should extend the notion of responsibility to the living in general*? This is because this pre-originary pledge 'situates...responsibility as irreducible to and rebellious toward the traditional category of "subject"' (274). Responsibility which no longer reckons only with the general category of the subject is excessive.

Yet, the second arm of the aporia, dealing with calculation, prevents us from casting the question of the animal in general terms. The singularity of a particular cat is not 'the exemplar of a species called cats' (Derrida, 2002b:378). Recognising the singularity of the other, prevents me from reappropriating the other; of framing the other as a general other; of anthropomorphizing the animal and casting judgments of animals 'as only partial realisations of the human ideal, as subhuman' (Wood, 1999:20). In other words, 'the animal is there before me, there close to me, there in front of me...it surrounds me...And from the vantage of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also...it can look at me' (Derrida, 2002b:380)[30]. Responsibility must be singular as much as it is excessive.

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[30] See the discussion on the question of the animal, pages 83-89

<center>**III**</center>

<center>**Maintaining the sacrificial structure**</center>

<center>*'This sacrificial structure, it seems to me…defines the invisible contour of all these reflections, whatever*
the distance taken with regard to ontology…or…with regard to onto-theological metaphysics.'
– Jaques Derrida, 'Eating Well'</center>

<u>Deaf to the call:</u>

In the previous two sections, it was demonstrated how Derrida (1987a:134) saves Heidegger's project from the 'silent voracity of [the] animal machine and its implacable logic' by introducing the 'yes, yes' of the *Zusage*. The call of the *Zusage* forces us to constantly reevaluate both how we view our ethical responsibilities and how we act out these responsibilities. Specifically, Derrida calls our attention to the question of our responsibilities to the animal.

By asking this question, Derrida (1995:278) is trying to underscore the whole canonized or hegemonic *sacrificial structure* of the discourse of Western metaphysics. This sacrificial structure is characterised by the acts of 'ingestion, incorporation, or introjection of the corpse' - an operation which is symbolic when the corpse is human, but real, as well as symbolic, when the corpse is an animal (278). According to Derrida, it is this notion of sacrifice which is 'essential to the [current day] structure of subjectivity' (Derrida, 2002c:247), in that it creates an absolute limit between the subject and sacrifice.

This limit does not recognise the radical irreducibility of the singular Other. Rather, this limit which marks sacrifice, is expansive and general insofar as 'those singular beings that we call "human" are named and configured *as* human' (Calarco, 2004:193). Otherwise stated, symbolic sacrifice universalises 'a singular being under the name "human," even if this occurs in the name of justice for all human beings' (193). Similarly, the singular act of eating the animal, the 'consecration of flesh-sharing *is* its erasure, the spiritualization and denegation of its gory reality' (Clark, 2004:103). Thus, partaking in the flesh of the singular animal allows us to paradoxically distance ourselves from the animal, symbolise the animal, reduce its singularity, and thereby allow for leaving open a

space for a very real non-criminal putting to death of the animal. This act can only be justified on the grounds of symbolic sacrifice, and postulating the only 'real' entity as the human subject (Carey, 2005:21[31]; Derrida, 1995:278).

Note that Derrida's point is not that real and symbolic sacrifice should be equated, nor that sacrifice should be done away with – indeed, as it will be later shown, sacrifice is inescapable. Rather, Derrida calls our attention to the notion of sacrifice in order to show how it has until now constituted both the material and symbolic outcome of the entire rational humanist tradition, without ever being sufficiently deconstructed. Indeed, Derrida (279) argues that even Levinas, who, like Heidegger, has done much in disrupting 'a certain traditional [rational] humanism', remains a profound humanist, to the extent that he, like Heidegger does '*not sacrifice sacrifice*,' where sacrifice is defined as 'a place left open, in the very structure of these [Western] discourses for a non-criminal putting to death' (278).

Levinas and the animal: Sacrificing the Other:

To say that Levinas (like Heidegger) remains a 'profound' humanist (where 'profound' should be understood as 'dogmatic', 'metaphysical' or 'anthoropocentric' (Calarco, 2004:180)) requires some explaining:

In the previous chapter we stated that Levinas begins his philosophical analysis within the horizons of contemporary anti-rational humanism (characterised by openness to otherness)[32] (179). We now return to the third definition of openness, which marks the openness or radical passivity of the subject. Levinas contends that anti-rational humanist philosophy opens the space for thinking the subject as radically passive, however it does

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[31] I wish to give credit to two graduate students of Dr. David Clark who analysed both the deconstruction of the sacrificial structure, and the meaning of the animal in their respective unpublished final graduate essays. Bibliographical details for these essays are as follows: Carey, J. (2005) 'The Politics of Friends: Animals and Deconstructive Opportunity'; and, Narduzzi, D. (2005) 'Hospitality and Its Other(s): The Animal in Derrida'. I have employed several of the references which they have used in their essays in order to substantiate my own points. I have provided full references to these respective essays only on the one or two occasions where I have found it insightful or illuminating to appropriate their own arguments.

[32] See pages 34-35 for a definition and implications of the meaning of openness.

not itself further this 'understanding of what being-subject to alterity signifies' (179). For Levinas, this openness and radical passivity of the subject should perhaps be 'located in the diachronic time of ethics, responsibility, and radical passivity – all of these serving as different names for a time and entity that has its mode of being as being-responsible for the other human.' (180).

This mode of being as 'being-responsible for the other human' translates into a 'subjectivity [which]…is constituted first of all as the subjectivity of the *hostage*' (Derrida, 1995:279). In Levinas' philosophy, the hostage is understood as the one 'who is delivered to the other in the sacred openness of ethics, at the origin of sacredness itself. The subject is responsible for the other before being responsible for himself as "me." This responsibility to the other, for the other, comes to him, for example…in the "Thou shalt not kill"' (279) [33]. However, this "Thou shalt not kill" that addresses our relation with the other, presupposes the other as *man*[34]. As such, the "Thou shalt not kill", and the related primordial ethical experience, has always been understood as "Thou shalt not kill man" and never as "Thou shalt not kill the living in general" (279).

In the same year that a section of the interview 'Eating Well' was published, an interview was conducted with Levinas[35] in which he 'somewhat complicates [the] standard picture

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[33] Levinas understands ethics to be something prior to moral questions, and *a fortiori* to moral law. In other words, Levinas is first and foremost concerned with 'the primordial ethical experience' from which certain moral questions, maxims and judgements may be derived (Critchley, 1999:3). This ethical experience begins with recognising the otherness of the Other, which takes place in the face-to-face encounter with the other that serves to challenge my 'subjecthood' or 'myself as ego or as subject with inalienable priority' (Howells, 1998:124). It is through challenging or questioning my primacy as subject, that the face of the other frees me from reification, and consequently grounds the ethical (125). Levinas thus defines ethics as 'the putting into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the other' (Levinas, 1969:43).

However, the encounter with the face of the other is not a neutral experience of mutual confirmation and reciprocity but rather an experience that both initiates and stops violence (hence the structure of the hostage): 'the otherness of the other as free transcendent subject both arouses my hostility and is also what causes it to cease, in so far as the face initiates an experience of transcendence and freedom which commands respect for the Other. And, this respect is the primary [and immediate] imperative: the 'incarnation' of non-violence' (Howells, 1998:125, appropriation of Derrida) upheld in the sacred 'Thou shalt not kill'.

[34] Indeed, Calarco (2004:181) notes that '[b]esides the short essay in *Difficult Freedom* entitled "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," Levinas appears wholly uninterested concerning the relation of animals to the ethical or justice-as-politics.'

