

**Delinearizing the Insuperable Line: Deconstruction as an Animal
Ethic**

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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at
Stellenbosch University*



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March 2015

To the (other) animals, each and every one

Declaration

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ABSTRACT

Jacques Derrida's *The Animal that Therefore I Am* published posthumously first in France (2006) and then translated in English (2008) has potentially become one of the most powerful philosophical discourses on animal ethics to date. His seminal undertaking begins with a personal experience the philosopher has with his cat that one day follows him into the bathroom. What follows is a classic deconstructive reversal when Derrida, ashamed at his nudity in front of the cat, reverses the perspective and asks what the cat sees and thinks when faced with a man – a naked one at that, and how he, as a shamed human, responds to it. Using his well-established deconstructive methods Derrida weaves through the pillars of traditional philosophy and rigorously unpicks our traditional and historical thinking about how we regard animals and calls into question both the human-animal distinction as well as the latent subjectivity on the matter. It is this text primarily that I utilized in my thesis, as well as some of Derrida's earlier influential works, to show that deconstruction is a powerful and persuasive strategy toward providing a new ethic for (other) animals.

As with Derrida, my point of departure is to put traditional philosophy under the hammer by showing how deconstruction as a post-modern tool unpicks the inherent flaws within its structure. I hope to reveal that a deconstruction of the anthropocentric and logocentric attitude of humans toward other animals is necessary in providing a new ethic for (other) animals. I begin first by breaking down the traditional hierarchy of humans over (other) animals – anthropocentrism, logocentrism and 'carnophallogocentrism' – as well as, in a separate chapter, a deconstruction of contemporary animal rights thinkers, and replace these perceptions and theories with what Matthew Calarco called a 'proto-ethical imperative' (Calarco, 2008: 108), which, I argue, is a foundation stone toward a new ethic. Then, by multiplying the possibilities of an equitable co-existence between human and other animals, I chart a path toward a better understanding and approach to our relationship with non-human animals. In short, this thesis is an attempt to discover, through deconstruction, a way toward an applied (animal) ethic.

OPSOMMING

Jacques Derrida se *The Animal that Therefore I Am* wat postuum die eerste keer gepubliseer is in Frankryk (2006) en daarna vertaal is in Engels (2008) het potensieel een van die mees kragtige filosofiese diskoerse oor diere-etiek tot op datum geword. Sy seminale onderneming begin met 'n persoonlike ervaring wat die filosoof het met sy kat wat hom een dag in die badkamer volg. Wat daarop gebeur is 'n klassieke dekonstruktiewe omkeer toe Derrida, skaam oor sy naaktheid voor die kat, die perspektief omswaai en vra wat die kat sien en dink wanneer gekonfronteer met 'n man – en boonop nog 'n naakte man, en hoe hy, as 'n beskaamde mens, daarop reageer. Met behulp van sy goed gevestigde dekonstruktiewe metodes weef Derrida deur die pilare van die tradisionele filosofie en met sy streng ontledings ontrafel hy ons tradisionele en historiese denke oor hoe ons diere beskou, en bevraagteken hy sowel die mens-dier onderskeiding as die latente subjektiwiteit oor die aangeleentheid. Dit is hoofsaaklik hierdie teks wat ek gebruik in my tesis, sowel as 'n paar van Derrida se vroeëre invloedryke werke, om aan te toon dat dekonstruksie 'n kragtige en oortuigende strategie is om 'n nuwe etiek ten aansien van (ander) diere te voorsien.

Soos by Derrida, is my uitgangspunt om tradisionele filosofie onder die hamer te plaas deur aan te toon hoe dekonstruksie as 'n post-moderne denkstrategie die inherente gebreke in sy struktuur kan blootlê. Ek hoop om aan te toon dat 'n dekonstruksie van die antroposentriese en logosentriese ingesteldheid van mense teenoor ander diere noodsaaklik is vir die formulering van 'n nuwe etiek vir (ander) diere. Ek begin deur die tradisionele hiërargie van die mens oor (ander) diere – antroposentrisme, logosentrisme en 'carnophallogosentrisme' af te breek – asook, in 'n ander hoofstuk, met 'n dekonstruksie van kontemporêre diereregtenkers, en vervang hierdie sieninge en teorieë met wat Matthew Calarco 'n sogenaamde 'proto-etiese imperatief' noem (Calarco 2008: 108), wat ek argumenteer 'n hoeksteen is van 'n nuwe etiek. Dan, deur die moontlikhede van 'n billike mede-bestaan tussen mens en ander diere te vermenigvuldig, karteer ek 'n weg na 'n beter begrip van, en benadering tot ons verhouding met niemense diere. In kort, hierdie tesis is 'n poging om deur middel van dekonstruksie, 'n pad na 'n toegepaste (diere-)etiek te ontsluit.

Acknowledgements

My sincerest thanks to the University of Stellenbosch and particularly Prof. Hattingh for his unswerving faith in my mad pursuit.

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“The time will come when men such as I will look upon the murder of animals as they now look upon the murder of men.” ~ *Leonardo Da Vinci*

INTRODUCTION

At first glance, the idea of using deconstruction as a strategy for an environmental, and specifically, an animal ethic may strike a curious note. To begin with deconstruction, as a philosophical strategy, is treated as a genre more in the field of semiotics than ethics and, even then, it has tended to be dismissed, among contemporary analytical Anglo-American philosophers in particular, as a mere side-amusement, a word-game with negative ramifications to a constructive and serious discipline in the other branches of philosophy. In short, deconstruction is regarded as outside the philosophical ball park, more useful for literary criticism than philosophy, something for the fringes of proper philosophical discourse, a *mise en abyme*, an infinite regression “in a spirit of game-playing nihilist abandon without the least concern for constructing some better alternative” (Norris, 1991: 137) and even denounced, apparently by Michel Foucault, as terrorist obscurantism (Derrida, 1988: 158, footnote 12). The late Jacques Derrida, deconstruction’s architect and mastermind, was consistently accused of playing outside the proper disciplinary boundaries of philosophy. John Searle was particularly scathing toward deconstruction in this regard going as far as to say deconstruction was a “low level philosophical argumentation” and even that it was “silly and trivial” (Mackay, 1984). But breaching boundaries, Derrida always argued, was the whole point of philosophy. As Jonathan Culler states in his preface for *On Deconstruction*, what distinguishes deconstruction from other philosophical disciplines “is its ability to function not as demonstrations

within the parameters of a discipline but as re-descriptions that challenge disciplinary boundaries.” (Culler, 1983: 9)

Tellingly, Derrida was personally very much concerned about the poor representation of non-human animals in philosophy and mentioned on numerous occasions throughout his illustrious philosophical *métier* an intention to put together a work directly dealing with this persistent snubbing by philosophers against other animals. This project finally came together at the 1997 Cerisy Conference in France where Derrida delivered a 10-hour seminar 1997 entitled *The Autobiographical Animal* from where the book entitled *The Animal that Therefore I am* – a direct reference to the Cartesian dominance in philosophy — was published posthumously first in France (2006) and then translated in English (2008).

The Animal that Therefore I am has potentially become one of the most powerful philosophical discourses on animal ethics to date. This seminal undertaking begins with a personal experience with Derrida’s cat that one day follows him into the bathroom. What follows is a classic deconstructive reversal when Derrida, ashamed at his nudity in front of the cat, reverses the perspective and asks what the cat sees and thinks when faced with a man – a naked one at that, and how he, as a shamed human, responds to it. Using his well-established deconstructive methods Derrida weaves through the pillars of traditional philosophy and rigorously unpicks our traditional and historical thinking about animals and calls into question both the human-animal distinction as well as the latent subjectivity on the matter. It is this text primarily that I shall utilize in this thesis, as well as some of Derrida’s previously influential aforementioned texts, to show that deconstruction is a powerful and persuasive strategy toward providing a new ethic for animals.

As with Derrida, my point of departure in the opening chapter of this thesis is to put traditional philosophy under the hammer by showing how deconstruction as a post-

modern tool unpicks the inherent flaws within its structure. The broad aim of philosophy (if I may be so bold as to provide such a sweeping statement) is to uncover the truth, gain knowledge, to reveal how things are, solve problems or untangle a difficulty. In order to substantiate its findings, however, philosophy relies heavily on the services of language – especially a written language. Writing, and ergo language, as a tool to uncover or convey the truth, however, is tremendously problematic. The hope of validating truth and gaining knowledge is what inspires philosophers to write. But, as Culler succinctly puts it: “If philosophy is to define the relation of writing to reason, it must not itself be writing, for it wants to define the relation not from the perspective of writing but from the perspective of reason. If it is to determine the truth about the relation of writing to truth, it must be on the side of truth, not writing.” (Culler 1983: 90)

Most philosophers have known that writing as a means of expression might pollute the meaning it is representing. Writing obtrudes thought because writing operates as a series of signifiers, secondary marks, in the absence, outside and independent of the philosopher’s thoughts. Physical marks, or rather the signifiers of written concepts, can become rhetorical, ambiguous, abstruse and imprecise to the subject matter they relate to. Plato in *Phaedrus* rejected writing for these very reasons, and he was by no means the only philosopher to do so – Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Freud, Saussure and Austin were all suspicious of the way writing manipulates the truth. American philosopher Richard Rorty comments:

“Philosophers write but they do not think that philosophy ought to be writing. The philosophy they write treats writing as a means of expression, which is at best irrelevant to the thought it expresses and at worst is a barrier to that thought. For philosophy writing is an unfortunate necessity. What is really wanted is to show, to demonstrate, to point out to exhibit, to make one’s interlocutor stand and gaze before the world.” (Rorty, 1978: 144)

Yet, Rorty maintains Derrida argues that if philosophers oppose writing, they are in fact opposing the very thoughts they are trying to convey (Rorty, 1978: 145).

The ancient Greeks named the plundering hordes beyond their civilised realms 'barbarians' because they sounded like barking dogs. They deduced that the barbarians lacked a structured language and therefore lacked the ability to reason. The fact that the 'barking' was a structured language and that the barbarians possessed as much knowledge, maybe *because* of their language, was lost on the Hellenes. This parallel of the perception that other animals lack 'language' and 'reason', is something I will reiterate later on in the thesis. Essentially, as with the Greeks' initial hypothesis Derrida claims that philosophy, as with any other discipline, is nothing more than a collection of words, or more specifically, a kind of writing, which always leads to more writing, and paradoxically the more complex the philosophical problem, the more writing there is.

At this juncture one must be careful not to reject Derrida as just playing the obscurantist, as Searle and others have done (Mackay with Searle, 1984: Vol. 31 #1; Habermas, 1987; Smith *et al.*, 1992). By claiming that philosophy is a kind of writing, Derrida is not trying to reduce philosophy to a form of rhetoric, or to prevent philosophy continuing with its altruistic pursuit for truth and knowledge. He is, however, questioning the limitations of traditional procedures and approaches of getting there. Writing, he has always maintained, is not structured, limiting or obstructive but quite the opposite. Granted, it is intrinsic to thought, but like thought writing is open and limitless which ultimately provides a far more expansive perspective on all matters philosophical.

The universal deferment of writing by traditional philosophy as well as the perceived structure and limitations of writing and language, as I shall reveal shortly, forces a logocentric¹ bias in thought. At its foundation logocentrism creates

“... not a peaceful co-existence of facing terms but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms, not truth or knowledge or some transcendental concept, dominates the other (axiologically, logically etc.), occupies the commanding position. To deconstruct the opposition is above all, at a particular moment, to reverse the hierarchy.” (Derrida, 1981: 56-57)

A classical philosophical example like the broad notion of Causality, can illustrate this point, and can be used to demonstrate how deconstruction first highlights the inherent hierarchy between facing terms or binary opposites, then breaks that hierarchy down, but most importantly denies either term a positive meaning. Derrida (1981: 56), following Hume and Nietzsche, would argue that Causality – the logical priority of cause to effect – — is not an indubitable given as we would like to think but solely a product of language. To be precise it is a case of metonymy or, as Nietzsche (1976: 47) maintained (who it must be said was a born deconstructionist), a tropological operation.

Students of philosophy know how this problem of causality goes: suppose one is walking in the bush and one feels pain. This causes one to look for a cause and seeing a thorn, one asserts a link and instinctively reverses the phenomenal order from pain = thorn to produce thorn = pain. This backwards causation, or causal reversal, is caused by metonymy, the temporal substitution of cause for effect. This is something Hume discovered (Hume, 1970: 121-124), stating that causation was nothing other than relations of contiguity and temporal succession.

¹ Logocentrism regards words, and thus language, as a fundamental expression of reality.

But deconstruction goes beyond Hume's scepticism that could take the problem no further. Consider again that Derrida states that with any "philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful co-existence of facing terms (the cause versus the effect) but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms [the cause] not truth or knowledge or some transcendental concept, dominates the other [the effect]" (Derrida, 1981: 56, 57). The tropological distinction between cause and effect makes the cause logically *prior* to the effect. The effect then is placed second and, it is argued, is dominated by the primacy of the cause because it is dependent on the cause for its existence.

Deconstruction then sets out to upset this hierarchy by exchanging the properties of cause and effect. A deconstruction of the hierarchy shows that even though it is deemed the original, the cause also relies on an effect in order to be a cause. If the effect is what causes the cause to become a cause, then the effect, not the cause, should be treated as the origin. The result is that if either the cause or the effect can occupy a position of origin, then origin cannot be original. Origin therefore, as a concept, is thrown out of the discussion. Deconstruction therefore disrupts the entire notion of causality from a philosophical perspective by breaking down the hierarchy and making the terms equally dependent on one another.

The telling point here is that, unlike Hume who ran into a sceptical dead end with this problem and could do nothing more but go off to the pub to play billiards and have a pint or two of lager with his mates, deconstruction opens up causality to a limitless series of possibilities far beyond a mere chicken and egg scenario, because the cul-de-sac notion of which came first has been made redundant. With both cause and effect occupying equal positions and with neither enjoying the full benefit of meaning – they only exist as a trace of other terms — the ramifications, and definition, of Causality as a philosophical discourse become limitless.

Essentially, what deconstruction achieves is to suspend everything that we take for granted about the logocentric nature of opposing concepts, which in turn suspends everything we take for granted in philosophy. Deconstruction then forces us, not to discard philosophy outright as any sceptic would, but, like Nietzsche (1976: 40-52), to prepare the ground for an expansive, open confab² with many and differing angles contributing toward a growing and deepening comprehension of the matters with which philosophers are concerned.

This is what Derrida sets out to achieve in *The Animal that Therefore I am*. In this thesis I hope to show that a deconstruction of the anthropocentric and logocentric attitude of humans toward other animals is necessary in providing a new ethic for (other) animals. I shall begin first by breaking down the traditional hierarchy of humans over (other) animals — anthropocentrism, logocentrism and ‘carnophallogocentrism’ (Derrida, 2008: 15) — as well as, in a separate chapter, a deconstruction of contemporary animal rights thinkers, and replace these perceptions and theories with what Matthew Calarco called a ‘proto-ethical imperative’ (Calarco, 2008: 108), which will be a foundation stone toward a new ethic. Then, by multiplying the possibilities of an equitable co-existence between human and other animals, I hope to open a path toward a better understanding and approach to our relationship with non-human animals. In short, this will be an attempt to discover, through deconstruction, a way toward an applied (animal) ethic.

* * *

In the first chapter of this thesis, I aim to provide an overview of deconstruction, what it is (not), and how it functions as a critique on the logocentric structure of language by

² A seemingly informal conversation. A method common to Derrida’s style of writing.

using what Derrida called ‘archi-writing’. I will also provide the criticisms that have been levelled against deconstruction as a philosophical discourse, as well as Derrida’s counter-arguments to these criticisms.

Essentially, deconstruction is a critique of the entire framework of Western philosophy, a trend that began with Nietzsche, and how it was shackled to a dualistic process of epic proportions. Like Derrida I will track the writings of Saussure who argued knowledge is constructed by a figurative language complete with an endless set of binary opposites where one side of the opposition was always favoured, violently, at the expense of the other. Making use of Derrida’s seminal work *Of Grammatology* (1976), I will be showing how ethics functions with regard to language and philosophy using the paradoxes of Rousseau’s writing, and how using deconstructive techniques of *différance* and the law of supplementation breaks down the structural limitations of language and thought. I will also show how deconstruction resists definition and conceptualization, becoming instead a means instead of an end.

At the end of the chapter, I will explore the problems with deconstruction as an evading concept, specifically the criticisms of Searle and drawing on Wittgenstein, but will conclude that such criticisms are unfounded.

In Chapter 2, I hope to show what it is to deconstruct the prevailing philosophical anthropocentrism and logocentrism with regards to the question of the (other) animal, and its resultant tropological or rhetorical manipulations, specifically within the realm of ethics and with close attention to the human-animal dichotomy.

The title of the principal text I will be referring to throughout the remainder of the thesis, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (Derrida, 2008), is a direct reference to Descartes’

famous statement, whose blatant anthropocentrism I will be exploring, as well as that of other philosophers, especially Martin Heidegger, who despite their anti-Cartesian outlook are just as anthropocentric in their use of language. The choice of both philosophers is important as I feel their polarity adequately covers the range of the latent anthropocentrism in the full spectrum of western philosophical discourse.

I will then tackle the general logocentric bias in language head-on. Logocentrism is essentially, according to Derrida, the foundation upon which traditional philosophy rests. While anthropocentrism is rampant in almost all philosophical discourses, it is the structure of logocentrism that dictates our anthropocentric bias toward (other) animals. Such a foundation, Derrida maintains, is inseparable for human mastery over the (other) animals. I will explore the disavowal of human ‘animality’, beginning with the use of clothing and working into the exclusive manipulation of language to ensure total human dominance. An animal-as-other, separated from human animals from the beginning has been “deprived of the logos, deprived of the *can-have-the-logos* ... a thesis maintained from Aristotle to Heidegger, from Descartes to Kant, Levinas and Lacan.” (Derrida, 2008: 27)

Accordingly, I will also investigate the use of proper, common, collective and pronouns in language and reveal how words have been manipulated to rank human animals above all others in a single class of their own. It will be noticeable throughout this thesis that I will employ the word ‘other’ in brackets as a prefix to the word ‘animal’. This is to highlight the logocentric shortcoming of the word ‘animal’ that tends to refer to all non-human animals. It is a word that, in common usage, forgets that humans too are animals.

Also, in this chapter, I will introduce Derrida’s own neologism ‘carnophallogocentrism’, a term that combines logo- and anthropocentrism with other tools of dominance, namely

the propensity of masculinity and the cult of sacrifice, hunting and flesh eating as sources of hierarchical power. Finally, in the chapter I will, as Derrida does, highlight that while our carnophallogocentric proclivities have been in evidence “since time, since so long ago” (Derrida, 2008: 3), it is only in the last 200 years that human violence toward (other) animals has spiralled to unprecedented heights. The epoch, which begins paradoxically with Descartes’ view of animals as unfeeling machines and Jeremy Bentham’s concern for (other) animals as sentient beings, has culminated in the slaughter of animals on an industrial scale without the slightest concern for the rights and sentiment for (other) animals.

Chapter 3 will deal with deconstructing the forces opposing the violent hierarchy of humans over (other) animals. The violent epoch has also resulted in a relatively weak and marginal outcry from some philosophers about the mistreatment of (other) animals and while Derrida is largely sympathetic to these philosophers I will show that, like Heidegger, as well as the ethical works of Levinas and the psychoanalytical enquiries of Lacan, contemporary animal rights philosophers like Singer and Regan are still tied to the carnophallogocentric discourse they challenge. In this third chapter of my thesis, I will discuss, again, the logocentric thread that runs throughout their discourses, as well as a deconstruction of the inherent insistence of drawing an insuperable line between opposing binaries, whether it is to distinguish between human and (other) animals; sentience-based animals (those with developed nervous systems) and non-sentience based animals; higher order animals and lower order animals; or simply mammals and non-mammals. Furthermore, I will tackle the notion of identity politics and the Cartesian reductionist notion of subjectivity as structural hurdles to overcome before an ethic on (other) animals is to be reconstructed.

The last chapter is about laying a different foundation for an applied ethic and how to avoid the pitfalls discussed in the previous chapters. In this chapter, I will present some

criticisms of the deconstructive approach toward an ethic, especially from the animal rights thinkers like Singer, but I will also show that, like the criticism of Searle on deconstruction in general, these criticisms are largely founded on a misunderstanding of what deconstruction is and how, through what Derrida calls ‘limotrophy’ (Derrida, 2008: 29), it has the potential of supplying a far more comprehensive ethic than any of the prevailing versions. I hope to conclude this thesis by providing, not a ‘concrete’ ethic toward animals per se because deconstruction prevents it, but, to use a Derrida-style neologism: the aim is to provide what Matthew Calarco identifies as a ‘proto-ethic’ (Calarco, 2008: 108), which is, in the spirit of Nietzsche, not to provide a distinctive or definitive alternative but rather a charting toward, a preparing the ground for or forming a prototype, toward a sustainable and applied animal ethic by exploring and then comprehending the expansive scope of possibilities provided by a deconstruction.

Chapter 1: DECONSTRUCTION EXPLAINED

1. DECONSTRUCTION (UN)DEFINED

Toward the end of his life in 2002, during a television interview, Jacques Derrida said that the reason he took up philosophy was to challenge the overwhelming phallogocentric bias in the subject (Derrida, 2002: documentary). It had bothered him that the inherent and dominant masculinity in Western philosophy both excluded and subjugated the other sex through a written and spoken discourse designed unremittingly to reinforce that supremacy.

Derrida's concern allowed him to investigate and then discover that the entire framework of Western philosophy was more than just phallogocentric, it was shackled to a dualistic process of epic proportions, where knowledge was constructed by a figurative language complete with an endless set of binary opposites where one side of the opposition was always favoured, violently, at the expense of the other. From a personal perspective Derrida had himself been on the wrong side of the binary as 'other'. He was a victim of anti-Semitism when he was a child in the years just before the Second World War when he had been unceremoniously thrown out of his school along with some other kids, and even teachers, just because they were Jewish. It is with this sensitivity having grown up as an 'other' that enabled Derrida to take on as his life-long project the dismantling of this dualistic chauvinism, a mechanism that has essentially formed the foundation of traditional philosophy (Derrida, 2002: documentary). His weapon of choice became a powerful one, a giant knocking-ball, with far reaching consequences, fashioned by his own hand – it was a W.M.D. (Weapon of Mass Deconstruction).

Deconstruction is often viewed, by those who have never wholly delved into it, and even by those who have, as a minefield of bewildering and seemingly chaotic paradoxes, impasses and infinitely regressive arguments. Over the decades, since the word deconstruction “imposed itself” (Derrida, 1983: 1) on Jacques Derrida in his seminal work *Of Grammatology* in 1967, it has been misinterpreted, misrepresented and misunderstood by detractors and proponents alike. Part of the problem is the (un)definition of deconstruction. Once pushed for a definition by a Japanese Professor Derrida wrote:

“What deconstruction is not? Everything of course! What is deconstruction?
Nothing of course!” (Derrida, 1983: 5)

The word ‘deconstruction’ which, incidentally, Derrida did not like, is both a play on Heidegger’s application of *Destruktion* – the destruction of ontological concepts in philosophy — and of linguistic ‘structuralism’ (Heidegger, 1962: 43-4). However, deconstruction is neither about destruction in Heidegger’s sense since it was too violent for Derrida because it “implied an annihilation or a negative reduction much closer to a Nietzschean ‘demolition’” (Derrida 1983: 1) of concepts; nor is it, as the name suggests, an antithesis of structuralism. Deconstruction is often viewed as the cornerstone of post-structuralism and in many ways it is just that — a critique on structuralism as we shall see further on in this chapter – but Derrida insists that this is not completely the case either since that would place deconstruction as the binary opposite to structuralism, which is precisely what deconstruction always seeks to avoid.

Therefore, deconstruction, as Derrida has always maintained, resists definition. On the one hand, deconstruction seeks to rigorously break down longstanding traditions in discourse but, paradoxically, Derridean deconstruction — and I stress *Derridean* versus other post-modern interpretations of deconstruction — is not out to destroy

those discourses it interrogates, but rather attempts to re-inscribe them by dismantling the linguistic obstacles to the point where there is “an impasse of thought engendered by a rhetoric that always insinuates its own textual workings into the truth claims of philosophy.” (Norris, 1991: 49) This latter statement is a frustrating one for philosophers since it implies that deconstruction fiddles about with language, which almost always lead, in a zigzag fashion, to a conceptual dead-end. This has been one of the major, if not, *the* major criticisms of deconstruction but one that Derrida has strenuously, and successfully, challenged.

Broadly, deconstruction is about dealing with the (in)coherent meaning of language and is at the same time, as Derrida’s self-confessed disciple Paul de Man states, “both a rigorous and an unreliable source of knowledge.” (Norris, 1991: 48) The central aim of deconstruction is to locate the internal violent opposition of words that always undermines the conceptual meaning of any discourse, and disturbs it. Words or text, claims Derrida, ceaselessly defers to other words or trace terms, so much so that meaning is always indeterminate, always without origin or definition. To deconstruct a text, be it a literary novel or the writings of an eminent philosopher, is to show that “the text becomes open at both ends. The text has no stable identity, no stable origin, no stable end.” (Derrida, 1976: xii) Texts have disruptive, deflecting effects on all thought through the rhetorical nature of language, especially those numerous and often hidden metaphors within any discourse. As Derrida (in)famously wrote *Il n’y a pas de hors-texte*: “there is no outside-the-text” (Derrida, 1992: 102), meaning that all interpretations of a text are themselves texts but also, and somewhat discerningly, suggesting that all meaning is context-based. This is critical with any deconstruction. A telling example is the Greek word for reason, *logos*, which also means ‘word’. Reason, therefore, is intricately tangled up with the word.

To the bafflement of many within the philosophical sphere, deconstruction’s singular preoccupation with the text seems more akin to literary criticism and has less to do with

philosophy, much less an animal ethic as I am about to attempt here. This confusion may come from the fact that deconstruction is not a philosophy in the usual sense, one which attempts to assert a truth or falsehood; or provide an alternative concept to an existing one, and Derrida himself was always at pains to make that clear. Yet the assumption that rhetorical analysis applies only to literary criticism is to mistakenly ignore that deconstruction, *because* it grapples with texts and therefore language, applies to *any* discourse, including philosophy.

The aim of this chapter, then, before deconstructing the (other) animal question, is to outline first, in detail, how deconstruction in Derrida's view relates and becomes indispensable to philosophy *as a linguistic tool*, despite the tendency of philosophers to eschew textual language as an obstacle to self-authenticating knowledge. Deconstruction, I believe, is a most essential tool for any philosophical project because it rigorously exposes those textual blind spots that philosophers either ignore or are ignorant of — blind spots that could ultimately render their discourses weak, or worse, meaningless (Derrida, 1992: 89).

This, unfortunately, means that deconstruction is often viewed negatively as a form of scepticism — the argumentative antithesis of anything and everything, “the perverse sport of super-subtle minds” (Norris, 1991: xi) bent on mindless nihilism. These are valid criticisms since deconstruction can and does fall into these post-modern tendencies if misused but, ultimately, these views are also misrepresentations since deconstruction, far from dismantling philosophy and reducing it as just another kind of writing, as Richard Rorty asserts (Rorty, 1978), strives instead to keep philosophers alert to a myriad of linguistic pitfalls, thus ensuring that their strategies remain rigorous to the end.

2. FOLLOWING NIETZSCHE

Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist approach is deeply philosophical in the sense that he deals with that persistent issue which Plato first wrestled with in the *Phaedrus* — namely the question about thinking, and its relationship with language, especially written language (Norris, 1991: 62-3). Derrida highlights a part of the text in the *Phaedrus* when 'Socrates' asks Phaedrus:

“Consider these facts and take care lest you sometimes come to repent of having now unwisely published your views. It is a very great safeguard to learn by heart instead of writing. It is impossible for what is written not to be disclosed. That is the reason why I have never written anything about these things, and why there is not and will not be any written work of Plato's own. What are now called his are the work of a Socrates embellished and modernized. Farewell and believe. Read this letter now at once many times and burn it.” (Plato, 1997: 314)

Writing is an issue that has hovered menacingly over the shoulders of philosophers since Plato, which, for the most part, has been ignored or shunned but never, Derrida notes, ejected outright from any philosophical project (Derrida, 1976: 13-15).

A point of departure when explaining deconstruction would be to compare it to a similarly provocative and well-known critique of Western philosophy by that moustachioed “scandal wrapped up in an enigma” (Norris, 1991: 56), Friedrich Nietzsche. I have already mentioned that Nietzsche would have made a fine deconstructionist, and none more so from the fact he was the first to recognise, then push the limits, of language and thought.

Nietzsche was renowned as the arch-sceptic on knowledge and truth. Truth, he maintained, was nothing but a “mobile army of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms.” (Nietzsche, 1976: 46-7) The entire edifice of philosophy, he maintained, rested on the liquidity of figurative language. Reason, cited Nietzsche, is built on occluded rhetoric, which goes all the way back to the Socratic method of the dialectic argument — the “Greek equation of truth and logic.” (Norris, 1991: 59) Nietzsche maintained that the drawing out of ‘truth’ from a carefully constructed encounter between a canny speaker and an unsuspecting interlocutor was nothing more than a rhetorical ruse. The purpose of a dialectic argument, he argued, is to place loaded questions onto a hapless victim constructed so that the answers are anticipated, always on the protagonist’s (Socrates’) terms (Honderich, 1995: 621). Nietzsche therefore claims that Socrates was nothing more than a sly tactical rhetorician whose ‘truth’ was simply an argument that won out in a war of competing persuasions. Thinking is nothing more than a series of rhetorical devices deployed in a battle against verbal wills; and reason, or truth, is likewise nothing more than tautology. Reason, for Nietzsche, cannot claim hallowed ground as the purveyor of truth and logic, no more than the rhetorical musings that it demands authority over (Honderich, 1995: 621). This grounding of reason on figurative language is largely, but not completely, a similar line of attack that Derrida adopts.

The delimiting of conceptual thought to figurative reverie paradoxically revealed, for Nietzsche, the bottomless abyss. The fact that everything could be reduced to an analogy was, as Kant called it to flirt with the unsettling glimpse of the infinite, what he called the ‘mathematical sublime’ (Culler, 1983: 17); or, for Hume, to become infected with a malady that can never be cured (Norris, 1991: xi). The ‘malady’ finally drove Nietzsche insane essentially because he saw no way out of the chasm. But not so for Derrida, who, it seems, was immune to the giddy limitlessness of scepticism. Derrida, at the lip of the abyss finds the limit and eagerly jumps. In so doing, he provides a thorough and

rigorous spin to the abyssal Nietzschean spirit of critique of objectivity and value by metaphor and trope.

Deconstruction begins with the same Nietzschean gesture of turning reason in on itself. Derrida skilfully identifies the metaphorical and other rhetorical elements at work in the texts of philosophy showing that philosophy cannot dispense with reason by ignoring the disruptive effects of language. Reason, says Derrida, is inextricably bound up in metaphorical language to the point where it cannot claim to arrive at an independent truth or knowledge no matter how hard philosophers try to suppress it (Derrida, 1982: 61).

3. "... THAT DANGEROUS SUPPLEMENT ..."

Philosophers, as mentioned, have always treated writing as a problem, an obstacle, when it comes to trying to communicate truth, logic and reason. From Plato onwards, philosophers have bemoaned that writing is an unfortunate but necessary means for expressing pure thought. Derrida systematically takes these philosophers to task starting with Plato and moving through Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Freud, Saussure and Austin, among many others.

Derrida's opening salvo against traditional philosophy is a broad claim that if philosophers are in opposition to writing, they are therefore in opposition to their own ideas (Derrida, 1992: 77). This is not a mistake made by philosophers, accuses Derrida, or at least some accidental phenomenon in philosophy. Writing, he maintains, is the structural property of all discourse. All discourse and, therefore, all philosophy is grounded in *logos*, the word of reason/reason as word. (Derrida, 1992: 78)

3.1) Logocentrism and the ‘Metaphysics of Presence’

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida zeros in on the major works of the 18th century Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, specifically the ‘*Essay on the Origin of Languages*’, ‘*Confessions*’ and ‘*Emile*’ where Rousseau condemns writing as “that dangerous supplement” to speech. Derrida states that,

“Rousseau condemns writing as destruction of presence and as disease of speech. He rehabilitates it to the extent that it promises the reappropriation of that which speech allowed itself to be dispossessed.” (Derrida, 1992: 79)

This is crucial to the Western approach regarding discourse. There is a tendency of philosophers to ground truth in what Derrida calls (with a twist on Heidegger’s anti-humanist concept of the ‘metaphysics of subjectivity’) the ‘metaphysics of presence’³ (Derrida, 1982: 61). According to Rousseau, speech is prior to writing, spontaneous, immediate and direct while writing (although a necessary supplementation for the reappropriation of speech) is secondary, artificial, divorced by time from thought, anonymous, removed from the speaker/author (again by time), a mere representation, and a distortion (Derrida, 1992: 82-3).

Logically, one would go along with this prioritization of speech over writing. In Africa we have entire cultures that have survived only on the spoken word. Furthermore, children learn to speak before they can write, so it is common sense to place speech prior

³ Derrida’s interpretation of the Metaphysics of Presence holds that the entire history of Western philosophy and language demands immediate access to meaning, something Derrida explicitly brings into question.

to and above writing. Speech is also directly in contact with meaning as it is connected immediately with the transparency of the speaker's thinking the moment (s)he utters the words. Writing, as seen from this point of departure, thus comes after speech, is parasitic and ambiguous. Speech is the ideal, purest form of communication and therefore ought to be privileged over and before writing. Language, says Rousseau, is supposed to be spoken not written. Writing only exists as supplement to the spoken word (Derrida, 1992: 77). This repetition of the word 'supplement' in Rousseau becomes crucial in Derrida's deconstruction of Rousseau as we shall see a little further on.

In *Of Grammatology* Derrida intercepts Rousseau, not so much for his condemnation of writing but for the way Rousseau is always forced to rely on the medium he condemns in order to prove his point. Derrida's goal is, not only to question Rousseau's philosophy but also his methodology, in order to pay close attention to writing as writing, and not as a subordinate means of expression. This has far-reaching implications because Derrida, by showing that writing is not subordinate to speech, much like 'effect' is not subordinate to 'cause', also shows how such an interrogation threatens the entire foundation of traditional discourse. The reason Derrida deals with Rousseau specifically is not only because he goes to great lengths over the issue of speech over writing, but also that he is a good representation of the Cartesian school of thought that places subjectivity, or "self-presence of the cogito" (Derrida, 1976: 23/12) as his central philosophical theme.

This Cartesian notion of phonocentric (speech over writing) self-presence (Derrida, 1976: 43) is an especially tenacious rejection of writing. The authority of the self-presence structures our thinking in the 'metaphysics of presence'.