[35] The interview is entitled 'The Paradox of Morality' in 'The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other' (1990)

of the status of animality in his thought' (Calarco, 2004:181). On this occasion, Levinas acknowledges both that the animal has a face and that 'the ethical extends to all living beings' (Levinas, 1998:172). However, Levinas is quick to mention that the 'priority here is not found in the animal but in the human face. We understand the animal, the face of an animal, in accordance with *Dasein*.' (169) Furthermore, Levinas argues that the 'human face is completely different and only afterwards do we discover the face of an animal' (172). The 'prototype' for our sense of obligation towards the animal is therefore, based on 'human ethics' (172). Calcarco (2004:184) argues that on this count, Levinas' displacement of the rational humanist subject of metaphysics fails in that 'it still retains and reinforces the anthropocentrism of classical humanism insofar as the *question* of the *animal's* being is never posed but is instead determined homogeneously and in relation to the measure of man…For Levinas, the animal is without *human* ethics; the ethical relation is based on the "prototype" of *human* ethics.' As such it would seem that the priority of the human justifies the sacrifice of animals for human needs and ends (183)

Calarco (183) launches a second criticism on Levinas's conception of the animal, stating that there is 'something deeply problematic about the way the distinction between "the human" and "the animal" is drawn in Levinas's discourse.' What concerns Calarco is that Levinas's category of "the animal" presupposes only certain types of animals (183). For example, Levinas would readily attribute a face to a dog, but when questioned about the face of the snake, Levinas replies that he 'can't answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed.' (Levinas, 1998:183). Reference to 'a specific analysis' seems to suggest that one already knows or can know what 'beings are included under the category of "animal"' (Calarco, 2004:183). In short, 'the thinking of singularity and radical alterity accorded to other human beings by Levinas never seems to extend beyond the human to the other animal, or the animal as other' (185).

Both the above criticisms implicitly underscore that '[w]e do not and cannot know in advance where the face begins and ends, and this non-knowledge should render any and every determination of the limits of responsibility problematic, contestable, and questionable' (184). Wood (1999:27) seems to reinforce this point, stating that Levinas

betrays his project in presupposing the other as man, since 'if we already know or determine the call of the Other as human, then we have failed to understand its radicalism'.

Along these lines Derrida (1995:284) argues that '[w]hat is still to come or what remains buried in an almost inaccessible memory is the thinking of a responsibility that does not stop at *this* [anthropocentric humanist] determination of the neighbour'. This 'still to come' or 'buried' notion of responsibility, must allow that '[s]omething of this call of the other must remain nonreappropriable, nonsubjectival, and in a certain way nonidentifiable, a sheer supposition, so as to remain *other*, a *singular* call to response or to responsibility…The obligation to protect the other's otherness is not merely a theoretical imperative' (284).

IV

Men and meat

'The question is not: can [animals] speak? But can they suffer?'
− Jeremy Bentham, 'An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation'

Summary and next steps:

In this chapter the history of Being was investigated in order to expose the ontological categories that underlie current conceptions of subjectivity. Through analysing the four defining nodes of *Geist* it was illustrated how 'the question of the 'Who?' ultimately guarantees the privilege of the human subject as questioning entity. However, this privilege holds terrible consequences and has the potential to transform Heidegger's project into work that not only lacks spirit, but embodies a figure of evil (Derrida, 1987a:134). A second strategy of reading however, saves Heidegger's project from these terrifying consequences by drawing attention to the beyond of the question, namely the pre-originary pledge of the *Zusage*. Not only does this pledge echo the implications that complexity theory holds for the subject; but it also refocuses our attention on what the notion of responsibility implies. Specifically, it raises the question of responsibility for the animal. The question of the animal lays the grounds for drawing attention to the

sacrificial structure that generally marks post-Heideggerian discourses on the subject and that is maintained on the basis of inferiority of animal. To illustrate how pervasive this discourse is, the example of the Levinasian Other was used in order to show how even an ethics as radical as this, does not demand responsible action towards animals.

Both Levinas's Other and Heidegger's *Dasein* are therefore "men" in a world where sacrifice is possible and where it is not forbidden to make an attempt on life in general, but only on human life…' (Derrida, 1995:279). The lowly place accorded to the animal in the Western tradition ultimately undermines the radicality of the anti-rational humanist position, and illustrates how a form of anthropocentric humanism continues to be implicated in current discourses on subjectivity. In order to reverse and displace the violence inherent in the institution of the 'who' as human subject, it is necessary to dismantle this sacrificial structure, thereby challenging the premises on which contemporary notions of responsibility are based. As Derrida (280) states:

> 'This sacrificial structure, it seems to me…defines the invisible contour of all these reflections, whatever the distance taken with regard to ontology in Levinas's thinking (in the name of what he calls metaphysics) or in Heidegger's with regard to onto-theological metaphysics. Going much too quickly here, *I would still like to link the question of the "who" to the question of "sacrifice"* (my italics).

Chapter 3

Eating the other: Towards a new limit

In the previous chapter the concept of the sacrificial structure - where sacrifice denotes a place left open in the very structure of these Western discourses for a non-criminal putting to death – was introduced (Derrida, 1995:278). In this chapter it will be illustrated how Derrida (280) attempts to dismantle this sacrificial structure by linking this structure and the corresponding question of sacrifice to the question of the 'who'. The reason for this (as was demonstrated) is that the question of the 'who?' always implies the subject as human. This allows for the absolute limit between man and animal, and therefore for the negation of responsibility to non-human life.

Derrida's aim in deconstructing the sacrificial structure, is to breach the terms of our anthropocentric humanism, and thereby intervene in the field of rigid oppositions between man and animal. This is because these rigid oppositions act as the justification for a non-criminal putting to death. Derrida dissolves these distinctions, by displacing the ethical frontier, which has always passed between the 'Thou shalt not kill' and 'Thou shalt not put to death the living in general' (279). In so doing, Derrida shows how the singularity and irreducibility of the other, as well as the relation to self (characterised as ex-appropriation and relative stabilisation), 'requires a thinking of *différance* and not of opposition' (269). In other words, an ethical frontier, defined not as an oppositional limit, but as a limit mediated by *différance* 'insists on multiplication and complication where essentialist gestures have homogenized, reduced, or screened out important differences' (Calarco, 2002:24).

In certain respects, Derrida's deconstruction of the man/animal divide is analogous to his deconstruction of speech/writing – especially in as far as this analogy points to the repression at play in binary oppositions. The analogy, however, falls short when it comes to illustrating the excess inherent to the notion of responsibility. Therefore, Derrida's deconstruction will be treated in two parts: firstly, Derrida's deconstruction of

speech/writing (in 'Of Grammatology') will be used to guide the reader through his deconstruction of the anthropocentric humanist subject. Secondly, the implications that the reversal and displacement of the sacrificial schema has for an ethical limit - now characterised by *différance* – will be investigated both in terms of the subject and its responsibilities.

A significant and interrelated problematic that will be dealt with in the last part of this chapter concerns the question of the animal: deconstructing the man/animal divide and displacing the sacrificial schema, necessarily complicates the question of the animal. The meaning that the animal assumes once the sacrificial schema is deconstructed must therefore be investigated. It will be illustrated how this meaning of the animal must necessarily reckon with a similar aporia as the one to be found in concepts of hospitality and responsibility.

I

Sacrificing sacrifice
'I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed.'
– Jacques Derrida, 'Interview with Richard Kearney'

Deconstructing the violent institution of the 'who':

Traditionally, writing has always been characterised as materiality and exteriority, 'two explicitly excremental epithets'; and speech as the 'diaphanous, diaphonic ideality and interiority of the voice *qui s'entend parler* [who is waiting to speak]' (Krell, 1988:8). In other words, the limit between speech and writing, like the limit between man and animal, functioned as an oppositional limit – an absolute boundary which marks speech as the superior term. As such, the philosophic voice was conceptualised as an ideal voice that heard and understood itself (7). However, by highlighting the repression of writing in 'Of Grammatology', Derrida deconstructs this fully present voice, the 'dream of [a] totalising self-presence, perfectly fulfilled, utterly slaked desire' (9).

This 'repression functions within writing itself, [and] is a repression of speech-in-writing and writing-in-speech' (7). This 'double repression' is a result of the history of metaphysics, which has not only repressed writing but also speech, in that both reflect engorgement. If writing is an 'excremental epithet' so too is speech, to the extent that speech is a 'genitofugal amphimixis of urethral and anal excitations, that is to say, a displacement upward in the body of release and retention "mechanisms" associated with (male) sexuality' (9). By showing how the 'excremental epithet' that traditionally characterised writing precedes speech, Derrida not only dismantles the superior term (i.e. speech) but also dissolves the absolute oppositional limit, illustrating how the relationship between speech and writing is mediated by *différance*. This not only prevents the reduction and homogenisation of speech and writing into absolute terms, but also complicates the relationship between them.

When the above analysis is applied to the distinction between man and animal, we see that the animal, like writing, has always only been characterised in terms of a materiality and exteriority incapable of phenomenology. On the other hand, man, like speech, has been understood as the diaphanous, diaphonic ideality and interiority of the non-biological character of life that must be saved and protected at all costs. In fact, this distinction, as we have seen, underscores Heidegger's entire project, where the animal is closed off in advance to the very opening of the entity of Being. As such, *Dasein's* definitive predicate 'is always a matter of marking an absolute limit' (Derrida, 1987a:54).

Similar to the 'double repression' of speech-in-writing and writing-in-speech constituted by the history of metaphysics, the absolute limit between man and animal has resulted in the same type of repression at play in the distinctions between man and animal. This repression of the human-in-the-animal and the animal-in-the-human has translated into the dominant schema of the day, namely the phallogocentric schema, which should be viewed as a '*carno-phallogocentric'* structure of subjectivity (Derrida, 1995:280). This is because this dominant schema implies a carnivorous virility installing the virile figure of

the self-present, speaking, virile male eater of flesh[36] at the determinative center of the subject (280; Calarco, 2004:190). In this schema, strength and virility do not merely represent the human ability to master and possess nature actively, but are also reinforced by the acceptance of sacrifice and the eating of flesh (Derrida, 1995:281). In other words, '[w]e have to eat and we have to eat something living. That is the law of flesh' (Clark, 2004:52)[37]. This is related to what Adams (1990:26) calls in another context 'the sexual politics of meat', where '[m]eat eating measures individual and societal virility.'

Therefore, it is this consecration of flesh-eating - the denegation of the putting to death of life-in-general - of sacrifice (both real and symbolic), and of 'carnivorous' assimilation of the other - which allows for this schema of subjectivity to survive unchallenged (Derrida, 1995:280). It is for this reason that Derrida states that it suffices to take seriously not only 'the idealising interiorisation of the phallus'; but *also* 'the necessity of its passage through the mouth, whether it's a matter of words or things, of sentences, of daily bread or wine, of the tongue, the lips, or the breast of the other' (280).

Derrida's point is that the unquestioned carnivorous assimilation of differences is the common denominator of the dominant schema, and informs 'the order of the political, the State, right, or morality' and therefore subjectivity itself (281). Anyone/anything who falls outside of this dominant schema – the celibate, homosexuals, even femininity – will rarely be acknowledged, admitted to the head of anything (above all the State), unless somehow it lets itself be translated into this dominant schema (281).

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[36] Through this carnophallogocentric schema, authority and autonomy are 'attributed to the man (*homo* and *vir*) rather than the woman, the woman rather than the animal, and the adult rather than the child (Derrida, 1995:280-281). Thus our notion of subjectivity implies a certain hierarchisation and evaluation with regard to strength and virility. These terms always come to define the 'the adult male, the father, the husband, or brother.' (281). In this fraternal schema the superior terms thus mark the higher presence, whereas the inferior terms mark the fall or a weakness.

[37] To illustrate this point, Derrida (281) uses the example of the *chef d'Etat* (head of State) as embodying the pinnacle of this fraternal structure, in that the *chef d'Etat* 'must be an eater of flesh (with a view moreover, to being "symbolically" eaten himself)'. In a footnote, Derrida (475) points to one fascinating exception to the rule, namely Hitler, who was in fact a vegetarian, but states that '[e]ven he did not propose his vegetarianism as an example'. Moreover, Derrida (475) views this exception as illustrative of the hypostudy which he is trying to evoke, namely 'A certain reactive and compulsive vegetarianism is always inscribed, in the name of denegation, inversion, or repression, in the history of cannibalism'.

In order to illustrate this point, Derrida (281) highlights the example of the 'feminine condition' which deteriorated from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century in Europe, reaching its worst moment at the exact time when the Napoleonic Code inscribed the positive rights of the subject. This reinforces the notion that not only has the animal been historically excluded from the realm of the subject, but also to a lesser degree, so has anybody who does not represent the logos of this fraternal structure. In other words, anybody who does not embody the idealising interior of the phallus and the associated carnivorous virility of man (281). Those excluded from the dominant schema are appropriated and assimilated by the virile strength of the male.

Once we start considering this (symbolic or real) ingestion and interiorisation of the other – something which is both expansive and unavoidable - we find that the threshold or line that demarcates the realm of the subject (typified in the 'Thou shalt not kill' (279)) can no longer be viewed in terms of a simple binary opposition: a clear-cut inclusion/exclusion or inside/outside of the subject. Rather, the limit passes between 'several infinitely different modes of conception-appropriation-assimilation of the other' (281). Derrida (282) argues that even '[t]he so-called non-anthropophagic cultures practice symbolic anthropology and even construct their most elevated socius, indeed the sublimity of their morality, their politics, and their right, on this anthropophagy.' So vegetarians too 'partake of animals, even of men' (282) and any attempt to deny this, creates another set of rigid oppositions (between sentient and non-sentient), which is equally problematic[38] (Calarco, 2004:195).

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[38] A practical example to highlight the problematic distinction between real and symbolic sacrifice, is the contestation between vegetarians and vegans with regard to delimiting symbolic and real sacrifice (Calarco, 2004:194). The importance of highlighting this complication is to ensure that vegetarianism does not hold itself up as '*the* moral mode of eating', since to do this risks stalling the question of sacrifice and hence 'collapsing into a self-assured form of good conscience' (195). In 'Violence Against Animals,' Derrida (2004:67) sums up this position as follows:

> '…I do not believe in absolute "vegetarianism," nor in the ethical purity of its intentions – nor even that it is rigorously tenable, without a compromise or a symbolic substitution. I would go as far as to claim that, in a more or less refined, subtle, sublime form, a certain cannibalism remains unsurpassable.'

Perhaps, as Calarco (195) suggests, Derrida should have given more attention to 'whether vegetarianism is generally a more respectful way of relating to other animals than is meat-eating or other modes of eating'. In bypassing this larger question, Derrida exposes himself to Wood's (in Calarco, 2004:196) criticism that the abstract question of 'eating well' (which I shall show in the next section becomes a means of reckoning with one's responsibilities) becomes 'the last ruse of a "beautiful soul," a final and desperate attempt to

By showing that the ethical frontier cannot act as an oppositional limit, Derrida problematises the hierarchy which allows man to dominate over animals, show cruelty and violence towards animals, and eat animals 'without concern for the animal or its singularity' (Narduzzi, 2005:14). In other words, Derrida renegotiates the boundary between 'the human *in general* and the animal *in general'* (Derrida, 2003:128), by focusing our attention on the '(symbolic or real) "eat-speak-interiorise" of the singular other. In doing so, Derrida may be suggesting that we are more like animals than we think, in that '[i]t is less a matter of whether one has the right to refuse the animal such and such a power...than of asking whether what calls itself human has the right to rigorously attribute to man...what he refuses the animal' (137).

By taking seriously not only 'the idealising interiorisation of the phallus', but *also* 'the necessity of its passage through the mouth, whether it's a matter of words or things, of sentences, of daily bread or wine, of the tongue, the lips, or the breast of the other' (Derrida, 1995:280), Derrida shows how the entire carnophallogocentric schema of subjectivity is based upon or proceeds the question of sacrifice and therefore of the animal. Once we, reverse the hierarchy, dissolve this oppositional limit and open it up to the necessary multiplication and complication, the repression at stake in the dominant schema recalls the notion of sacrifice. This serves to bring attention to the responsibility we must take for the other whom we inevitably interiorise (whether in the symbolic or real sense). This in turn recalls the question of both the human-in-the-animal as well as the animal-in-the-human.

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avoid taking a stand on one's eating habits.' This criticism seems legitimate, and future work should as, Calarco (197) suggests, pose the question of eating well (or sacrificing responsibly) within the existing vegetarian discourses and practices.

<u>A new economy:</u>

To say that the ethical frontier passes between infinitely different modes of conception, appropriation and assimilation of the other has serious implications for how we view the notion of the 'Good'. Derrida (280-281) writes:

> '…as concerns the "Good" [*Bien*] of every morality, the question will come back to determining the best, most respectful, most grateful, and also most giving way of relating to the other and of relating the other to the self. *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'* (my italics).

Up until now, the notion of the Good (which has informed our ethical, judicial and political foundations) has always been related to questions sealed within the subject (266) and typified by the limit "Thou shalt not kill man" (279). However, by displacing the limit of our ethical frontier, Derrida shows how the subject is in fact constituted by 'the symbolic executions of ingestion, incorporation, or introjection of the corpse' (278). This displacement has serious implications for our conception of the Good, since this symbolic operation of ingestion must now be calculated into our conceptions of what concerns the Good. This task is further problematised by the fact that the symbolic operation of ingestion is impossible to delimit, due to 'its essential excessiveness, a certain unclassifiability or the monstrosity of that *for which* we have to answer here, or *before* which (whom? What?) we have to answer' (278).