"The system of language associated with phonetic-alphabetic writing is that within which logocentric metaphysics, determining the sense of being as presence has been produced. This logocentrism, this *epoch* of the full

speech, has always placed in parenthesis, *suspended*, and suppressed the essential reasons, all free reflection on the origin and status of writing.” (Derrida, 1976: 43)

For philosophers like Rousseau, voice becomes a metaphor of truth; living speech as opposed to the secondary consequence of writing. With the act of speaking there is an immediate link between utterance and understanding, between pure thought and communication, whereas writing obtrudes and “destroys the ideal of pure presence.” (Norris, 1991: 28) Presence equals truth, and writing, for Derrida, is truth that is “sacrificed to the vagaries and whims of textual dissemination ... the endless displacement of meaning which governs language and places it forever beyond the reach of self-authenticating knowledge.” (Norris, 1991: 29)

Presence, for most of us, is thus ‘real’, ‘pure’, and the ‘truth’ because it seems to be a “simple, indecomposable absolute ... the present simply is: an autonomous given.” (Culler, 1983: 95) The authority of presence over absence is, according to Derrida's argument, tentative at best because the notion of presence is problematical insofar that presence is always defined by its opposite, the absent. Ultimately, Derrida proves that presence is *not* a pure and autonomous given since it must always carry *traces*, or attributes of its opposite other (Derrida, 1976: 44-6). ‘Presence’, therefore, is incomplete as a term without its binary ‘absence’. There cannot be one without the other.

Presence instead possesses the qualities of its opposite, absence. The same can be said in reverse: absence inhabits the qualities of presence. Thus both presence and absence possess the qualities in “relation to time as difference, differing and deferral.” (Derrida, 1976: 237/166) This is a set of relational terms common in language. They differ from each other but at the same time defer from their autonomy. This dual difference and deference of the relational terms can be formed together in a single marvellous neologism

that Derrida invented, one that has come to characterize the core of deconstruction, and has been so influential that it has been incorporated into the French Dictionary. The word is *différance*, a French term that I will explain in more detail shortly.

3.2) The (Sign)ificance of Structuralism

To grasp *différance* fully, one must first take a look at Derrida's readings of Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of Structuralism, who highlighted the predominance of relational binary opposites in language, and in so doing proved the impossibility of *absolute* or *essential* terms and concepts. Structuralism is regarded by many as the immediate predecessor to deconstruction, which, in turn, is viewed (mainly by American interpreters) as the cornerstone of 'post-structuralism', which was, noted Derrida, "a word unknown in France until its 'return' from the States." (Derrida 1983: 2) While Saussure's writings are a powerful critique against the priority of speech over writing and, as Derrida readily admits, that deconstruction owes its existence to the groundwork laid out by Saussure (Derrida 1983: 2), he nonetheless shows that Saussure's texts, by not paying close attention to textual blind-spots, are themselves an affirmation of the 'metaphysics of presence' as I shall reveal shortly.

The two linguists do, however, begin at the same starting point. Both Saussure and Derrida agree that the traces that interplay between speech and writing are exactly the same as the traces that interplay between presence and absence. "To write is indeed the only way of keeping or recapturing speech since speech denies itself as it gives itself." (Derrida, 1992: 79)

In this vein Saussure would agree. Utterances count as language only when they serve to communicate ideas. Ideas are represented as 'signs', and language is simply nothing more

than a structured ‘economy of signs’ (Culler, 1983: 98). Language is not just an act of speech but a predetermined system of letters and words. For example, words (signifiers) like ‘cat’, ‘sat’ and ‘mat’ are distinguished phonetically by a replacement of the first consonant that, in turn, distinguishes their meaning (signified). In this sense language is diacritical; that is, dependent on what Saussure called a structured ‘economy of differences’ (Saussure, 1986: 68). Thus, Saussure observed, a slight play of differing letters in language can create a much larger difference of the signified. Meaning, therefore, is always relational. Words or signs are simply contrasted with other elements within a linguistic structure (Saussure, 1986: 85). This diacritical nature within an economy of differences is something I will show Derrida parody to great effect later on in this chapter.

From this basic working example of semiotics, Saussure moves on to claim that language is *synchronic* and not *diachronic* as previously assumed. That is to say that language only exists at a given point in time and is not an historical development. The signified or meaning of a word can only be produced by the rules within a language system (Saussure, 1986: 91).

In this sense, Saussure assumes that speech is a kind of writing, because the system or structure *precedes* speech. Language is not, as is commonly viewed, a series of positive, independent entities that are put together to form a system. Utterances, words or signs are a *product of differences*, and language is, at base, a *structure of differences*. Derrida says this is a potent attack on the Western philosophical tradition because ...

“The play of differences involves syntheses and referrals that prevent there from being at any moment or in any way a simple element that is present in and of itself and refers only to itself. Whether in written or in spoken discourse, no element can function as a sign without relating to another

element which itself is simply present. This linkage means that each “element” – phoneme or grapheme – is constituted with reference to the trace in it of other elements of the sequence or system. This linkage, this weaving, is the *text*, which is produced only through the transformation of another text. Nothing, either in the elements or in the system, is anywhere simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.” (Derrida 1981:37-38/26)

When we speak, we think of uttering some meaning in the present but each word or sign has a meaning, which always defers to past acts of communication. Whenever we look up a word in a dictionary, we are given other words or events – traces to describe that word. And what is true for words is true for the whole structure of language.

Every speech act has already been predetermined by prior speech acts and no matter how far back in human history we push, even to our earliest ancestors and that first hungry cry of the primitives dwelling in caves and combing the beaches, we find that every act, even the first act of communication is differentiated with another to the point that we find only non-original origins. A grunt signifying “food” must be differentiated from the grunt, or even the silence of “non-food”. The grunt “food” even though a noise that is *present* always has traces of differing or opposing grunts that are *absent*. Utterances, whether they are grunts or complex speech, are always a product of prior differences. Every sign (written or spoken) has two inseparable aspects to it: the signifier (the sound or the written mark) and the signified (its conceptual meaning). The nature of the two aspects is arbitrary in that they are based on convention.

The importance here is that the priority of speech over writing, and hence presence over absence, has been nullified. There are only “differences and traces of traces.” (Derrida 1981: 37-38/26) This has been Saussure’s contribution to the attack on the traditional

metaphysics of presence bias in philosophy. However, this is also where Derrida and Saussure part company. A system based on differences, Derrida would argue, defies meaning (Derrida, 1992: 71). No synthesis can occur as Saussure would like it to. Despite Saussure's claim of the pre-existence of writing over speech, Derrida notes in *Of Grammatology* a number of places in the texts that Saussure paradoxically gives in to the priority of speech, while writing is demoted back to secondary status. Saussure speaks of the dangers of writing as a tyrannical tool that "disguises" language and leads to errors of pronunciation that are "pathological". "Writing," as Culler explains of Saussure, "threatens the purity of the system it serves." (Culler, 1983: 101) In other words, Derrida shows that Saussure reverts back to the purity of speech tainted by writing that, by his own assertion, comes after and is a lesser form than speech. The problem, as Derrida shows, is that by inadvertently making writing a derivative of speech, a parasitic form of representation, speech can only be explained through writing. No matter how hard one tries, the nature of speech is best illustrated in the form of writing. Speech therefore is nothing but a form of writing.

This is a paradoxical contradiction that other structuralists like Roland Barthes recognised but found no way around. As Christopher Norris states, Barthes presents this paradox most succinctly:

"A language does not exist properly except in 'the speaking mass'; one that cannot handle speech except by drawing on the language. But conversely, a language is possible only starting from speech; historically, speech phenomena always precede language phenomena (it is speech which makes language evolve, and genetically, a language is constituted in the individual through his learning from the environmental speech." (Barthes, 1967 from Norris, 1992: 27)

In other words, Barthes recognises the paradox of speech as historically preceding writing but without being able to exist except by drawing on the structure of writing. It is

a new concept of writing, as Culler points out: “A generalised writing that would have as subspecies a vocal writing and graphic writing.” (Culler, 1983: 101)

For Derrida this paradox of speech and writing is a hurdle that must be cleared in order for language, and therefore thought, to move beyond the shackling bonds of Cartesian dualism and the ‘metaphysics of presence’. The inability to deal with this paradox is Saussure’s, and indeed structuralism’s, incapacitating blind spot, since the altruistic claims to break with the Cartesian tradition of subjectivity paradoxically keeps the concept firmly entrenched in the system it challenges.

In *Of Grammatology* Derrida deconstructs Saussure’s texts (Derrida, 1976: 1-87) and discovers that they are riddled with loaded metaphors that give in to a clear phonocentric bias. Voice, for example, becomes a metaphor for truth as opposed to the indifferent lifeless emanations of writing. Speech, according to Saussure, produces a link between sound and sense and an immediate realisation of meaning, something that writing destroys. (Norris, 1982: 28) These are metaphors that contradict the Genevan’s entire theory. Structuralism, Derrida shows, reaches an impasse (or an ‘aporia’ in Derridean speak), where the text’s self-contradictory assumptions can no longer be resolved, and like Nietzsche, Saussure glimpses infinity, or, at best, a circular argument. As Derrida points out, differences defy meaning because they eternally shift between present event and prior structure (Derrida, 1976: 45) or in Saussurian terms the constant shifting between *parole* and *langue*. No absolute meaning can be derived from any term, grunt or utterance thanks to the reciprocal differences with other terms. For example, the concept of the sign is based on the distinction between signifier (written mark) and signified (meaning). The signifier exists only to give access to the signified and because of this, it is immediately subordinated as secondary to the signified. Saussure must accept, therefore, that writing is a secondary derivative to speech and by doing so he endorses the ‘metaphysics of presence’ he has tried to overcome. Saussure, says Derrida, has reached a self-engendered paradox from which there is no escape (Derrida, 1976: 43).

It is important for me, at this point, to reiterate that Derrida's deconstruction of Saussure is not a "negative reduction" or a rejection of his theory outright. On the contrary, Derrida views Saussure contribution to modern post-structural linguistics as an important development'. A deconstruction of Saussure is simply pointing out certain flaws, which are, admittedly, major flaws, but states Derrida of Saussure:

"It is when he is not expressly dealing with writing, when he feels he has closed the parentheses on that subject, that Saussure opens the field of a general grammatology ... Then something which was never spoken and which is nothing other than writing itself as the origin of language writes itself into Saussure's discourse." (Derrida 1976: 43-44)

A deconstruction of Saussure remains closely linked to the text it interrogates. Deconstruction is not, and cannot be seen as, an independent concept or alternative to structuralism (which is why the term post-structuralism can be misleading) because to do so would be to set up deconstruction in opposition, a privileged or hierarchical opposition, which would ultimately render it hostage to the very bias it seeks to undo. This paradox inflicts Saussure when he tries to place language (*langue*) as a precondition to speech but ends up making it secondary to the phonocentric bias.

The reaching of this final impasse, the *aporia*, is also problematical for students and opponents of deconstruction because this is where there is the tendency to fall into an infinite regression that seems to inflict post-modernism in general. By confining everything to language inconsistencies and elevating flawed rhetoric above reason deconstruction opens an abyss of meaningless enquiry. Derrida in *A Letter to a Japanese Friend* (1983) states that deconstruction is "neither an analysis nor a critique" and is not, "a method and cannot be transformed into one." For Derrida, deconstruction is not something that you do, rather "Deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not

await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject, or even of modernity. It deconstructs itself.” (Derrida, 1983: 54) This is confusing at best for anyone trying to understand the mechanisms of deconstruction. Deconstruction seems to confine itself to negative descriptions. In other words, it seeks to destroy concepts and terms, like Saussure’s structuralism without providing a positive alternative. Deconstruction itself is subject to the same negative process. The process is neither a method, a critique, nor an analysis. It is not even post-structuralist, more like anti-structuralist, or even better anti-everything. This leads many to question the validity of deconstruction at all.

If deconstruction does not set itself up as an alternative to structuralism, what does it try to achieve then? That which deconstructs ought to also reconstruct or replace, otherwise it will obfuscate for eternity and, consequently, will be of no use.

However, this is where Derrida sets the limit on deconstruction and while he does not provide an alternative *as such*, he is laying the ground for a re-inscription of structuralism. Derrida, then, is not trying to *reverse* the opposition with a deconstruction of Saussure to re-establish that writing must take priority over speech. Rather, what he is setting out to achieve is to undo the concept of ‘opposition’ completely. Derrida wants to create a disturbance of the binary between writing and speech, to stir the twin-toned dualism typical of a metaphysics of presence (and the centuries old philosophy of subjectivity) into a soup. To achieve this, he introduces a diacritical play of the Saussurian structural term, which he calls the ‘economy of *différance*’ (Derrida, 1992: 81).

In the next section I shall explore the ‘nature’ of *différance* and explain how effective it is in diverting from the priority of relational terms in language.

4. ARCHIWRITING

4.1) Différance

In order to avoid the hierarchical system of oppositions, and that infinitely regressive *aporia* that plagues Saussure, Derrida marks the eternal interplay of differences by “establishing an arbitrary centre” in the “space between.” (Derrida, 1981: 42) He creates a style of proto-writing, which he calls archi-writing, to break the facing-off of binaries. In French, Derrida creates a portmanteau term called *archi-écriture* (*archi* – ‘chief builder’ and *écriture* – ‘writing’), which sounds almost the same as ‘architecture’ (in French as in English) playfully parodying the diacritical structure of the term as well as hinting at a foundational reconstruction of the text. What Derrida wants to show is that once a deconstruction has been applied to a text, when the oppositions hit that inevitable and final *aporia*, one can then consider a reconstruction using a new set of terms.

Again mocking language’s diacritical structure, Derrida employs one such new term, another portmanteau, which we have already mentioned, *différance*, which is

“... a structure and a movement that cannot be conceived on the basis of the opposition of presence/absence. Différance is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other.” (Derrida, 1981: 28)

The word *différance* sounds the same as the French ‘différence’ – the silent *a* “of *différance* indicates this indecision as concerns activity and passivity, that which cannot be governed by or distributed between the terms of this opposition.” (Derrida, 1981: 28)

An English equivalent of the word is ‘spacing’, “the space between”, a gap, which designates both an arrangement and an act of ... arranging.” (Culler, 1983: 97) Spacing is a term Derrida uses too (*espacement* in French) but *différance* is preferred since it interplays nicely with the word ‘difference’, a word that anti-Cartesian thinkers like Nietzsche, Saussure, Freud, Heidegger and Husserl used frequently as a basis to their theses.

The silent ‘a’ also brings into play the other, and more poignant, meaning of *différance*, deferment.

“The *a* of *différance* also recalls that spacing is temporization, the detour and postponement by means of which intuition, perception, consummation - in a word, the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a being - are always deferred. Deferred by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element in an economy of traces. This economic aspect of *différance*, which brings into play a certain not conscious calculation in a field of forces, is inseparable from the more narrowly semiotic aspect of *différance*.” (Derrida, 1981: 30)

This is where Derrida reaches full flight – the diacritical point where ‘differ’ morphs easily into ‘defer’. The crux of deconstruction presents itself here. This process of dismantling the authority of speech is not simply a reversal of dualistic categories – replacing presence with absence, speech with writing, subject with object etc. – which all will still remain distinct and violently opposed to one another. Deconstruction seeks to undo both the hierarchical opposition of terms by deferring them away from each other *and* to break down the very concept of opposition that makes it possible in the first place.

A portmanteau term like *différance* is thus essential in order to repair the inherent flaws in a philosophical project grounded in Western philosophical tradition – be it either of our two Genevans, Rousseau or Saussure, or any philosopher for that matter – otherwise a blind prejudice will remain and taint their process. This key point will manifest itself later when we begin, in the other chapters, to deconstruct the question of the (other) animal. The dualistic relationship between the human self and the (other) animal is, as will be seen, one that is patently skewed to the advantage of the human. The blind prejudice manifests most in this context and where the use of *différance* is employed with great effect to offset the hierarchy.

Here is the pivotal moment in deconstruction. What Derrida has so far achieved is not a wholesale rejection of Saussure's or Rousseau's texts, neither has he left their theories 'hanging' and facing a paradoxical abyss, nor has deconstruction provided an independent and alternative concept to replace structuralism or speech with writing because, insistently, it remains closely tied to both. Deconstruction will remain integrated with any philosophical text, but what it achieves is to rigorously and expertly reveal those metaphorical blind spots inherent in Saussure's or Rousseau's theses.

4.2) Blind to the Supplement

The *archi-écriture*, the writing-in-general, at once both phonetic and alphabetic that Derrida creates in order to break down the opposition between speech and writing, also derives its force from what he calls philosophy's 'blindness to the supplement' (Derrida, 1976: 141). The Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) describes 'supplement' as: *A thing added to something else in order to complete or enhance it*. To Derrida the addition of that something implies both that a thing is complete and incomplete without it. It is an extra, so it is not intrinsic to the thing but paradoxically the thing is incomplete without the addition. This means that when Rousseau says writing serves only as a supplement to

speech, he is really saying, “Speech is incomplete without writing.” (Derrida, 1976: 142) Speech, then, is not self-sufficient and must depend on writing for its existence.

What Derrida is showing up in Rousseau’s texts is that while Rousseau condemns writing as a destruction of presence, his own writing is “an attempt to restore through the absence of writing a presence that is missing from speech.” (Derrida, 1976 from Culler, 1983: 103) Rousseau goes on at length about supplements but he is blind to their true nature. He thinks they are marginal, less important entities, yet they are always called in because there is a lack in the thing that is being supplemented. Rousseau cites many examples of supplements – education supplements nature, masturbation is a supplement to sexual intercourse, Madame de Warren is a supplement to the mother he never had (and more ...). In all of these supplementations there is an inherent lack, an absence, in the thing that is supplemented. Something must be supplemented in order to be truly itself and to make it whole (Derrida, 1976: 141-52).

The nature of supplements, though, does not mean that there are just two opposing entities at play like the assumption that a prior term of speech needs a secondary derivative like writing to complete it. Derrida points out that supplements reveal an endless chain of supplements, “the supplement supplements.” (Derrida, 1976: 152) In *Emile* Rousseau even admits that children begin to speak to supplement “their own weaknesses ... for [they do] not need too much experience to realize how pleasant it is to act through the hands of others and to move in the world simply by moving the tongue. (Derrida, 1976: 154). Therefore, Rousseau admits that speech itself is a supplement. Likewise Madame de Warren’s absence was supplemented from her presence, which in turn was supplemented by the mother Rousseau never had, who herself would have been a supplement to something else. Madame de Warren, who was a kind-of sponsor for the boy Rousseau, was supplemented in other areas (Rousseau, 2006: Book II). In *Confessions* Rousseau admits that as a teenager he desired Madame de Warren as a lover as well as a mother. Masturbation was a supplementation of that desire, while later on

when she did become his lover that supplement was replaced again. (Rousseau, 2006: Book II) Derrida sees a pattern of supplements at work:

“Through this sequence of supplements there emerges a law: that of an endless linked series, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing that they defer: the impression of the thing itself, of immediate presence, or originary perception.” (Derrida, 1976: 157)

This shows that ‘presence’ is always deferred to a trace of something supplementary. The ‘dangerous supplement’ exists because of an original paucity. Since there is an originary lack, Derrida again seeks to occupy the arbitrary centre because nothing has priority - everything remains a supplement to something else. This shows that supplement “is another name for *différance*.” (Derrida, 1992: 90) The law of supplements is more like a building block or, at worse, the limit set for deconstruction.

The logic of supplementation is extremely important in that it defers the nature of binary opposites in their traditional ‘face-off’ as independent competing antagonists. Supplementation, while still recognising differences, attaches the opposing terms to one-another, showing that every binary is incomplete without the other and therefore no hierarchy can be achieved. Speech is defined as writing; presence as absence; subject as object; human as animal. As will be shown in Chapter 4, the logic of supplementation is an important facet in the deconstruction of the human/(other) animal dichotomy.

Thus, the logic of supplementation attacks and tears down the binaries and metaphysics of presence, both of which support the dualistic nature within traditional philosophical theories. As he did with Saussure, Derrida exposes Rousseau to an impassable

contradiction in his writings. Saussure tries to break down the ‘metaphysics of presence’ but paradoxically succumbs to it, while Rousseau treats writing as a subordinate to speech but in so doing demonstrates the integral importance of writing with regards to speech, and blurs what is a supplement to what. The reading of Rousseau is particularly compelling in that Derrida proves that any theory that tries to ground itself in presence or binaries is doomed to undo itself due to its blind reliance on supplements.

Yet Derrida saves Rousseau from himself. He rescues Rousseau’s writing as writing, despite the philosopher’s best efforts to reduce the activity as a dangerous supplement. As Christopher Norris argues, Derrida saves Rousseau with “a kind of pre-emptive rhetorical strike. Rousseau’s writing survives and transcends the process of figural reduction.” (Norris 1991: 107) Rousseau’s power and his prestige as a philosopher, Derrida wants to show, comes from his writing. With the help of a deconstruction highlighting the law of supplementation, Derrida does not trip up Rousseau but reinstates his texts as proper philosophical discourses. This is something Derrida does with great force, as will be seen in Chapter 3, by assisting the texts of philosopher’s like Jeremy Bentham, for example, who attempt to enhance the position of (other) animals but are limited and marginalised by their discourse.

Unfortunately, deconstruction, for many philosophers, remains mired in the criticism that it fails to provide a concrete alternative to any discourse and consequently Derrida has drawn heated criticism from his contemporaries, notably the Anglo-American analytical school of philosophy.

5. THE DISPUTE WITH DECONSTRUCTION

Despite Derrida's efforts at setting the limit to deconstruction, there remains an inherent misconception that it tends to controvert its own argument. Each deconstruction of a work, it is believed, opens up to further deconstructions, each gravitating toward every rhetorical hint of its own performance. Deconstruction, it has been argued, is quintessentially post-modern because it tends to spiral down an endless chain of deconstructions with no possible end. To understand these inherent misconceptions of deconstruction as a typical post-modern form of scepticism, we need to analyse Derrida's reading of J.L. Austin, which was the spark that ignited a firestorm against deconstruction.

5.1 Austin's 'Ordinary Language'

John Langshaw Austin begins his theory, like Nietzsche, Saussure and Derrida, by castigating previous philosophers who affirm that all utterances come directly from the consciousness of the Cartesian self-present subject, the so-called source of meaning (Austin, 1975: 3-5). Like Saussure, Austin argues what makes an utterance is not the speaker's state of mind at the moment of utterance, but the yielding of the speaker to conventional rules of language involving context (Austin, 1975: 4).

Austin banks off into his own hypothesis by claiming that not all speech acts aimed at truth are utterances of fact. Truth statements can also be used to perform certain intended, rhetorical acts like promising, naming, or declaring something. What sets 'performative' statements apart from factual or 'constative' statements is their 'illocutionary force' (Austin, 1975: 5). Intentional speech acts involve a commitment of the speaker to stand by his or her words and acknowledge the obligations the utterance intends. For example, "I promise to pay you back the money I owe" or "I declare you man and wife" obligates

the speaker to perform the act (s)he utters in the present. The key to truth is that the speaker must be sincere and committed to honouring a promise, declaration or ritual naming act, otherwise that utterance is ‘etiolated’, ‘parasitic’ or, simply, idle talk (Austin, 1975: 11).

But the philosophical implications in Austin’s discussion on illocutionary force are once again paradoxical in that “the conditions of performative felicity require that the speaker ‘mean what he says’ in the sense of being *presently* [my italics] involved with his or her utterance and faithfully *intending* its import.” (Derrida, 1989 from Norris, 1991: 110) This turns out to be a strong case for the self-presence of the speaker over the detached writer, yet Derrida immediately spots the non-presence of performative terms because the characteristics of convention are already in existence before the speaker even utters them. That is to say, a speaker, instead of meaning what he says at the moment of speaking is really just *iterating* what has already been said before. Performative speech acts partake in *différance* in that the utterance pre-exists the speaker’s intention. All performative speech acts, therefore, belong to general writing in the Derridean sense because “they can be explained and located only within a larger system of non-self-present signification.” (Derrida, 1989 from Norris, 1991: 110)

Derrida also highlights the lingering binaries present in Austin’s theory, felicitous versus the infelicitous statements. Felicitous or ‘serious’ speech acts, according to Austin, hold sway over “anomaly, exception, ‘non-serious’, citation (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy).” (Derrida 1989: 8) Non-felicitous speech acts are treated as “some kind of linguistic delinquency” (Derrida, 1989 from Norris, 1991: 109) that Austin practically casts out as irrelevant to his theory. It is odd, thinks Derrida, that Austin berates philosophers for treating secondary those utterances that are non-factual when he himself makes a distinction between ‘serious’ and ‘non-serious’ utterances (Derrida 1989: 9). Again, the paradoxical nature of philosophy is revealed, thus inviting, as we have seen with Rousseau and Saussure, a more rigorous scrutiny of Austin’s theory.

Since at best Austin treats the ‘non-serious’ utterance as parasitic to the ‘serious’ and therefore must be excluded from his theory, this also reveals Austin’s blindness to the supplement. ‘Non-serious’ language is something extra, added to ordinary language, which paradoxically is also dependent on it, because, as we have seen, any entity is incomplete without the supplementary bits. Austin himself must have been aware of this potential contradiction as it is he (not Derrida in his critique of Austin, nor me in this text) who consistently wrote the word ‘serious’ in quotation marks, suggesting Austin himself was aware of the vacillating and doubtful nature of the hierarchical opposition with ‘non-serious’.

A promise made by an actor on stage, for example, is regarded as a ‘non-serious’ speech act – one that is cast out by Austin as infelicitous – but, says Derrida one could argue that the promise made by an actor is just as, if not more, ‘felicitous’ than a real promise in that if it were not possible to make a promise on stage, there would be no promises in real life (Derrida, 1989: 11). Austin states that a promise is a real promise by virtue of convention, a formula that is repeatable. Yet so is a ‘false’ promise a matter of repeatable convention. Thus, for someone to make a promise in real life there must be iterable procedures in order to make that promise, like those used on a stage. Serious utterances, then, are just special cases of role-playing. (Derrida, 1989: 14).

“Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, to launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as *conforming* with an iterable model, if it were not thus identifiable in some way as ‘citation’?” (Derrida, 1982: 389)

The possibility of ‘serious’ utterances depends upon the iterability of such utterances – the promise of an actor on stage is thus an excellent example of such iterability. Derrida reverses the hierarchy by using the logic of supplementation. The so-called parasitic performatives now become the model or convention and the ‘serious’ performatives just become an example of that model. Another illustration of this is there can only be a particular Austin or Derrida style of writing, an *oeuvre*, but such a personal style of so-and-so can only exist if there is a possibility that it can be copied, cited, imitated or parodied, otherwise it ceases to be so-and-so’s *oeuvre*. That possibility is the nucleus of Derrida’s argument. As Culler bluntly states, “deconstruction exists only by virtue of iteration.” (Culler, 1983: 133)

But Derrida takes it further. ‘Non-serious’ or meaningless sentences, themselves have meaning in that a listener can *imagine* a context in which they have meaning. When someone makes a promise to another, even if he intends to break it, the listener is imaging the promise in context with his own thoughts. Intention, as Austin wanted it, is not the foundation for ‘serious’ speech acts. Austin agrees that meaning is context-bound, but context, Derrida shows, is boundless or, as we have already seen, deferred. (Derrida, 1989: 16) This structural openness, the *différance*, is the core of deconstruction and applies to all disciplines from atomic sciences to growing dahlias. The historian can revise a history because he uncovers new data, or a literary critic sees a text in a different perspective to another.

Again, the power of deconstruction then is to reveal that Austin’s theory is flawed both by revealing that Austin repeats the move he admonishes his predecessors of making, and by showing that *différance* once again undoes the opposition of the ‘serious’ and the parasitical ‘non-serious’ utterances and that both are acts of convention by virtue of their iterability. This iterability neatly switches meaning from intention to context. (Derrida, 1989: 13)

5.2) Searle's 'Rejoinder'

Derrida's deconstruction of Austin seems like an innocuous philosophical examination, none more so than any other text Derrida deconstructs, yet this particular one sparked off one of the most bitter philosophical debates, one that culminated in Western philosophy dividing itself into two opposing camps – the rationalist Anglo-American analysts and the post-modern Continental philosophers. The debate began with John Searle who took a particular and somewhat hostile exception to Derrida's deconstruction of Austin. He stated that Derrida had not only confused the issue of Austin's Speech Act Theory but that it was a "low-level philosophical argumentation" and "deliberate obfuscation." (Mackay with Searle, 1984: Vol. 31 #1)

Searle's 'rejoinder', however, has come to be regarded as a classic misunderstanding of deconstruction, one that is appropriate to mention in this context because it highlights the misunderstanding that most laypeople, and even eminent philosophers like Searle, have with deconstruction. In his brief rejoinder, *Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida* (1989), Searle agrees with Austin that the 'infelicitous' portion of language ought to be left out of a 'serious' (Searle also uses quotation marks much to Derrida's delight) theory of ordinary language. Searle tries to reverse Derrida's argument by stating that iterability in fact facilitates intentionality – "there could not be promises made by actors in a play if there were not the possibility of promises made in real life." (Culler, 1983: 119)

This is hardly a meaningful counter-argument because the mere reversal of binaries falls straight into the hands of deconstruction, *différance* and the logic of supplement. Essentially, without providing an adequate rejoinder, Searle is simply reinforcing that which has already been said by Austin. Most importantly, Searle argues from a common-sense stance that speech acts cannot be invaded by boundless contexts without intentionality, because there would then be no such thing as communicative competence,

or standard interpretive rules, which play the same role in both written and spoken language (Mackay with Searle, 1984: Vol. 31 #1). By denying speech acts the common-sense role of communicating meaning Derrida, according to Searle, is not providing a proper philosophical explanation (Mackay with Searle, 1984: Vol. 31 #1). In arguing that meaning is only context-bound but that context is also boundless and therefore unmasterable, Derrida is muddying the waters (Mackay with Searle, 1984: Vol. 31 #1).

However, it is Searle, not Derrida, who is not providing a proper philosophical examination. Derrida justifiably regards the ‘common-sense’ approach as less than rigorous – especially in a philosophical context. I recently saw the documentary made in 2002 entitled *Derrida* that emphasizes, quite concisely, the common sense versus Derrida’s rigorous philosophical approach to various issues. In 1998 Derrida visited Cape Town. He was shown Mandela’s cell on Robben Island and gave a series of lectures at a couple of universities on the notion of ‘forgiveness’. South Africa at the time had just wrapped up the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) so it seemed appropriate for Derrida to provide some philosophical insight into the understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. For many South African students present at his seminar at the University of the Western Cape, it proved a most unsatisfactory experience especially from those hoping for an affirmation of the applied reconciliatory process from Derrida. However, they, like Searle, completely misinterpreted the deeply philosophical rigour applied by Derrida on his understanding of forgiveness on that occasion.

In the clip Derrida calls to attention “a rigorous border” (Derrida, 2002: documentary) between the idea of pure forgiveness and that of reconciliation.

“... pure forgiveness is impossible and that one can only truly forgive that which is unforgivable. If one forgives what is easily forgiven, one doesn’t really forgive ...” (Derrida, 2002: documentary)

This is the kind of statement Searle objected to, stating that these are trivial language games. But according to Derrida, forgiveness that is “*demande*d or *accorded* in order to achieve reconciliation, is not really forgiveness.” (Derrida, 2002: documentary) He does concede that reconciliation is valuable in the context of national peace and political harmony but since he is “a philosopher who tries to be rigorous with what is said” reconciliation is not an example of forgiveness (Derrida, 2002: documentary).

Derrida’s response is a telling one, despite the howl of consternation from members of the audience, because even today over a decade after the TRC hearings there remain unresolved questions. Such questions come from among the families of the political victims, such as the relatives of Steve Biko for example, who still argue against the validity of amnesty awarded to those who committed structurally unforgivable crimes. From a pragmatic/common-sense point of view, reconciliation is necessary for the nation to move forward but for the victim’s families forgiveness remains a hard, impossible pill to swallow. Derrida would argue that if at this level these issues have been ignored there is a danger, if left unaddressed, that these latent simmering emotions can one day erupt into a full-scale and violent retribution. The genocide in Rwanda is one extreme example of this. One cannot be forced to shake hands and to forgive and forget on the grounds of reconciliation if the scars run too deep. Now, two decades after the TRC findings can one truly claim that the victims and the families of victims have forgiven the crimes committed against them?

Like the students at UWC, Searle failed completely to understand Derrida at his philosophical best. By accusing Derrida of a “constant striving to give the appearance of profundity by making claims that seem paradoxical, but under analysis often turn out to be silly or trivial” (Mackay & Searle, 1984), he is somehow blind to Derrida’s insistence on a deeply rigorous approach. That deconstruction examines the notion of ‘forgiveness’ and a theory like Austin’s “with such exemplary force ... with the utmost philosophical

precision and care” (Norris, 1991: 143), shows how Derrida urges that we must continue to interpret texts and issues in an effort to thoroughly investigate where theories go awry.

Instead of being a linguistic trickster playing word-games, Derrida provides a rigorous critique of Austin’s theory as well as providing some early but poignant questions upon the validity of the TRC’s methodology toward healing wounds in South Africa. As opposed to how Searle and others view it, Derrida must be set apart from other post-modern thinkers – those who *do* reduce philosophical truth-claims to the endless play of figurative rhetoric. On the contrary, Derrida sees himself closer to Austin than Searle is to Austin (Derrida, 1989: 111). Derrida does not debunk Austin’s theory. In fact, he goes at length to state that the chief virtue of the speech act theory “is the fact that its keenest insights derive from a willingness to follow out the abnormalities of ‘ordinary language’ while at the same time maintaining a scrupulous regard for the protocols of reasoned argument.” (Derrida, 1989 from Norris, 1991: 148) Derrida is in step with Austin to a point that both agree that writing must operate at two levels: a performative level where philosophic truth-claims are constantly brought into question, and a level of none the less rigorous argument and critique where issues of validity (or truth or falsehood) are always inescapably raised (Derrida, 1989 from Norris, 1991: 148). That Austin also adopts a ‘playful’ and witty style of writing – something Searle austere regards as a non-philosophical approach – is another indication of the similarity between the two thinkers. The bottom line is that Derrida believes Austin’s theory a philosophically good one and a deconstruction of Austin simply aims at preparing the ground for a better argument. Here is Derrida’s response (for the last time) to Searle:

“ ... the value of truth ... is never contested or destroyed in my writings, but are only re-inscribed in more powerful, larger, more stratified contexts ... and within [those] contexts ... that are relatively stable, sometimes apparently almost unshakable, it should be possible to invoke rules of

competence, criteria of discussion and of consensus, good faith, lucidity, rigour, criticism, and pedagogy.” (Derrida 1989: 146)

Context is delimited in the sense that it invites a more thorough philosophical investigation. With Austin, Derrida demonstrates the difficulty of making a distinction between two classes of speech acts and calls for another go at it. “The language of theory always leaves a residue that is neither formalizable nor idealizable in terms of that theory of language, this is no reason to stop work on theory.” (Derrida 1989: 41)

Why then is Searle blind to such rigour? The underlying feature for Searle, the UWC students and other detractors of deconstruction, is one of irritation. The rigour of deconstruction often goes against the grain of a common sense or a pragmatist approach – the nit-picking of terms like ‘forgiveness’ and the impossibility of forgiving the unforgivable; or the ‘meaningless’ critique of intentional versus context-bound performative statements. For them, deconstruction’s opening up of context to a dizzying array of interpretation, smacks of post-modernism at its nihilistic worst. This, sadly, is the common view of many of Derrida’s contemporaries, philosophers, like Searle and that of Jürgen Habermas, who cast Derrida as a post-modern enemy of reason, a “latter-day sophist” with a penchant to be a transcendental *tu quoque*, and part of the despicable Nietzschean-irrationalist creed (Habermas, 1987: 139). These objections were mild in comparison to those philosophers who were viciously opposed to the awarding of an honorary doctorate to Derrida by Cambridge University in 1992. They sent a publicly open letter to the university describing Derrida’s philosophy as being composed of “tricks and gimmicks similar to those of the Dadaists”. They went on to conclude that an

“... academic status based on what seems to us to be little more than semi-intelligible attacks upon the values of reason, truth, and scholarship is not,

we submit, sufficient grounds for the awarding of an honorary degree in a distinguished university.” (Barry Smith *et al.*, 1992.)

This open and blatant hostility is hardly the stuff real philosophers should sink to. It seems the inherent issue here is an irrational fear that the established “values of reason and truth” that place philosophy in a scholarly ivory tower are deeply threatened by deconstruction, a groundswell that shakes the very foundations of that tower. If deconstruction, they argue, asserts an indeterminacy of meaning then all effort at discovering meaning is pointless? Philosophy would cease to exist and philosophers would have to seek work in other lesser academic disciplines like, horror of horrors, literature. Yet, as Culler points out, when Gödel demonstrates the impossibility of constructing a theoretical system in mathematics, it does not mean that all mathematicians must abandon their work. In fact, if anything such impossibility opens the way for more work (Culler, 1983: 133).

5.3) Wittgenstein: from Frictionless Ice to Rough Ground

A far more convincing argument against deconstruction has been the deployment by his acolytes of later works of Ludwig Wittgenstein, notably from the texts of his posthumous *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Derrida, as we have seen, is by no means a post-modern *tu quoque* because his attack on the traditional convention of philosophy goes hand-in-hand with meticulous attention to detail and a rigorous insistence of sticking to the philosophical letter of the text. However, there are still hints of an overriding element of scepticism within Derrida’s treatment of philosophy.

Scepticism in philosophy has always had an ambiguous relationship to the common sense or pragmatic attitude. Language, as Searle argued in his reply to Derrida (Mackay with Searle, 1984: Vol. 31 #1), continues to communicate despite Derrida’s best efforts to

thwart it and victims of political and social violence move on with their lives despite being unable to forgive the unforgivable. Richard Rorty puts forward a summary saying that there are two kinds of philosophers. Both exist in a state of perpetual rivalry (Rorty, 1978: 143). On the one hand, are the mainstream philosophers who, through the ages, have sought truth and knowledge. Then there are the sceptics, disparate raiders into mainstream philosophy, who thrive on the energies of paradox and seek to destroy the ideas and formulations of the others. In modern philosophy there is an assumption that the lines have been drawn between the austere Anglo-American analytical philosophers who protect the cause of 'ordinary language' against the 'raids' of post-modern Continental philosophers like Derrida.

Because Derrida has been 'categorized' as a post-modern sceptic, the Anglo-American camp have invariably turned to one of their big guns for support against the tirade. Wittgenstein is a weighty adversary primarily for his powerful views that scepticism in language is grounded on a false epistemology. He maintained that someone who tries to discover a logical correspondence between language and the world, as Derrida seems to with the statement that "there is no outside the text", is always doomed to fail. All the problems in philosophy, said Wittgenstein, can be reduced to the multiplicity of language games. According to him, philosophical problems arise when language is forced from its proper common-sense home and takes a holiday into the metaphysical environment, where all the familiar and necessary landmarks and contextual clues are removed (Wittgenstein, 1953: §38). This metaphysical environment, he says, is like being on frictionless ice where the conditions are ideal for a philosophically perfect language and that all philosophical problems can be solved without the muddying effects of everyday contexts. But, he argues, it is precisely because of the lack of friction that language in this sense does not work in the practical, everyday sense. Wittgenstein instead argues that philosophers must leave the frictionless ice and "go back to the rough ground" of ordinary language (Wittgenstein, 1953: §107). For Wittgenstein, if philosophers regard language as a problem of paradox, as Derrida does, it is to repeat a traditional mistake of expecting language to relate directly to objects or ideas. This, says Wittgenstein, is the root problem of scepticism. Sceptics, like Nietzsche, were driven insane by infinite

paradoxes because they failed to accept language as ‘ordinary’ where such problems are dissolved rather than solved.

Wittgenstein’s theories seem to provide a slightly cooler, less emotionally charged, rejoinder to Derrida than Searle’s but they still do not provide a satisfactory knockdown argument. Firstly, if Derrida took a look at Wittgenstein’s argument against scepticism he would point out Wittgenstein’s heavy reliance on figurative non-ordinary language to state his case. Metaphors like ‘proper home’, ‘taken a holiday, on ‘frictionless ice’ and ‘rough ground’ defer away from what Wittgenstein is really trying to say about language, and ultimately question the rigour of his approach and, in vindicating Nietzsche, prove that truth is nothing but a mobile army of metaphors and metonymies.

Yet, more importantly, Derrida is not the post-modern sceptic everyone thinks he is. He does not doubt everything, nor does he accept outright those endless paradoxes in language. The problem of the paradox is foremost in Derrida’s approach, one that he tackles and insistently delimits through the effective deployment of *archi-écriture*. True, Derrida takes to the frictionless ice of a Nietzschean critique that concepts or categories in philosophy can be traced back to some sublimated metaphor or figural expression, but he only does so to a point. In *White Mythology* (1974) Derrida makes it clear that his deconstruction is far from endorsing the Nietzschean view that *all* concepts come down to metaphors (Derrida, 1974: 49-54), or Rorty’s assumption that philosophy is just another kind of writing (Rorty, 1978: 141). Indeed, Derrida attacks the metaphysics of subjectivity/presence, which, it must be argued, is also found skating on frictionless ice. Derrida, instead, calls for a thorough critique of philosophical theories even if, through a deconstruction, they produce irresolvable *aporias*. The crucial aspect here is that Derrida’s approach is less sceptical and more rigorously philosophical, often much more so than his adversaries. As Derrida himself says in his *Afterword* in *Limited Inc.* printed to clear up the ceaseless dispute with Searle,

“... what philosopher ever since there were philosophers, what logician since there were logicians, what theoretician ever renounced this axiom: in the order of concepts (since we are speaking of concepts and not of the colours of clouds or the taste of certain chewing gums), when a distinction cannot be rigorous and precise, it is not a distinction at all.” (Derrida, 1989: 123-4)

6. ROCK BOTTOM OF THE ABYSS: DECONSTRUCTION DELIMITED

For Derrida it is not enough for deconstruction to just expose the binary oppositions at work and then stop there, “thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively.” (Derrida, 1981: 42)

“The final task of deconstruction is not to surpass all oppositions, because they are structurally necessary to produce sense. They simply cannot be suspended once and for all. But this does not mean that they do not need to be analysed and criticized in all their manifestations, showing the way these oppositions, both logical and axiological, are at work in all discourse and enable it to produce meaning and values.” (Derrida, 1981: 42)

To be effective, then, deconstruction creates new terms, not to synthesize the terms in opposition, but to mark their difference and eternal interplay. Thus we get terms like *différance* that effectively delimit the void of sceptical regression that faced the likes of Nietzsche. These neologisms are not a free play of words but are a necessity for rigorous philosophical analysis that hurdles the obstacles of paradox, and paves the way or prepares the ground for a reconstruction toward an improved theory or idea.

The fact that deconstruction, despite the cries of naysayers as silly and trivial, is deeply influential in the applied fields of feminism, politics, literature, post-colonialism and popular media, underscores the power of its value as a tool to re-inscribe the shortcomings in any discourse. It is with such a tool that I (in conversation with Derrida) shall turn to the question of the (other) animal.

Chapter 2: DECONSTRUCTING THE HUMAN/ANIMAL DISTINCTION

1. WHAT ANIMAL? THE OTHER

1.1. “Since time, therefore. Since so long ago ...” (Derrida, 2008: 3)

In the first chapter of *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (2008) Jacques Derrida writes:

“... for a very long time, since I began writing, in fact, I believe I have been dedicated to the question of the living and of the living animal. For me that will have always have been the most important and decisive question. I have addressed it a thousand times, either directly or obliquely.” (Derrida, 2008: 34)

This statement seems, at first glance, is a bit “puzzling for long-time readers of Derrida and to readers who are familiar with debates in animal philosophy” (Calarco, 2008: 103), given that Derrida, until the 1997 Cerisy conference, which produced *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, had only occasionally mentioned (other) animals in his long and illustrious philosophical career. Even after he took a so-called politico-ethical turn in the mid-1980s, the immense volume of Derrida’s work infrequently mentions issues directly concerning (other) animals. This is not to say, they were of little concern. Indeed, when Derrida did, on occasion, turn his full attention to the question of (other) animals, he did so with a force and elucidation that, arguably, made him the leading Continental philosopher on the subject. One instance in particular stands out. This is the printed and extensive dialogue with friend and historian Elisabeth Roudinesco, entitled *For What Tomorrow...* (2004) where the two discuss a variety of social and political issues that they

have covered over their illustrious lives. Here Derrida explicitly reveals his views in a chapter revealingly called *Violence Against Animals* (Derrida, 2004).

In a broader sense, Matthew Calarco argues that Derrida's infrastructures of *différance*, supplement, *archi-écriture* etc are not exclusively human where the Self "is not necessarily the *human* self and where the Other is not necessarily the *human* other" (Calarco, 2008: 106). In other words, it can be argued that throughout his work Derrida has been explicit in showing no clear separation between humans and (other) animals. "Animals", he wrote undoubtedly including human animals as well, "are my concern." (Derrida, 2008: 35)

According to Marie-Louise Mallet writing in the foreword of *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida had "often expressed his intention to one day put together in a large work the texts he had written on the animal" but that various tasks persistently got in the way (Derrida, 2008: xi). But this is not to say that the question of animals wasn't present in many, if not all, of his published texts. While Derrida seldom mentions (other) animals directly, he is correct in saying that they have been his concern and that he dealt with the question 'obliquely', and right from the beginning when he started out as a philosopher. Certainly, since the introduction of his deconstructionist oeuvre in *Of Grammatology* in 1967, Derrida has analysed this particular question in tremendous detail. The animal question deals explicitly with hierarchical binary oppositions, and the pervading logocentric dominance in philosophy. It is a question that is none the more glaring when it comes to the subject of (other) animals. Animals, it is obvious, *are* the quintessential Other and the most subjugated of opposite binaries. The question of the animal, therefore, is *the* question of otherness.

In this sense, everything that deconstruction challenges boils down to the concept of the (other) animal, and the power exercised over it by the authoritative Cartesian

‘metaphysics of presence’ in its various guises – *logo* as well as *anthropo* (and *carnophallo*, as we shall see later on in this chapter). As Derrida argues, the foundational structure of philosophy is wholly anthropocentric, which is reinforced by a logocentric bias and is rigidly demarcated around Aristotle’s *zōon logon eschon*, the rational animal, the ‘subject’ that is distinct from all other animals both for its definition and existence. Derrida states that the entire ontology of being human is “essentially a thesis regarding the animal” – a thesis on dichotomous hierarchy that is “maintained from Aristotle to Heidegger, from Descartes to Kant, Levinas to Lacan.” (Derrida, 2008: 27) Derrida’s criticism regarding the direct question of the animal has been that philosophy is mired in an “ontotheological humanism” (Calarco, 2008: 104), which manifests and defines itself, through language, text and context, in rigid binary opposition against all (other) animals from chimpanzees to microbes.

The foundational ontological question in philosophy has always been the nature of being: “Who am I?” But it is an exclusively anthropocentric question, which can essentially be transcribed as “what is it to be human?” However, as exclusive as this question insists on being, it must always rely on a direct comparison with everything that is *not* human. This means the foundational ontological question always comes with a rider attached, namely: What makes humans different from (other) animals?

This question, this exclusively *animal* question, therefore, is both the overriding and binding thread in metaphysics, one that has been answered consistently and variously through the ages by almost every principal philosopher. The unique properties, or what are exclusively ‘proper’ (*propre*⁴) of humans have been thoroughly analysed throughout history with such conclusions as: the ability to speak, to reason, to respond, to mourn and bury the dead, have hands with opposing thumbs, wear clothes, have technology, lie, deceive, laugh, cry with tears *etcetera ad nauseum*. The bottom line is that metaphysics is

⁴ Derrida uses this term in French and is translated directly as ‘proper’ but in French can also mean ‘attributes’ or ‘essences’.

wholly preoccupied with neatly dividing all beings into two distinct and opposing camps – humans into one and all (other) animals into the other, with an “insuperable line” (Bentham, 1823. XV11.122) to separate them. With the line clearly demarcated and in place, philosophy has then spent an entire epoch trying to widen and deepen it, so much so that, as Heidegger pointed out (a description that Derrida repeatedly uses), an unsurpassable abyss now separates the human animal from all the others (Heidegger, 2004: 17).

The insistence on the total separation of humans from (other) animals, claims Derrida, is bad philosophy. I discovered a late interview with Jacques Derrida on *You Tube* where he discusses the question of animals.

“To put all living things that aren’t human into one category is, first of all a stupid gesture – theoretically ridiculous – and partakes in the very real violence that humans exercise toward animals.” (Derrida, 2008: YouTube)

I will attend to the ‘partaking in violence’ further on in this chapter but for now it suffices to note that Derrida correctly points out that it makes no sense to separate humans from all other animals just because one can cite various differences unique to human animals. Derrida does not, as usual, deny that there are differences. Obviously, one must admit there are properties unique to humans, but to attach exclusive *value* to a specific set of human properties and to place them in opposition to the properties of the entire animal kingdom makes no sense.

“There are considerable differences between different types of animals. There is no reason one should group into one and the same category monkeys, bees, snakes, dogs, horses, anthropods and microbes. These are radically different

organisms of life, and to say ‘animal’ and put them all into one category – both the monkey and the ant – is a very violent gesture.” (Derrida, 2008: YouTube)

One could argue, for example, there are properties unique to cheetahs that humans, nor, for that matter, lions, a relatively close member of the feline class, do not possess. Imagine if philosophy were to concentrate exclusively on cheetahs’ attributes instead and argue that because no animal can run as fast as a cheetah; or no other feline has a non-retractable claw; or that the tear drop markings on its face have evolved to reduce the glare of the midday sun during a high-speed chase; or that its heart is much larger than most mammals, therefore all other animals should be lumped together on one side while cheetahs alone can enjoy ethical predominance and exclusivity. And if philosophy spent as much time dealing with the being of a cheetah versus every other living being as it does with humans, imagine how many cheetah properties we could eventually come up with? Why not arbitrarily conduct the same exercise with elephants? Elephants have the most developed memory among all living beings; they are the biggest land animal; they have no gall bladder; have a prehensile trunk and so on, and we can do the same for each and every animal, drawing a line between each and every other animal. Why, Derrida is asking, do we only concentrate on humans? Is the distinction not just as arbitrary as any animal?

The human tendency to fall for this “exclusionary logic” (Calarco, 2008: 132), thinks Derrida, is fairly straightforward – only humans have the faculty and structure of writing (another human property) at their disposal, they can write in their own exclusivity and deny all (other) animals theirs. This is why Derrida calls humans the “autobiographical animals” (Derrida, 2008: 34). It explains why the line has been drawn at humans collectively as a species otherwise we could ask: “If exclusionary logic is what governs our thinking then why distinguish between species at all? Why not make an inter-species distinction?” It has been done before between genders, cultures, religions and races. And,

is it not the fact that we place Adolph Hitler and Nelson Mandela in the same category a stupid gesture too and just as theoretically ridiculous? However, a deconstruction will reveal that *any* exclusionary logic, inter-human or not, has dangerous and often violent ramifications. Forms of exclusions among humans have only recently, in human history, been properly addressed to the point that, although it has not been completely eradicated, the general consensus is that it is wrong to discriminate against people of different gender, race, religion and so forth. A deconstruction would highlight the danger of sweeping discriminatory generalizations and categorizations that exclude one group from another and set themselves up in opposition with each other.

Yet, discrimination of a very large body of beings remains largely unattended, simply because they are silent, unable to protest thanks to a lack of autobiographical power (Derrida, 2008: 34). A rigorous analysis into the flaws of autobiographical and, ergo, anthropocentric discourse, therefore, becomes deconstruction's first step toward a direct enquiry into the question of the (other) animal. Thus, Derrida's broad enquiry throughout *The Animal that Therefore I Am* is in response to the constant preoccupation with answering the fundamental ontological question of being from an exclusively anthropocentric manner, a criticism that expertly calls into question the overriding humanist bias in ethics. In this chapter I will unpack this enquiry and start to explicate its implications.

1.2 Who I am (following)

Derrida begins his critique with a classic deconstructionist gambit, one that, as usual, is deeply context-dependent and text-specific, or what Calarco calls Derrida's advocacy for

“Situational [sic] Ethics” (Calarco, 2008: 115)⁵. The advocacy is almost completely wrapped up within the title alone of his 1997 Cerisy Conference address “*The Animal that Therefore I am (following)*”. As Derrida has constantly maintained throughout his career, public enemy number one in philosophy is his 17th Century compatriot, René Descartes and his wide-ranging and deeply entrenched anthropocentric dualism. In his title, Derrida deconstructs that infamous Cartesian phrase, a phrase that has more than any other in philosophy cemented the hierarchical dichotomy between the human self and the animal other.

In French, Descartes’ famous declaration is written ‘*je pense donc je suis*’ but Derrida takes the ontological ‘*je suis*’ (I am) and juxtaposes it with ‘*je sui(vre)*’ (I am following). This is a discursive technique central to any deconstruction with a diacritical but non-egoistic ‘*je suis/suivre*’ (I am/following). Derrida’s full title in French therefore is *l’Animal que donc je sui(vre)*, a title that just about says it all - the animal that I am and I am following. Furthermore, the word ‘*suivre*’ conjugates in French with the first person ‘*je*’ (I) to ‘*suis*’, meaning that ‘*je suis*’ can either refer to ‘I am’ or ‘I follow’. In fact, the title in French is written just with ‘*je suis*’ without the ‘*sui(vre)*’. The English translator of this text, David Wills, felt it necessary to include ‘*sui(vre)*’ in order to clarify Derrida’s intentions (Derrida, 2008: 162).

The translator also informs, in his Notes at the end of the text, the title could variously mean ‘the animal that therefore I am (following)’; or ‘the animal that therefore I am (more to follow)’; or ‘the animal that therefore I become (by following)’; or ‘the animal that therefore I (follow)’ (Derrida, 2008: 162). The play here is clearly against the Cartesian ontological prioritization of the consciousness of the doubtful animal over everything else. It also hints, by following, to the Heideggerian *Dasein*, the concept of ‘being-in-the-world’. Both connotations reveal essentialist as well as existentialist

⁵ Not to be confused with the Christian ‘Situational Ethics’ of Joseph Fletcher. Calarco is referring to ‘Situation Ethics’ that are acts judged within their individual contexts and not their categorical principles. (Calarco, 2008: 115)

notions, which is effortlessly blended by Derrida by making the subtle switch from the ‘I am’ to read ‘I am also following’.

Just by playing with order of words and the slight differences in language structure this title produces limitless connotations. Does it say I *am* an animal, or I am *being*-animal? Perhaps, following Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 232), I am *becoming* an animal. I am *after* the animal? (Just the word ‘after’ opens up a spectrum of further interpretations like ‘in pursuit’, ‘behind’, ‘in the wake of’, ‘in search of’, ‘in honour of’). Could I say, I am travelling, on a journey somewhere, a journey of discovery? Also, since I no longer just ‘am’, I am unsure of who or what I am, like the Heideggerean *angst* of Being (Heidegger, 1931: 16), I am perhaps uneasy with the situation. I am trying to *understand* the animal, this animal, or understand *the question* of the animal? Am I admitting that philosophy is *all about* and *nothing but* the animal, that there is more than meets the eye to the animal, or that we humans cannot, *ought* not, separate ourselves from animals? Derrida states that with the title:

“... everything in what I am about to say will lead back to the question of what ‘to follow’ or ‘to pursue’ means, as well as ‘to be after’, back to the question of what I do when ‘I am’ or ‘I follow’, when I say ‘*Je suis*’ if I am (following) this suite then [*je suis cette suite*], I move from the ‘ends of man’, that is the confines of man, to ‘crossing the borders’ between man and animal. Passing across borders or the ends of man I come to surrender to the animal, to the animal in itself, to the animal in me and the animal at unease with itself, to the man Nietzsche said (I no longer remember where) something to the effect that it was an as yet undetermined animal, an animal lacking in itself ... Since time, since so long ago, hence since all of time and for what remains of it to come we would therefore be in passage toward surrendering to the promise of that animal at unease with itself.” (Derrida, 2008: 3)

These ramifications are endless, those that always avoid a direct answer. It is a brilliant employment of *différance* in deconstructing Descartes' most rigid and reductionist of concepts because just by introducing the slightest change in the meaning of the egoistic 'je suis' the whole ontological question is disrupted. Even better, while a direct answer is unachievable, a different outlook regarding the animal – human or other – certainly is and this change in outlook is mandatory for a reconstruction toward a workable animal ethic.

Derrida continues to interpret his title's own disruption in a similar vein, but with the telling and crucial realisation toward a different approach to ethics. He weaves in and around the ontological question of 'who I am (following)' and discovers the necessitation of two further questions: "I am inasmuch as I am *after* [après] the animal" or "I am inasmuch as I am *alongside* [auprès] the animal" (Derrida, 2008: 10). The similarity between the diacritics is once again better evident in French – *après* and *auprès*. Both words connote via the diacritic of being-*near* (prés) the animal, which leads to being-with, being-huddled-together or being-pressed (cf. the root word *pressu* for English *press* as well as French *prés*), which could also mean 'compressed', 'impressed', 'repressed' or 'pressed-against'. Again the diacritics break the text wide open, and dilute any attempts at strict conceptualization. They effectively destroy the fixed abyss between human and animals and blur the insuperable line. No more is there the ontological, singular "I am", but a more plural "I am also an animal", "...with animals", "... alongside animals", "... following animals", "... among animals". There is, as one can clearly see, no rank categorization in Derrida's language.

There is also a subtle but sharp jab at Heidegger in this title as Derrida plays the exclusively humanist *Dasein* with his own more inclusive 'being-after/alongside/with/as-the-animal' which could variously be "in the sense of the hunt, training or taming, or being-after-it in the sense of succession or inheritance" (Derrida, 2008: 10), and since I am following the animal it is 'being-there-before-me' it can allow itself to be looked at, regarded, analysed, compared but, and this is a big 'but', for Heidegger completely failed

to follow through with this point, the animal can also *look back at me*. This is the crucial realisation I mentioned just now. Derrida's seemingly purposeless semantic stumbling around the title of "*The Animal that Therefore I am (following)*" also effectively *reverses* the human/animal opposition. The 'I' may regard the animal as other, but equally the animal may regard the 'I' as other. The animal too has a point of view, a point of view, like us, of the absolute Other.

The result, as we have seen on countless occasions throughout Derrida's work, is a complication of the traditional notions of definition and reference within the language structure, which ultimately serves to break down the hierarchical binary prevalent in language. 'I am' is no longer an autonomous entity or concept of 'self', looking out across a great chasm at the other. The *différential* 'I am (following)' throws the singular cogito in among the rest, scrambles it, multiplies it and as a result becomes indistinct. Derrida's title therefore throws the Cartesian human self in among the pigeons, along with all the other animals – as I will show in more detail in the sections of this chapter below.

2. RUNNING WITH HARES AND HUNTING WITH HOUNDS

In the following pages of *The Animal that Therefore I Am (following)*, Derrida adopts a distinctly animal approach to his enquiry, one he has adopted many times before, "*since the beginning*", a style of analysis that concentrates on sniffing out and following traces, a metaphoric scent that he 'tracks', which is said more eloquently in French because the diacritics keep poetically kicking in.

“That is the track I am following, the track I am ferreting out [*la piste que je dépiste*], following the traces of this ‘wholly other they call ‘animal’...”
Derrida, 2008: 14)

Tracking is Derrida’s ‘following’ of the multitude of traces. ‘Trace’ is a term Derrida has oft used in deconstructive readings to describe the reliance on thought or speech to the structure of language in that each word or phrase always possesses a trace of another word, phrase or prior thought. In the context of *The Animal that Therefore I Am* trace is used for “that unconscious logic which haunts the path of argument and reaffirms the seeking of knowledge or information as a habit that human and nonhuman animals of different species share: we follow signs scents, clues, not always knowing where or to what or whom they may lead us, indeed not knowing also how they may become part of us.” (Weil, 2008)

Derrida’s animal-like following and ferreting around the subject of the question of the animal can be both frustrating and enlightening as he picks up a word or phrase, like a scent, follows it for a while, lets it drop to pick up another only to return to the original, but “now rediscovered in a slightly changed context”. (Weil, 2008) David Wood, one of the first critics to respond to *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, picks up on Derrida’s tracking, stating metaphorically that Derrida “starts a number of hares and manages to track most of them with his usual elegance.” (Wood, 2004: 129) Ultimately, as we shall conclude much later on, Derrida’s tracking enforces a radical rethinking in ethics. This line of questioning by opening up a simultaneous, seemingly limitless network of enquiries, is in stark contrast to the reductionist methods generally used to compile theses in traditional philosophy.

2.1 Anthropocentrism

At the heart of the question of the animal is the anthropocentric attitude of philosophers throughout the ages from Plato to Heidegger. Derrida takes on a number of them, each time exposing their reliance or insistence in providing hypotheses from a strictly anthropocentric viewpoint. Anthropocentrism is the biggest obstacle for structuring an ethic that is inclusive of (other) animals. As long as the pervading bias of anthropocentrism remains, no such ethic is possible. Therefore, it is critical that the foundational philosophical treatises be deconstructed so as to rid them of this insurmountable barrier.

I have selected two such philosophers taken to task by Derrida essentially because they come from radically different schools of thought, yet both are complicit when it comes to their anthropocentric dogma. My view is that Descartes and Heidegger represent the great spectrum of anthropocentrism that almost all other philosophers are guilty of no matter what frame of reference they come from. Both are also clearly implicit in Derrida's title: Descartes' essentialist *cogito* and Heidegger's existentialist/phenomenological *Dasein*. Derrida himself tackles both in detail, as he has done for most of his life. In short, Descartes and Heidegger are ideal representations of the anthropocentric issues I want to introduce in this section of the chapter.

2.1.1 Descartes' Fiction

Reason is often seen as one of the central properties of being human, and Derrida, by using a property more akin to (other) animals, is subliminally exposing the primacy of reason as a metaphorical human-constructed, (con)text-specific and anthropocentric entity. In a similar vein, Nobel laureate author J.M. Coetzee, in his novel *Elizabeth*

Costello (2003), expounds on this unusual contra-reasoning approach with specific reference to the subject of animals. The grand Cartesian statement is something his protagonist, Elizabeth Costello, is markedly uncomfortable with as:

“It implies that a living being that does not do what we call thinking is somehow second-class. To thinking, cogitation, I oppose fullness, embodiment, the sensation of being – not a consciousness of yourself as a kind of ghostly reasoning machine thinking thoughts, but on the contrary the sensation – a heavily affective sensation – of being a body with limbs that have extension in space, of being alive in the world. The fullness contrasts starkly with Descartes’ key state, which has an empty feel to it: the feel of a pea rattling around in a shell.” (Coetzee, 2003: 78)

Coetzee makes a number of very close parallels to Derrida. The author prefers the Nietzschean animal sensory embodiment of being rather than the ‘empty’ human constructed one. He also disparages the acclaimed Cartesian statement calling into question the consciousness of the Self by reversing Descartes’ negative opinion on animals as mechanical things right back onto his doubting Self. Animals, thought Descartes, were nothing but mechanized automata – animal-machines with no sensation or understanding of their own or each other’s being. However, Coetzee, through his main character, insinuates that the construction of the human as the egoistic thinker is less natural and more mechanical than Descartes’ animal-machines.

This is in sync with Derrida. Deconstruction concentrates heavily on uncovering paradoxes within texts and contexts and Descartes’ is riddled with them. In the second chapter of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida takes Descartes to task for paradoxically denying the Self as an animal and enforcing the distinction upon animals who are also denied animal being.

Descartes' line of questioning begins, argues Derrida, when he took Aristotle's original definition of man as rational animal, the *zōon logon eschon*, and suspended it (Derrida, 2008: 71). By eliminating all that is not indubitable, Descartes is basically embarking on a questionable process of economizing the truth. Derrida opens with this classic quotation of Descartes' in *Meditations*, which he calls 'Descartes' fiction':

“What then did I formerly think I was? A man. But what is a man? Shall I say ‘a rational animal’? No; for then I would have to inquire what an animal is, what rationality is, and in this way one question would lead me down the slope of other harder ones, and I wouldn't like to waste the little time and leisure that remains to me by using it to disentangle subtleties of this kind.”
(Descartes, 1884: 17)

Thus, in order to save “the little time” remaining to him and that it is too hard to analyse, Descartes dumps the entire question of the animal and gives it no further constructive thought. He also suspends everything animalistic in humans, including his own living body, as he can predict the resulting problems associated with humans-as-animals. He, therefore, objectifies the human body along with everything else corporeal. This is the core of Descartes reductionist thesis and has since become the kernel of traditional philosophical methodology.

Descartes sets about rejecting everything that he does not consider indubitable, which is almost everything, until he arrives at the heart of the matter. According to Descartes the one thing that remains indubitable is the only non-detachable thing to “I am”, which is the activity of doubting. (Note: present tense. As soon as I cease to think I cease to be). This is the full *presence of the subject* – a lone(ly) reduced, essential entity that has been detached and stripped of life. In other words, the doubting subject is not the ebullience of

life but as Coetzee said “a pea rattling around in a shell”; or, as Derrida playfully writes showing up the nonsensical structure of Descartes line of enquiry, “the animal that I am not” (Derrida, 2008: 73). Heidegger too (following Nietzsche and Husserl) was critical of Descartes’ metaphysical abstractions of the human self and spent his entire philosophical *metier* challenging these deeply entrenched Cartesian structures.

Derrida also attacks Descartes, and others, on their claim that reason is an anthropocentric distinction that makes humans ethically superior to (other) animals. As mentioned, the ability to reason has long been regarded as the primary quality that sets humans apart from all other animals, and many have made the category mistake of applying this imperturbable quality to the field of ethics. Reason, it was (and often still is) thought, is what allows us to determine what is right or wrong, which also dictates our actions in accordance. It was the faculty of human reason, thought Kant following Descartes, that gave humans a moral compass but also, since only humans alone possessed reason only could benefit from ethical conduct. (Other) animals, he maintained, were outside the ethical realm due to their rational inability, although he did say it was wrong to be cruel to them, but only inasmuch as it reflected badly on the ethical conduct of humans (Kant, 2004: paras 16-17).

Yet, even before Derrida, it has been widely demonstrated that reason as the only faculty for providing any sort of ethic is unworkable. Many other philosophers⁶ have, over the ages, discovered the metonymical and dispassionate limitations of relying on reason alone, something I have already noted in the previous chapter (and will do so again in the next), but reason as a strictly ethical pursuit can also become a violently dangerous and indifferent tool. Contrary to his two contemporaries, Hume thought reason was ethically ‘inert’ (Hume, 1970: III 27) and he had a valid point.

⁶ Notably David Hume and Jonathan Swift as we shall see shortly, as well as Friedrich Nietzsche and more recently Jean-Francois Lyotard who said “Reason is itself fiction, because it is a human linguistic construct, not a transcendent entity.” (Lyotard from Robinson & Garratt, 1996: 111)

The Nazi doctors were clinically rational men, yet they could systematically exterminate millions of humans without a glimmer of remorse and a sense of wrongdoing. This follows Jonathan Swift's famous eighteenth century satire called *A Modest Proposal* (1729) where Swift adopts the persona of a concerned, clinically rational economist who suggests that in order to better combat poverty and overpopulation of Ireland, the children of the poor be sold as food to the wealthy. The result, he argues, will not only reduce the population, but the income of the poor will increase significantly and raise the general standard of living. In developing his thesis, Swift provides abundant detail, projecting the costs of child rearing (which will be recuperated after the child is sold), estimating the portion of the population affected, and even providing specific quantity regarding the number of servings a child might provide. He suggests that the meat of the children of Ireland would be considered a delicacy to both the English and to Irish landowners, and would therefore be highly sought after for feasts and special occasions (Swift, 1729).

Throughout, Swift's satire relies on the persona of the economist, an ostensibly well-meaning visionary whose sympathy for the poor leads through the *faculty of reason* to suggest a remedy of murderous cruelty. His arguments, rationally presented, support a profoundly irrational proposition, and their appalling callousness radically undermine their benevolent intent. The point is that reason as a source of ethical wisdom is dangerously fallacious and the post-war era as a result of the Holocaust saw a radical shift away from any rational approach toward what has become known in very broad terms as post-modernist procedures in ethics⁷.

⁷ Jean-Francois Lyotard, as mentioned, was joined by the likes of Theodor Adorno, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari (among many others) in decidedly shifting away from reason-based ethics in most of their writings; and especially, as we shall see in the following chapters, the seminal works of Emmanuel Levinas, whose comments on (other) animals Derrida deconstructs and reconstructs to good effect toward a workable animal ethic.

Deconstruction, of course, is at the forefront of post-modernist condemnation of reason in ethics. It first and foremost condemns the worship of 'reason' as being unable to uncover truth, and that it is tied to the contextual and vacillating structure of language in the form of metaphors and metonymies. Reason, ultimately, is the cause of much self-inflicted and unnecessary human violence against each other and especially (other) animals.

2.1.2 Heidegger's 'being-poor-in-the-world'

It was, intriguingly, Martin Heidegger, despite his anti-Cartesian leanings and his challenge of the primacy of reason, who stated that the being of humans (being-in-the-world) and the well being of (other) animals (being-deprived) are distinct from one another (Heidegger, 2004: 17). It seems, like Descartes, Heidegger thinks (other) animals are deprived of a being that only humans enjoy. This marks a gap, a rupture, and the abyss that Heidegger believed can never be traversed. This, paradoxically, is the same man who is said to have the greatest influence on Derrida and the foundational aspects of deconstruction.

As a result, the anthropocentric attitude toward (other) animals in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger is of much more concern to a deconstructionist than that of Descartes, primarily because the latter philosopher is unashamedly anthropocentric while the former ought to be demonstrably against anthropocentrism. The paradox is that Heidegger adopts a phenomenological, not an essentialist, approach to the question of the animal, and was the first philosopher to try understand non-human animals' relation in the world based on *their* perspective. This was a seminal step in the subject of (other) animals in philosophy and remarkably progressive for his time. This radical step, Matthew Calarco insists, was the first real turning point with regards to the animal question in philosophy (Calarco, 2008: 28). It is of great wonder therefore that Heidegger did not follow through what seems like an obvious line of analysis, namely, to include (other) animals in his notion of *Dasein*.