Yet, this task is inescapable due to the fact that the experience of 'eat-speak-interiorise' is unavoidable, both in terms of physical nourishment (eating) and in terms of our being-together-with-the-other in the world (in the sense of seeing, hearing, speaking to, and sucking the other) (282). Acknowledging this need for the other, and taking responsibility for 'eating-speaking-interiorising' (281) the other, undermines the sacrificial structure implicit in the history of metaphysics. Once this denegation of murder of the animal (and also the other) is dismantled, the violent institution of the 'who' as subject becomes undone (283). As such, the repression inherent in the traditional distinction between

man/animal - which previously resulted in the engorgement of need and desire for the other (Krell, 1988:9), and which was sated in the space which allowed for denegation of murder - is released. This marks the closure of metaphysics, and opens up the space for a new and bolder economy of need and desire[39] typified by the ethical mandate: '*Il faut bien manger*''(9).

Therefore, '[t]he 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' (Derrida, 1995:282) - one 'devour[s] the (m)ilk of the (m)other' (Krell, 1988:9) – 'and lets oneself be eaten by him' (Derrida, 1995:282). And, we do this in order to fulfill the desire and need for presence, pleasure and the *Da* of *Da-sein* (Krell, 1988:7). As such, we have to find a way of eating well together: *'Il faut bien manger'*, must be understood both as 'one

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[39] Krell (1988:9) described the new, bolder economy of need and desire as follows:

> 'engorgement of the breast with milk or the alimentary canal with food or the penis clitoris and lips with blood as experiences of the voice's site and situation the possibility of a projective and proprioceptive philosophy taking the measure of its line of thought from the breath that enlivens it and the flesh that informs it as a celebration of orality devouring the (m)ilk of the (m)other in full voice or rapt in silence as tumescence of the vocal chords here too what hegel called the vibrant blood but also the patient detumenscence of the stylo and its (b)analities no longer spirit's (s)tool but an opening onto the wor(l)d engorgement as the general economy of extravagance producing supplements of presence and disseminating signs of absence in defiant affirmative deferral of death'

must eat well' (Derrida, 1995:475) (in the sense of '*learning* and *giving* to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to-eat' (282)); as well as 'everybody has to eat'. And, the adverb 'bien' must be nominalised into 'Le Bien', to imply 'the eating of the Good' (475). Furthermore, because one never eats entirely on one's own, this ethical mandate is the rule offering infinite hospitality (282).

This metonymy of 'eating well' recalls the aporia of responsibility and hospitality[40]: on the one hand, we must be open to and prepare for the before and the after of the subject which precedes language (i.e. the *Zusage*). In other words, we must 'respect the law that is at once a voice and a court (it hears itself, it is *in us* who are *before it*) (283). On the other hand, we must reckon with the singularity of the other – 'identify with the other, who is to be assimilated, interiorised, understood ideally (something one can never do absolutely without *addressing oneself to the other* and without absolutely limiting understanding itself, the identifying appropriation)' (283).

'The 'sublime refinement' involved in this respect for the other is [Derrida contends] always a way of "Eating well," in the sense of "good eating" but also "eating the good" [*le Bien Manger*]' (283). '[T]he good, must be eaten and eaten well' (283) Once we acknowledge our need and desire for the other, we face a new set of ethical questions dealing with the way in which we are to eat, namely: how should one eat well? What does this imply? What is eating? How is the metonymy of introjection to be regulated? How does the formulation of these questions in language give us more food for thought? In what respect is the question, if you will, still carnivorous? (281).

Yet, the above ethical questions will never receive a final answer. Implicit in the ethical mandate of '*Il faut bien manger'* and the corresponding economy of need and desire, is the logic of *différance* which requires that the modalities and contents of this mandate be varied, *ad infinitum*. As such the economy of need and desire can never totally close in

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[40] See pages 83-89 for a detailed discussion of the implications that this aporia has for the question of the animal.

upon itself, and therefore need and desire must, by definition, be diverted or delayed (and can hence never be completely fulfilled) (Krell, 1988:7).

Furthermore, need and desire need the other, but the appropriation of the other, like the fulfillment of desire, can also always only be partial. Thus the economy of need and desire is simultaneously marked by a present absence or an absent presence of both the other and need for the other (8). The only undifferentiated state is death, which marks an absolute closure, a pure alterity, and which destroys the deferral and structure of desire, hence 'restor(ing) the primitive serene state of nonlife which is the seedbed of life' (8). Allowing for the denegation of murder denies the entire economy of need and desire, and therefore also the ethical responsibility which we have towards the singular animal:

> 'What is being-for-death? What is death for a *Dasein* that is never defined *essentially* as a living thing? This is not a matter of opposing death to life, but of wondering what semantic content can be given to death in a discourse for which the relation to death, the experience of death, remains unrelated to the life of the living thing.' (Derrida, 1987a:120)

II
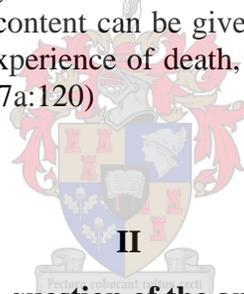
The question of the animal

'All the deconstructive gestures that I have attempted to perform on philosophical texts, Heidegger's in particular, consist in questioning the self-interested misrecognition of what is called the Animal in general, and the way in which these texts interpret the border between Man and the Animal.'
‒ Jacques Derrida, 'Violence against Animals'

The meaning of the animal:

The above quotation alludes to the animal-machine that on the perverse reading of Heidegger, defines his project as a 'figure of evil' (Derrida, 1987a:134). This perverse reading is fuelled by posing the animal as a general category in opposition to man. In order to ward off the consequences of this 'figure of evil' (134) it is, as was demonstrated, necessary to deconstruct the sacrificial structure which allows for a non-criminal putting to death or denegation of murder of the animal. Therefore, for Derrida

(2004:63) the question of the animal does not present us with one question amongst many, but rather represents 'the limit upon which all great questions are formed and determined, as well as all the concepts that attempt to delimit what is "proper to man," the essence and future of humanity, ethics, politics, law, "human rights," "crimes against humanity," "genocide," etc.'

Derrida is very explicit about the point that in recalling the question of the animal and sacrifice, he is not trying 'to start a support group for vegetarianism, ecologism, or for the societies for the protection of animals' (Derrida, 1995:278). In other words, Derrida is not arguing for animal rights; to do so is a 'surreptitious or implicit way of confirming a certain interpretation of the human subject, which itself would have been the very lever of the worst violence carried out against nonhuman living beings[41]' (Derrida, 2004:65). Rather, in deconstructing the sacrificial structure that continues to dominate present day Western discourses, Derrida seeks to focus our attention on the responsibility that we have towards the singular other. Eating well is therefore another way of reckoning with the question of the animal. This is because displacing the limit of the sacred 'Thou shalt not kill' with a limit characterised by the metonymy of 'eating well' (281), recalls the aporia of responsibility and hospitality. In this section it will be illustrated how this aporia relates to the meaning of the animal and serves to protect against a single homogenous category of the animal-in-general.

In the name of the animal:

As previously stated, the first arm of the aporia dealing with responsibility and hospitality compels us to reckon with the singularity of the other – 'identify with the other, who is to be assimilated, interiorised, understood ideally (something one can never do absolutely

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[41] The reader will recall that Derrida (1995:266) argues against Heidegger's notion of subjectivity because, despite having the virtue of displacing the Cartesian subject, this notion still rests on 'the idea of ethical, judicial and political foundations [that] remain essentially sealed within a philosophy of the subject.' Derrida's contention with this notion of subjectivity is that it has created the 'philosophico-juridical space [within which] the modern violence against animals is practiced, a violence that is at once contemporary with and indissociable from the discourse of human rights.' (Derrida, 2004:74).

without *addressing oneself to the other* and without absolutely limiting understanding itself, the identifying appropriation)' (Derrida, 1995:283).