Without getting into too much detail about Heidegger's general philosophy, I will briefly state, however, that Heidegger took traditional philosophy to task for its reliance on dogmatic metaphysics especially in defining humans in the Aristotelian *zoōn logon eschon* tradition. In other words, for Heidegger, there can be no Cartesian abstraction, no cogito that is metaphysically separate from the world. The problem, as Heidegger saw it, was that philosophers were talking about the nature of being without analysing 'being' itself. Heidegger regarded humans existing as real entities on a non-metaphysical basis and human essence as existence or 'being-in-the-world', meaning 'being' is about engaging being, experiencing being, accessing being and confronting being as modes of existence in the environment. This is what Heidegger called *Dasein* – literally *being-there* (Heidegger, 1962: 6).

It is an open phenomenological concept like Derrida's 'I am (following)' that resists a fixed English translation or definition. One would think that this phenomenological sort of 'being' includes all things that live, since, as J.M. Coetzee has Elizabeth Costello remark, the overriding sameness of all living beings comes from 'being-alive-in-the-world' (Coetzee, 2003: 78). Curiously though, Heidegger insisted that *Dasein* only applies to humans (Heidegger, 2004: 17).

Calarco argues that "despite Heidegger's profound analysis of the limits metaphysical humanism, he offers next to nothing in the way of critique concerning the metaphysical tradition's *drawing* of the oppositional line between human beings and animals; his final concern, rather, is with the way in which this oppositional line has been *determined* and understood" (Calarco, 2008: 53). During his lecture courses of 1929-30, which have been compiled as the *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1938), Heidegger devotes some time to the question of the animal. There is an excerpt in it posthumously entitled *The Animal is Poor in World* (the title was added from the original text by Atterton and

Calarco when they included it in their book *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*, 2004).

In his notes, Heidegger asks the familiar philosophical question: “Does the animal too have world ... in the same way as man, or in some other way?” (Heidegger, 2004: 17) By ‘world’ Heidegger means accessibility to other beings and the environment. It seems as if Heidegger is about to embark on a thorough examination of the animal question, yet, for some reason while on the brink of including (other) animals within his concept of *Dasein* and overturning the dominant anthropocentric attitude on the subject of animals, he steps back and turns away from his task.

Worse, Heidegger falls right back into dogged anthropocentrism. Ultimately, Heidegger resolutely reinforces the otherness of non-human animals by making a clear distinction between the human relation to the world and the animal relation to the world. Following his opening question in *The Animal is Poor in World* Heidegger asks:

“How do we grasp this otherness? And what about the stone? However crudely, certain distinctions in the following three theses: [1.] the stone (material object) is *worldless*; [2.] the animal is *poor in the world*; [3.] man is *world forming ...*” (Heidegger, 2004: 17)

By ‘being-poor-in-the-world’ Heidegger insists he is not making a hierarchical value judgement compared with humans’ ‘world-forming’. The animal is poor in its own terms of being-deprived-of-world, not ‘poor’ compared to humans’ ‘rich’ (Heidegger, 2004: 18).

To explain his thesis Heidegger goes on to ask if one could put oneself into the mind of a lizard basking on a stone in the sun. The inanimate stone, it is obvious, has no concept of the world because it has no 'being', but the lizard, a living thing, has 'being' as it has a world-relation. The lizard has access to the world, like a warm stone to seek out and lie on (Heidegger, 2004:17). This responsiveness to the environment by the lizard, and its accessibility to various objects and other beings means, in Heideggerian terminology, it 'has world'. But the fundamental question for Heidegger, echoing that ontological question by all philosophers throughout the ages, is: does the lizard have world in the same way a human does? Human beings have the same access to warm stones and responsiveness to other beings too. There ought not to be a difference in their modes of being.

This is the point where Heidegger could have overhauled the traditional anthropocentric perspective on (other) animals by including them in the same mode of being as humans. The result of such an analysis would be that such existence ought to be both a human and an (other) animal condition. Therefore, there should, according to Heidegger's broad development of *Dasein*, be no reason why not to include (other) animals. Yet Heidegger holds back. For him there was in fact an entrenched and abyssal difference between the modes of being between (other) animals and humans. The lizard, he maintains, is incapable of making a relational connection between the warm stone and the sun that warms it. When a human lies out in the sun on a rock, the sun is accessible to her/him *as* the sun, and the rock is accessible to her/him *as* the rock. Lizards cannot understand these entities *as such*. Non-human animals respond to sets of relationships, but they are specific to survival or instinctual relationships like food, predators or mating partners. They cannot respond or understand to entities *as* entities. In other words, they cannot grasp the ontological *differences* between entities. The lizard, says Heidegger, is poor-in-the-world because it can access other beings but not other beings *as such* (Heidegger, 2004: 17-18).

This is the point of much frustration for analysts like Derrida, who believe Heidegger somehow lost the nerve to follow through what was a perfectly natural course to follow. The obvious question is why does Heidegger step back away from what logically was a move toward a radically more inclusive philosophy on animals. Matthew Calarco believes the main reason was that Heidegger simply never considered the being of (other) animals a pressing task, (Calarco, 2008: 29) and all of Heidegger's references to (other) animals were made only with an eye toward developing and understanding the essence of human *Dasein*. This, argues Calarco, is the chief limitation of Heidegger's refusal to follow through.

Yet Derrida recognizes the usual fundamental flaw in Heidegger's discourse: an inability to let go of the latent anthropocentric bias in his language. Derrida believes that despite Heidegger's *destruktion* of traditional philosophy "Heidegger's discourse is still Cartesian" (Derrida, 2008: 146). Heidegger, like Descartes *et al.*, remains steadfast in insisting on making a distinction between world-forming humans and impoverished (other) animals. These distinctions are no different from comparing humans as rational (non) animals to those that are not. Derrida argues it is crucial that 'one has to get out of this opposition, which is an absolutely structuring operation ... between the 'as such' and the 'not as such' (Derrida, 2008: 156). The insistence of Heidegger to maintain the rigid binary between (other) animals and humans is paradoxical, even though he claims that there are no hierarchical differences between the 'poor-in-the-world' and the 'world-forming' animals, which according to Heidegger's choice of words, there patently are.

Derrida chides Heidegger severely for this since how can one state that 'world-forming' versus 'being-poor-in-the-world' is not hierarchical? (Derrida, 2008: 24-5) Surely there is difference in the level or rank between 'a have' and 'a have not'; or between a being that *ek-sists*⁸ and a being that just exists? From a deconstruction point of view, whether some

⁸ According to Heidegger *Ek-sistence* is a manner of being that is proper only to the human being, whereas 'existence' is true only for (other) animals. The human being is *ek-*

animals have being ‘as such’ or ‘not as such’ is beside the point. To continue to separate humans from all other animals by dogmatically pointing out differences or uniquely human properties remains an area of much annoyance for Derrida, especially when it comes from one of his most revered philosophers and from a philosopher who, in all other aspects of his work, steadfastly denied the Cartesian dualistic concept of oppositions. As mentioned, I have specifically chosen these two philosophers as case studies largely because each comes from a radically different position but they connect in their anthropocentric outlook. Descartes represents the quintessential stance on dogmatic philosophical tradition of hierarchical binaries, while Heidegger, even though he does his best to destroy the tradition that Descartes is the chief representative of, still remains dogmatically anthropocentric as well as dualistic.

What I am highlighting, which is Derrida’s main intention, is that no matter how progressive a philosopher may appear to be in his approach and method, the result is more often than not a thesis that is always directed from a dogmatic anthropocentric and dualistic position. Derrida proved this tendency with a number of other prominent philosophers in the second chapter of *The Animal that Therefore I am*. Kant, although not as harsh as Descartes in referring to (other) animals, was criticised for being unashamedly anthropocentric⁹ but the bulk of criticism was levelled at Levinas¹⁰ who like his

sistence, a standing outside of itself into the truth of being (Heidegger, 1998: 180-181/266). According to Heidegger, the fundamental orientation of the human being is not toward itself and its narrow everyday concerns, but toward something beyond itself – an open possibility.

⁹ In the *Lectures on Ethics* Kant makes it clear that we only have indirect duties to (other) animals. We do not have direct duties toward them, only insofar as our treatment of them can affect our duties to other humans. This quote of his best sums up Kant’s anthropocentric position:

“If a man shoots his dog because the animal is no longer capable of service, he does not fail in his duty to the dog, for the dog cannot judge, but his act is inhuman and damages in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind. If he is not to stifle his human feelings, he must practice kindness towards animals, for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men.” (Kant, 1997: 240)

¹⁰ We will return to Levinas’ anthropocentrism in the following chapters.

contemporary, Heidegger, could have easily progressed from a non-anthropocentric point. The third chapter of *The Animal that Therefore I Am* is dedicated to Lacan, and again Derrida unravels the anthropocentric thread within his work. Heidegger formed the bulk of the last chapter of *The Animal that Therefore I Am*. Both Levinas and Lacan will feature later in the discussion of this thesis because while they are dogmatically anthropocentric, they, like Heidegger, do however point in the direction of a genuine all-inclusive animal ethic, important themes that Derrida will adopt and build upon in his reconstruction of an animal ethic. What is essential, though, from a reading of all these philosophers, whether Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, Levinas and Lacan, is that if a genuine ethic of the animal is to be structured, anthropocentrism and hierarchical dualism, above all else, must be eradicated from the text.

2.2 Logocentrism

At the lip of the insuperable divide, where Heidegger lost his nerve, Derrida leaps across and in so doing begins to analyse the question of the animal from a non-anthropocentric position. The method of blending the human-animal divide is another ‘hare’ that Derrida starts, and as with the anthropocentric and dualistic hares, the logocentric hare is perhaps his prize one. The task, as Derrida sees it and which Heidegger initially began, is to switch the point of view of enquiry from the human perspective to the (other) animal. This switch separates deconstruction from the dogma of the two philosophers just mentioned. The ‘I am (following)’ juxtaposition in the title is, as mentioned beforehand, structured to mimic Descartes’ ontological ‘who I am’ with a more phenomenological, non-static ‘who I follow’ or ‘who I am following’ implying a permanent connection or bond with an other.

The reversal of perspectives from subject to other is an epiphany that occurs to Derrida “at the moment when, caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, for example the eyes of a cat.” (Derrida, 2008: 3-4) The cat, in question, Derrida is at pains to stress, is a

specific cat, not a figurative one, nor the singular or plural of the word ‘cat’. It is Derrida’s pet cat, a female cat (the gender and the particularity of the cat is immensely significant as we shall see later on) and, from what I saw in the documentary entitled *Derrida*, she’s a Siamese (which is not significant at all). Derrida holds that his cat:

“... does not appear here to represent, like an ambassador, the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline, from La Fontaine to Tieck (author of “Puss in Boots”), from Baudelaire to Rilke, Buber, and many others. If I say “it is a real cat” that sees me naked, this in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity. When it responds in its name (whatever “respond” means, and that will be our question), it doesn’t do so as the exemplar of a species called “cat”, even less so of an “animal genus or kingdom. It is true that I identify it as a male or female cat. But even before that identification, it comes to me as *this* irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, into this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked. Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized [*rebelle à tout concept*].” (Derrida, 2008: 9)

The insistence of the ‘unsubstitutable singularity’ of his pet cat over its exemplar as a species, genus or kingdom, Derrida is tracing who the absolute other is. It is clear the other, “*this* irreplaceable living being” is something that, like Heidegger’s humanist notion of ‘*ek-sistence*’, refuses conceptualization; or as Derrida says this ‘other’ rebels against the concept (*rebelle à tout concept*).

The moment Derrida is caught by the gaze of his cat, any identification of ‘other’, and himself as ‘subject’, is suspended. A response occurs within Derrida that evokes an expression “*j’ai du mal*” (I have evil) that translator David Wills describes as receiving a

curse. Derrida is stating that the cat steadfastly gazing at him is like a curse or a spell being cast upon him, and he had a difficult time overcoming it (Derrida, 2008: 4). The ‘curse’ is essentially a psychological awareness of Derrida’s own vulnerability because he suddenly places himself in the mind’s eye of his cat. He is viewing himself from his cat’s perspective. The cat is acting like a mirror. This mirrored vulnerability has a specific reference to psychoanalytic ideas of Sartre, Freud and especially French linguistic-psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan.

Lacan was a disciple of Freud, Heidegger and Saussure, and broadly believed that the unconscious mind was structured like language through signs and signifiers. The reference Derrida is making with his cat is to Lacan’s early psychoanalytic study on human infants and chimpanzees using mirrors (Lacan from Macey, 2000: 154). Lacan called it the awareness of ‘The Gaze’ (*Le Regard*), which he borrowed from Sartre’s version of phenomenology, notably the aspect of ‘Being-for-Others’ (Sartre from Macey, 2000: 154). Briefly, Sartre was exploring the mode of being when one becomes the object of another’s consciousness. When a subject becomes aware that they are being looked at by an ‘other’, the subject switches to object. As the ‘other’, the subject feels alienated and no longer in control of the situation because the perspective is not theirs to control. Being the object of the other’s gaze is often accompanied by a feeling of shame or vulnerability (Macey, 2000: 154). Lacan takes Sartre’s notion of Being-for-Others and applied it to psychoanalysis. The gaze in Lacan’s sense becomes the *property* of the ‘other’, so the subject looks at the ‘other’ and realizes that the ‘other’ looks back from outside the field of the subject’s perception (Lacan from Macey, 2000: 154). The immense significance of this is that it blurs the Cartesian concept of who is ‘subject’ and who is ‘other’ (which is why I keep putting the word ‘other’ in inverted commas). The gaze from the perspective of the ‘other’ acts as a mirror in that the subject looks at themselves looking back. This view has subsequently become an important element in feminist discussion of how women are constructed as objects of the male gaze in society (Macey, 2000: 154-55).

It is also something that Derrida uses, except in this case the ‘other’ is a non-human animal, not an ‘other’ human. Derrida’s ordinary little cat, because he has shifted the perspective from himself to his cat, suddenly makes Derrida, in Sartre’s sense, feel a deep sense of shame, which stems from the dim consciousness that he has been ‘caught out’ by his pet’s insistent and ‘disapproving’ gaze, not only at that he has been discovered as an animal too, but also at his masculine sexuality. The embarrassment and shame is both a latent Nietzschean/Freudian humiliation at one’s sexuality as human and as a man. The gaze of his cat, one that seems to question uniquely from the perspective of the ‘other’ (animal), causes Derrida to conduct a brilliant re-enquiry into the entire animal question in philosophy.

As a result, he covers some serious new ground in the field of ethics. Derrida realises that what links most philosophers, and psychoanalysts like Lacan, is that whenever they discussed the subject/other concept it was never with non-human animals in mind. It took the gaze of his cat to reconfigure both Lacan and Sartre:

“The animal is there before me, there next to me, there in front of me - I who am (following) after it. And also, therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me. It surrounds me. And from the vantage point of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also – something that philosophy perhaps forgets, perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself – it can look at me. It has a point of view regarding me. The point of view of an absolute other ...” (Derrida, 2008: 11)

Différance comes into play once again, in that the concept of the human subject as distinct from an animal ‘other’ has been muddled and thoroughly deferred. The subject no longer occupies a separate, higher ground as the *source of knowledge*. As we regard Derrida standing naked and ashamed before his cat, the object of knowledge, shifts from

him as subject to his cat who, in turn, reflects it back, altered and re-arranged to the bewildered Derrida. This is the critical phase of deconstruction, which consistently seeks to occupy the space between the binaries. It is this constant deferral that completely undoes the logocentric forces at play between humans and (other) animals.

2.2.1 The Disavowal

Derrida immediately realises looking from the cat's re-arranging point of view that humans have been deceitful in hiding their animality. As with Descartes, humans have been intent on pretending they are not animals. Following Nietzsche, who had similar ideas on this subject, Derrida shows that an obvious instance of this deceit is the wearing of clothing. This is made glaring obvious by the shame Derrida experiences when seen naked by his pet cat: "Ashamed of being naked as a beast." (Derrida, 2008: 4) Clothing is another of those properties uniquely human, which hides the fact that humans are animals. *And* it hides their sexuality (this is another 'hare' to be tracked shortly).

Clothing allows human animals to pose as something non-animal to all other animals. What makes (other) animals unique from humans, Derrida writes, is their perpetual nakedness, a nakedness that such animals are unconscious of. Consequently, because they are "naked without knowing it, (other) animals would not be, in truth, naked ... There is no nudity in nature." (Derrida, 2008: 5) Humans are distinguished from (other) animals because they alone are aware of their own nakedness and are, in essence, ashamed of it, of their impropriety, of being discovered of their deceit, of their disavowal. Here, says Derrida, is the beginning of the rot of separation, a *contretemps* – the out of sync between humans and (other) animals. What follows is that humans, knowing themselves to be ashamed of their own nakedness, develop an opinion of themselves as 'subjects' (Derrida, 2008: 5).

All (other) animals, on the other hand, because they are not conscious of their own nudity, have no knowledge of modesty and ergo immodesty. They are not conscious of themselves as *selves*. There is no 'I' among animals, and therefore they do not regard themselves as 'subjects' in the way humans do. I will be returning back to the question of subjectivity later on but first I want to tackle another form of deceit or disavowal that human animals have been exercising over the (other) animals.

From a theological perspective this disavowal is deeply historical and cultural. It can be traced to the Book of Genesis since the time when the human animal walked about naked without shame. This was the moment that humans followed (came after) the other animals who were already living in the world. However, the animals were only named *after* the arrival of humans. They did not name themselves or each other. The last animal, the only animal blessed with the faculty of 'language', named them. This notion of humans following, referring back to his title, says Derrida "determines a sequence, a consequence, a persecution." (Derrida, 2008: 17)

Here Derrida introduces an even more original, more powerful form of disavowal than clothing, one that is not just intended to hide the animality of humans, but also something to be used as a weapon to subjugate all the (other) animals, namely, the act of naming. This is a process initiated by the human animal, the latecomer, and the last animal, and authorized by an omnipotent god, who, tellingly, replicated the last animal in his own image. What Derrida interprets is the Islamic-Judeo-Christian perception that the human animal alone is awarded the gift of logos while all other animals are deprived of it. This means that humans, the world's only *autobiographical* animals, have the ability to rewrite their own, as well as all the other animals' history, and to inscribe through a structured language a power, a dominance over them as well as a deceit and a disavowal of their own animality. Thus, the bottomless gaze of his pet Siamese cat reveals "the abyssal limit of the human ... from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself." (Derrida, 2008: 12)

It is not only within Islamic-Judeo-Christian texts. The same kind of thing is underwritten in Greek Mythology too. Derrida is reminded of the myth of the god Prometheus who steals the special fire to give to humankind because the forgetful god Epimetheus, whose task was to equip all animals with the necessary appendages to survive in a harsh world, mistakenly leaves humankind naked and vulnerable. Derrida cites that:

“... it is paradoxically on the basis of a fault or failing of man that [he] will be made a subject who is master of nature and of the animal. From the pit of that lack, an eminent lack, a quite different lack from that he assigns to the animal, man installs or claims in a single stroke his property ... and his superiority over what is called animal life. This latter superiority, infinite and par excellence, has as its property the fact of being at one and the same time unconditional and sacrificial.” (Derrida, 2008: 20)

With that timeless abyssal gaze Derrida construes what his cat is saying “in its own way, what it might be suggesting of simply signifying in a language of mute traces, that is to say without words.” (Derrida, 2008: 18)

“Who was born first, before the names? Which one saw the other come to this place so long ago? Who will have been the first occupant, and therefore the master? Who the subject? Who has remained the despot, for so long now?” (Derrida, 2008: 18)

2.2.2. “The animal. What a word!” (Derrida, 2008: 23)

“It is a question of words, therefore. For I am not sure that what I am going to set about saying to you amounts to anything more ambitious than an exploration of language in the course of a sort of chimerical experimental exercise, or the testing of a testimony.” (Derrida, 2008: 33)

Nouns and verbs

The rise to ascendancy of the last and decidedly puniest of animals, as I have expounded, owes a lot to humankind’s reliance on logocentrism, something that has decidedly influenced the prevalent anthropocentric bias. The word ‘animal’ is tremendously problematic, as it lumps all animals *other* than humans into a single class, even though humans are animals too. “I avoid speaking about animals in general”, said Derrida, “for me there are not ‘animals’. When one says ‘animals’, one has already started to not understand anything and has started to close the animal into a cage.” (Derrida, 2008: YouTube)

I have demonstrated how Descartes excuses humankind from the realm of animals and since then, in philosophy as well as generally, ‘animals’ have come to represent all beings that are *not* human. As I shall demonstrate later Derrida shows how language can manipulate our thoughts. The word ‘animal’ is particularly guilty of forming our anthropocentric bias toward (other) animals. Let us see how this works:

The original Latin word, ‘*animalus*’ means ‘having breath’. In other words, humans are a part of this description because they also breathe but just having a glance at my

computer's dictionary (Apple Dictionary, Version 2.2.1, 2014) I will show how the word has been misused:

“animal | ' anəməl|

noun

a living organism that feeds on organic matter, typically having a specialized sense organs and nervous system and able to respond rapidly to stimuli : animals such as spiders | wild animals adapt badly to a caged life | humans are the only animals who weep.

- any such living organism other than a human being: *are humans superior to animals, or just different?*
- a mammal, as opposed to a bird, reptile, fish, or insect : the snowfall seemed to have chased all birds, animals, and men indoors.
- a person whose behavior is regarded as devoid of human attributes or civilizing influences, esp. someone who is very cruel, violent, or repulsive : those men have to be animals—what they did to that boy was savage.”

Notice the amount of times humans or human attributes are excluded from the modern daily definition of the noun. The online thesaurus is no better (Apple Thesaurus, Version 2.2.1, 2014). Pay particular attention to number 2:

“animal

noun

1 endangered animals creature, beast, living thing; informal critter, beastie; (animals) wildlife, fauna.

2 the man was an animal brute, beast, monster, devil, demon, fiend; informal swine, bastard, pig.”

So much for the noun but as an adjective too the thesaurus describes animals as: “Carnal, fleshly, bodily, physical; brutish, beastly, bestial, unrefined, uncultured, coarse. (Apple, thesaurus)

As for myself, in writing this paper, I am wary of referring to (other) animals as non-humans by using the word ‘animal’. To rectify the potential error, where I am aware of it, I try to describe non-human animals as the ‘(other) animal’. The bracketing, which is a common deconstructive tool, admits the ‘otherness’ implicit in the use of the word ‘animal’ as well as referring to the fact that humans are also animals. Derrida too tries as often as possible to highlight this common mistake throughout the text of *The Animal that Therefore I am*. For example, a sentence he may use goes like this: “Here I am under the naked gaze of what they call ‘animal’” (Derrida, 2008: 13). The word ‘animal’ is placed in inverted commas. It means that Derrida is marking his dislike for the word and the word ‘they’ is the common anthropocentric/logocentric bias in humanity, but excluding him. The explicit hint is that the use of the word ‘animal’ needs revising. Further on in the text Derrida gets even more explicit:

“Animal is a word that men have given themselves the right to give. These humans are found giving it to themselves, this word, but as if they had received it as an inheritance. They are giving themselves the word in order to corral a large number of living beings within a single concept: “The Animal”, they say.” (Derrida, 2008: 32)

Humans are animals too and at heart most of us (even Descartes) realize this but we have somehow come to utilize the word ‘animal’ whenever we refer to non-humans. Here’s another basic common example: What is a zoo? The dictionary answer is “an establishment that maintains a collection of animals.” (Apple dictionary, 2014) Are we referring to human animals in that collection? Of course not, that would be ridiculous, so why does the word ‘animal’ in this definition of a zoo cause us to think immediately of any animal *except* human animals? Unless, of course, one is being cynical.¹¹

Derrida takes exception to this universal nature of the word ‘animal’ because it reinforces our anthropocentric attitude that humans alone belong to one class and all other animals from chimpanzees to microbes belong to another. We shall see in the final chapter how Derrida attempts to deal properly with the word ‘animal’. ‘Zoo’ itself is an equally biased word. It is derived from the Greek ‘*zōon*’ meaning ‘animal’. Again, this word in all its forms from ‘zoology’ to ‘zoogenic’ always only refers to non-human animals.

Throughout the text Derrida pokes fun at our misuse of animal-relating words. When he accuses himself or someone else of acting inappropriately or making a stupid statement he says he or that someone has committed a ‘*bêtise*’, which the translator says means the same as ‘asinine’, an adjective denoting extreme stupidity and originating from Latin ‘*asinus*’ meaning ‘ass’ or ‘donkey’ (Derrida, 2008: 162). In French, the word for an animal or beast is ‘*bêtes*’ and ‘*bêtise*’ is being ‘stupid like an animal’. The word ‘beast’ in English, when used on humans has a variety of negative connotations. Being ‘beastly’ or committing beastly acts have undertones of being unkind, malicious, cruel, unrestrained or possessing a specified characteristic to an intense and unpleasant degree. Throughout these negative undertones the subliminal reference is to everything that is non-human.

¹¹ Such philosophical cynicism is found in the work of German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, who in his two volume critique of cynical reason (*Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, 1983), refers to humans living in a park (read ‘zoo’) – to evoke a sense of ethics and government controlling humans like (other) animals. (In this Sloterdijk seems to reinforce, instead of deconstruct, the conventional use of ‘animal’.)

Human-distinctive actions and being therefore place humans in a hierarchical ethical rank above the lower actions and being of other animals, and as Derrida correctly points out it is the skewed use of human language – logocentrism – that cements this view (Derrida, 2008: 18).

Take the noun ‘herd’ as another example, which we use commonly to describe a group of mammals, normally herbivores. ‘Herd’ insinuates that all herbivores, when in a group, act or move together without much planning or coordination. An individual within a herd behaves according to the majority of the other members of the herd through imitation, or because they are responding to the same external circumstances, like migration or protection in numbers. The implication is that a group of herbivores lacks the mental skill to be independent and display coordinated intelligence of their own. This may be true of some antelope species, but certainly not all species, so to lump animals like elephants with those that lack mental skill to act independently is absurd.

Groups of humans are not referred to as herds because logocentrism has ensured their individual subjectivity. That is unless one wishes to be derogatory, because humans in a group are supposedly better coordinated with independent and intelligent individual roles. “She endured herds of tourists on Table Mountain” and “I am not of the common herd” are derogatory statements toward herd-like behaviour. The usage implies that large groups of tourists following a guide and a planned itinerary are like supposedly mindless bovines while the independent traveller is not.

The verb, ‘to herd’, takes the negative implication toward animals further, as it refers to animal gatherings being controlled under human directive and explicitly means that animals are similar to the mindless automata that Descartes described and are therefore incapable of managing their own movement. By using ‘herd’ to describe cows, horses, goats, buffalo, antelope, and even elephants, the speaker is boxing all these social

herbivores into one class or category, a category that is always inferior in status to humans. Most people who use the word, whether as a noun or verb, may not intend to be supercilious, but the word is patronizing toward those animals as it detracts from their individual behaviour and lumps them all together in a defamatory way – that of unplanned, mindless, or instinctual grouping. The archaic grouping word or collective noun for elephants is a ‘parade’, a human reference, as opposed to the animal reference of ‘herd’. This is a far more constructive word for describing elephants because it *includes* elephants in the human category. A parade of elephants conjures up images of proud, important, self-confident beings. In contrast to ‘herd’, ‘parade’ also has the effect of moving elephants up a few notches in our minds as an intelligent, highly coordinated group.

Finally, following the Cartesian description of animals, we often refer to domestic cows and sheep as ‘livestock’. Cattle are therefore regarded as commodities with this usage and because we speak of them as such and not as sentient beings, we therefore treat them like machines that convert fodder into flesh. As Peter Singer argues, the higher the ratio of conversion, the more profit and the more they get treated as commodities (Singer, 2005: 81). Terms like this only emphasise that we are no different in our attitude toward animals than Descartes’ low view that animals were nothing more than machines and are accordingly valued as such.

Collective Nouns

Carnivores as a class fare better than herbivores when it comes to general collective descriptions. However, our common usage of certain words still relegates carnivores to a class below that of humans. For example, unless you are a lion, most carnivores form ‘packs.’ While a ‘pack of hyena’ is not as vacuous as ‘herd’ it is still debilitating as a collective description. ‘Pack’ has connotations of a group of relentless hunters, which

carnivores can be, but the collective noun fails to distinguish one species of carnivore from another, and lumps them into a grouping that we humans can identify as separate from ourselves, a group that kills and maims without any regard for the lives of their victims. By using the term a ‘pack of wolves’ the thought of blood-thirsty predators single-mindedly on the prowl for prey immediately crosses our minds. Humans, at least, can choose to refrain from such ‘beastly’ acts.

A better term would be some of the more archaic collective nouns. For example, the original collective noun for hyena is ‘clan’. This has more of a humane element to it and is a far more inclusive and appropriate term than ‘pack’. Hyena gatherings are matriarchal, forming close-knit, interrelated families where females bond to protect and raise their young. This is a description we tend to use exclusively for human families. ‘Clan’ is a word that is Scottish Gaelic in origin, meaning ‘children’. Unfortunately for hyenas we no longer use this term to describe them and as a result our regard of the canine is largely negative.

Archaic collective nouns, therefore, can also be derogatory toward (other) animals, not so much by their inclusive nature but in their scant and rare usage compared with humans. To begin with: what is the collective noun for humans? There isn’t a general one. Instead, there are a vast multitude of specific collective nouns for our species, which depends entirely on which sub-group of humans one is describing. I can think of at least two-dozen immediately but in truth there are probably hundreds. Here are some examples:

A faculty of academics

A troupe of acrobats

A cast of actors/players (company, cry)

A bench of aldermen

A conflagration of arsonists

A troupe of artistes
A team of athletes
A tabernacle of bakers
A babble of barbers
A promise of barmen
A thought of barons
A squad of beaters
A bevy of beauties
A bench of bishops (psalter)
A blush of boys
A troop of boy scouts
A feast of brewers
A pack of Brownies
A shuffle of bureaucrats
A goring of butchers
A sneer of butlers

... and that's just the first two letters of the alphabet regarding groups of people. (Other) animals when given a collective noun are reduced having to just one, sometimes two, three is rare and five or more is almost unheard of. Here are some (other) animal examples...

A pride of lions
A tower of giraffe
A crash of rhino
A parliament of owls
A shrewedness of monkeys

A dazzle of zebras

... to name a few. Worse, even though these collective nouns add a little to the phenomenological nature of describing (other) animals, most of these collective nouns are so archaic that they are almost entirely unknown to all but a tiny fraction of people. I would bet that most people would not know that a group of cheetahs is called a 'coalition'. A coalition to describe cheetahs adds to the prestige of an animal by describing it in more detail. The noun 'coalition' means an alliance, usually temporary, which is formed for a combined action. This neatly explains a unique behavioural tendency of some cheetahs, who, it must be said, rarely form groups. Yet, sometimes, and usually as siblings, they form coalitions to strengthen their territory and covet females from other cheetahs.

So even though (other) animals are reduced to at best five collective nouns per species those collective nouns are hardly ever used in practice. The reductionism and simplification of language, therefore, detracts both from an (other) animal's individuality and collective character. By reducing (other) animals to this degree the dominant hierarchy that humans enjoy is effectively maintained.

Proper nouns

Proper nouns for (other) animals are perhaps the most pejorative of all. 'Wild dog' is an unsuitable name for the species of dog in Africa. Admittedly they are dogs that are wild but since wolves, foxes, coyotes, and jackals are also wild members of the same family, *Canidae* (dogs), that name does not seem fit. 'African wild dog' is seemingly better but it still comes with baggage. Other common names for this animal are Cape hunting dog and painted or ornate dog. I prefer the latter two since 'Cape' is geographically limiting for a

species that once roamed most of sub-Saharan Africa. Given that these animals were shot out of existence in the Cape over a century ago where they were never in great numbers in any case, the name is doubly misleading. The name ‘hunting dog’ is also ill considered since all wild *Canidae* hunt. It is what all wild dogs do. ‘Painted dog’ (their species classification is *pictus*, Latin for ‘painted’) is far more respectable as these animals have a wonderful tri-colour pattern of tan, black, and white patches. Each individual is a separate work of art as each pattern is different. The only consistencies are the white tip of the tail and the black muzzle. It is extraordinary that even though they belong to the *Canidae* family, they have no close species relatives. Painted dogs are the only species in the genus *Lycaon*, which is Greek for ‘wolf’, a strange classification given that they don’t look like wolves at all. Incidentally, wolves fall under the genus *Canis*, which they share with dogs, jackals, and coyotes. So, wild dogs are classified as ‘wolves,’ while wolves are classified as ‘dogs.’ Sometimes I wonder if the Linnaean method of classification, a method introduced by Aristotle to categorize animals, is worth the trouble. Painted dogs were probably first classified according to the Linnaean method in the nineteenth century, while wolves must have been considerably earlier and the fact that both sit in each other’s so-called categories highlights the fault of such methods. It is better to refrain from the category methods altogether. Humans after all are hardly ever categorized in such a way. We are primates, which is true, but in general practice whoever considers us as just another species of ape? Derrida writes:

“There I am naked under the gaze of what they call ‘animal’, and a fictitious tableau is played out in my imagination, a sort of classification after Linnaeus, a taxonomy of the *point of view of animals*... there are texts signed by people who no doubt seen, observed, analysed, reflected on the animal, but who have never been *seen seen* [sic] by the animal.” (Derrida, 2008: 13)

The inappropriate common name ‘wild dog’ has also been responsible for their rapidly declining numbers. The use of ‘wild’ in the proper noun is another example where our

misuse of language has polarised our thoughts against nature. As Dr. Greg Rasmussen, a leading authority on painted dogs and director of the Painted Dog Conservation (PDC) project, argues “apart from being misleading, continued use of the name ‘wild dog’ does little more than fuel negative attitude and prejudice, which is detrimental to conservation efforts.” (Rasmussen, PDC website¹²) Just look at how we use the words “wild” and “dog.” Any dictionary or thesaurus will tell you that the words have negative connotations, such as untamed, fierce, savage, unrestrained, barbaric, and dangerous. Consider the meanings of these phrases: “You are a dog, Fred!”, “Dog eats dog”, “dogs of war”, and “slum-dog.” How about the use of ‘wild’? “She went into a wild frenzy”; “He was wildly drunk”; and “They just went wild with anger.”

Rasmussen argues that the name was given at a time when all predators were seen as a threat or a pest that were to be removed at all costs. Thanks to the name ‘wild dog’, this prejudice still remains today, particularly among stock farmers and local cattle herders. In Laurens van der Post’s *Lost World of the Kalahari, 2004* I came across this entry he and his party had with wild dogs, which highlights humans’ general attitude toward these beautiful animals:

“Soon after sunrise on the second day out from Maun I was startled to hear an outburst of rapid gunfire ahead of me. I came to Ben’s Land Rover abandoned in the track with three dead wild dogs close beside it. Some moments later Ben and John reappeared dragging two more dead dogs after them. It was an extraordinary demonstration of Ben’s quick reactions and accuracy as a rifleman: five shots and five of the swiftest animals in Africa and all five fatal. Ben’s sun-lined face had a benign expression on it. I believe of all the natural things he hated only the wild dogs for their ruthless ways with weaker animals.”(Van der Post, 2004: 122)

¹² www.painteddog.org

Ben was a cattle farmer from Ghanzi whose particular aversion for painted dogs stemmed from the occasional raids the packs made on his beloved herds, “their ruthless ways” being the main cause of his hatred. Van der Post himself remained ambivalent toward the random slaughter of the dogs, in spite of being a self-proclaimed nature lover and conservationist. It is amazing to read and listen to countless stories and incidents of our species’ hatred for these animals. Wolves have a similar reputation in the north, which is mainly based on myth and incorrect assertions.

Peter Singer, asserts that when it comes to humans’ regard for (other) animals, most humans are more than just anthropocentric, we are ‘speciesists’ much in the same way some humans are racists and chauvinists (Singer, 2005: 81). Painted dogs in particular fall foul of the general perception of how animals ought to behave. We dislike their brutal ways of surviving in the wild and compare it to our sedate civilized life. Both hyenas and painted dogs are, in our view, nefarious villains that lack moral or noble qualities. Take, for example, our popular culture, like the Disney animation of the *Lion King* (1994). The poor hyenas are, as usual, the evil villains. As David Hume maintained, we only attach value to something we identify with ourselves, or how we would like to be. So even though we may use inclusive terminology like the courage of a lion, painted dogs and hyenas endure a negative rap since they cruise about in gangs looking to commit heinous crimes and cackling and giggling like Macbeth’s witches all the while. Because we see our worst qualities as humans in hyenas and painted dogs, we view them accordingly in a negatively anthropomorphic manner, like we would a witch or bloodthirsty Mongol hordes.

Rasmussen has been championing the cause of Hwange’s painted dogs, the last natural painted dog stronghold. This is the Painted Dog Conservation’s (PDC) mission statement, posted on their website:

“Public perception is the driving force of extinction. PDC therefore combines direct action strategies with education and awareness programmes, creating an environment whereby the dogs can move in status from ‘perceived pests’ to ‘best loved animal’”

Whether education and awareness programmes will actually help is a contentious point. Derrida would think we would need to go a lot further than that. The very structure of language needs to be overhauled first and one should begin, as Rasmussen has, by altering the proper nouns. Wild dogs are not the only animals with given names designed to generate mirth from humans. Killer whales, vampire bats and butcherbirds are each given the same negative rap.

Pronouns

Pronouns in language weigh heavily, if not exclusively, in favour of the human ‘subject’. ‘He’, ‘she’ ‘theirs’ and ‘who’ for humans are replaced by reductive objectification ‘it’ and ‘which’ when referring to (other) animals. Whenever I try to include non-human animals in the third person pronoun, as I have attempted here, the spell check on my computer always highlights this with a jagged green line as incorrect grammar. We post-moderns may snigger at Descartes for referring to animals as machines but in truth we are no different. The use of pronouns proves that. As Wendy Woodward states: this sort of language “designates object or inanimate status’ to animals.” (Woodward, 2008: 14) Woodward made a point to ignore her spell-check and include animals in human third-person terminology in her book *Animal Gaze* (2008), 2008 a title that refers directly to Derrida’s encounter with his cat. Non-human animals in our language are not to have feelings or emotions. However, by switching pronouns from the objective ‘it’, ‘which’ or ‘that’ to the subjective ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘who’, ‘whom’ etc. like Woodward and I do, we run

the risk of being accused of anthropomorphism, paradoxically usually by those who tag hyenas and painted dogs with human (albeit negative) qualities. In philosophical terms, our anthropomorphism is regarded as a ‘category mistake’. Following Nagel (1974), humans either cannot place themselves into the minds of (other) animals or that (other) animals are simply incapable of human emotions – at least not at the same complex level as humans.

Derrida, of course, would dispute such notions and would agree with Woodward. His encounter with his cat is the case in point, where the perspective is shifted from human to cat, not *as* a cat but what it *might* be like to be a cat. Woodward cites ethologist Marc Bekoff as a parallel to Derrida’s personal encounter. Bekoff states emphatically that ‘we must make every attempt to maintain the animal’s point of view. We must repeatedly ask, “What is that individual’s experience?”’ (Bekoff from Woodward, 2008: 15) This question is crucial in Derrida’s thinking of the animal. The individual animal, as opposed to the figurative, representative or symbolic ‘animal’ is important to understand before we begin to construct an ethic. For instance, most of us feel no compunction about how the beef in our hamburgers gets into a neat patty form, we just eat it. Yet if we were to stand near and witness the slaughter of a cow, whether for traditional purposes or in an abattoir, the experience may shock us to the point that we may look at that hamburger patty very differently from then on. Mark Zuckerberg, the creator of Facebook, has said on many occasions that he would only eat meat if he killed it himself. The implication is if you look into the face of an individual animal before you kill it, you may have a hard time of it. Consequently, Zuckerberg has become a vegetarian.

Derrida too is at pains to describe his experience with his pet cat as a real instance with a real individual. This, argues Calarco, is one of Derrida’s central questions, “since his earliest work, namely, how to refer *in* language and concepts to that which precisely resists conceptualization.” (Calarco, 2008: 124) What Derrida does so brilliantly here is by insisting on the “unsubstitutable singularity” of his cat, he is thwarting the possibility

of reducing the cat to an object of human representation and culture. Woodward agrees and points out that the usual linguistic reductionism has “ethical repercussions.” (Woodward, 2008: 15)

For example, in print media some animals, like seal pups, tend to be seen generally as ‘cute’. Other animals are regarded as immersed in violence either savagely committing to death, like crocodiles. Woodward goes on to argue that animals can generally be seen both as comical, in a sense of the representation of monkeys clowning around and as metaphorical. Essentially, animals are seen “as symbols [like the Hindi elephant-god, Ganesh] rather than sentient beings on their own ...” (Woodward, 2008: 16) What these representations cause is the objectification of animals and this is the kind of language that Derrida emphatically warns us against. However, there is more to the animal question than just language. As Derrida states in the passage earlier “the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline” (Derrida, 2008: 6), and by association all non-human animals, is also a major obstacle in constructing a suitable animal ethic.

2.3 Carnophallogocentrism

Derrida insists that the human-animal distinction is a quintessential part of a vast “network of exclusionary relations” (Calarco, 2008: 131) not just anthropo- and logocentric. The term Derrida coined to encompass all the authoritative and influential of these terms is ‘carnophallogocentrism’.

‘Carno’ emphasizes the violent sacrificial tendencies of man (gender-specific) and, it must be said both historically and theoretically, masculinity or machismo (phallic) is articulated through the presence of the rational, speaking subject (logos). The

‘metaphysics of presence’ and, hence, of ‘subjectivity’ within the Cartesian tradition not only excludes animals but is a broad measure that can and does exclude other ‘fringe’ beings *within* humanity as well, in particular women and various minority groups, or any other ‘other’ that fails to meet the traits of phallogocentric ‘subjectivity’¹³. In other words, there are many ‘groups’ within humankind that are excluded from ethical or legal protection and who have historically been (and, in some cases, currently are) treated no more as subjects but as non-human animals and have thus endured a similar violence directed at them.

Throughout all his texts, Derrida wants a joint examination of the marginalised, whether (other) animal or human, to emphasize the violent nature of human masculinity. Feminists and liberation groups make arguments against their exclusion yet most would balk at the prospect of including (other) animals within the same moral ambit.¹⁴ As Derrida would argue, if it is exclusionary logic that is under attack, then all exclusionary logic, including (other) animals must be attacked. Derrida steers the argument against subjectivity toward a more rigorous conclusion, one that demands that *any* notion of exclusionary logic and resultant jurisdiction to be overhauled or radically altered before a genuine ethic can begin to be constructed. One cannot argue for the inclusion of women

¹³ Derrida first introduced the neologism ‘carnophallogocentrism’ and the subject-hood of masculinity in an interview entitled ‘Eating Well’. It now forms part of a collection of his interviews in a works called ‘Points’ edited by Elisabeth Weber and translated by Peggy Kamuf & Others (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Feminists in general, with the notable exception of Donna Haraway, are mired in anthropocentric jargon. For example, Cheris Kramarae, past professor of communications and of women's studies at the University of Illinois, has been quoted as saying “Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings.”

(http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/83683.Cheris_Kramarae) In other words, women as distinct from (other) animals.

and not do the same for minority religions or races, any more than one could argue for the inclusion of humans and not (other) animals.

At the same time, Derrida's introduction of the 'carno' into the centric ambit is an equally probing one. "The animal's problem", states Derrida emphatically, "is the male. Evil comes to the animal through the male." (Derrida, 2008: 104) The male, he says, is a hunter by nature "warlike, strategic, stalking, *viriloid* ...but no-one will contest that in its most overwhelming phenomenal form, from hunt to bullfight, from mythologies to abattoirs, except for rare exceptions it is the male that goes after the animal, just as it was Adam whom God charged with establishing his dominion over the beasts." (Derrida, 2008: 104) This is a standard and recurrent theme when it comes to the question of the (other) animal. In J.M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello*, one of the characters in a group around a dinner table mentions that the ancient Greeks "had a feeling that something was wrong in slaughter, but thought they could make up for that by ritualizing it." Elizabeth Costello retorts: "But perhaps we invented gods so that we could put the blame on them. They gave us permission to eat flesh ... It is not our fault, It is theirs. We're just their children." (Coetzee, 2003: 86) There are two issues raised here. Firstly, that the notion of sacrifice gives humans the right to act violently toward (other) animals; and secondly humans have willingly placed themselves as subjugated 'others', in this case as metaphoric children to an angry and violent male-like 'Subject' (God) in order to both shift any blame for slaughtering animals and reinforce *their* own dominance and violence on (other) animals.

Derrida too brings forth biblical sacrificial tales to highlight the privileged, domineering position of the specifically macho human (the one animal and gender that is God's replica) (Derrida, 2008: 15-18). The male human's privilege over women and (other) animals relates to everything else marginalised, which could of course include 'non-macho' males like vegetarians, homosexuals, nerds or philosophy professors. What Derrida is arguing is that being a carnivore is the heart of becoming a full subject in

contemporary society (Derrida, 1995: 114) and participating, whether directly or indirectly in rituals of eating flesh is “a necessary prerequisite for being a subject.” (Calarco, 2008: 132) The custom of sacrifice goes back to Cain and Abel where God sacrifices one brother for another. Tellingly it is Cain, the grower of grain, and not Abel, the herder and slaughterer of animals, who is sacrificed, and it is Abel’s animal sacrifice that is accepted by the all-powerful God and not Cain’s trifling vegetarian matter, which ultimately condemns the latter to be cast out as it were. Then there is Abraham, the father, to sacrifice his son to the whim of the dominant god, but is subsequently allowed to substitute an animal when God is satisfied with Abraham’s subservience.

These biblical tales serve to establish the dominance of the subject whose position is strengthened by sacrificial acts that are entrenched as symbolic and ritualistic. The fact that God is a dominating male filters down to the phallic dominance of masculinity in humans. In South Africa the ritualistic slaughtering of bulls is a case in point. Woodward, in *The Animal Gaze*, comments on a specific incident in January 2007. The incident was disgraced politician Tony Yengeni’s ritualistic and much publicised slaughtering of a bull immediately following his release from jail. The act of killing the bull, Woodward writes, was “elided with the celebration of Yengeni’s swaggering masculinity.” (Woodward, 2008: 10) Her point being that Tony Yengeni was a person who masqueraded his political power and dominating masculinity, even in the face of corruption charges and subsequent jail time. The ceremonial killing of the bull was an act to reinsert and cement that power as well as his dented masculinity.

Derrida makes more parallels. In the interview *Eating Well* he asks what the chances are that a presidential candidate would be winning the presidency of a country, especially France, if he was a committed vegetarian? Derrida believes it is practically zero because the head of state must be seen as a strong and powerful leader, to exhibit machismo (Derrida, 1995: 281). Powerful leadership roles are associations one does not make with vegans, or even vegetarians. Vegans and vegetarians do not exhibit the domineering

character needed to portray power because they are overly sensitive to the lives of non-subjects. It is interesting to note that France's current president, Francois Hollande, saw his popularity rise (albeit brief) after his illicit affair was publicised. His perceived masculine virility, even though in itself unethical, is linked directly to a masculine force of character, something the bespectacled pot-bellied president had yet to enjoy in his term of office.

Women are regarded along similar lines as vegetarians. Neither France nor the United States has ever elected a female president. Women have become national leaders in some other countries but it is only those that show a masculine 'toughness' and a lack of sentimentality that get elected. Margaret Thatcher was called the 'Iron Lady' and her fierce and domineering masculinity is essentially what got her elected and kept her in power. Helen Zille has a similar persona in South Africa. She has been referred to as "Godzilla" – a reference to a caricature of a human-devouring monster. Both women coincidentally have deep voices. Zille's is naturally deep while Thatcher went for elocution lessons to sound more baritone. However, the role of women in top leadership roles remains few and far between, even in the most 'progressive' countries. This attitude of the general human populace boils down to the perceived dominance meted out on perceived 'non-subjects'.

The subjugation of women is an interesting one in that it alludes back to Lacan's version of the 'gaze' specifically the phallogentric gaze of men, and the response of women in their gazes that can cause an inner sense of shame among men. Derrida, we have seen, uses the same mirror-reflecting technique with the gaze of (other) animals and the result is a sense of shame on behalf of the human 'subject-now-object' which occurs *before* that human is able to avow or disavow the (other) animal. The sense of inner shame is crucial for Derrida because it is the *subsequent* human response following that shame that tends to lead us to mistreat others. As with Descartes humans feel the need to overcome the shame, the animal within us. The inclusion of women as a 'fringe' subject is important as

it brings us back to Derrida's point about the shame and the sense of inadequacy of being naked, especially in front of a female. This is a direct reference to Nietzsche's (1976) reference of the shame of the male being naked in front of the female and the need to cover up the inadequacy by supplementing with clothing and then dominating in order to assuage that shame. The way to handle the shame, or to justify it, according to Derrida, is to ingrain the same system of ritualistic sacrifice (Derrida, 1995: 114). So the parallel exclusionary logic is that the female other is taught to sacrifice unto the phallogocentric, surrender to him in matrimony and take his name. Historically, women have been treated at best as second-class to males and at worse as non-subjects outside the moral ambit completely. Even these days, among conservative circles, certain religions and traditional structures, women are excluded as moral subjects. Derrida states categorically that it has always been "the discourse *of* man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for and in man." (Derrida, 2008: 37)

Sacrificial acts on (other) animals, however, are less symbolic and more openly violent, primarily because they are the absolute Other.

David Wood asserts that:

"We may surmise that the (external) animal we eat stands in for the (internal) animal we must overcome. And by eating, of course, we internalize it! On this reading our carnivorous violence towards other animals would serve as a mark of our civilization, and hence indirectly legitimize all kinds of other violence. If we target anything for transformation it would be this culture (or should we say cult) of fault and sacrifice." (Wood, 2004: 139)

Thus, in order to exercise the right to power, male humans must implant a cult of sacrifice, and the best and most efficient way is to act violently toward non-subjects, and the easiest non-subjects to deal with are (other) animals.

But it is not just the *literal* cult of sacrifice that separates males as subjects from all other beings. Sport or recreation like bullfighting, hunting and fishing, which are not directly seen as sacrificial acts, still tend to be exclusively male-dominated activities. In the days before civilisation, the male's physical advantage made him the hunter. Perhaps after many eons of hunting, the urge to hunt remains within the breasts of many human males. Today, men that kill animals for fun feel an inner urge, a deep-rooted feeling originally resulting from shame, to kill, even though the reason behind killing the animals has long ago ceased. The same can be said about sport-fishermen (note the gender-specific word for someone who fishes). Popular writers like Ernest Hemingway have glorified fishing and hunting as a macho activity. Somehow killing animals gives the male human self-possessiveness and assurance. This is perhaps some Freudian response to an innate shallow or deep sense of inadequacy within men. Pictures of overweight, unsightly men holding up the head of a bloodied Kudu carcass or a dead fish are splattered over the glossy covers of hunting and fishing magazines in most book stores. Derrida believes that these men who need to hunt or fish for fun are ashamed about something, like their sexuality, and they desperately need something else to prove their domineering masculinity (Derrida, 2008: 31). Killing helpless (other) animals somehow gives them that sense. Yet, there is hardly a major outcry from the general public over such slaughter of animals. Sure, there are a few dissenters but as a whole, humans do too little to stop recreational hunting, fishing and bull-fighting (although some steps have been made regards the latter in Catalonia and south France¹⁵).

¹⁵ The autonomous Catalan Parliament banned bullfighting outright. The ban came into effect on the 1st January, 2012. In France it is illegal except in Nîmes and Arles in Provence. These towns are exempt due to their long association to *corrida* (bull fighting), but not without widespread protest. See this online article: <http://www.ibtimes.com/bloody-battle-over-bullfighting-southern-france-violence-protests-boycotts-cultures-collide-1497642>

All these reasons, as I have said, may lie directly with a male human's perception of the gaze of the opposite sex – and that of the (other) animal. It is little wonder when asked in an interview Derrida was unequivocal about his disparaging views against bullfighting and hunting. (Derrida, 2004: 75)

3. THE VIOLENT EPOCH

Derrida, however, points out that while carnophallogocentrism is a fundamental problem that needs to be overcome in order to achieve an ethical approach to animals, it is a relatively minor issue “compared to the violence of the slaughterhouses and poultry farms.” (Derrida, 2004: 75) J.M. Coetzee has Elizabeth Costello cite that a ‘sport’ like bullfighting is at least a contest of sorts with a ritual and an honour given toward the (other) animal, even if killed and eaten afterward but, as both Derrida and Coetzee agree, the past 200 years is the real area of ethical contention apropos the (other) animal. Derrida states that during the past epoch “we who call ourselves men or humans ... have been involved in an unprecedented transformation.” (Derrida, 2008: 24) It is as if, says Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello, four billion hunters and matadors went on the rampage because now there are too many of us and with “no time to respect and honour the animals we need to feed ourselves.” (Coetzee, 2003: 97) Derrida calls this transformation from ritualistic sacrifice to the industrialized slaughter of animals a violent mutation of the human psyche:

“It is all too evident that in the course of the last two centuries these traditional forms of treatment of the animal have been turned upside down by the joint developments of zoological, etiological, biological, and genetic forms of *knowledge*, which remain separate from *techniques* of intervention *into* their object, from the transformation of the actual object, and from the

milieu and world of their object, namely the living animal. This has occurred by means of farming and regimentalization at a demographic level unknown in the past, by means of genetic experimentation, the industrialization of what can be called the production for consumption of animal meat, artificial insemination on a massive scale, more and more audacious manipulations of the genome, the reduction of the animal not only to production and overactive reproduction (hormones, genetic crossbreeding, cloning etc.) of meat for consumption, but also all sorts of other end products, and all that in the service of a certain being and the putative well-being of man.” (Derrida, 2008: 25)

The epoch begins with modernism, marked by the writings of Descartes, and we again revert back to his notion of animal-machines and the dominance of reason as an anthropocentric human *propre*. From here the epoch progresses rapidly and exponentially with the rise of industrialization and human population growth during the industrial age in the mid 19th century. This culminates in the massive slaughter that continues without abate to this very second.

To emphasise his point Derrida compares the culminating violence on animals with the worst forms of inter-human violence, with specific mention to the Nazi Holocaust, as well as the resultant apathy of the German population at the time. It is fundamentally a denial of the disavowal, says Derrida: “... men do all they can to hide in order to dissimulate this cruelty or to hide it from themselves; in order to organise on a global scale the forgetting or misunderstanding of this violence, which some would compare to the worst cases of genocide.” (Derrida, 2008: 26)

Derrida is by no means the first and only philosopher to make this comparison – it has been done before but to such a limited degree mainly because of the general view that any

comparison of human genocide with the mistreatment of animals is deemed insensitive to humanity, as well as philosophically questionable. In contemporary Continental philosophy the Nazi Holocaust always touches a raw nerve. Heidegger once alluded to a comparison of the food industry with the Holocaust (Heidegger, 1994: 52) but initiated such a furore from his colleagues that he never pursued the comparison further (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990: 34) Since then Continental philosophers have tended to treat the matter with kid gloves.

Derrida, of course, possesses no sensitivity in this regard and is perhaps the only Continental philosopher to analyse the human-animal genocidal comparison in detail, mainly because the objection to any human-animal comparison rests purely on those traditional anthropocentric notions of hierarchy, which deconstruction so abhors. What the comparison with the Nazi Holocaust obliges us to do, writes Calarco, “is to consider precisely the anthropocentric value hierarchy that places human life always and everywhere in a higher rank over animal life.” (Calarco, 2008: 110)

Coetzee too is not shy to bring in the comparison of the Nazis, stating that it was the Chicago stockyards that showed the way for the mass slaughter of (other) animals. This was also where the Nazis took note later applying the same process in the Jewish death camps (Coetzee, 2003: 110). Derrida takes the comparison a bit further suggesting that the mass slaughter of (other) animals is in fact far worse:

“As if, for example, instead of throwing people into ovens or gas chambers (let’s say Nazi) doctors and geneticists had decided to organize the overpopulation and overgeneration of Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals by means of artificial insemination so that, being more numerous and better fed, they could be destined in always increasing numbers for the same hell,

that for the imposition of genetic experimentation or extermination by gas or by fire. In the same abattoirs.” (Derrida, 2008: 26)

It is a powerful association. Not only are we committing a continual genocide against (other) animals, an act that traditionally seeks to extinguish a race or group for good, but also we are deliberately increasing the numbers of animals so that we may continue to commit genocide *ad infinitum*. The aim is not to extinguish anymore, which is bad enough, but to propagate in order to perpetuate the suffering for eternity. This association brings home the clarity that everyday, somewhere near to where we carry on our daily lives, a revolving mass genocide takes place on a scale that makes the Nazi Holocaust pale in comparison. And we continue to use the by-products of these factories of death without any remorse. Coetzee spins a similar macabre twist with his comparison in *Elizabeth Costello*:

“It is as if I were to visit friends, and to make some polite remark about the lamp in their living room, and they were to say “Yes, it’s nice, isn’t it? Polish-Jewish skin it’s made of, we find that’s best, the skins of young Polish-Jewish virgins.” And then I go to the bathroom and the soap wrapper says, ‘Treblinka - 100% human sterate.’” (Coetzee, 2003: 115)

The motive behind these arguments effectively forces one back into the position of the ‘other’. David Hume said that ethics is governed by sympathy (Hume, 1970: III, 1, 7-8), which could be seen as just another way of being able to place oneself in the position of the ‘other’. Coetzee writes that the Nazi doctors and their henchmen could commit heinous atrocities because “they refused to think themselves into the place of their victims ...” (Coetzee, 2003: 79) That, says Derrida and Coetzee, is humanity’s biggest problem. Most of us fail to think ourselves in the place of millions of (other) animals that

are condemned to the slaughterhouses. If we did we may begin rethinking the question of the animal.

Derrida asserts that the fundamental question that humans should be asking themselves, citing Bentham's classic proclamation,

“... will not be to know whether animals are of the type *zōon logon eschon*, whether they can speak or reason thanks to that *capacity* or that *attribute* of *logos*, the *can-have* [pouvoir avoir] of the *logos*, the aptitude for the *logos* ...The first and decisive question would rather be to know whether animals *can suffer?*” (Derrida, 2008: 27)

This question Derrida notes coincides with the exponential increase in violence against animals and the question ‘can they suffer?’ is about that rethinking ourselves into the place of the ‘other’. This rethinking has resulted in a counter-movement, what Derrida calls “voices of the minority, the weak and the marginal” who are “little assured of their discourse, of their right to discourse but who intend to awaken us to our responsibilities and our obligations to the living in general.” (Derrida, 2008: 26-7)) Derrida, of course, is talking about the Animal Rights Movement – the counter-force to everything we have discussed in this chapter. This movement, by taking the perspective of the ‘other’, looks to change “the very cornerstone ...of the philosophical problematic of the animal.” (Derrida, 2008: 27) It is a matter of compassion, he continues, “I believe it concerns what we call ‘thinking’. The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there.” (Derrida, 2008: 29)

But Derrida also cautions that while he is largely sympathetic to the movement, this counterforce remains largely ineffective, since, like Heidegger, the Animal Rights

Movement is shackled to the same logocentric and anthropocentric discourse of those that they are attempting to change, even though they are taking the perspective of the ‘other’ as their starting point. In the next chapter I will be exploring the logo- and anthropocentric bias within the opposing discourses of those philosophers, notably the utilitarianism of Bentham and Singer, that rigorously attempt to campaign for equal consideration of humans and (other) animals.

Chapter 3: DECONSTRUCTING THE OPPOSITION

Thus far, we have examined the workings of deconstruction and how it highlights the carnophallogocentric pitfalls in most philosophical discourses regarding the nature of human existence, especially Descartes and Heidegger, but it is also prevalent in almost all philosophical discourses from Aristotle through Kant to Levinas. In doing so it has become clear that every time a philosopher attempts to define the human condition there is a natural linguistic tendency to compare it with (other) animals and then, having done so, to set about separating ourselves from them. It is, as Derrida maintains, our single greatest disavowal (Derrida, 2008: 14).

In this chapter, we turn to those “minority, weak, marginal voices, little assured of their discourse ...” (Derrida, 2008: 26) These voices that attempt to break down the prevalent human-animal dichotomy by asking us to reconsider, and perhaps find a way to include the (other) animal in our moral community. While Derrida recognises the importance of awakening us to our responsibilities and obligations, he also is able to deconstruct their texts and prove that they too, like the protagonists they oppose, are steeped in logo- and anthropocentric sub-texts; and as he did with Rousseau and Austin’s texts, he calls for a re-evaluation of their analyses, something I will examine, in detail, in the final chapter of this thesis.

1. EQUAL CONSIDERATION

It would seem obvious that the natural counterforce facing the dominant carnophallogocentric attitudes toward (other) animals are the theories posited by animal rights philosophers. Most current environmental models are an explicit attempt to break down the humanist hierarchy and exclusionary logic prevalent in philosophy and instead

to consider, or perhaps place, the rights of (other) animals on an equal, or as near as equal footing as humans.

Renowned environmental ethicists like Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Clare Palmer, J. Baird Callicott, Arne Naess, Richard Sylvan (Routley), Val Plumwood (Routley), Holmes Rolston III, James E. Lovelock and many others have, since the emergence of formal environmental philosophical enquiry in the early 1970s, begun to question the pervading anthropocentric dominance in Western traditional thought, specifically “its elevation of humanity high above the rest of nature, and its celebration of human reason – alongside biblical delusions of grandeur about being created in the image of God, and Greek Protagorean arrogance about humans being the measure of all things ...” (Callicott & Palmer, 2005: xxxv) Editors J. Baird Callicott and Clare Palmer have claimed in the general introduction to their voluminous five-volume work entitled *Environmental Philosophy* that “in the finest tradition of Western Philosophy” most environmental philosophers have taken “a non-anthropocentric turn” (Callicott & Palmer, 2005: xxxvi). This statement is ostensibly true. True in that the *intention* of these ‘environmental’ philosophers is non-anthropocentric but ostensibly they, like Heidegger, remain inextricably tied to the anthropocentric discourse they confront.

As we are dealing specifically with the animal question rather than a broad environmental one I shall concern myself only with those philosophers dealing specifically with, shall I dare call it, ‘zoocentric’ issues. The reason for this is that although both broad environmental and animal-specific approaches appear to rise from the same source, they are polemically divergent viewpoints often at odds with each other. I shall highlight this divergence later in this chapter since a deconstruction reveals the anthropocentric pitfalls of animal rights ethics while the broader environmental theories tend to conduct themselves better to such charges by avoiding opposing terms and offering a more inclusive ethic.

On the surface it may seem, in some ways, that animal rights philosophers adopt similar goals to a deconstruction of the human-animal dichotomy, since both are primarily concerned with breaking down the dominance of anthropocentrism. Both disciplines begin their discourses from this same premise, that is, the need to dismantle hierarchical, exclusionary Cartesian reductionism in ethics concerning the binary between humans and (other) animals. One of the most outspoken protagonists for a philosophy toward a non-anthropocentric ethic is Australian animal-rights philosopher Peter Singer.

Broadly, Singer insists that all (sentient) animals ought to enjoy the same moral value as humans. Singer develops his theory from a steadfast utilitarian foundation. Singer calls for a liberation movement that demands an expansion of moral horizons and claims that unless “we wish to avoid being numbered amongst the oppressors, we must be prepared to re-think our most fundamental attitudes.” (Singer, 2005: 75) That re-thinking means a mental switch to consider the point of view of the disadvantaged to a “very large group of beings, members of a species other than our own – or, as we popularly though misleadingly call them, animals.” (Singer, 2005: 75-76)

So far we can see the parallels with deconstruction. Singer, like Derrida, understands that anthropocentrism is the cornerstone of the problem; one that needs to be removed before an ethic on animals can be considered. Singer also understands, for the same reasons as Derrida, that an ethic from the perspective of (other) animals is an important consideration *and* that the word ‘animal’ is a harmfully misleading one in that it entrenches the Cartesian notion that humans belong to a class that is not ‘animal’.

Another similarity with deconstruction, and Derrida specifically, is the link Singer makes between the ethical (mis)treatment of women and (other) animals. In his seminal 1974 essay published in the *Philosophical Exchange* entitled *All Animals Are Equal* Singer cites an early forerunner to women’s rights, Mary Wollstonecroft, who published

Vindication of the Rights of Women (Wollstonecroft, 1792). In those days, ideas that women ought to enjoy the same rights as men were widely ridiculed. It was believed that the disparity between men and women were so abyssal that to even think of treating women as equals was downright absurd. Singer highlights (Singer, 2005: 76) the bemused response of one Thomas Taylor, a distinguished Cambridge philosopher, who satirized Wollstonecroft's 'eccentric' ideas with *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (Taylor, 1792). By 'brutes' Taylor was referring to (other) animals and in classic carnophallogocentric sarcasm implied that if something as absurd as rights for women could be considered, hell, why not extend it to animals too. Of course, to modern readers women's rights are now so far from absurd that the idea of women *without* rights is considered absurd. However, while the rights of women are taken for granted these days, the notion of similar rights for (other) animals is still commonly regarded as preposterous (Singer, 2005: 76).

One of the primary objections to anyone making a comparison between women and (other) animals is that such statements succumb to a basic category mistake. Women, being the same species as men, also have the similar properties as men, like the ability to reason. Women are capable of voting, taking part in meaningful discourse and understand the idea of *Dasein* because, since the days of Wollstonecroft, men have discovered that women are just as capable as men in almost all areas that were once regarded as strictly male traits.

Animals (the other ones), on the other hand, have no such properties because they belong to another species, and unlike women they cannot, among countless other human properties, make the same rational decisions. In short, human women and men belong to the same species and are different from (other) animals – unless one ignores the obvious category distinction. That is precisely what Singer and Derrida want us to do.

I have already argued against reason as an inherent value comparison, and Singer follows the same path in discarding human specific properties as value-entities. Singer wants to find something that circumvents such reductionist hierarchical distinctions in what, at first glance, is precisely also the aim of deconstruction. Singer's intended deferment from dominant anthropocentric leanings comes in the form of his basic principle of equality. For Singer, ethics is not about beings of different species enjoying the *same* rights, like the right to vote, but whether all beings enjoy equal *consideration* (Singer, 2005: 77). Singer, like Derrida, wants to challenge the inherent attitude of society, not by ignoring *actual* differences between races, sexes, individuals and (other) animals, but by deferring from the hierarchical differences toward an equal consideration basis for all living beings. By adopting this sort of mind switch he hopes to abolish all forms of exclusion within the field of ethics.

Equality, says Singer, "is a moral ideal, not a simple assertion of fact." (Singer, 2005: 79) We humans tend to eschew the claim that equality among our own species is based on intelligence, moral capacity, physical strength, or similar matters of *fact*, otherwise why does an uneducated beggar have the same moral consideration as a philosophy professor, or Usain Bolt as opposed to an overweight couch potato? Thus, the principle of equality is not an *actual* equality but a *prescription* of how we ought to treat others (Singer, 2005: 79). By using this sort of principle, we can see how easy it is to make a switch to morally consider (other) animals as well as humans of an 'other' nature. Singer succinctly poses the question: "If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit non-humans?" (Singer, 2005: 79) It is impossible to refute the answer this question is demanding, because any claim that (other) animals cannot qualify because they are neither moral agents, nor of the same species category, is really just ignoring the question.

There is another question to follow Singer's: Who then qualifies for equal consideration? This necessary question, like Descartes' big ontological one¹⁶, begs an answer that, unfortunately for Singer, tends toward the reductionistic. Following Heidegger (Heidegger, 2004: 17), we can say a stone cannot be considered on the same ethical level as a human or (other) animal, since a stone does not live; or, to quote environmental philosopher, Tom Regan, a stone has no 'subject-of-a-life' and therefore has no notion of its own being. Plants have life, he argues, but still no subject-of-a-life (Regan, 1983: 22). It would therefore be absurd to place cabbages and daisies on the same ethical plane as humans, or (other) animals, since it is doubtful that plants are conscious of their lives, or at least the sort of consciousness that makes them aware of itself as living beings (we assume). Heidegger, we know, has a similar regard toward (other) animals. While (other) animals have a kind of being (being-poor-in-the-world), only humans can be 'subjects', that is, have a sensation, in Heideggerian language, of being-there, or being-thrown-out-in-the-world (*Gerworfenheit*), confronting its possibilities, understanding themselves as beings and other entities *as such* and knowing the inevitability of one's own mortality (Richardson, 1963: 37 & Heidegger, 1962). Regan, however, wants to include (other) animals as 'subjects'. He would argue that *Dasein* is not what separates beings from each other. For a being to be a subject-of-a-life, Regan claims, their own lives must matter to them, their existence must at all costs be guarded against harm or elimination. In other words, if beings are intent, above all, to preserve their own lives, they therefore share an inherent commonality in terms of value, their own value of life (Regan, 1983: 22-23).

Singer's version is similar. He also understands that being treated as a 'subject' is an important status that some animals can attain, but Singer (2005: 81) believes there is more to a 'subject' than Regan's simplistic subject-of-a-life. Peter Singer, as mentioned, is a utilitarian¹⁷ who broadly follows Jeremy Bentham's straightforward approach to the sort of criteria that must be met to qualify for 'subjectivity'. Bentham was a

¹⁶ What is existence i.e. what does it mean for a being to be? The reductionist answer 'Je pense donc je suis' separated the existence of Self from Other.