Recognising the singularity of the other, especially the animal other, halts before a difference that cannot be mediated by *différance*. Derrida (2002b:381) writes that the cat's gaze 'offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human'. Here then, the boundary between human and non-human seems to remain firmly intact. This limit, however, should not be read in terms of Heidegger's 'abyss of essence' (Calarco, 2004:177) since in Heidegger, the human and the animal-in-general are separated by an oppositional demarcation that entirely closes off the animal to Being. This has the implication of creating the space which allows us to negate our responsibilities towards the animal. Derrida's abyssal limit should therefore be read more as a Levinasian limit that exists between the Other and the I[42]. On this count, the limit acts as a safeguard against appropriating the Other's otherness and has two significant consequences for the question of the animal:

Firstly, in acting as a safeguard against appropriating the other's otherness, this limit is also a safeguard against anthropocentrism. Otherwise stated, this limit prohibits us from posing the category of animal as *general* other. Although the limit creates a subjectival distance between the animal and man, it also ensures that we do not land in 'the astonishingly audacious and human-centered presumption that human experience is the measure, not only of all things, all subjectivity, but of all forms of subjectivity as well' (Laycock, 1999:271). In his essay on 'The Language of Animals', the Renaissance humanist[43], Montaigne[44] (1533-1592), also warns against this audacity stating that:

> 'Presumption is our natural and original disease....'Tis by the... same vanity of imagination that he equals himself to God, attributes to himself divine qualities, withdraws and separates himself from other creatures, cuts out the shares of the animals, his fellows and companions, and distributes them portions of faculties

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[42] See footnote 33 for a discussion on the relation between the Other and the I.

[43] See footnote 6 for a full discussion of Renaissance humanism and the way in which it differs from rational humanism.

[44] All references to Montaigne are taken from: Montaigne M. (1865) 'An Apology of Raymond Sebond' in <u>The Works of Michel de Montaigne</u> (trans. W. Hazlitt).

and force, as himself thinks fit. How does he know, by the strength of his understanding, the secret and internal motions of animals? – from what comparison betwixt them and us does he conclude the stupidity he attributes to them?...The defect that hinders communication betwixt them and us, why may it not be in our part as well as theirs? 'Tis yet to determine where the fault lies that we understand not one another – for we understand them no more than they do us; and by the same reason they may think us to be beasts as we think them.'

Read retrospectively, this essay offers a scathing critique of the arrogance of both rational humanism and anthropocentric humanism which endorses the supremacy of the human subject. Furthermore, by drawing attention to the abyssal limit that exists between man and the animal other, we are forced to engage with the problem of the observer. Whilst this problem might in some sense be 'logically unavoidable' in that 'any account we come up with in "our" relation to "animals" will be from "our" point of view... [t]he challenge [nevertheless] remains to construct a point of view that is not just "ours"' (Wood, 1999:20). In other words, we must continue to seek ways to refrain from distributing to animals 'portions of faculties and forces' as we see fit.

Secondly, in respecting the animal *as* animal, instead of 'only partial realizations of the human ideal' (Wood, 1999:20), one must contend not only with the singularity of the animal but also the responsibility that we have towards the animal: indeed, this singularity will constitute whether the animal can be 'the (absolute incalculable) other in the face to face [encounter] of, for example, hospitality or responsibility' (Narduzzi, 2005). In line with this, Derrida (2002b:377) asks the following Levinasian question: '[h]ow can an animal look you in the face? That will be one of our concerns…For everything that I am about to confide in you no doubt comes back to asking you to *respond* to me, you, to me, reply to me concerning what it is to *respond.* If you can." In other words, in asking us to respond if we can, Derrida not only questions the human ability to respond, but is also suggesting that the singular animal may be capable of responding to us in the face-to-face encounter (Narduzzi, 2005).

If indeed the animal is capable of a response, understood here as 'answering to' (being responsible for a singular name) (Spivak, 1994:22) then one cannot pose 'a singular

linear, indivisible, oppositional limit, to a binary opposition between the human and the infra-human' (Derrida, 1995:285). Rather, we need to contend with the rights and obligations that are always conditional and conditioned by the animal's singularity, the animal's name (Derrida, 2005:6).

Recall that a criticism Derrida lodged against Heidegger dealt exactly with the fact that Heidegger does not contend with the singularity of every animal and every species of animals[45]. In sweeping these structural differences aside, Heidegger's category of the animal-in-general serves to validate the violent sacrificial/carnophallogentric structure. This is because in drawing an oppositional limit between man and animal *in general*, Heidegger blurs rather than complicates the *differences* between man and animals. The quotation below clearly illustrates Derrida's sensitivity to the '"deadening shorthand" involved in using the phrase "the animal". This is precisely why animal *figures* such as apes, hedgehogs, cats, birds, squirrels, ants, even Heidegger's lizard[46] abound in his writing (Calarco, 2005:192). Derrida (1987b:183) writes of these differences between animals:

> 'I am trying to explain how drawing an oppositional limit *itself* blurs the differences, the difference and the differences, not only between man and animal, but among animal societies – there are an infinite number of animal societies, and, within the animal societies and within human societies itself, so many differences'

The above discussion therefore clearly illustrates that we need to reckon with the singularity of the animal in order to ward off anthropocentrism and take responsibility for the singular other. In other words, we must recognise that we are 'constitutive, companion species...Significantly other to each other, in specific difference...' (Haraway, 2003:2-3).

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[45] See page 58.
[46] In 'The Language of Animals', Montaigne refers to dogs, birds, hogs, oxen, horses, ants etc. and therefore also displays a sensitivity to the 'diverse kinds [of animals]' that exist. For this reason, his essay should not be read as highlighting the differences between man and the category of animal as general-other. Rather, the question of the differences between man and animals that he raises is contingent on examples of communication between specific animals and specific species of animals.

Beyond the name:

The second arm of the aporia of responsibility deals with the *Zusage*. As stated before, this arm demands that we be open to and prepare for the before and the after of the subject which precedes language. And, in so doing, we must 'respect the law that is at once a voice and a court (it hears itself, it is *in us* who are *before it*)' (Derrida, 1995:283). In other words, by introducing the *Zusage* as that which signifies the beyond of the question 'who', Derrida reminds us that the finite subject must always comes after the infinite and non-determinate realm of the *Zusage* (Derrida, 2002a:268).

In terms of the animal, this arm of the aporia necessarily evokes a certain incalculability which prohibits us from defining or categorising the animal in advance. This is because trying to determine what or who the animal is, or how one should treat the animal invariably implies violence to the being in question. In other words, our notions of both the animal and our responsibilities to the animal must pass 'through the proofs of the incalculable and undecidable' (Derrida, 2002a:273). To fail to do this is to reduce everything to calculation (273) and, hence, to generally determined categories of being. Consequently, Calarco (2004:191) argues that if 'Derrida has accomplished anything in posing the question of the animal, it has been to raise these very limitations as questions.'

The question of the animal undermines both 'the phrase "the animal" and how it is used oppositionally to define "the human"' (191). In raising the question of the animal, Derrida again seeks 'to contest...[that there] exists a single linear indivisible, oppositional limit...between the human and the infrahuman.' (Derrida, 1995:285). The question of the animal is therefore just as much the question of the human, since if human privileges can no longer be defined or justified by referring to the category of the animal-in-general, then this begs the question: who is the human? Practically speaking, this amounts to the fact 'that we never know, and never have never known, how to *cut up* a subject.[47]' (285).

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[47] This point also implies that we cannot define language in such a way as to reserve it for what we call 'man'. Rather, we need 'to re-inscribe language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside.' (Derrida, 1995:285). If language no longer marks the absolute frontier between man/animal and the human/non-human, then we need to reckon with 'the complexity of

This concession not only necessitates that we take into account discriminatory attitudes towards animal societies, but also other partitions and separations 'other than Auschwitz – apartheid, racial segregation – other segregations within our Western democratic society. All these differences have to be taken into account in a new fashion.' (Derrida, 1987b:183). This is because repressing these differences assumes that we know what or who the subject is and how it should be treated.

The second arm of the aporia therefore implies that when speaking about the subject, we need to contend with the undecidability that resides in the notion of the subject. As such, we cannot exclude the animal from the realm of the subject. In real terms this implies that when developing models or systems of the subject we have to reckon with the human-in-the-animal and the animal-in-the-human. The human and the animal can no longer stand in opposition to each other, and the superiority of former cannot be justified on the inferiority of the latter.

III
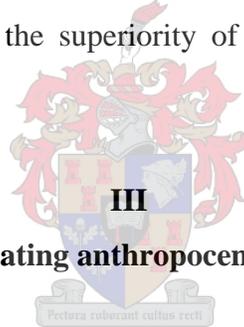
Delineating anthropocentricism

Summary and next steps:

Displaced, fragmented, re-inscribed, unsure
An unchallenged consumption defines us as poor
Milk, flesh, and speech leave us sated
Yet never a word on the matter debated

In this chapter, a deconstruction of the dominant schema of subjectivity - namely, the carnophallogocentric or sacrificial structure – was undertaken in order to illustrate how the question of the 'who' is linked to the question of sacrifice (defined as the space left open in Western discourses for a denegation of murder) (Derrida, 1995:280). This

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"animal languages," genetic coding, all forms of marking within which so-called human language, as original as it might be, does not allow us to "cut" once and for all where we in general like to cut' (285).

question of the 'who' ultimately endorses the privilege of the human. In showing how this privilege is based upon and sustained by both symbolic and real sacrifice of the other; it was demonstrated that the ethical frontier cannot be marked by an oppositional demarcation that runs between man ('Thou shalt not kill') and animal ('Thou may put to death the living in general') (283).

'Speak now or forever hold your peace'
How can one initiate the word when the questioning will never again cease?
Yet, already in desire our need is known
An a-temporal spirit must make way for flesh and bone
Free the repressed
The boundary is always already transgressed
'Speak, speak! Peace is not a luxury that we can afford'
Responsibility lingers infinitely in the unfinished chord.

Once we reckon with the singularity of the other whom we eat-speak-interiorise, we find that this oppositional limit must necessarily be displaced by a limit which testifies to the multiplicity and complication that marks the interiorisation of the other. This limit, characterised by *différance,* is denoted by the ethical mandate *'il faut bien manger,'* meaning 'you must eat well' (Krell, 1988:9).

Displaced, fragmented, re-inscripted but aware
Bowing before the singularity for which we cannot prepare
In the irreducible moment we have already answered 'Yes'
As naked and in need before the other – this is our address

In order to be able to eat well we must not only address ourselves to the singularity of the other, but absolutely limit understanding itself (Derrida, 1995:283). In other words, we need to reckon with the otherness of the other. However, eating well also implies that we heed the call of the indeterminable *Zusage*, and therefore be open to the before and the after of the subject (283). This necessarily involves warding off fixed definitions and categorisations of the other. To illustrate the meaning of the aporia that characterises the *'il faut bien manger'* (Krell, 1988:9)*,* the meaning of the question of the animal was analysed, since the question of the animal implies the question of what it means to eat well. What came to the fore in this analysis is that it is only in reckoning with the aporia

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of eating well, that we affirm the singular yet indeterminate subject in a way that escapes the violence of the 'animal-machine', which characterises the perverse reading of the Heidegerrian project (Derrida, 1987a:134).

Through this analysis, the anti-rational humanist position was also undermined by showing how the openness and alterity that characterises this position falls short in its failure to reckon with the alterity and singularity of the animal. This failure ultimately rests on the binary opposition entrenched and inscribed between the human and the animal (Calarco, 2004:189) In other words, anti-rational humanism collapses back into a humanism of the other man based on metaphysically anthropocentric grounds (180).

Derrida's thinking therefore, 'offers us...the possibility of clearly delimiting this anthropocentric closure in contemporary [Western] thought, [and] also gives us a number of instructive remarks concerning what is involved in contesting this limit.' (185-186). In delineating anthropocentric humanism, Derrida manages to eradicate the last remnants of a normative ethics that does violence to the subject in question in that it presupposes what a subject is, and therefore how to treat the subject. This study was aimed at presenting the reader with a view of ethics that is divorced from a normative framework. In the concluding chapter, the practical implications that this view holds will be developed, in order to illustrate what, in real terms, our ethical responsibilities entail.

Conclusion

Implications of Being Eaten

'The concept of the 'subject' is, I believe, the most important problematic currently deserving of our untiring attention. This is because the way in which we define ourselves influences the ways in which we come to view our responsibilities'. This statement introduced the reader to the purpose for undertaking this study. At this juncture, the significant extent to which our definitions of the subject influence our sense of responsibility should hopefully be clear. Specifically, this study was aimed at demonstrating that the question 'Who or what is the subject?' needs to be deferred as much as possible, in order to avoid a normative ethics that bases our responsibilities on pre-determined notions of the subject.

In the introduction it was also stated that though our responses to the moral issues that mark contemporary debates will never receive full justification, as much calculation and consideration as possible must be undertaken (and moreover, undertaken constantly) (Derrida, 2005:6,7; Derrida, 2002a:298; Derrida, 1995:272). These calculations and considerations, however, cannot halt at current conceptions of the subject, since deconstruction 'already has a pre- as a preliminary prescription of what it means to be ethical-political' (Derrida, 2002a:300). This 'pre- as a preliminary prescription' becomes our safeguard in a context marked by the fact that we do not know, nor ever will know, how to cut up a subject. This, however, does not mean that we should view our ethical responsibility as something opposite to man (311), nor that we should resign ourselves to a tragic, and passive position when faced with the (im)possibility of ethics. Rather, we should let ourselves be approached by the resistance which the thinking of responsibility may offer thought (Derrida, 1992c:373) and remember that:

> 'If there must be a prescription, if there must be a duty in the face of something such as the rights of man, then it demands that all of this must be rethought constantly: and to rethink, to question this, one must begin from a place where

man is not, where there is not man, where one does not know what it is.' (Derrida, 2002a:311).

This place where man is not (in the traditional sense) is in part characterised by the animal, need, desire, consumption etc. This is because all these factors are constitutive of a subjectivity which is not necessarily human. To say that subjectivity is not necessarily human is also an acknowledgement of the fact that the subject is a complex issue that cannot be circumscribed in its totality. Therefore, the best we can do is to attribute 'complex descriptions and a certain humility' to the notion of the subject (Cilliers, 1998:57).

We have seen how the rational and anthropocentric humanist traditions - in endorsing the privilege of the 'who' as a human privilege - not only display an alarming arrogance, but also blind us to the *full* implications of 'the relationary nature of complexity, and especially to the continuous shifting of those relationships' (112). Acknowledging the indeterminacy of the 'who' allows us to reckon with these implications. Furthermore, in warding off pre-determined categories of the subject, we not only introduce a certain humility into the notion of the subject; but are also obliged to take seriously (both in thought and action) the responsibility that we have towards our mutually constitutive companions (human, animal and otherwise) within our embedded, embodied context.

The concluding chapter focuses on two issues: firstly, it will be shown how complex descriptions of the subject result in a material understanding of what a complex responsibility implies. Secondly, the practical implications of responsible action for a post-deconstructive subject will be illustrated. Through means of this analysis, I hope to present the reader with some tools and strategies for conceptualising the notion of responsibility developed in this study. These tools and strategies will hopefully provide new and innovative ways of addressing the moral concerns that mark contemporary debates.

I

A material understanding of a complex responsibility

A complex responsibility is contingent on the notion of what is meant by a complex subject. At the end of the first chapter the following description of the subject was given: *'[a]s a complex system, '[t]he self is understood in terms of a 'fabric of relations', a node in a network, and not in terms of atomistic units standing by and for themselves.'* (Cilliers, 1998:116) (my italics). At this stage, we are in the position to unpack the full implications that this description holds for our notion of responsibility:

Firstly, if the self cannot be understood in terms of atomistic units, then neither can the notion of responsibility. The meaning of responsibility, like the meaning of the animal or the human, needs to be both singular yet unclassifiable. This constitutes the aporia of responsibility (Derrida, 1995:283). In real terms this means that we need to forgo the fixed definitions and categories that define a normative ethics since this type of ethics blurs important differences (Derrida, 1987b:183). Consequently, normative ethics must be replaced by a complex ethics that is sensitive to the demands of this aporia, and that therefore multiplies and complicates differences. Another way of stating this is to say that a complex sense of responsibility must 'insist on multiplication and complication [in places] where essentialist gestures have homogenized, reduced or screened out important differences' (Calarco, 2002:24). If we relate this point back to the above definition of a complex subject, we can say the following: responsibility demands that we reckon with the 'other' in the 'fabric of relations' (Cilliers, 1998:116) that constitutes our embedded context. Here, the 'other' is not only defined as the singular instance of a specific node at a specific place in the network; but is also defined by the recognition that since the 'other' is constituted in a *relational* network, we cannot know in advance where the other ends and the I begins (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2000:227). In other words, we need to recognise the potential of the human-in-the-animal and the animal-in-the-human.