¹⁷ A utilitarian is a theorist in normative ethics that propagates the maximizing of utility i.e. Maximizing benefit and reducing suffering.

contemporary of, and as much a forerunner of contemporary views of (other) animals as, Mary Wollstonecraft (both coincidentally heralded in the ‘violent epoch’ that Derrida cites in *The Animal that Therefore I Am*: 29), but instead of only championing the cause for women’s rights and racial equality (this was still the era of British slave trading), Bentham (Bentham, 1823. XV11.122) also wanted to include animals within his moral sphere. Jacques Derrida (2008: 27) introduces the last line of the famous statement as it was written in the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* in 1789, but I feel its worth reproducing Bentham’s full quote here as it covers quite a few issues that I will follow throughout this chapter:

“The day *may* come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognised that the number of legs, the villosity [sic] of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, a week or even a month, old. But suppose they are otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they reason? nor Can they *talk*? but, *Can they suffer?*” (Bentham, 1823. XV11.122)

Singer uses this quote as the foundation for his principle of equal consideration. For him the day *has* come for sensitive beings to acquire the rights that “have been withholden from them”. Bentham was the first to insist that uniquely human traits were not criteria for equal consideration. The only criterion that bridges the ‘insuperable line’ between

humanity and (other) animals, which as Derrida (2008: 27) states is that “*first and decisive question*” is whether or not a being can suffer? As long as a being can suffer (and by default, also can experience pleasure) ethical consideration must be afforded it. This effectively means that any being, as long as it has *feelings*, is to be considered equally to human beings. A being such as a plant that is not governed by sentience, ‘those sovereign masters of pleasure and pain’, cannot be considered, but an animal like a cow that has a central nervous system can. Singer follows Bentham’s ideal that the utility principle, or rather to use Bentham’s formula – ‘each to count for one, and none for more than one’ - must include non-human animals too ... or at least all those that are deemed sentient (Singer, 2005: 80).

From this basic foundation Singer goes on to develop an applied ethic, one that is both sweeping and radical. Firstly, he argues that eating animal flesh under the principle of equal consideration is no longer an option (Singer, 2005: 82). Singer is also a committed abolitionist as opposed to an animal welfarist. The latter is, very broadly, about *limiting*, not abolishing, mistreatment on (other) animals. That means humans can kill and eat other animals provided that adverse effects are *minimized*, which according to Singer (2005: 82) falls way short of not (ab)using (other) animals at all. Proponents, utilitarians among them, of animal welfarism argue that eating animals is necessary since it is what we are biologically meant to do, and that our health depends on the consumption of meat for nutritional value. This certainly is a sound version of the greatest happiness principle, but Singer asserts that these days “there can be no defence of eating flesh in terms of satisfying nutritional needs, since it has been established beyond doubt that we could satisfy our need for protein and other essential nutrients far more efficiently with a diet that replaced animal flesh with soy beans, or products derived from soy beans, and other high protein vegetable products.” (Singer, 2005: 81) Vegetarianism therefore is the only option at mealtimes because any killing of sentient animals will be deemed immoral. The Equal Consideration Principle, were it to be generally applied, would stop dead the need for industrialized abattoirs, slaughterhouses and battery chicken farms.

Singer, like his American contemporary, Tom Regan, is also much concerned with the violence meted out on (other) animals while they are alive. The artificial preparation of such animals for the slaughter like the questionable methods used in the production of veal, *pâté de foie gras* and hormone-induced fodder, the maltreatment of battery chickens and all kinds of experimental vivisection will have to be abolished under the Equal Consideration Principle (Singer, 2005: 82). These theories from philosophers like Singer and Regan are fairly unique in modern academic philosophy as they have since the 1970s sparked and continued to influence a popular global movement, namely the Animal Rights Movement (Honderich, 1995: 16). And, although still ‘weak and marginal’ compared to the pervading human attitudes toward animals, many compassionate people, including the two protagonists, have become committed vegetarians and have rigorously highlighted the desperate plight of (other) animals particularly in the food, pharmaceutical and live experimentation industries. The pragmatism and effect of such methods is commendable¹⁸ and has gone some way in improving the treatment of certain animals in certain countries. It would seem, then, that such concepts are beyond reproach but a deconstruction, as with Descartes, Heidegger *et al.*, of these foundational philosophical concepts driving the broad animal rights movement provides the need for a re-analysis.

2. DECONSTRUCTING ‘THE MOVEMENT’

One could say that Jacques Derrida is in favour of the works of Bentham, Singer and Regan and that during the past 200 years, since Bentham first posited his question, Derrida has cited that the suffering of (other) animals not only has increased exponentially, and continues to do so at alarming rates of a genocidal nature, but that

¹⁸ Peter Singer’s book *Animal Liberation* (1975) is considered by the Animal Liberation Movement as the founding statement of its ideas, while Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983) has had enormous influence on the way humans regard (other) animals, particularly in the USA – where he has drawn attention of the wrongs of wearing leather and hunting.

there is an urgent need to address the situation by taking action. The urgent need to change has, through the writings of Singer and Regan, resulted in the counterforce of the Animal Rights Movement, a movement that no matter its unequal struggle, it is one that Derrida is largely sympathetic to. A discourse of animal rights is necessary, argues Derrida “in order to awaken us to our responsibilities and our obligations vis-à-vis the living in general, and precisely to this fundamental compassion that, were we to take it seriously, would have to change even the very cornerstone ... of the philosophical problematic of the animal.” (Derrida, 2008: 27)

Derrida also likes Bentham’s seminal question: “Can they suffer?” It is a “language both of its most refined philosophical argumentation and of everyday acceptance and common sense” (Derrida, 2008: 27), as it ditches the anthropo- and logocentric in one blow. This question he says “changes everything” because “it no longer concerns the *logos* ...” (Derrida, 2008: 27)

It is not just in the text of *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, but also during various interviews that Derrida¹⁹ has vigorously made clear his stance against the mistreatment of animals, and doubtlessly he has come across both Singer’s and Regan’s writings, (although he never mentions either of them). It would seem obvious that in a number of key areas Derrida is poised to join the ranks of the animal rights movement in calling an end to the anthropocentric and logocentric violence against (other) animals. Derrida’s key conviction against the evil of carnophallogocentrism is, in a sense, everything that Singer and Regan have been campaigning for since the 1970s. It does not matter how one interprets it, argues Derrida, no one can deny the unprecedented proportions of the subjugation of (other) animals. Such subjugation is simply “called violence in the most morally neutral sense of the term.” (Derrida, 2008: 25) Yet, Derrida is not content with Bentham’s seminal question. There is something flawed in its syntax.

¹⁹ With Elisabeth Roudinesco in ‘For What Tomorrow ...’ (2004); and with Jean-Luc Nancy in ‘Eating Well’ (1991).

2.1 The Problem with Pity

According to Derrida, Bentham's question is "disturbed by a certain passivity." (Derrida, 2008: 27) The word 'can' in "Can they suffer?" changes sense and sign from an active notion to something almost its exact opposite: a passive 'not-being-able'. It is structurally a self-contradictory question. "Can they suffer?" says Derrida, "amounts to 'Can they *not be able*?' (Derrida, 2008: 28) because being able to suffer is no longer a power; it is "a possibility without power", a being able to not be able, "a possibility of the impossible." (Derrida, 2008: 28) This appears like one of those language games that he has been so often accused of, but what Derrida is trying to achieve here, says Calarco, is a radically different approach to ethics than Singer's and Regan's (Calarco, 2008: 115). Indeed, Derrida is taking a step back to analyse and strengthen the pre-ethical and foundational situation of Bentham's question before moving onto an applied ethic, something Singer and Regan have ignored to their peril. Allow me to explain.

"While the surface level of Bentham's discourse speaks in terms of capacities and faculties," continues Calarco, "Derrida wants to suggest that capacities are not the final foundation of animal ethics" (Calarco, 2008: 117). Instead, he points toward a prior interruptive trace or encounter with (other) animals that gives rise to our thinking of them. Our ethical thoughts about the suffering of (other) animals have more to do with their *inability* and *incapacity* to avoid pain rather than the ability and capacity to suffer (Calarco, 2008: 118). A deconstruction of the question therefore defers away from the egoism of compassion.

"Being able to suffer is no longer a power ... Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of this non-power, the possibility if this

impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability and the vulnerability of this anguish.” (Derrida, 2008: 28)

I will deal further with this deflective approach to the humanist hierarchy of compassion in the next chapter where Derrida merges humans and (other) animals in their shared finitude, but the point here is to highlight that Derrida’s reading of Bentham’s question neatly sidesteps the variety of inherent pitfalls of Singer’s and Regan’s reading of it. Here are the most poignant stumbling blocks:

- The problem of individual rights over environmental concerns; and
- The problem of determining which animals qualify for equal consideration.

2.2 Act Utilitarianism versus Rule Utilitarianism

The animal rights movement has come under fire from other environmentalists²⁰, also utilitarians, who regard zoocentric theorists, like Singer, with varying degrees of derision. The main accusation against a zoocentric ethic is that it displays a tunnel vision, especially when it comes to Singer’s Equal Consideration Principle, which is largely due to the refusal to look beyond the reduced parameters of an individual’s suffering instead of at the effects of the *whole* environmental community. This can be clearly illustrated with a recent South African example.

A few years ago a decision was made to cull the Himalayan tahrs on Table Mountain, primarily because, as alien ungulates, they were displacing the indigenous wild antelope through the overgrazing of *fynbos*, an endemic biome that also supported a list of smaller

²⁰ Notably J. Baird Callicott and Holmes Rolston III, who insist that individual values ought to be excluded for a broader environmental one. For example, domestic or alien animals may be harmful to the wild environment.

endemic wild animals like the extremely rare and localized Table Mountain ghost frog. The sound utilitarian decision to sacrifice a few tahrs for the greater ecological good, however, caused a furore among the animal rights activists in Cape Town who clashed with environmentalists over the correct ethical course of action.²¹ Tahrs, it was argued by the animal rightists, had been living on the mountain since a few escaped from the university zoo in 1936. It was deemed by many of the locals who had witnessed or suffered at the hands of relocation policies that the tahrs, although only ‘animals’, had the same claim to Table Mountain as the humans. Being shot because they were ‘alien’ was regarded as unethical, while having them relocated still had the stigma of forced removals written all over it in a country sensitive about its Apartheid past.

This *contretemps* between animal rights activists and environmentalists emphasizes a main contention among utilitarians. It boils down to the consequences resulting from an action, and the difference between Act and Rule Consequentialism. The animal rights activists are classical Rule or, as I prefer, ‘indirect consequentialists’ in that they see the sacrifice of animals like the tahrs as intrinsically wrong. They would argue that Act or ‘direct consequentialists’ are happily willing to sacrifice innocent sentient beings in the name of the greater good. Direct consequentialists, they argue, are allowed to break any moral code as long as the action is deemed to maintain the greatest happiness.

For direct consequentialists, the idea is that a philosophy professor should be given more ethical consideration than a lowly, uneducated beggar if the two were stuck on a life raft that would sink unless one of them was sacrificed. The point, for them, is that a philosophy professor would bring about a greater good to society than a lowly beggar who just parasites off society. The same goes for the tahrs. The sacrifice of a few alien tahrs will ensure that the broad ecology on Table Mountain will remain pristine and intact. (Mail & Guardian, 2004)

²¹ See <http://www.animalpeoplenews.org/04/11/ripTahrs11.04.htm> and <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/mountain-rangers-braai-tahr-1.1029020#.U6AE9I2Szf>

Indirect consequentialists would counter this with arguing that the harming of innocent or sentient beings is wrong because such actions will have a long-term destructive tendency on society as a whole, and this in their view, is far worse than the immediacy of protecting the ecology on Table Mountain. In this instance, Rule Utilitarians would argue that the conservation authorities are acting in a way akin to the Apartheid oppressors, or worse, like the Nazis. Such actions, like killing tahr, instil or maintain repressive and militant tendencies in a society that can and do flow into other aspects of that society.

This is the conundrum with utilitarianism in general and is the main factor why environmentalists and animal rights theorists of the same broad philosophical persuasion rarely see eye to eye. What is needed, is an ethic that encompasses both the lives of the alien and the endemic animals that live on Table Mountain. Singer's Equal Consideration Principle cannot cover both because if the tahr remain the endemic animals suffer, and vice versa. This is not the only problem with the Equal Consideration Principle. The following hurdle is in fact a far more problematic one.

2.3 Redrawing the Insuperable Line

Following Bentham's line, Singer argues that "to mark the boundary by some characteristic like intelligence or rationality, would be to mark it in an arbitrary way." (Singer, 2005: 80) The fundamental problem, however, with Rule Utilitarianism, or zoocentrism, is that by asking whether animals can suffer, the whole enquiry tends to fall into the same old essentialist/reductionist trap where philosophers like Singer are simply practicing ethical extensionism on some but not all animals. As far as Derrida is concerned, the problem with asking whether animals can suffer, is still arbitrarily marking the boundary and tends to send philosophers down the wrong road toward a ceaseless debate as to nature, extent, and moral weight of what suffering *is*.

As mentioned the question that immediately attaches itself to Singer's Equal Consideration Principle is: 'Who gets to be considered?' This is contentious at best, and as Calarco emphasises, it has simply "led to an entire field of inquiry focused on determining whether animals can suffer and to what extent this can be confirmed empirically, and what the normative and legal implications of these empirical findings are." (Calarco, 2008: 119) What a deconstruction of the principle uncovers is that empirical, biological and ontological findings on sentience will only lure animal-oriented theorists to redraw the same insuperable line between those included and those excluded from an ethic.

Following are two further predicaments that the Equal Consideration Principle has to face. I will demonstrate these first with John Rawl's Original Position Theory (2.3.1) and then with Thomas H. Birch's notion of the Consideranda Club (2.3.2). I will then develop a link to a possible solution – and the concluding chapter – by bringing into play the concept of the Face of the Other (2.3.3) developed by phenomenological philosopher Emmanuel Levinas.

2.3.1 The Problem with Rawls' 'Original Position'

Animal rights theorists are essentially arguing this: 'Instead of excluding *all* animals from the human realm, let us just exclude *most* of them.' I was bemused to find this common mistake in Mark Rowland's book called *The Philosopher and the Wolf* (2008). It is a quasi-philosophical-cum-animal-ethics true story about the relationship of a philosopher (Mark Rowlands) and his pet wolf (Brenin). Rowlands is a committed champion for animal rights, and a vegetarian, on account of his interpretation of John Rawls' Original Position Theory.

Rowlands agrees with Rawls that equal *fairness* is what is needed to make a just society. Rawls' thought experiment on contractual theory briefly goes along these lines: Parties to the original position know nothing about their particular positions in society thanks to a hypothetical 'veil of ignorance'. No one knows if they are going to be male or female, black or white, rich or poor, evil or good, a philosophy professor or a beggar. The veil of ignorance blocks all this knowledge and because no one knows their place in society, gender, race or class they tend to act in the interests of the society as a whole and not for their own personal, racial, denominational or economic interests. Once the veil is lifted participants may discover who they are and where they fit in society but not before they have acted in the interests of the worst-off members of that society since before the lifting of the veil every member of society could potentially be a destitute, black, female orphan born in the slums of some downtown metropolis. So the whole society in the original position will guard against such worse off positions and ensure a fair distribution of wealth or protection against poverty and unemployment as well as maintaining racial and gender equality (Rawls, 1999: 102-118).

Rowlands, however, thought that Rawls had overlooked one major source of unfairness. For Rawls the parties in the original position were rational humans above a certain age. Every other being including infants, the insane and of course (other) animals, were never considered by Rawls. Rowlands therefore adopted a "newer, fairer, version of the original position" (Rowlands, 2008: 131) by including (other) animals – or should I say, some of them. He argued that if he were in the original position behind the veil of ignorance he could, for all he knew, potentially be a cow or a goat bred and raised in terrible conditions for slaughter. Based on that assumption, Rowlands concludes it would be irrational and immoral to allow such animals to "live such miserable lives and die such horrible deaths." (Rowlands, 2008: 131)

This version of the Original Position Theory is not a new concept. Hindus and Buddhists follow similar lines with a belief in reincarnation.²² Most Hindus and Buddhists believe that a life is always preceded or succeeded by the life of another being. The other being could be a horse, a woman or an ant. Such a belief automatically ensures that all living beings are treated with the utmost respect because it may be possible that in the next life you come back as one. Consequently, Buddhists, and most Hindus, do not eat meat and there is a widespread practice of non-violence toward (other) animals. The extreme version is Jainism²³, an Indian religion that prescribes non-violence to *all* living beings including the smallest most ‘inconsequential’ ones. Most Jaines would venture outdoors with a mask to cover the nose and mouth in the unlikely but possible event they swallow a flying insect and they even filter water regularly so as to remove any small insects that may be present.

Rowlands appears to take the same altruistic stance in his version of the Original Position Theory, but ultimately his is one that is not much better than Rawls’ strictly anthropocentric version of sane humans of a certain age and older. While Rowlands commits to vegetarianism he, however, finds it difficult to do the same for his wolf, Brenin, because the wolf “refused point blank to eat the vegetarian dog meal presented to him ... and who can blame him?” (Rowlands, 2008: 131) In the end, Rowlands ‘compromises’ by feeding Brenin a ‘lower’ life form, namely fish. Granted, wolves are supposed to be carnivores and I am personally unsure of the nutritional benefits of vegetarian dog food, however, by refusing Brenin beef and allowing him fish on purely ethical grounds makes no sense. What makes the ‘higher’ lives of cows ethically more valuable than the ‘lower’ lives of fish? Brenin was also allowed to kill rats and rabbits, apparently in order to satisfy his instinct for hunting, and the act was justified as being natural and non-impacting. Non-impacting for whom? Not for the rabbits or rats.

²² One can read more on Hindu reincarnation in www.himalayanacademy.com; and Buddhist reincarnation in the official website of the Dalai Lama. See <http://www.dalailama.com/>

²³ For more on Jainism see: www.jainism.org

Rowlands also subsequently discovered that it was impossible for himself to live as a 100% vegetarian, especially after he moved to meat-loving rural France, so he too becomes a 'piscetarian'. At no point does Rowlands see the contradiction of morally protecting the lives of one set of animals (cows, sheep, goats etc), while happily killing others (fish, rabbits and rats). It is clear that, like Rawls who excludes all beings except rational adult humans, Rowlands adopts the same logic to exclude certain beings and include others. In terms of the original position, does Rowlands not consider the possibility of him being a pilchard? Rowlands, like Rawls, thus draws a line between those who qualify for the original position and those that don't.

This is something Derrida would explicitly take Rowlands to task on. Morality from Rowlands' perspective is governed by the anthropocentric logic of exclusion with humans at the apex and the rest of life radiating concentrically downwards. This is determined by the *perceived* degree of sentience dictated by those in the centre. Poster animals, or 'higher-order' mammals, the so-called charismatic megafauna like wolves, whales, elephants, rhinos, chimpanzees, tigers, dolphins and panda bears are generally regarded with more ethical consideration by animal rights theorists than 'lower-order' sharks, rats, snakes, spiders and bats. The World Wildlife Fund has a panda as its logo. Would they garner any sympathy from the human populace if they had a spider or scorpion as their logo? The reasons remain heavily anthropocentric, since panda bears and dolphins are aesthetically sublime or spiritually significant to our human-centred sensibilities, while spiders, scorpions, gnats and cockroaches are of little substance and consequence to us.

Even if one aims to include these 'lesser' beings, there is still empirical doubt about the sentience of mosquitoes, flies, ants and the gazillion microbes that inhabit this planet. The thick arbitrary line that originally separated human animals from all others is now more often drawn at mammals, normally the 'higher' often larger ones, primarily because human mammals recognize certain similar traits in these mammals. Sentiment, as Hume

maintained, remains the guiding factor in ethics (Hume, 1970: III.3.7) and science backs up Hume's view. The nervous systems of most mammals are most like our own, so it stands to reason that they share similar feelings, while geckoes and preying mantises who have vastly dissimilar physical attributes are deemed unable to suffer in the *same* way, which, almost all the time, also means that they are deemed to suffer *less*, if at all.

This is perhaps the biggest pitfall of all with the Benthamite question. The capability to suffer and the degree of suffering now becomes the means to construct a further anthropocentric hierarchy. In the next section I will show how some animals are considered as moral entities in what Birch calls the Consideranda Club while others are not.

2.3.2 Ontological and Empirical Line-Drawing: the Consideranda Club

For animal rights theorists like Singer some animals are more equal than others. Most humans afford non-mammals little sentimental value, essentially because they are more 'other' - physically and sentimentally - than mammals. Ask most people if they would give more value to a dolphin than a shark. The answer would almost always be in the affirmative simply because we recognise familiar traits in dolphins whereas sharks seem at best, alien, and at worst, dangerous. Likewise, ask a vegetarian about oysters or mussels. That normally stumps them because while they realise they are subjects of a life, they are not subjects per se in that they have no nervous system and therefore have no notion of suffering. Even if, when removed from rocks, they clamp up as if to protect themselves from danger.

J.M. Coetzee has Elizabeth Costello bring up Thomas Nagel's famous question: "Do we know what it is like to be a bat?" Nagel thinks it is not possible. He is of course posing

the ontological question, to *be* a bat, not the behavioural aspects like flying around using radar to catch insects and hanging upside down in a cave during the day. To be a bat, argues Nagel in a classical reductionist syllogism, one needs the mind of a bat, but since we are not bats it is impossible to know what it is like. Therefore, we cannot truly sympathise with bats, because we have no way of knowing what they think or feel (Nagel, 1974: 445).

Most people would concur, even more so if we bring up the subject of fish, who unlike bats, are not mammals with highly evolved sensory apparatus. Who would ever be able to place themselves in the minds of fish? It is impossible. Fish are too ‘other’ for us to ‘know’. This is obviously Mark Rowlands’ attitude. Dogs and pet wolves, he can understand, at least to a point, because he can identify with them more closely. They have similar and familiar attributes. Rowlands consistently refers to shared traits between humans and wolves, and even where there are differences, like the easy loping gait of the wolf compared to his own ungainly bipedal run when the two take their daily jog, it is regarded with a measure of envy. This, again, is precisely what David Hume argued about human morality. Sympathy is measured by the *relation* a being is in to the sympathiser, who remains at the epicentre of the ethical question (Hume 1970: III.3.7). The question of the level of sentience in bats and fish, who are a long way off the human centre, is wide open to conjecture. Humans can only imagine it in a vague way what it is like to be a bat, but we have no scientific proof, and until science discovers a way to get into the mind of a bat, or a chameleon, or a frog we cannot say for sure whether these animals suffer, with the expressly attached rider: “like we do.”

Despite Peter Singer’s claims that morality should not be about facts, his kind of approach is always forced to take an empirical line to define the level of sentience in other animals. This is the biggest obstacle to Singer’s Equal Consideration disquisition because Singer, like Rowlands, is paradoxically employing the same line-drawing, value rankings and exclusionary logic of the humanists that he is seeking to challenge. Instead

of marking the boundary at the point of human distinctive properties “in an arbitrary way” (Singer, 2005: 80), or in Mary Wollstonecroft’s and Jeremy Bentham’s days, at the arbitrary point of white males of a certain standing in society, Singer himself is simply redrawing the boundary in an equally arbitrary way, depending on which animals are proven to suffer *in a certain way*, namely to suffer in the same way humans suffer.

Tom Regan, in a typically Rawlsian sense, freely admits that *his* subject-of-a-life criteria only include certain mammals of a year and older (Regan, 1983: 19). This follows Charles Darwin’s insistence that some non-human animals, like most large mammals, are moral agents in that they exhibit mutual affection, care for one another and alert each other to danger. Modern cognitive etiologists, like Frans de Waal, who conduct extensive studies of animal behaviour and genetic make-up, confirm Darwin’s biological continuism by pointing out that there are no clear divisions between humans and such other animals in terms of cognition or morality (De Waal, 2009: 10). The problem with scientific methods, though, is that they just serve to prove that certain classes of animals have moral agency, and by ‘moral agency’ we are referring again to the similarity with human moral agency. Snakes and sharks do not care for their young, nor do they seem to possess altruistic behaviour to other members of their species. Therefore, according to etiological methodologies, these animals are to be excluded as moral agents.

I would assume Singer thinks along similar lines. Matthew Calarco states with some assertion that this approach to animal ethics is “the most serious mistake that has occurred in the field” (Calarco, 2008: 128) because instead of rejecting hierarchical schemas, all that these animal ethicists are doing is randomly redrawing the same exclusionary line, but in a different locale. The moral consideration approach, argues Calarco, is unethical, “even imperialistic” and is “ground for some of the worst atrocities human beings have committed.” (Calarco, 2008: 73)

Calarco cites Thomas H. Birch who compiled a thought-provoking essay in 1993 entitled *Moral Considerability and Universal Consideration*. Birch states that by claiming moral consideration as an ethical ideal there is a desire to close the subject off once and for all. This closure has occurred historically on numerous occasions with various criteria specified like: gender, colour of skin, moral agency, subject-of-a-life, sentience etc, but, notes Birch, each time the question has been closed it has later been established to be found in error and the question always has to be re-opened. The problem with this line of enquiry is that it is forever seeking to draw the line between those ‘inside’ and those ‘outside’ the scope of moral concern. Birch sums it up as follows:

(1) ... when it comes to moral considerability, there *are* and *ought* to be, insiders and outsiders, citizens and non-citizens (for example slaves, barbarians, and women), “members of the club” of *consideranda* versus the rest; (2) that we *can* and *ought* to identify the mark, or marks, of membership; (3) that we *can* identify them in a rational and non-arbitrary fashion; and (4) that we *ought* to institute practices that enforce the marks of membership and the integrity of the club, as well, of course, as maximising the goods of its members. (Birch, 1993: 315)

The trouble with this approach is that non-members, those that cannot be considered empirically or ontologically, suffer the atrocities meted out by those within the ‘club of consideranda’. Of course, even if some animals are not moral agents, they could still be considered ‘moral patients’, something that Regan writes at length about in *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983) but the question still remains ontologically (Nagel) and empirically (Darwin) unanswered – can animals like snakes, fish and spiders really suffer? This is a question that Emmanuel Levinas posed, although inadvertently, and one that I shall deal with in the following section.

2.3.3. The Face of the Other: the Phenomenological Counter-Approach

Emmanuel Levinas is a philosopher that Derrida was much preoccupied with. Not only are Levinas' brief thoughts on animals in ethics implicit in Derrida's encounter with his cat, Levinas is a major influence on Derrida's general approach to situation ethics. It was Levinas who first introduced phenomenology into France in the 1930s after studying under Husserl and Heidegger in Freiburg (Steinfels, 1995). His contribution to ethics has been significant. Levinas' ethics of the Other has influenced Derrida and much of the post-modern Continental school.

Following Nietzsche, Levinas, along with his contemporaries, notably Heidegger, criticised previous philosophers for being preoccupied with an ontological bias in the field of ethics. An ethical exchange, Levinas asserted, was phenomenological, not ontological nor empirical. Ethics begins when a person's egoism has been interrupted (Levinas, 1969: 64-70). Similar to Sartre's and Lacan's 'gaze', Levinas believes this interruption comes from an encounter with the face of an absolute Other, which commits a person toward generosity. The act of generosity comes from the Other's perceived destitution or vulnerability, which suspends the selfish egoism and creates, following Sartre, a 'being-for-the-Other' (Levinas, 1969: 64-70). The face of the Other is what is key to Levinas' theory. It is the face that causes the disruption, a direct encounter with an Other since the face, above all, reveals vulnerability and suffering. The face calls into question one's egoism and entices one toward justice and hospitality. This phenomenological approach of the absolute Other seems perfectly situated to include (other) animals into a universal ethical sphere hitherto enjoyed exclusively by humans.

However, Levinas in the usual dogmatic way resolutely draws the line between humans and animals in his ethical ideal. Non-human faces, thinks Levinas, do not interrupt one in the same way human faces do, but he can never rigorously explain why (Levinas, 1969:

64-70). Calarco believes that Levinas' affirmation of the insuperable line is just sloppy philosophy and that, like Heidegger, he never really gave the animal question much thought (Calarco, 2008: 62). This was highlighted toward the end of his life in a 1986 interview when students from the Universities of Essex and Warwick pressed Levinas to clarify why a human face carried more value than a non-human one. Levinas answered, somewhat unassuredly, that:

“One cannot entirely refuse the face of an animal. It is via the face that one understands for example a dog. Yet 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. The phenomenon of the face is not in its purest form in the dog. In the dog, in the animal, there are other phenomena. For example, the force of nature is pure vitality. It is more this that characterizes the dog. But it also has a face.” (Levinas, 1988: 169)

It is interesting that Levinas chooses the face of a dog for a specific example because a decade earlier he published an essay called the *The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights* (1975) which Peter Atterton described as one of the most “bizarre things Levinas ever published, but also one of the most interesting.” (Atterton, 2004: 51)

The Name of a Dog is a story about Bobby, a stray dog that befriended Levinas and his fellow inmates during their internment in a camp for Jewish prisoners of war near Hanover in Nazi Germany. This was an actual encounter, like Derrida's cat, although clearly under very different circumstances. What is interesting about this phenomenological encounter is that Levinas succeeds in blurring the line between animal and human. Levinas and his fellow Jewish prisoners have been reduced to nonhumans “... stripped of our human skin. We were sub-human, a gang of apes.” (Levinas, 2004: 48) However, to Bobby, “there was no doubt that we were men” (Levinas, 2004: 48) meaning

that, unlike the injustice metered out by the camp guards, Bobby showed no discrimination toward them. He would bark and wag his tail every time the prisoners returned from their daily routine of backbreaking labour. In short, Bobby was more a moral agent than the guards, “the last Kantian in Nazi Germany.” (Levinas, 2004: 49) This story points to the fact that Levinas does, to some degree value non-humans, especially dogs, as morally agentive, or at least quasi-agentive, and therefore it would seem possible that moral obligation should be extended to such animals.

When asked in a follow-up question by the students in 1986 whether moral obligation should be extended to non-human animals, Levinas admitted that “the ethical extends to all living beings” but it remains “a prototype to human ethics” that “arises out of a transference to animals of the idea of suffering.” (Levinas, 1988: 171) Levinas recognised the same problem with the Benthamite question as Derrida. Levinas saw it, first and foremost, as a human condition that is extended onto certain (other) animals but only as a comparison to themselves. Dogs, he admits, can invite moral obligation because the face is recognisable and familiar to us, but says Levinas during the same interview, “I don’t know if a snake has a face. I can’t answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed.” (Levinas, 1988: 171)

Levinas, it is clear, recognised the limitations of his own thesis and that he was aware that he never gave enough consideration to non-human animals, especially snakes, in his ethical disquisition. Yet, Levinasian ethics remains open enough for others to analyse. An extension to (other) animals like snakes is well within its scope, and this is where Derrida steps in.

Peter Atterton in his essay entitled *Ethical Cynicism* states that the lesson drawn from Levinas’ discussion on ethics, one that Levinas never fully appreciated, was that his ethical theory is possibly the best equipped to accommodate the inclusion of (other)

animals (Atterton, 2004: 53). The encounter with the face of the absolute Other is as powerful as the utilitarian notion of moral considerability.

Derrida makes a specific reference to Levinas' ethics when he described the individual encounter with his cat, but he takes the phenomenology much further. Derrida is aware that the face of the Other does not only interrupt one's egoism through destitution or vulnerability, indeed, there are a limitless number of ways in which the face of a specific Other can interrupt and disrupt one's selfish pursuits a priori of the preconceived ideas one has toward others. These interruptions could be "kindness and vitality" (Calarco, 2008: 70) much like Bobby the dog displayed toward the prisoners otherwise stripped of their humanity and dignity. The interruption of the face of his cat, for Derrida specifically, caused a sense of shame to overcome him, which launched an ethical pursuit aimed at encompassing the Other.

At the point of interruption, however, it does not mean one has to act generously, as Levinas maintained. Sometimes doing nothing is the correct ethical approach, or joining the Other in protest could be construed under certain circumstances as the right thing to do. Matthew Calarco agrees, stating that "once the idiosyncratic restrictions" of Levinas' own version of his ethics are lifted, Levinasian ethics will become "rigorously and generously *agnostic*." (Calarco, 2008: 69) In other words, a Levinasian ethic is not shackled to an empirical or ontological proof as other ethical versions, like utilitarianism, tends to be and it would appear that, because of its agnosticism, and Derrida's endorsement of the facial encounter with his pet cat, Levinasian ethics probably goes further than a utilitarian ethic toward including non-human animals.

Yet, the agnosticism only extends to a point because, just like the utilitarian notion of moral considerability, Levinasian ethics is reduced to relying on empirical data in proving *who* exactly has a face. Levinas' confession that he does not know whether a snake has a

face is a compelling one and it shows that Levinas' hesitation in including (other) animals was more insightful than previously thought. I could similarly ask if a fish has a face. Its eyes are cold and shallow, they do not look at you as a cat or a dog does, so there is no interruption of the ego, no calling into question my sympathy, generosity or responsibility and, thus, according to Levinasian ethics, a fish should not have a face. I for one would disagree, since as a scuba diver I have had the opportunity to see the eyes of fish in a different context to most other people, and in that context there is, for me, an interruption. I have seen fish look carefully, quizzically at me. I have seen in their faces wonder, bewilderment, indignation, fear, anger and a dozens of other recognisable traits that cause me to consider them with both moral obligation and as moral agents but I fear I am in the vast minority since many people will never encounter fish the way I have.

That is another important point. Most people's 'encounter' with (other) animals is at the dinner table, as food. They rarely, if ever, have an opportunity to encounter the gaze of another live animal. In fact, this is Derrida's main criticism of most philosophers:

"The experience of the seeing animal, of the animal that looks at them, has not been taken into account in the philosophical or theoretical architecture of their discourse. In sum they have denied it as much as misunderstood it. From here on we shall circle round and round the immense disavowal, whose logic traverses the whole history of humanity, and not only the quasi-epochal configuration I just mentioned [the violent epoch from Descartes to present]. It is as if the men representing this configuration had seen without being seen, seen the animal without being seen by it; without being seen seen naked by someone who, from deep within a life called animal, and not only by means of a gaze, would have obliged them to recognize, at the moment of the address, that this was their affair ..." Derrida, 2008: 14)

It highlights that while Levinasian ethics is a sound one and if taken specifically and individually it can function, but only if the face interrupts. It is doubtful if the faces of fish, spiders and snakes do so for most people. It is also doubtful, in most instances, that dogs and cats, as Levinas cautioned, can interrupt us ethically, at least, in the same vein as other humans, and even then, as Levinas was well aware himself, that the face of another human, like the face of a Jew in Nazi Germany, or more commonly the face of a beggar at a street crossing in downtown Cape Town, would far from guarantee moral consideration. The lines remain drawn between those on the ‘inside’ of an ethic and those cast on the ‘outside’.

In an interview with historian Elisabeth Roudinesco published as a collection called *For What Tomorrow ...: A Dialogue (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (2004) Derrida explicitly warns against using these comparative criteria to argue for granting certain animals moral status, for it is the very criteria that has served to justify the violence toward animals, and other humans, in the first place. (Derrida, 2004: 64-5) Suffering is always compared to the kind of suffering that humans experience. Faces are compared with the faces of humans. Human feelings and faces are the standard by which other sentience and expression is measured. Non-human animals that are perceived to have similar feelings and expressions to humans are therefore placed on a higher ethical plane than animals that don’t meet the criteria. When analysing Levinas in the *Animal that Therefore I Am* Derrida reiterates that:

“It is only by means of a transference, indeed, through metaphor or allegory, that such suffering obliges us. Certainly the human face is and says “I am”, in the end, only in front of the other and after the other, but that is always the other human, and the latter comes before an animal, which never looks at him to say “Thou shalt not kill”, even if it be as if to say ‘Help, I am suffering,’ with the implication ‘like you’.” (Derrida, 2008: 108)

That anthropomorphic line could be drawn subjectively at mammals as Regan does, or it could be at the mark to include reptiles, or amphibians, or fish, as I did, or insects as the Jaines do. But why only separate animals along species lines? One just as randomly can redraw the distinction at pets, domestic or wild animals. The line has already been drawn over the tahr versus endemic wildlife issue on Table Mountain, so why not divide beings into ‘domestic’ and ‘wild’? Pets and domestic animals are sometimes seen as inferior to the protection of wild animals, while others take the opposite view. Or - and this is the anthropocentric pearl - why not choose between animals that are useful to humans as food, totems, representations and rituals versus inconsequential animals, like ghost frogs, leopard toads and blue swallows, or animals that provide humanity with nothing but trouble like baboons, great white sharks, snakes, fleas, tsetse flies, and Anopheles mosquitoes. Most humans regard the eradication of such animals as essential if we (humans) are to live in a better world. How many animal rights activists decry the killing of whales by the Japanese scientists but feel no remorse at spraying their houses with poisonous aerosols to rid themselves of thousands spiders, flies and other unwanted insects?

Perhaps the problem with animal rights philosophers’ and campaigners’ continued insistence on drawing and re-drawing the insuperable line has a lot to do with the axiomatic use of language. In this next section I will uncover some resolvable problems.

3. THE PROBLEM OF RIGHTS DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY POLITICS

3.1 The War of the Words

A major problem with the logic of exclusion, says Calarco, is that it forces animal rights theorists to “adopt the language and strategies of identity politics ...” (Calarco, 2008: 7) This, in turn, leads to an isolationist approach within politically progressive circles. In other words, the movement for animal rights competes with other political identities like the rights of women, workers, minority groups and the plight of the poor. And, as it generally happens, especially within the social fabric of a country like South Africa, animal rights issues invariably take a back seat to these other ‘more pressing’ political identities. Paradoxically, it is among progressive and leftist thinkers that we find the greatest challenge to the animal rights movement.

A current example is the dire predicament of rhino poaching in South Africa. Over the past few years the slaughter of rhinos for their horns has spiked to the point where the animals are facing extinction, yet many progressive or leftist thinkers and politicians, most of whom regard animal rights as an elitist, bourgeois and a white-dominated luxury, consider the high unemployment and rampant poverty as a far more pressing issue. Many South Africans think it preposterous to worry about the lives of rhinos when humans are suffering too.²⁴ The end result is that most legal and financial assistance is grossly weighed in favour of the suffering of humans as opposed to the suffering and possible extinction of rhinos.

²⁴ In an interview before the national elections in May 2014 Economic Freedom Fighters’ leader, Julius Malema, when asked about the crisis of rhino poaching that saw over 1 000 rhinos slaughtered in 2013, replied: “Who cares about rhino poaching anyway? Rhinos are like dinosaurs: out there, maybe, but have no direct impact. We are concerned about our people.” (News24: 15/04/2014)

To make matters worse, these isolationist tendencies in promoting animal rights, as well as the tendencies of other political identities to side-line animal issues, has led some activists to adopt regressive and conservative strategies and actions that, firstly, are contrary to progressive thought and, secondly, are unlikely to win the intended empathy from the general human population.

Organizations like Sea Shepherd and, to a lesser, extent Green Peace have been saddled with militaristic and violent innuendo, labelled as ‘eco-terrorists’ or ‘eco-fascists’ because of the violence meted out toward those hunting whales, building nuclear power stations or removing pristine natural habitat for low-cost housing. Brendon Larson, who teaches on the social dimensions of invasion biology at the University of Waterloo in Canada, argues in his paper entitled *The War of the Roses: Demilitarizing Invasion Biology* (2005) that the language biologists and conservationists adopt toward invasive alien animals and plants is negatively combative and militaristic. This is problematic because:

“(1) they lead to an inaccurate perception of invasive species; (2) they contribute to social misunderstanding, charges of xenophobia, and loss of scientific credibility; and (3) they reinforce militaristic patterns of thought that are counterproductive for conservation.” (Larson, 2005: 495)

Larson goes on to cite the common militaristic metaphors of conservationists and scientists against certain species. They are as follows: “a war against invasive species”; “aliens”; “establish a beach-head”; “kill”; “explode”; “weapons”; “eradication”; “an invasion”; “a terrorist attack on the environment.” (Larson, 2005: 495) This kind of war rhetoric, as Larson asserts, is too easily associated with militaristic or nationalistic policies of vicious past and current inter-human acts of violence. War and terrorism are

common associations one makes with this kind of rhetoric. As a result, people tend to associate such attitudes with actual war and often take a dim view of the perpetrators as their behaviour smacks of right-wing dictatorial oppression. In South Africa ‘forced removal’ of invasive animals as well as banning human communities from ecologically pristine environs like game reserves, carries a heavy Apartheid stigma that still resonates loud among most previously excluded South Africans. Too easily a switch is made between the plight of animals and the plight of humans, with the plight of the former in a losing competition with the latter.

In another paper Larson mentions that he often brings up this statement with his students made by San Francisco City Supervisor, Leland Yee, who has an Asian ancestry:

‘How many of us are “invasive exotics” who have taken root in the San Francisco soil, have thrived and flourished here, and now contribute to the wonderful mix that constitutes present day San Francisco?’ (Larson, 2007: 257)

Yee makes a valid point. The parallels are interesting in that the term ‘invasive exotic’ elicits the drawing of an analogy between invasive animal species and undesired human immigrants. This use of language, like statements such as ‘the eradication of aliens’ again touches a raw nerve in xenophobic-riddled South Africa where people from Zimbabwe, Malawi and Somalia, among others, have been deemed ‘alien’. Much rhetorical and physical violence has been directed toward them as many local South Africans see their ‘eradication’ as necessary for their own welfare. The same could be said for the Zimbabwe government’s violent action toward ‘alien’ white farmers. Similar militaristic metaphors by conservationists and animal rights activists have connotations of acts of war, violence and, at worst, genocide. Consequently, it may be construed, by those on the

outside, that conservationists and the animal rights movement are violent and xenophobic and are subliminally regarded with a suspicion that can manifest into open derision.

The actions and attitude of conservation authorities on alien tahrs and alien vegetation like the pine trees on the southern slope of Table Mountain at Tokai and Cecilia Forest sectors have been likened to the worst of human oppression (Cape Times, 2007).

It also does not help that together with the militaristic jargon (tahrs and pines are labelled as ‘escapees’ and ‘invaders’ that must be ‘hunted down’ and ‘eradicated’), the parks authorities seem to pay scant regard to the opinions and beliefs of the general public, and have run roughshod over any dissent from the nature-loving public. This has resulted in widespread public distrust of the South African National Parks authorities, where impassioned protesters have made comparisons between the conservationists and the Taliban (Cape Times, 2007).

The violent language and attitude also tends to polarize villain and victim. The tahr issue on Table Mountain polarized the conservation authorities against animal rights activists, including the SPCA (Animal People News, 2004). One would have thought the two opponents were all on the same environmental page, but due to the misuse of language and the militaristic right-wing attitude, both groups found themselves pitted against each other in a violent war of words. By using the language of a military oppressor it is not surprising that the Table Mountain conservation authorities found themselves regarded as such by the public and animal rights activists. Yet, the same language is true for the other side, their response could be compared to equally militaristic left-wing revolution talk. Calls to ‘fight’ against the ‘tyranny’ are often succeeded in media print and online with an army of exclamation marks. The Table Mountain park manager also received an SMS threat that read: “If one more tahr is murdered, you will be next!!!!” (Gosling, 2004).

The war of words is viewed with bemusement by other political identities who have begun disparaging the animal liberation movements calling them ‘bunny or tree huggers’, ‘greenies’ and ‘eco-terrorists’. Idioms like the last one create images of a ‘hot’ war where emotion tends to run roughshod over prudence. Sides become embroiled in a slinging match with the aim of scoring points at the expense of the other side. The fictitious character, Elizabeth Costello, is a fierce campaigner for animals’ rights but she is well aware of the problem of heated verbal combat. In her lecture entitled *The Philosophers and the Animals* Costello remarks that she knows:

“... how talk of this kind polarizes people, and cheap point-scoring only makes it worse. I want to find a way of speaking to fellow human beings that will be cool rather than heated, philosophical rather than polemical, that will bring enlightenment rather than seeking to divide us into the righteous and the sinners, the saved and the damned, the sheep and the goats.” (J.M. Coetzee 2003: 66)

It is a compelling remark and goes back to what Larson was saying about heated combative talk being counterproductive. The better way to approach these issues is a cool, philosophical approach which may lead to enlightenment rather than polarizing binaries between the “righteous and the sinners”. But it is the cool philosophical approach of deconstruction and not pugnacious philosophers like Searle²⁵ that is required. Derrida believes that language needs to be re-inscribed to avoid the violent tendency to become polemical. Deconstruction’s task is to defer away from any polemical divide and insists that there must be no distinction of “the saved versus the damned, the sheep and the goats”.

²⁵ Searle’s much-publicized outburst against Derrida and deconstruction is covered in detail in Chapter 1.

3.2 The Language of ‘Subjectivity’

Matthew Calarco argues there is another similar but more subtle language difficulty that animal rights activists face in what he describes as “the anthropocentric constraints at work in political and legal institutions ... that animal rights discourse ends up acceding to...” (Calarco, 2008: 8). This is something Derrida has highlighted throughout his major works. Language is steeped in the ‘metaphysics of subjectivity’ and animal rights discourse unfortunately is deeply constrained in adopting the self-same language.

Regan’s ‘subject-of-a-life’, notices Calarco, is “not a case for animal rights but for rights for *subjects*.” (Calarco, 2008: 8) This reinforces the point I have made earlier, that subject-like traits in other animals are always measured against human subjectivity. The ‘metaphysics of subjectivity’ for Heidegger was a superfluous term. According to him, ‘metaphysics’ in Western thought *is* ‘subjectivity’ and is centred exclusively on *human* subjectivity in opposition to other beings the human subject encounters in the world. These notions, as has been demonstrated, are implicit in language. Therefore, when it comes to the discourse of animal rights, theorists discover that only those animals that exhibit ‘subjectivity’ qualify for rights. No doubt an animal rights philosopher like Tom Regan would prefer to expand the scope of moral consideration to include all animals, like the Jaines do, but he is constrained by the implicit anthropocentric model of subjectivity in order to make a case that “can gain a hearing in that model.” (Calarco, 2008: 9) In other words, one has to use the language of the metaphysics of subjectivity – paradoxically the same language that has been used to deny animals a basic moral standing – to make a claim. The result, as Regan and Singer discovered, is one is always forced to accede to the demands of language. The upshot of which is a matter of redrawing a new exclusionary boundary in the same old arbitrary way. As Derrida says in the interview called *Eating Well* that “we know less than ever where to cut ... And this also means that we never know, have never known, how to *cut up* a subject.” (Derrida, 1995: 285)

This is where a deconstruction comes to the rescue:

“Of course, if one defines language in such a way that it is reserved for what we call man, what is there to say? But if one re-inscribes language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside, everything changes. I am thinking in particular of the mark in general, of the trace, of the iterability, of *différance*.”
(Derrida, 1995: 284)

The displacement of anthropocentric language and subject-centred models is the key to affording a fully inclusive ethic, and deconstruction thus calls for a *pre-subjective* perspective that is refigured in non-anthropocentric terms.

4. UNIVERSAL CONSIDERATION

Thomas H. Birch calls for the abandonment of the ‘subject’ and ergo the moral *consideranda* that is attached to it (and the parallel attempt to determine who or what has a face). Instead, the notion of subjectivity ought to be replaced with something more agnostic, that is, an ethic that is open to the possibility that *anything* might be considered to take on a face. This approach, argues Calarco, is a notion that takes on humankind’s “fallibility in determining where the face begins and ends.” (Calarco, 2008: 73) In other words, who or what must enjoy moral consideration. This is a notion that Birch calls “Universal Consideration”. (Birch, 1993: 313-32)

The key to universal consideration is that it does not attempt to develop any criteria that would define who/what has a face or moral considerability, because to do so will fall back into the trap of arbitrary line-drawing. The focus here must be generously open-ended, which means it also does not accept the criterion that *all* beings must take on a face and that ethical consideration includes all forms of life. What universal consideration *is* arguing for is (1) a disruption of anthropocentric attitudes in ethics; (2) an avoidance of essentialist and reductionist ideology that places non-human animals in a single class distinct from human animals; (3) a linking of the divergence of animal and environmental ethicists and the fact that the animal question does not get relegated to compete with other human struggles or identities; (4) that the animals as individuals must count, that their specificity must be attended to so that we can learn how to transform their situation to something far more ethical. (Birch, 1993: 315) Universal consideration is not about making a positive claim, it is rather, as Calarco attests following Levinas' own terminology, a risk without the pretensions of knowing what we understand about non-human animals. "Such risks", states Calarco "are what constitute the act of doing philosophy" (Calarco, 2008: 77) and it is the sort of agnostic risk that Derrida takes when providing for a (non)alternative ethic. In the concluding chapter that follows these lines of thought are further explored in the context of developing the outlines of a deconstructionist animal ethic.

Chapter 4: DELINEARIZING THE INSUPERABLE LINE: DECONSTRUCTION AS ETHIC

The last chapter is about using deconstruction to lay a foundation for an applied ethic, and how to avoid the pitfalls discussed in the previous chapters. I will begin with presenting some criticisms of the deconstructive approach toward such an ethic, especially from the animal rights thinkers like Peter Singer. I will then show that, like Searle's criticism of deconstruction in general, these arguments are largely founded on a misunderstanding of what deconstruction is and how it 'functions'. Through what Derrida calls 'limotrophy' (Derrida, 2008: 29), deconstruction has the potential of supplying a far more comprehensive ethic than any of the prevailing versions revealed in Chapter 3. I hope to conclude this thesis by providing, not a 'concrete' ethic toward animals per se (because deconstruction prevents such conceptualisations), but to provide what Matthew Calarco identifies as a 'proto-ethic' (Calarco, 2008: 108), which is, in the spirit of Nietzsche, not to provide a distinctive or definitive alternative but rather a chart toward the formation of a sustainable and workable animal ethic.

1. DECONSTRUCTION AND POST-MODERN ETHICS

1.1 THE ANGLO-AMERICAN CHARGE

In the preface to the collection of primary and secondary readings on the animal question in Continental Philosophy entitled *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought* (2004), Peter Singer takes pride that his philosophical writings, among a handful of others such as Tom Regan, came prior to, and, more importantly, gave impetus to a global animal rights movement. Most of these ideas Singer points out, quoting his own words from previous texts, came almost exclusively out of the Anglo-American stable in

philosophy, one that, because of its solid utilitarian and pragmatic framework, “has had a significant impact in changing both popular attitudes and practices regarding the treatment of animals.” (Singer, 2004: xii) Singer cites a study conducted by Charles Magel (Singer, 2004: xii) who found only 94 philosophical works on the subject of animals before 1970, but by the 1980s when Magel conducted his study the number had exploded to almost 300. These days the number of philosophical papers dealing directly with the animal question is well into the thousands, a clear indication that the question of the animal is now a major subject in modern philosophy. But, Singer asks, “How much of this philosophical impetus ... came from writers in the philosophical traditions of Continental Europe?” (Singer, 2004: xii) For Singer, as far as he can judge, there aren’t any, not a single one. This, of course, includes Singer’s readings of Derrida’s text ‘*The Animal that Therefore I Am*’ (in Chapter 7 of *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought* he prefaces), whom he disregards in adequately dealing with the question. Singer, not content to hide his mirth towards his Continental colleagues, expounds ...

“... for me the most significant question raised by this volume is why such an extensive body of thought should have failed to grapple with the issue of how we treat animals. What does this failure say about the much-vaunted critical stance that these thinkers are said to take to prevailing assumptions and social institutions?” (Singer, 2004: xii)

For Singer, Continental philosophy has largely failed to consider the value of (other) animals due to a variety of cultural and historical constraints, the usual anthropocentric assumptions and, perhaps with an explicit dig at Derrida, of dabbling in “vague rhetorical formulations.” (Singer, 2004: xiii)

Calarco's reasoning as to why (other) animals have not featured as much in Continental philosophy is that such philosophers "place a priority on concrete existential and ethico-political issues over abstract metaphysical and epistemological issues." (Calarco, 2008: 110) Given the positioning of modern Continental philosophy to the Nazi Holocaust for example, "which is a common and privileged referent to many of these thinkers" (Calarco, 2008: 110) if one were to dare compare the Holocaust, as Heidegger did in 1954²⁶, with the situation with (other) animals, it would be regarded as highly questionable. This forces Continental philosophers "to place human life always and everywhere in a higher rank over animal life ... despite the fact of the continuing rise and widespread presence of animal rights discourse in both philosophy and society at large." (Calarco, 2008: 110)

One could argue that such deficiencies may be true of the so-called much-vaunted ethico-political stances of Heidegger, Sartre, Lacan and Levinas, but then again given the period that these philosophers were writing (pre-1970) the same could be said for the Anglo-American school that Singer flamboyantly extols. It was only after 1970 that the Anglo-American tradition took up Bentham's call and began to be seriously concerned with the animal question. If one takes post-modern Continental philosophers like Derrida who, as has been established, *has* been concerned with animals "since the beginning" (albeit obliquely), this places his contribution as early as the 1960s when his seminal trio of works on deconstruction first appeared. That makes Derrida's ethical contribution to animals prior to Singer et al.

²⁶ In his 1954 essay, *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger compared the mechanized food industry with the Nazi gas chambers. The origin of that statement was a line delivered in a lecture in Bremen in 1949 when Heidegger stated "Agriculture is now a motorized food industry, the same thing in its essence as the production of corpses in the gas chambers and the extermination camps, the same thing as blockades and the reduction of famine to countries, the same thing as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs." (Sheehan, 1988: 45)

The fact, that it was only recently that the existing framework of deconstruction has been applied directly to the animal question, and thus far only Derrida is a significant contributor, does not mean that he has necessarily ‘failed’ (other) animals. I aim to demonstrate the significance of his ethical contribution throughout this last chapter, showing, ultimately, that deconstruction is a better alternative to the animal rights movements than the strictly utilitarian and normative approach of Singer and his colleagues. Also, one cannot ignore the cogent and relating contributions of other Continental thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Elisabeth de Fontenay, Giorgio Agamben as well as the pairing of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. All of whom have, in some form or another, dealt with the question of the animal even if from meta-or proto-ethical perspective rather than a normative or applied one.

1.2 THE CONTINENTAL SHIFT

From my reading of their texts, it would be incorrect to write off, as Singer seems to, the contributions of the pioneering work of Continental philosophers toward the animal question. Although most remained mired in their anthropocentric discourse, the likes of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Levinas effectively opened a new door into ethics and especially onto the animal question. They all pointed toward a more rigorous analysis for an inclusive ethic of animals, at least an ethic that promised more breadth and depth than the equally anthropocentric utilitarian approach. Although anachronistic by today’s standards, all three contributed heavily to the laying of a solid foundation for post-modern ethics, and were they to have stepped beyond their respective eras and afforded more time to the question perhaps a Nietzsche, a Heidegger or a Levinas would have laid the foundational stone to an all-inclusive animal ethic.

Indeed, I believe, in a remarkable way, they have. Given that each of these thinkers has had a major influence on Derrida’s work and the formulation of deconstruction, which, in

turn, and it cannot be refuted, has penetrated into almost every modern discipline from the sciences to literature. More so, the reliance of Continental philosophers on a more agnostic phenomenological aspect, as we have noted already with Levinas, rather than the traditional Cartesian version, is a profound and recondite basis for the structure of a post-modern ethics and one that is far more conducive to the animal question than utilitarianism.

Phenomenology, in its fundamental form, rejects the rationalist bias that has dominated Western thought in favour of a method of reflective attentiveness that discloses what Husserl called the individual's "lived experience." The consciousness is not 'in' the mind but rather a being is conscious of something other than itself. Therefore, the traditional notion of the 'subject' is disrupted as a stand-alone 'entity' or 'essence', and becomes one that is intricately bound up in the consciousness of another's (Husserl, 1970: 240-2).

These broad phenomenological notions are intrinsic throughout deconstruction and, as we shall see further along in this chapter, are challenges to all forms of reductionism rather than arguing that reductions are mere tools used to better understand and describe the workings of consciousness or being. The phenomenological approach shifts away from Cartesian 'thought economizing' and relies on the description of phenomena as they are given to consciousness in the first-person, that is, interactions in their *immediacy*. This last fundamentally phenomenological conviction is, as we shall see, pivotal in Derrida's initial formulation of a direct or situation ethic on (other) animals.

Before Husserl, it was Nietzsche who initiated the shift toward a new perspective in thinking. As was earlier discussed, it was he who proclaimed that reason could no longer claim hallowed ground as the purveyor of truth and logic, since it was nothing more than a figurative grouping of signifiers. More directly, however, Nietzsche believed that human *propres* were qualities that were no different from other animals. For Nietzsche, it

was the qualities of (other) animals – animality – that determined humanity. ‘Animal’ qualities, like courage, strength, vitality and energy was how Nietzsche valued humans positively. He did the same in a negative sense, claiming that those embedded ‘weak’ animal qualities, like gregariousness, domesticity etc. gave a person less value (Lingis, 2004: 8).

This unfortunately is where Nietzsche falls back into the logic of exclusivity. It could be argued that even though his intention was to erase the line between humans and (other) animals, Nietzsche kept inadvertently redrawing it. Yet, Nietzsche’s writings are decidedly ‘zoological’ and anti-humanist in tone in that he forever evaluates all that is positive (or negative) in humans, which stems from the instincts and strengths of their latent ‘animality’ especially the traits of certain ‘noble’ solitary animals like tigers and eagles (Lingis, 2004: 9).

Although Nietzsche’s pioneering musings are somewhat crude, this is a theme Derrida carries forward with his aim to reinstate humans as the animals they are, not as the superior non-animalistic rational androids that Descartes and the Western onto-theological tradition have sought to install.

Following Nietzsche, it was Heidegger, despite Derrida’s serious misgivings on his anthropocentrism, who resolutely targeted the ‘metaphysics of subjectivity’ throughout the history of the Western philosophical epoch in order to develop a rethinking of ethics that is both pre-subjective and post-metaphysical. *Dasein* was Heidegger’s replacement for terms such as ‘subject’, ‘object’, ‘consciousness’, and ‘world’, which, like *différance*, defers from the subject/object binary. Heidegger also noted that with *Dasein* there is always a ‘mood’, a mood that overcomes us and causes us to be reflective about our being-in-the-world. This mood is what Heidegger calls ‘care’, or as another translation states, ‘concern’, a mood that manifests itself through the ‘facticity’ of *Dasein*. For

Heidegger 'facticity' occupies a multiplicity of meanings, including moods as conditions of thinking that elicits a response from the being-in-the-world toward the Other (Heidegger, 1962: 29-90).

As we shall see, these are all significant points in Derrida's formulation of an ethic. Derrida repeatedly plays on Heideggerian terminology, like 'destruktion', 'concern', and 'being-in-the-world' to formulate his own thesis. Lastly, following his one-time mentor, Husserl, Heidegger suggested that it was important to look at the world from the perspective of the Other (Heidegger, 1962: 70-6), something Sartre, Lacan, Levinas and ultimately Derrida have differentially developed further. In fact, it is the very notion of the Other versus the long history of egoistic presence of self-identity that became the primary focus for the entire ponder of Continental philosophers from Nietzsche, Hegel, Freud, Brentano and Husserl through to Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Arendt and especially Levinas, Lacan, Foucault and Derrida, a trait that makes Continental ethics what it is. Thus the far-reaching influence from such erstwhile Continental philosophers has had a significant bearing on the 'animal-as-other' in the post-modern era. It is, arguably, in this post-modern/phenomenological ethical sense that these Continental philosophers have done more than the problematic and limited mechanisms of normative utilitarianism, which, as I have demonstrated, were glaringly highlighted in the previous chapter.

In the editors' introduction to *Animal Philosophy* Atterton and Calarco state that:

"Continental philosophy is perhaps better placed than is Anglo-American philosophy to accommodate the animal question owing to its more sophisticated understanding of the role of history in philosophical discourse, a historicism that has enabled it to make significant advances in other fields

from feminism to psychoanalysis, and from cultural studies to critical race theory.” (Atterton & Calarco, 2004: xvi)

The successes in the fields of feminism, psychoanalysis, cultural analysis, race relations and other ‘emancipation’ disciplines have come exclusively from this wholesale and astute historical critique of Western humanism. The influence of Continental philosophy, is further-reaching pragmatically since it vigorously penetrates the core fabric of society. This sets it apart from the contributions made by the Anglo-American tradition who generally favour a more theory-based, analytical approach. Or, as in the case of the animal rights movement, which although considered as an ‘applied’ ethic, is a marginal identity-based policy that is forced to compete against other identity-based movements. For this fact, as Atterton and Calarco maintain, Continental philosophers in general are poised to deliver results in animal philosophy since “they open up new vistas for research even if they often turn out to be cul-de-sacs for the thinkers themselves.” (Atterton & Calarco, 2004: xvii)

Jacques Derrida is the latest protagonist of this tradition. He more than any other philosopher has taken the animal question the farthest. Not only does he rise above the trappings of anthropocentrism that beset his predecessors but his attack on ‘subjectivity’ and a focus on the ‘pre-subject’ has become critical in showing the way forward to a functional non-anthropocentric ethic. Derrida’s main focus is the insuperable line that Bentham cites. The border, the abyss that separates beings from inside and outside a moral community. It is here that Derrida sets to work tracking and tracing the context-bound language that forces our thinking.

1.3 LIMOTROPHY: WORKING THE LINE

Singer, though, has a point. While great strides have been taken in the ethical areas of feminism, post-colonial and race relations, the animal question on the other hand, although ‘poised’ to proceed from the foundational stage, has thus far failed to get out of the starting blocks. At least the Anglo-American animal liberation philosophers²⁷ have been diligently slogging it out for the past forty years without any pragmatic assistance from their Continental colleagues. However, Derrida, although a relative latecomer in terms of a *direct* enquiry into (other) animals, was never content merely just to lay another brick in the sturdy foundation of post-modernism as his predecessors had done. Derrida, I believe, has answered Peter Singer’s charge and has proceeded to set about creating a workable ethic for (other) animals starting from the foundation up. Were it not for his untimely death in 2004, we may already be a lot further along. Consequently, one should bear in mind that Derrida’s direct contribution to the question of the (other) animal, as Matthew Calarco wrote in an early review of *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, “does not represent a polished draft, but a work in progress that Derrida would no doubt have wished to expand and rework in several ways.” (Calarco, 2009) Indeed, Derrida’s last seminars he presented (compiled in two volumes entitled *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2009)) are an expansion on *The Animal that Therefore I Am*. Not coincidentally Derrida discusses facing the spectre of death and likens it with non-human animals like werewolves, beasts that hesitate between life and death (Derrida, 2009: 13). He explores our animal commonality with death, despite our intended separation from (other) animals – “There is only one thing against which all violence-doing, violent

²⁷ Apart from Singer and Regan, the likes of Gary Francione and Marc Bekoff have made considerable strides in applied animal liberation policies in both the USA and UK. Francione’s *Rain Without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement* (1996) and *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog?* (2000) deals with animal rights and welfare as well as sentience and veganism, while Bekoff is, among other things, a co-founder with Jane Goodall for Etiologists for Ethical Treatment of Animals.

action, violent activity, immediately shatters. [...] It is death. Our opening question thus remains entire: who is capable of death?" (Derrida, 2009: 290) and thus Derrida reiterates Bentham's notion of suffering. It is an interesting weave as Derrida again evokes Descartes and Heidegger's anthropocentric dogma and meshes it with the text of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. These final seminars look set to continue with a subject that Derrida seems to have developed a growing passion for, but unfortunately he does not provide any more insight than what he has already covered in *The Animal that Therefore I Am*. It is however telling that in facing his impending death Derrida chose the subject of (other) animals from his vast deconstructive oeuvre for his seminar discussions.

The fact of the matter is that Derrida has largely gone unnoticed by thinkers and activists alike. Part of the problem is that his direct involvement *has* come late in the stage of animal ethics in philosophy, but that could be argued away as a necessary response to the past failures of utilitarian and normative ethics. It is also now left to acolytes and proponents of deconstruction to take up the banner and carry Derrida's infrastructure of ideas forward into the more 'concrete' arena, an area, despite the attention of thinkers like Matthew Calarco, most have been slow to take up.

More severely, though, the main reason for deconstruction's failure to emerge out of academic obscurity and into popular politics, specifically with regard to the animal question, is the labyrinthine and tortuous examination of deconstruction as a concept-evading concept. This has tended to frustrate readers in philosophy as well as animal studies who are looking to Derrida to deliver a concrete, prescribed course of action, similar to the clear-cut prescriptions, like becoming a vegetarian or vegan, something that both Singer and Regan endorse.

There is also a more serious charge against deconstruction, one we have witnessed from the much-publicised debate with Searle and other Anglo-American thinkers. Here the

same arguments are levelled at deconstruction's (mis)handling of the animal question. The charge is that deconstruction does not only obfuscate the issue with "vague rhetorical formulations" but negatively undermines the process too. In the *Encyclopaedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy* under the reference title *Post-modern Philosophy*, Zimmerman wrote that the main accusations are the "'anything goes' attitude [of post-modernism] [that] unwisely abandons the search for ethical limits regarding the treatment of nature and humankind alike" and that such methods "deconstruct *all* truth claims, foundation and narratives including those cherished by environmentalists." (Zimmerman, 2009: 383)

We have already analysed deconstruction's attack on carnophallogocentrism and Bentham's seminal question on suffering, which gives such critics ammunition in pointing out that the insistence of attacking both sides of the binary results in a wholesale undermining of ideas and organizations that are trying to include (other) animals within the ethical realm. Thus, organizations such as Green Peace are viewed with the same scepticism and get the same rigorous treatment as British Petroleum. The biggest issue here is that deconstruction does not seem to provide a concrete alternative. Since a concept like equal consideration has been deconstructed and, as a result, proven problematic in that it still adheres to the discourse of anthropo- and logocentrism, what then is one to do? This is a good question because at no time does Derrida himself provide a direct or concrete alternative to utilitarianism.

One of course does not need Derrida to provide concrete solutions. Deconstruction is more than able to cruise through the prickly issues by making use of a sensitive interpretation of its central tenets that are already well-known as they pertain to the 'animal question'. However, to refute the above accusations one needs to shift one's perspective of what a 'concrete ethic' is. The conventional view of a 'concrete' ethic is that it gives the lay-population a course of action – a defined boundary to move about and work within. To be 'concrete', the argument usually goes, such an ethic should clearly

also be tailored and simplified to accommodate the minds and actions of the largest possible (human) population, and as such should offer practical solutions for particular problems, or general guidelines that can be ‘applied’ to many different problems and issues.

Deconstruction is not an ethic in this sense because it eschews simplistic solutions to what it sees as a multitude of problems and seeks other ways of providing an ethic. Take for example the act of being a vegetarian. The fundamental aim of deconstruction is to resist conceptualization of the ‘other’ altogether, open the question against reductionism and essentialism, blur the insuperable divide, defer from strict binaries and find the vast expansive middle-ground as it were. This is why *différance*, the deferment away from fixed concepts like anthropocentrism *and* its opposite, vegetarianism, is critical to any deconstruction. By ignoring *différance* and claiming vegetarianism as the solution to carnophallogocentrism, one is merely switching one concept for another without disturbing the oppositional structure. Vegetarianism, because it is in itself a concept, must “*also* impassion a deconstructive approach to the question of the animal.” (Calarco, 2008: 135) If vegetarianism became the dominant human approach, ‘otherness’ will remain in the form of anyone opposed to vegetarianism. The dichotomy remains fully entrenched even though vegetarians and vegans may be morally correct in stating that the prevention of the wholesale slaughter of (other) animals is indeed a far more progressive and nobler moral code.

It is this insistence of avoiding what may be regarded as ethically right that leaves thinkers nonplussed with deconstruction. Critics of deconstruction, however, exhibit a gross lack of understanding of such fundamental goals of deconstruction. Any hierarchical binary structure is dangerous and panders toward violence. For example, as a vegetarian or vegan there remains the massive mistreatment of animals in almost all major commercial agricultural industries, from pesticides to deforestation on colossal scales. One merely has to track “the processes by which one’s food gets to the table is

enough to dissatisfy any consumer of the notion that a vegetarian diet is cruelty free.” (Calarco, 2008: 135)

As difficult as it is to gain anything constructive from the apparent penchant for limitlessness or nihilism, deconstruction *does* seek a limit. This is the limit that *différance* and the law of supplements calls for, the third tier or middle ground as it were. This is *not* a move toward a *compromise* between opposing forces but a wholesale disruption, or to use Derrida’s play with semantics, a *trephō*, *trophē* or *trophos*, (Derrida, 2008: 31) or in English, ‘-trophy’ which is a combining form suffix attached to words like ‘photo’ to make ‘phototrophy’. The root word *trophē* means “to transform” by “thickening” and curdling”. An example would be, a deconstruction of the anti-whaling organization, Sea Shepherd. The name evokes nurturing and protection but in action and with their logo of a skull and cross-bones a completely different message is conveyed, i.e. one of nihilism, lawlessness and violence. The same can be said with the name ‘Green Peace’. A deconstructive disruption would ask that animal rights campaigners of both organisations avoid such perceptions by replacing revolutionary discourse with cool, correct language and possibly wear suits and ties instead of slops and hemp shirts that box them as ‘bunny-huggers’ and not serious advocates of the rights of (other) animals in the eyes of the general public.

In *The Animal that Therefore I Am* Derrida departs somewhat from his usual meta-ethical track and attempts to create the rudiments of a workable ethic specific to the animal question. Rather than criticising all and sundry, as his critiques would have him usually do, Derrida sets about laying the groundwork for an achievable ethic, a positively ‘concrete ethic’ in another sense as alluded to above, with the explicit aim of refiguring that most obstreperous of obstacles – the insuperable line, the borderline, or limit between humans and (other) animals.

For Derrida the major problem with an animal ethic is the insistent need of philosophers to keep redrawing that line. The primary aim of deconstruction is a look toward an ethic that stirs the rigidity of the dividing line and reveals that in the mix are complex *relationships* of concepts, no longer as simplified facing binaries, but as endless layers and forms. In *The Animal that Therefore I Am* Derrida presents his ethical methodology based on the aforementioned ‘-trophē’ semantics. This is what he calls ‘limotrophy’ (stirring the limit), which is a task that first and foremost deals with the limit, at the line that divides.