Secondly, if the self is understood in terms of a 'fabric of relations' (Cilliers, 1998:116), it implies that selves are mutually constitutive beings (Harraway, 2003:2). In a complex system there exists a fairly rich interaction i.e. 'any element in [a complex] system influences, and is influenced by, quite a few other ones' (Cilliers, 1998:3). In terms of responsibility, this means that we need to recognise that we are constituted by our interactions with each other, and our need to 'consume' each other. Derrida (1995:282) reinforces this point by stating that '[t]he moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal...*one must* eat... [Therefore] *how* for goodness' sake should one *eat well* [*bien manger*]?' In terms of this quotation, we need to take note of two issues: firstly, Derrida alludes to the inadequacy of our traditional demarcations of consumption in terms of this/that, man/animal and living/nonliving. In doing so, Derrida displays a sensitivity for the fact that '[t]he interactions [between the nodes in a network] do not have to be *physical*; they can also be thought of as the transference of *information*.' (Cilliers, 1998:3). In terms of eating, this means that we need to contend both with physical or 'real' eating (i.e. eating the flesh of the other), as well as informational or symbolic eating (e.g. eating the words of the other). Secondly, in asking '*how* for goodness' sake should one *eat well*?', Derrida is drawing attention to the urgency of determining the most ethical way of interacting with each other. As a preliminary prescription, this ethical determination will, at the very least, constantly take into account the fact that any demarcation of the subject, though necessary, always implies a violence. This is because it assumes that we can draw a boundary around the subject. Eating well is therefore first and foremost constituted by a deep awareness of our necessarily complex interactions with each other.

Another characteristic of these interactions are that they are non-linear. In other words, simple cause-and-effect interactions must give way to complex patterns of interactions, where it is possible for small causes to have large effects, and where the effects cannot be fully predicted or determined (Cilliers, 1998:4). Derrida also notes this difficulty: in speaking of symbolic sacrifice, Derrida (1995:278) writes, 'the "symbolic" is very difficult, truly impossible to delimit...hence the enormity of the task, its essential

excessiveness, a certain unclassifiability or monstrosity of that *for which* we have to answer here, or *before* which (whom? what?) we have to answer.' This quotation recalls the *Zusage* as an acknowledgement of the complexity that confronts us when trying to circumscribe responsible thought and action.

Fourthly, to say that responsibility cannot be fully circumscribed, is also to say that responsibility should be understood as an open system. A characteristic of an open system is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the border of this system (Cilliers, 1998:4). In terms of responsibility, this implies that the ethical limit (determining the realm of our responsibilities) cannot mark off a closed system. In other words, it cannot be an oppositional limit. Recall that in his deconstruction of the sacrificial structure, Derrida (1995:281) displaces the oppositional ethical limit (typified by the 'Thou shalt not kill *man*') with an open limit that passes between 'several infinitely different modes of conception-appropriation-assimilation of the other'. This point implies that we must be sensitive to the models and frames that we employ when delineating our responsibilities. This is because the way in which we frame our responsibilities necessarily excludes certain constituents that may lead to different notions of responsibility (Cilliers, 1998:4). If we frame our responsibilities in terms of a normative (and hence closed) system then we in effect deny the fact that a true ethical responsibility cannot close 'the door on the future and the foreigner' (Derrida, 2005:6).

Fifthly, if identity cannot be separated from 'the fabric of relations' (Cilliers, 1998:116) that constitutes its embedded context, the self will always have an ethical-political dimension (Cilliers, de Villiers & Roodt, 2002:11); both in the sense that the self is formed by its interactions, but also in the sense that the self influences other selves (Cilliers, 1998:3). In other words, we are defined by the decisions that we make and the actions that we undertake (Cilliers & de Villiers, 2000:242). Related to this point is the fact that each element in a complex system 'is ignorant of the behaviour of the system as a whole, it responds only to information that is available to it locally' (Cilliers, 1998:4). Meta-frameworks that prescribe a universal, a-temporal notion of responsibility are

therefore by definition impossible. Therefore, responsibility, separated from the traditional, deterministic meta-frameworks, implies an endless task.

Lastly, the self is constituted in a complex system and '[c]omplex systems operate under conditions far from equilibrium. There has to be a constant flow of energy to maintain the organisation of the system and to ensure its survival' (4). In terms of our notion of responsibility, this implies that we need to acknowledge our need and desire for the other (Derrida, 1995:282, Krell, 1988:9). If we do not acknowledge the other and allow for the denegation of murder, we not only deny the very conditions that make a complex system possible, but we forgo the responsibility that we have toward the singular other. Derrida illustrates this insight by giving a perverse reading of the Heidegerrian project. As was shown, this reading is characterised by the 'animal-machine' and transforms the Heideggerian corpus into a work which is not only 'without spirit' but a 'figure of evil' (Derrida, 1987a:134). This is because in allowing for an absolute oppositional demarcation between man and animal, Heidegger allows for a denegation of murder. The consequence of this is that it denies life both to the animal and to the human. In other words, in not having made room for the animal-in-the-human or the human-in-the-man (Spivak, 1994:33), 'Dasein [itself]...is never defined as a living thing' since 'the experience of death, remains unrelated to the life of the living thing.' (Derrida, 1987a:120). In order to avoid this consequence, a notion of responsibility must be situated within an economy of need and desire (Krell, 1988:9). In this economy, need and desire can never totally close in upon themselves, since this will mean equilibrium, which is another word for death (Cilliers, 1998:4). Need and desire must, by definition be in part diverted or delayed (7). This is another way of saying that the metonymy of eating well, characterised by need and desire, is both unavoidable and infinite.

The above characteristics all undermine a morality based on the commonality of human nature which defends our ability to determine right from wrong by an appeal to human qualities. The concept of responsibility cannot be conceived of as an abstract, transcendental mandate (rational humanism) or as a notion reserved for defending the

sanctity and privilege of human life (anthropocentric humanism). Rather, any notion of responsibility must reckon with the materiality that is characteristic of a complex system.

In sum, the notion of responsibility must be understood as an endless task, marked by a multiplication and a complication. This notion of responsibility forces us to take seriously the singularity of the body, the animal or any other category traditionally excluded from the realm of metaphysics. Furthermore responsibility cannot be separated from the infinite, excessive, non-delineated need, desire and consumption of the singular other. In a word, the notion of responsibility is *complex*.

Given the complexities at play in the notion of responsibility, the question arises as to how we are to undertake responsible *thought* and *action*. What clearly emerges from the above is that a definite notion of responsibility is impossible: 'whatever is formalizable remains in a sort of intermediary stage. The rest cannot be *purely* formalized. These steps must be formally taken *and* experienced as limits before the usual beginnings can be made. Full formalization itself must be seen not as impossible but as an experience of the impossible, which may be to say the "the same thing."' (appropriation of Derrida in Spivak, 1994:22).
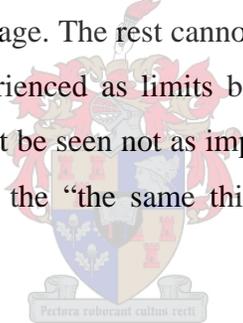
'Responsibility [therefore] annuls the call to which it seeks to respond.' (Spivak, 1994:19). In practical terms, this impossibility of responsibility implies that all decisions and actions must be characterised by *vigilance*.

II
Responsibility in praxis

To remain vigilant is never an argument for inaction. The vigilance required by the notion of responsibility is an immense task which is both endless and infinitely suspended. This is because in *principle* vigilance is preceded by a slow, rigorous and infinite elucidation of what is required by the concepts of ethics and politics and also their associations (Derrida, 2002a:295-296). These associations include all the questions

raised in this study pertaining to both eating well and eating the Good. Yet, there is also an inescapable urgency in the face of ethical and political responsibility, in that both are characterised by the impossibility of waiting for the end of reflection (296).

Thus the main determinants (296;302) of the concepts of ethics and politics are: firstly, that both command action (What should I do?); Secondly, both demand a thoughtful answer – a questioning without limit (which implies vigilance to the question); And thirdly, ethics and politics both entail that the decision must be made with the utmost urgency. This is because the time of reflection is always interrupted by a situation. Inaction is already an action, or a responsibility taken. In short, the relation to a here and now are the common requisites of both ethics and politics[48].

The determinants of ethics and politics imply that *différance* and urgency are the same thing (299). This is because the urgency of an interruption is in its very principle an impossible condition: there can be no ethical and political responsibility without reflection, without reducing the urgency a little, thus without a deferring (299). The nature of urgency is therefore both paradoxical and aporetic, since urgency is both the condition of the possibility and impossibility of all responsibility: without urgency one would have only the 'deployment consequent to a *determinate* knowledge' (i.e. calculation) (298). Urgency thus necessitates vigilance in the realm of the undecidable in order for there to be a decision and responsibility:

> ' ...one [does] not need ignorance or some form of not-knowing; not at all, on the
> contrary, one needs to know and one needs to know as much as possible and as

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[48] Note that this description of ethics and politics is very similar to Kierkegaard's bifurcation point. The bifurcation point is characterised by 'two distinctive alternatives or "choices" which are open to a system'. Because one does not know how to choose between these alternatives/choices, a decision can only be made through a "leap of faith" (Taylor, 2001:150;149). Taylor (149-150) describes Kierkegaard's conception of a decision as follows:

> 'Decision, as the word suggests, is a cutting off (*de,* off + *caedere,* to cut). In the moment that possibilities are actualized, new patterns, which impose new constraints and open new possibilities, emerge. Though free decisions are always unpredictable, they are never independent of a certain determinism [since they are constrained by the 'fabric of relations' that constitute a complex system]. Decisions, therefore are the outcome of the interplay of fate and freedom; circumstances beyond one's control bring one to a crossroads where a decision *must* be made. As the moment of decision draws near, certainty becomes a vague memory and equilibrium remains a distant dream.'

well as possible, but between one's knowledge and the decision, the chain of consequences must be interrupted. One must, in some way, arrive at a point at which one does not know what to decide for the decision to be made. Thus a certain undecidability, contrary to what one often pretends to think, the undecidability...is the condition or the opening of a space for an ethical or political decision, and not the opposite. And the undecidability makes the urgency something other than...the empirical briefness of a lapse of time.' (298)

The undecidability at the heart of all ethical-political responsibility demands untiring vigilance regarding the subject. This always again raises the question of whether, and up until what point the subject, as the first exercise of a responsibility, can still be considered ethical or political (299). And, it is this vigilance that fulfills the mandate of the free questioning that authorises ethics, since it draws attention to the 'pre-ethical-political deconstruction' (300) mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

With regard to a post-deconstructive subject, the urgency, the undecidability and the vigilance necessitated by the subject, amounts to a prescription locked in the double bind (300). This double-bind is characterised by the im/possibility of ethics which is always an imperative to act with the greatest urgency; yet something which (in the face of not knowing how to cut up the subject) we are always tempted to put off till later (300). Consequently, this bind is not characterised by urgency against non-urgency, but rather urgency against urgency (300). Spivak (1994:26) sums up this point stating: '[a] "responsible" thought describes "responsibility" – caught in a question necessarily begged in an action – as attending the call of [the] irreducible fact [of the contamination of responsibility].'

When we apply the above analysis of urgency/vigilance to the economy of need and desire, we find that such an economy is 'a hybrid economy that attempts to tie the most successful knot between two irreconcilable tensions or to cut the knot of the aporia that blocks the passage, to cut the knot at the best place?' (Derrida, 2002a:300)

In the hybrid economy, the urgency of vigilance – the sphere of ethics - protects us from determining the other as a *human* other, thereby risking that which it cannot be (299). Vigilance always again raises the question of the other, the animal, and of sacrifice.

Vigilance is a questioning without limit (296). Yet, the urgency of action – the sphere of politics - characterised by the need and desire for the other and for presence, is inescapable. It is the moment when the gamble cannot be deferred (302), when the other has to be eaten. As such ethics and politics are one and the same thing. This is because ethics is always already taken up in the realm of the political. Therefore, despite the negotiation, the calculation, the deliberation (302) – politics/ethics is marked by a certain unavoidable undecidability in the face of a decision and action that *must* be taken.

III

The end of a beginning

In this study I have attempted to use the deconstructive method in order to bring about a displacement in the relations between the human and animals. Several authors are critical of the benefits of deconstruction, stating that on the final analysis *'deconstruction changes nothing'* (Taylor, 2001:65). This critique is premised on the argument that '[w]hile exposing systems and structures as incomplete and perhaps repressive, deconstruction inevitably leaves them in place [65]…The paradoxical result is that deconstruction's solicitation of differences ends up repeating the same gestures of totalization it condemns in others. This strategy ends in an interminable mourning that leaves differences fragmented without any hope of significant change' (155).

Another way of explaining this argument is to say that in breaking down violent hierarchies, deconstruction creates the opportunity or rather the necessity for choice. However, in exposing all hierarchies as form of totalisation and violence, deconstruction also eliminates our rationale for endorsing a certain choice (Michaels, 1977:147). In other words, deconstruction forces us to choose whilst simultaneously eliminating the possibility of a correct choice (Culler, 1983:234) According to Spivak (1994:28), this criticism is based on a misconception of deconstruction expressed by 'the high rollers of the establishment who, without the patience or the training to read the material carefully, congratulate themselves on having discovered its lack of moral muscle.' The reason why these critics misconstrue deconstruction will become apparent in a moment. However,

before proceeding with this analysis, it is necessary to take note of an equally-problematic camp, namely deconstruction's supposed defenders:

These 'defenders' claim deconstruction 'learnedly for philosophy, disowning its dependence on the un-philosophical or diagnosing the latter as simple literature' (Spivak, 1994:28). This position becomes particularly problematic if deconstruction becomes entangled with responsibility for the trace of the other (21). In this case, the resistance that responsibility offers 'cannot be purely academic...Between...[the principle of reason and an-archy]...only the setting-to-work [*mise-en-oeuvre*] of this "thought" can decide...To claim to eliminate that risk by an institutional program is quite simply to erect a barricade against a future' (Derrida, 1983:16;19). Responsibility, quite simply, is as much a question of thought and experience, as it is an academic exercise.

If deconstruction *does* indeed change something, whilst simultaneously resisting instiutionalisation, the question arises as to how we are to view deconstruction? Following the lead of Spivak (2004:28), I would argue that deconstruction can be bound to both good and bad uses, and that a good use of deconstruction is to do "correct politics" with it: in this sense, deconstruction constitutes neither 'a nihilistic undermining of truth,' nor a merely theoretical exercise. Instead deconstruction has to do with exploring the 'prejudices and preconceptions that underlie much of what we generally accept without question.' (Derrida in Howells, 1998:154) In so doing, deconstruction is able to present us with new ways of thinking, thereby *changing everything*.

Furthermore, the task of deconstruction is ongoing. In the context of this study, the term 'post-deconstructive' subject seems to imply that that all the deconstructive work has already been done, and that we have 'arrived' at a place where the subject and its responsibilities are now determined. At this stage it should be clear that this is not the case: deconstruction is limitless, and in a sense impossible, or rather, like justice, 'it is possible as an experience of the impossible' (Derrida, 1992a:38). Otherwise stated, deconstruction, like justice, and like the subject, is always still to come (Derrida in Howells, 1998:156).

The fact that deconstruction is still to come further ensures 'the preservation and necessity of free questioning.' (123). This mode of questioning should also be viewed as ethical in itself (123) since in an embedded and complex world, divorced from meta-frameworks, free questioning "authorises" ethics. In the introduction to this study it was stated that the urgency of formulating the subject in an ethically-responsible manner becomes apparent when we consider contemporary debates in stem cell research, cloning, abortion, euthanasia, genetic modification, AIDS etc. Through the course of this study it has hopefully become clear how the necessity of free questioning (or vigilance to the question) can provide one 'with the political means of analyzing the strategy of those who, in a given situation, make use of references to the rights of man' (Derrida, 2002a:312).

Showing vigilance to the question as a means of arming oneself with a political strategy to ward off fixed determination of the subject is, I believe, a means of doing 'correct politics' with deconstruction. It is within this paradigm that I have tried to work with the deconstructive method in order to demonstrate how, in a complex environment, one must continually unearth the repression and exclusion inherent to our models (and hence, our treatment) of the subject. Furthermore, in undertaking a deconstruction of the sacrificial structure, I hope to have illustrated how it is not just an '"ontological" necessity' but also an "ethical" duty' to continuously think the *unthought* of the subject.

Admittedly, deconstruction will never provide us with final answers. However, in a complex environment, deconstruction's 'peculiar humility, responsibility and strength; its acknowledgement of radical contamination' (Spivak, 2004:28), serves as a powerful strategy - especially to defend against the violence of normative and misguided 'truths'.

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