“*Limotrophy* is therefore my subject. Not just because it will concern what sprouts or grows at the limit, around the limit, by maintaining the limit, but also what *feeds the limit*, generates, raises it, and complicates it. Everything I’ll say will consist, certainly not in effacing the limit, but in multiplying its figures, in complicating delinearizing, folding, and dividing the line precisely by making it increase and multiply.” (Derrida, 2008: 29)

It is clear, therefore, that limotrophy is intended, not just to understand and criticize the reasons the line exists, but to attend carefully to refiguring that line. It is important to understand that deconstruction does not seek to *erase* or *efface* the line, rather its aim is to reveal the multiplicity of interrelated lines instead of just the single arbitrary one between humans and (other) animals; or, the line drawn between those seeking to include animal ‘subjects’ of higher-order animals at the expense of lower-order animals. Matthew Calarco believes that “it is here that one of the central axes of the emerging fields of animal studies might profitably be situated” and that “not only would this project further de-sediment and de-naturalize the human-animal distinction, but would also help uncover alternative ways of conceiving human-beings and animals that have been ignored, covered over, and distorted by dominant discourses.” (Calarco, 2008: 140-141)

The central goal for limotrophy, then, is to move away from the traditional philosophical approach of trying to reduce or mark the differences between just two opposing binaries. A true ethic must first become both radically anti-reductive and anti-anthropocentric, and point toward a heterogeneous multitude of lines of which the human divide is but a small and somewhat insignificant part. As Derrida puts it:

“... the “Animal” or “Animal Life”, there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living, or more precisely (since to say “the living” is already to say too much or not enough) a multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead, relations of organization or lack of organization among realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of the figures of the organic and inorganic, of life and/or death. These relations are at once close and abyssal, and can never be totally objectified.”
(Derrida 2008: 31)

This passage, which is laced with *différance*, insists that the human-animal distinction is a crude one, especially when subjected to rigorous analysis. What exists instead is a multiplicity of relations “among realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of the figures of the organic and inorganic, of life and/or death.” This rejection of the human-animal divide and the insistence on the irreducible plurality of beings and their relational structures are what constitutes, what I believe, a solid foundation toward a positive ethic. From here on we shall analyse how exactly Derrida works along the insuperable line.

2. THE PROTO-ETHICAL IMPERATIVE

Derrida's central undertaking toward a non-anthropocentric ethic begins, as any ethic should, in what Calarco terms a 'proto-ethical' (Calarco, 2008: 108) sense. By 'proto-ethical' he is talking about the bedrock, the blueprint so to speak of an ethic. Think of proto-ethic as a precursor to an ethic, the architectural drawing of an ethical construction. Without the establishment of a proto-ethic, no applied ethic can be formulated, or rather if the central core of an ethic is limited or faulty as is Heidegger's or Singer's unavoidably anthropocentric ones, the resulting applied ethic can logically not function. The proto-ethic therefore sets about laying the ground to prevent the inherent logocentric and anthropocentric problems from appearing in any resultant applied ethic concerning (other) animals. I shall begin by focusing on the 'gaze' of (other) animals and how that disrupts our dogmatic reverie and blurs our subjectivity allowing us to become aware of the other, not just the vulnerability of the other but as the other-as-subject.

2.1 THE UNDENIABLE GAZE OF THE OTHER (ANIMAL)

The proto-ethic on animals begins with this question from Derrida, harping back to Heidegger's notion of 'care' or 'concern'. This question was formulated right after the bathroom encounter with his pet cat (I'm going to present the question here in its original French because it, as always with Derrida, the question has been carefully constructed so that it can be read in a number of ways):

“Depuis le temps, peut-on dire que l'animal nous regarde?” (Derrida, 2008:

3)

The literal translation reads, “Since long ago, can we say the animal has been looking at us?” It could also be read, as translator David Wills suggests, “Since long ago, can we say the animal has been our *concern*? [my italics]”, a Heideggerian term that Derrida himself deploys later in the text when he says “Animals are my concern.” (Derrida, 2008: 35) Derrida, once again, reiterates that the animal question has been both his and everyone’s concern since the beginning - since Aristotle, since Genesis, since Descartes, since Bentham, since Heidegger, since the 1970s. This is iterability at work within the context of our ontological analyses of ourselves as humans. What is iterable throughout history is whenever we try to understand our own ontological being as humans we are always inadvertently drawn into comparing ourselves to (other) animals.

Without the existence and presence of (other) animals our own conceptualizations of ‘being’ are impossible because the structure of language always insists on the opposing binary, or the ‘other’, to define the *ergo sum*, or the *Dasein*, of humans. This, as mentioned, has lead philosophy down the erroneous track of forever drawing the line, of comparing and elevating the attributes of a single species of animal against all the others. But, conversely, this also forces that single species to *address* and *respond* to other animals to prove their own existence.

Rousseau thought that writing serves only as a supplement to speech. Likewise, traditional philosophy has treated (other) animals in much the same way, as supplements to humans, which paradoxically in deconstruction terms, means that the human, although a constitutive entity in itself, it is still incomplete and must depend on the (other) animal for its existence. This is because there is something lacking in humans that only (other) animals can complete. That ‘lack’ is the intrinsic and shared *animality* within each and every human, an animality that Cartesian-based thinking has for the past epoch attempted to deny. It is something that Derrida (2009) explores at length in *The Beast and the Sovereign* when he discusses the shared spectre of death. The (other) animal, therefore, cannot be ignored. It is ambient-in-the-world and has seeped into the very core of

philosophy, and, more specifically, it concerns the basic structure of ontology; and from ontology we could also say that it has penetrated into the very heart of ethics.

Which brings me to the second and perhaps most important version of reading the above question: “Can we say the animal has been looking at us”, or even better, because ‘looking’ can be without adjudging, lets rather say: “*regarding* us”. It comes direct from the French ‘*regarde*’ and this kind of ‘look’ gives more weight to the question. Here the trace of an ethic begins to form. This, as we have already discovered, is the crux of Derrida’s thesis, it is a traditional ethics that have been given a phenomenological twist but in a way that shifts about in a perpetual state of flux between the binaries – the subject-as-object and the other-as-self. ‘Other’ can be written with a capital ‘O’ because ‘other’ now attains the same level of importance as the ‘I’; the capital, singular ‘I’ is incomplete without *the* Other and vice versa (I could of course write ‘I’ as ‘i’ but for wont of convention based on the esteemed phenomenological thinkers that I follow I have chosen the former). The question, therefore, asks about the nature of the absolute Other, by looking at the gaze of an unknowable but knowing, judging, considering, analysing, assessing perspective of an (other) animal.

A certain aspect of this question is not too dissimilar to Bentham’s original question asking that we empathise with another animal’s suffering (Husserl also spoke about empathy of the Other (Husserl, 1991: 109) and Heidegger, as I have said, speaks of ‘care’ or ‘concern’). This could be taken as placing oneself in the position of another’s sentience. But Derrida wants to avoid the resulting anthropocentric pitfalls of this version of the question. He recognizes that modern philosophy, true to its Cartesian allegiance and its scientific aspirations, demands proof that animals suffer or that animals are aware of their suffering; or even whether that suffering is the same as a human’s – and this is a grave mistake. Derrida’s argument is that animal rights theorists like Singer et al. when they ask the question “can they suffer?” are still concerned with what is *indubitable*,

when they should instead be concerned with “a radical, although essentially different [instance]: namely what is *undeniable*.” (Derrida, 2008: 28)

“... the response to this question – ‘Can they suffer?’ – leaves no room for doubt. In fact, it never left any room for doubt; that is why the experience that we have of it is not even indubitable; it precedes the indubitable, it is older than it. No doubt either, then, of there being within us the possibility of giving vent to a surge of compassion, even if it is then misunderstood, repressed, or denied, held at bay. Before the *undeniability* of this response (yes, they suffer, like us who suffer for them and with them), before this response that precedes all other questions, both ground and cornerstone of the problematic shift.” (Derrida, 2008: 28)

Indubitability tends toward anthropocentrism since suffering can only be compared with what is *known*, and the only known suffering is one’s own personal suffering. Ethics therefore is reduced to a comparison with suffering of the ‘subject’ that in turn is compared to other human suffering and only then compared to the suffering of (other) animals. Since comparison among humans and/or ‘higher-order’ animals is ‘recognizable’ we somehow and erroneously claim indubitability. Even if good science was practiced and suffering could be measured, indubitability would still exclude those who cannot ‘suffer’ (the word is in inverted commas to mark that suffering is foremost compared to human suffering). A deconstruction therefore would want to defer from this reductionistic totality of unquestionable truth and shift toward something more soliciting, like the notion of undeniability.

What Derrida means by ‘undeniability’ is that the suffering of (other) animals, regardless of what ‘suffering’ is – scientifically or otherwise – reveals a kind of phenomenological

disruption that both affects and challenges us *prior* to any rational reflection or empirical debates we may have on the ethical status of (other) animals.

Levinas' disruption of the face and Lacan's 'Mirror-Phase' are both revised and included at this junction giving more rigour to the analyses. Concerning Levinas, Derrida agrees that the phenomenon of the face, or specifically, the gaze of the Other, as Lacan describes, is what disrupts one's dogmatic reverie and commits one to *respond*. Derrida is careful not to fall into the trap, as Levinas did, that the response to the face or gaze is necessarily an act of generosity, it could even at this initial stage of the formulation of the ethic be a negative response. As he says in the discussion with Elisabeth Roudinesco:

“The difficulty with ethical responsibility is that the response cannot be formulated as a “yes or no”; that would be too simple. It is necessary to give a singular response, within a given context, and to take the risk of a decision by enduring the undecidable.” (Derrida, 2004: 76)

Derrida's point is, one is submitted to an involuntary response when caught by the gaze within a particular context by a particular being, it is not a result of a structured blanket rule of affirmation or negation, avowal or disavowal. This is why his ethics is described as a 'situation ethics'. What is undeniable is the response-in-context, not just from the seen but also from the *see-er*. Derrida wants us to investigate the nature of another animal's response at the moment he meets its gaze, not precisely their thoughts, that is unknowable, but how their possible thoughts reflect back on us, the *seen*. We will see in the next section how a singular flash moment disrupts our structured language-based thought processes.

2.2 IN AN ‘UNSUBSTITUTABLE’ MOMENT OF MADNESS

Following basic formula discussed above, Derrida expands the phenomenological concept by arguing that at the moment of placing the first-person’s perspective in relation to the Other due to a response from its gaze, one’s trust in the usual world order, the pre-formed reductionistic categorizations or conceptualizations (like ‘subject’, ‘self’, ‘other’, ‘animal’ and so on) are disrupted. Feeling irrationally ashamed in front of the Other perhaps because he has been found out as an animal, or at deceiving the Other, or simply, following Nietzsche, that he feels inadequate by his masculine nudity or whatever else it may be, causes Derrida later to *reflect* whether at that very moment he knows who he is or what his cat is asking with that gaze. Derrida is uncomfortable with the feeling, the gaze is uncanny and he has a hard time overcoming it. Is the insistent gaze of the cat a benevolent one, or is it pitiless, surprised or cognisant? Why can he not know? Was there a brief flicker of madness in the encounter, of losing one’s identity, or was it something else?

“I often ask myself, just to see, *who I am* – and who I am (following) at the moment when caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, for example, the eyes of a cat. I have trouble, yes, a bad time overcoming my embarrassment.” (Derrida, 2008: 3-4)

Further along in the text, Derrida, using a bit of Carroll’s Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and perhaps also referring to Foucault’s suggestion that madness is the embodiment of unreason and equated with animality, states:

“*Who therefore?* For I no longer know who, therefore, I am (following) or who it is I am chasing, who is following me or hunting me. Who comes

before and who comes after whom? I no longer know which end my head is. Madness: we're all mad here. I'm mad, you're mad. I no longer know how to respond, or even to respond to the question that compels me or asks me who I am (following) or after whom I am (following) ..." (Derrida, 2008: 10)

What Derrida is insinuating is that our modes of logocentric discourse are not equipped to describe such an encounter adequately, but what he does discover is that the encounter is an absolutely unique and irreplaceable one, with a single entity whose enquiring gaze can never be substituted by another animal or concept. I have already quoted this passage in Chapter 2 but I feel it is worth another look here:

"If I say "it is a real cat" that sees me naked, this is in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity. When it responds in its name (whatever "respond" means, and that will be our question), it doesn't do so as the exemplar of a species called "cat", even less so of an "animal genus or kingdom. It is true that I identify it as a male or female cat. But even before that identification, it comes to me as *this* irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, into this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked. Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized [*rebelle à tout concept*]." (Derrida, 2008: 9)

Derrida shows that in order to break away from the tendencies of employing reductive language to refer to the Other as well as forgetting about the alterity between the Subject and the Other, one needs to insist on the 'unsubstitutable singularity' of each encounter. The word 'unsubstitutable' (which isn't really a word but descriptive nevertheless) does not mean 'indivisible', nor should it be read as 'cannot be reduced further', because that

would be contradictory. This is not about cats as a species nor about what makes them cats, or having ‘catness’ for want of a better description. Nor is it about reducing all (other) animals to a homogenous and single class. This is a once-off, unique encounter with “an other in a face-to-face duel” (Derrida, 2008: 9) that cannot be substituted by a reductionist referencing term like ‘animal’ or ‘cat’ or even ‘little’ or ‘female cat’.

By deferring from the reductionist description of cats as a species, Derrida is contesting the possibility of reducing the animal, and himself, to a basic object of knowledge. Derrida veers from the simplistic anthropocentric treatment of his cat as a species of animal by insisting on the idiosyncratic nature of the event. He also avoids the empirical demands of what another animal could be thinking or feeling, since the gaze of the cat is reflecting such enquiry back toward him, the seeing and seen subject. Thus, and most importantly in an anti-Cartesian vein, he does not know who *he* is at that moment because the knowledge of himself rests with the thoughts of the Other. Derrida is no longer really a subject, but a subject-now-object, an other to the Other. In this instance, one could also argue, Derrida is at that moment *pre-subjective*. So the flash encounter takes place prior to and outside his knowledge of himself. Such knowledge only comes afterwards when Derrida has recovered from the shock, walked out the room, got dressed and regains composure by removing himself from the gaze of the Other.

This is where Lacan’s mirror concept of the gaze is deployed. The gaze is not the property of the subject but the Other, yet the gaze *reflects* the subject’s potential thoughts like a mirror back at the subject. When the subject (Derrida) gazes at the Other (his cat), he realises that the Other is gazing back, but from a point outside the field of the subject’s perception. Derrida insists that the pre-ethical formulation can only begin with unrepeated events such as this. Philosophers have been mistaken in their treatment of (other) animals because they have never been caught in the gaze of an (other) animal *in their ‘unsubstitutable singularity’*.

“The experience of the seeing animal, of the animal that looks at them, has not been taken into account in the philosophical or theoretical architecture of their discourse.” (Derrida, 2008: 14)

I personally can vouch for this description of being momentarily unsure, without reason, mad as it were. Recently, I wrote a book about an overland journey I took through the wilderness of southern Africa. This is my recording of an encounter with a massive Black-mane lion in the Kalahari:

“My head was half-way out the window to get a better look. He lifted his gaze, and those fiery amber eyes looked directly into mine. Weird. I was transfixed like a rabbit caught in the headlights. The lion just held me with his stare. I couldn’t even bring myself to take a photograph I was so completely spellbound.” (Cruise, 2012: 142)

If I had tried to analyse this experience empirically I come unstuck, because there is not enough empirical data to make a conclusion. All I know is the lion, through its gaze, is responding to my presence, a response I am made aware of by the look. It was such an uncanny response that it completely disrupted my usual reverie. In a sense, I was looking at myself through the eyes of a lion and what I imagine what the lion saw was bewildering and complex and least of all unrecognizable. I have had other encounters of seeing *seeing* animals. The disturbing and penetrative gaze of a humpback whale while diving as a teenager in the Comores also caused a momentary sensation of uncertainty because the eye in question was quizzical. Seeing the whale question my being with its gaze from its perspective, from its aquatic heritage, broke down my own notion of who I am since I apprehended myself as having become an object of another’s consciousness. And it is not just related to (other) animals. The demure gaze of a woman, the fixed stare of a stranger can force one to look at oneself from their perspective, causing one to act

accordingly, which could be in a variety of different ways. These specific-event, situation encounters have caused one to become self-reflective at the strangeness of the gaze, as has happened with Derrida and his little female cat. It is this self-reflectiveness that ultimately obliges one toward action – moral or not.

There is a potential snag at this point. The eyes of a little cat are easily recognisable to the anthropomorphic mind of Derrida and his readers, as are the amber eyes of a lion, the penetrative gaze of a whale or the demure glance of the opposite sex. But, following Levinas' line of objection, what of the gaze of a snake? Or, better yet, a mosquito or a fly? These are hardly the 'eyes' that can cause a disruption. However, although Derrida never explored this particular difficulty, I would imagine that by referring to 'gaze' one does not always refer to the '*looking at*' part. Derrida's question was '... can we say the animal has been *regarding* us?' 'Regard' means '*to consider*' or '*to think of*' not necessarily '*to look*', implying that *any* form of consideration from the Other constitutes a 'gaze' as such. The avoidance of a fly I am about to swat shows it is responding to me and could disrupt my thoughts and ultimately cause me to arrest my hand. The communication in a fly's eyes cannot be determined, let alone be considered, but the physical response is there on both sides. Likewise a crab who turns to face me, pincers raised in defence, is indicative of how it views me. These are both acts of communication between the (other) animal and I.

Even if a creature does gaze with its eyes, the 'eyes in question are not recognisable. As a diving instructor of twenty years, I have often had to contend, from my students, with the common but deeply rooted fear of sharks. Such a fear causes one to feel antagonistic toward those beings. Sharks, in particular, have a way of drawing out a fear among humans at its most carnal, which, in turn, generates such hatred that most people feel no compunction about exterminating the species for good. Most likely, the reason is that sharks are as alien as it gets from the human form. They exist in a dark, sub-aquatic world largely out-of-bounds to humanity where they swim stealthily about in the hope that an

unsuspecting swimmer will take the plunge. The common perspective is that sharks don't seem to show emotion either (at least not in the human way). Their eyes are cold and empty and they have no facial expressions or recognisable body language to the lay-person. In short, sharks are viewed in classic Cartesian terms as cold-hearted eating machines. What is interesting is that most people have never *experienced* sharks in their irreplaceable singularity, which is another reason for this (imagined) fear.

Therefore, most people are afraid to scuba dive. Some, however, are a little braver. They temporarily shelve their worries and sign up for a diving course, yet their fear remains in the back of their minds. The question most often on these brave souls' lips even before they get to the pre-dive pool training session is: "What about the sharks?" I have a stock answer to this question (usually delivered with a wry smile): "Wait until you come face-to-face with one and you'll see." Such a statement is hardly any comfort for my petrified chargers but the truth is our language cannot describe the face-to-face experience adequately, to the point that it is not worth the bother. All I know is that when some do eventually see a shark underwater, that carnal fear evaporates and is replaced with something else. The experience of *interrelating* with an irreplaceable animal elicits something unexpected. What was expected was brute aggression and hostility from a cold-blooded (another asinine term that distinguishes all that is human from all that is beastly monstrous) killer, but what they found was something far more complex. At such unsubstitutable moments one is confronted with a being that is 'full of life' as it were, and while it is almost impossible to explain empirically, and while a shark does not 'speak' per se, our tendency is to say the shark *responds*, rather than just unconsciously or instinctively *reacts*.

I have noticed that these perception-changing singular events have garnered sympathy for a species far more than the usual Benthamite reading of "Can they suffer?" does, because humans don't think sharks suffer. And even if they do, they don't really care whether they suffer or not. It takes an interrelational response-encounter to see sharks differently,

and ultimately ethically. Sharks, contrary to common-held perceptions, are not Cartesianly fixed eating machines. Derrida actually dedicates an entire chapter in *The Animal that Therefore I Am* entitled *And Say the Animal Responded?* in which he takes Jacques Lacan to task for this common ‘Cartesian fixity’. (Derrida, 2008: 122) Lacan states that animals merely obey a fixed coded program by reacting to external stimuli whereas humans are different in that they *respond* to each other with a complex spoken language.

“Lacan expressly contrasts *reaction* with *response* as an opposition between human and animal kingdoms in the same way that he opposes nature and convention.” (Derrida 2008: 123)

Derrida believes Lacan is incorrect in assuming that just because (other) animals do not respond in the human sense it means they do not respond at all. (Other) animals, Derrida argues, *do* have a language of their own, not just an unconscious reaction to instinct or a fixity of coding or system of signalling. They can question and they can evoke a response in return. The gaze of Derrida’s cat is all about and nothing but response, and in the case of sharks it is no different.

I have witnessed sharks exhibit a number of responses to my presence in their world. They could be curious, investigative, shy, unsure, timid or fascinated responses, we will never really know empirically, but what the shark almost always is not, is that hostile demon mindlessly intent on gobbling me up. This is what Derrida means by ‘undeniable’ – the shark does not merely react but looks at us, regards us, addresses us and considers us in much the same fashion as we do with it. The primary force of such encounters engenders a connection between subject and Other, and again it is difficult to see what that connection is, because the structure of ‘our’ language insists on reductive binaries and indubitable fact.

The level of response in (other) animals can achieve great heights. There is a famous story of a horse called Clever Hans (Pfungst, 2010) who could respond to people by answering complex questions like counting, remembering peoples' names and reading German simply by stamping his foot on the ground. Clever Hans' owner made quite a fortune by showing him at fairgrounds across Germany, especially since it was proved that no trickery was involved. Eventually, though, it was discovered that Clever Hans was not 'clever' in the way people thought he was. In fact, one could argue he was even cleverer, because while he was ultimately unable to count and not understand German, Hans could communicate and engage with people in such a way that they thought he was capable of human feats.

The horse was able to learn from reading and understanding the subtle body language that people exhibited toward him, and accordingly, he responded back. When a basic maths question was posed like "Hans, what is three plus two?" Hans began slowly tapping with his hoof until he noticed the crowd and his owner inadvertently tense up as he got to five taps. Then he noticed they almost imperceptibly relaxed when he paused slightly with his hoof in the air. This was enough to tell Hans to stop tapping the ground, and the response thereafter was expected, with lots of pats and tit-bits to eat.

Here begins the formulation of a moral thought. Shark and the horse, Clever Hans, begin to take on a recognisable and intrinsic value in the minds of those who engage with them. These predominantly inexplicable feelings remain in memory long after the encounter, as did Derrida with his cat. The memory of the encounter, in turn, allows one to transfigure the vague sensations of 'fascination', 'concern' or 'kinship' into broader terms, which ultimately commit one into an act of morality. The memory of my first encounter with a shark made me realise we humans have been doing them a serious injustice by thinking of them simply as killing machines. I came to understand that these animals were fellow-beings-in-the-world that needed our – and here is Derrida's crucial word – respect. At

present 100 000 million sharks globally are slaughtered either for their fins or because they are seen at best as mindless vermin. This number is so large that it defies comprehension. Most humans don't see a problem with this heinous slaughter because, sadly, they will never have an opportunity to have an encounter with a living, seeing, addressing shark. If they did, most likely they would have a different, more compassionate view toward sharks. I bet those who encountered Clever Hans had a much greater opinion of horses after they discovered how he was able to *respond* to human body language.

There is more to the concept of the response – the response of the *seen* 'subject'. I recently wrote a story of a professional game hunter named Guillame who specialised in taking clients into the African bush to shoot elephants. On the last occasion

“... while hunting in a private concession next to the Kruger, they came across a lone female elephant. The American client's aim was poor, and the animal bounded off into the bush mortally wounded. Guillame was forced to track the elephant in order to put it out of its misery. After hours of tracking, he found the elephant lying down, in the last throes of life. He cautiously approached the dying elephant. When he got within a foot, the elephant slowly lifted her trunk and placed it gently on his head. Remaining rigidly still Guillame allowed her to sniff him from head to toe, the tip of her trunk gently touching her assailant, perhaps in an effort to understand who this creature was who had harmed her. Then she lay her head down and died, her lifeless trunk resting on his shoes. With tears welling up in his eyes, Guillame told us that the moment broke his heart. It was the last time he had laid another finger on anything resembling the trigger of a gun.” (Cruise, 2012: 240-1)

The dying elephant provoked a response from its interlocutor. Guillame's familiar and normal state of mind was interrupted by this irreplaceable encounter of an animal addressing him with its trunk. Guillame, at that moment, regarded himself from the perspective of the elephant; he possibly imagined what the dying elephant must think of him, this alien-smelling creature that was the cause of her death. Does he wonder, in such a moment, if she forgives him, or is she trying to understand why such a creature would want to violently harm her for no apparent reason? What is more, the enquiring trunk of the dying elephant trying to understand this violent Other induces a post-reflective action from Guillame never to kill elephants again.

So when Derrida speaks of the animal *regarding* us, he may just as well imply that the animal *addresses* us. Guillame's incident shows an addressing animal that causes a momentary freak pre-subjective reaction (Guillame, against better judgement, stood stock still to allow the elephant's trunk to investigate him) that ultimately caused a moral action (Guillame hung up his hunting boots for good).

The addressing animal, and this is the crux of Derrida's argument, does not merely constitute a two-tier face-off between subject and other as competing hierarchical binaries. Rather the Other, in these instances, becomes a third mode of existence – “is the cat a third [*tiers*]?” (Derrida, 2008: 9) Lacan states this Other, as it did with Guillame, acts like a mirror held up to the ‘subject’ reflecting the animal's thoughts on the ‘subject’ back toward the ‘subject’. At the end of *The Animal that Therefore I am* Derrida is more explicit:

“But cannot this cat also be, deep within her eyes, my primary mirror?”
(Derrida 2008: 51)

The 'subject' sees himself in the eyes (or mind's eye) of the Other. Thus, one's actions toward the Other reflect back on one's being. In the interview with Elisabeth Roudinesco, Derrida, when talking about the industrialized slaughter of animals states categorically that:

“... it would be necessary to limit this violence as much as possible, if only because of the image of man that it reflects back to him.” (Derrida, 2004: 73)

We have tried to analyse the force of the encounter and the 'madness' of it, which may or may not reach a concrete conclusion in terms of a response (Guillame could have easily shrugged the moment off and continued with his profession) but he knows how his actions appear from the perspective of the Other and it is an image, like Derrida's naked image of himself, that he does not like. The importance, from an ethical dimension, is that the 'pre-subject' can only arrive at self-consciousness through and after the insistent, knowing, enquiring, frightened, suffering, hungry gaze/address of (other) animals – human or otherwise. Sartre maintained that one can only experience one's own subjectivity in the presence of the Other ...

“The look which the eyes manifest, no matter what kind of eyes they are, is a pure reference to myself. What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is not that *there is someone there*; it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt ... in short, I *am seen*.” (Sartre, 1986: 259)

That is why Derrida's title *The Animal that Therefore I Am (following)* suggests that the Cartesian 'I' can only arrive *following* an encounter with the Other. In Sartre's mind the reference to Self is about one's own vulnerability.

I cannot refute this since, perhaps, that is from where such a sensation originally stems, like being caught naked in front of a gaze. But one's own vulnerability created by the response of the Other is not the only sensation manifested. The response back toward the Other, in terms of reference to one's own vulnerability, could manifest itself onto the Other as well. Guillame's specific encounter with the elephant caused him to re-evaluate himself, not through selfish vulnerability, but through compassion or concern of the Other's vulnerability. This, of course, is Derrida's main point about rethinking the Benthamite question. In Guillame's case he 'became' only after the elephant died at his feet.

Levinas follows a similar track in reversing the usual stance between the primary subject and the so-called secondary Other. Knowledge of the Self does not come prior to the Other since there is an original paucity, an original lack. The 'subject' first comes to rely on the Other for its identity before the 'subject' can respond. Therefore, the primacy of the subject is deferred. Wood explains that the Other does not need to be cognitively knowable either, as Nagel would have, but rather that the Other, by addressing the subject, determines the subject and invokes an obligation that exceeds knowledge (Wood, 2004: 131). Such obligations occur through instances in moments of time and space that *precede* and *initiate* possibilities of recognition, and such events disrupt and rearrange such experiences of time, self and being and highlight the shortcomings of our logocentric modes of language to describe such instances. What constitutes an act of morality then, in the Levinasian sense, is how one *responds* to such a shock encounter with an "irreplaceable living being" that defies categorization, conceptualization and knowledge. Guillame's post-encounter act is a moral one in that the address of a dying animal impassioned a self-reflection and caused him to shun the hunting of (other)

animals from that moment on. In the proto-ethical sense, structured by a particular event with a particular being that addresses us, a non-human animal can disrupt thoughts and cause a questioning both of oneself as ‘subject’ and the Other as other.

Derrida, through this sweeping proto-ethical formula, has effectively erased the anthropocentric and empirical traps that bedevil the applied ethical strategies of philosophers like Singer and Regan. No longer is the ability to speak, to rationalise, to be the subject-of-a-life or to suffer a prerequisite for moral consideration; nor does it make a difference whether a snake has a face or a bat a cognitive, recognisable mind. The drawing and re-drawing of that insuperable line is no longer necessary. The point is that *being addressed* and *addressing*, whether from a bat, a fish, a human or a gnat, are all forms of pre-ethical communication and therefore implore a *response*, a word which in original Latin means ‘something offered in return’, a definition that points toward an act of moral obligation, namely *responsibility*.

I shall now move to show how deconstruction lays the foundation for an applied ethic.

3. TOWARD AN APPLIED ETHIC

3.1 FROM THE UNSUBSTITUTABLE SINGULAR TO THE COMPOUND GENERAL

From this proto-ethical foundation we can now move onto building something more concrete. The nature of ‘response’ both from the ‘subject’ and the Other is difficult to pin down in that each encounter with any particular ‘subject’ toward any particular Other can manifest itself in a variety of ways, both positively or negatively. This depends on how the post-encounter and rational self-reflection or self-evaluation occurs after the

encounter. Depending on *how* one acts is the difference between a moral or an immoral act.

Derrida spoke to Elisabeth Roudinesco about the kindling of respect toward the Other, rather than the utilitarian version(s) of recognising the capacity to suffer.

“... progress can be made in establishing relations between humans and animals that would move in the direction of maximum respect.” (Derrida, 2004: 73)

The perception of ‘respect’ is at best a highly ambiguous term but one that nonetheless inclines toward a positive sentiment of another being, rather than the passive inability to avoid pain. ‘Respect’ is the key toward responsibility and the creation of a positive ethic.

Derrida picked up on Husserl’s belief that phenomena arrive at a person’s consciousness through various interactions in their immediacy (Husserl, 1970: 34) and based his proto-ethical imperative on the ‘unsubstitutable singularity’ of an event. The problem is: how does one transfigure that-which-cannot-be-substituted toward a general ethic. For example, cattle are led to the slaughter every day by the billion. Due to the industrialized technology of processing meat any individual, distinctive events where a see-er engages with a seen are impossible. How does one extend ethical consideration from the experienced singular-unique to the non-experienced compound-general? The answer is fairly straightforward. The singularity of the event merely serves as a launching point toward an ethic.

One does not even have to have an *actual* encounter with an irreplaceable other in order to be respectful. It could work just as easily as *iteration* as Derrida demonstrated with his deconstruction of Austin. For example, Mark Zuckerberg says he will only eat the meat of the animals he kills. Obviously Zuckerberg has no intention of killing animals himself since he can patently imagine that if he had to look his victim in the eye (and, by association, it looked back at him), he too will feel a pang of shame, or guilt or some jolting passion of sorts. His response to the *imagined* animal's response, communicated through its *imagined* gaze, would, in his instance, reflect on his being, like Sartre's being-for-the-other. That Zuckerberg obliges that imaginary gaze, the iterability of it, becomes a moral commitment.

The problem is most people lack Zuckerberg's imagination. How many of us could slaughter a cow that looks at us knowing its fate, with our own hands? Most of us, probably, could not, yet we still eat meat. Our trouble is that we, like the otherwise good citizens of the Third Reich who were unable "to think themselves in place of the victims" (Coetzee, 2003: 79), cannot or will not place our mind's-eye into these situations. Such are cases of 'out of sight out of mind'. It takes a rigorous imagination to place our minds eye into the bloodied abattoirs, to experience the desperate bellows of hundreds of animals led to the slaughter and inhale the heavy pall of death. Most of us would rather not think about it, something the townsfolk surrounding Treblinka and Auschwitz did too. Doing nothing can also be construed as an immoral act. As Derrida asks in his interview with Elisabeth Roudinesco: is there a difference between *killing* and *letting die*? (Derrida, 2004: 67) Therefore, to act ethically one simply *must* place one's minds eye right into such places, and then we will realise what unforgivable crimes we are committing, either by doing nothing or partaking of eating flesh. In terms of a deconstruction then, the modern industrialized slaughter and the mass human consumption of (other) animals is utterly unethical and it wants us to change from unthinking consumers to educated people who care. "Thinking", says Derrida when talking about Bentham's question calling for compassion, "perhaps begins here." (Derrida, 2008: 29)

3.2 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (?)

Thinking about the mass industrialized slaughter and widespread testing on billions of (other) animals that takes place all around us, every minute of the day, is in fact a concrete ethical start. Once we embark on iteration and place ourselves inside the abattoirs and laboratories we begin to look at ourselves and consider acting. No longer will we be committing the crime of “letting die”.

Vegetarianism, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, is not an alternative in a deconstruction, at least as an absolute concept. In the same interview with Roudinesco a few lines later Derrida presents his specific views on vegetarianism:

“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 without a symbolic substitution.” (Derrida, 2004: 67)

Vegetarianism as a concept opens up a whole variety of problems that need to be attended to before it can be considered an ethical action. That is not to say one must not become vegetarian, or better, a vegan since the dairy and egg industries are just as heinous as the meat industry. If one respects humans as non-food, the same must be said of (other) animals, otherwise we are accused of anthropocentrism all over again. But by making the claim that one is a vegan, for example, places oneself in direct opposition to people who eat meat. That insuperable line is drawn yet again between two facing concepts and this is what Derrida always and explicitly seeks to tackle. My guess, if one were to work through each vegan issue as rigorously as deconstruction demands, like the fact that soya bean crops are responsible for massive deforestation but are used mainly to feed cattle reared for food, we may eventually find a workable case for veganism and vegetarianism,

like localised small farms that endorse permaculture and grain-fed open air local chicken coops.

Ultimately it is essentially a simple question of avoiding binary terms and concepts that tend to pigeon-hole views forcing them to oppose each other. As Derrida says we may have to compromise and provide a symbolic substitution. One way of doing this and avoiding confrontation, is to refrain from using phrases like “I am a vegan” because by doing so one is effectively opposing, even declaring war on non-vegans. The binaries remain dualistic and hostile. Non-vegans regard vegans as freaks, while vegans find meat-eaters evil. It would be better to say if one were required to inform a waiter at a restaurant of your respect for the lives of (other) animals, to say instead: “I only eat plant-based foods.” With such a statement there is no face-off, no violent opposition against the other ideology, just a non-confrontational blurring of the insuperable line, while at the same time maintaining a powerful ethical stance. There is no concept categorization to open up in opposition to its logocentric counter-part, the non-vegan.

Better yet, by refusing to partake in eating (other) animals, is also refusing the hierarchical mistreatment of them. In this context, by not partaking, one is in a sense performing an ethical act. In a similar vein, by not using cosmetic or household products tested on animals is refuting the violent subjugation against (other) animals. In all these senses, deconstruction becomes an applied ethic because opposition comes in the form of not falling into the trap of a binary face-off – opposition by not opposing.

The delinearizing of the line with a deconstruction could also finally link the two opposing schools of environmentalists – the zoocentrics and the biocentrics. If we turn back to the controversy of the tahrs on Table Mountain, a deconstruction would support the necessity of preserving the natural habitat as well as sourcing a better, compassionate method of dealing with the lives of the tahrs. A possible solution, which incidentally was

at one point mooted, would rather have been a relocation of the tahrs to a better environ. This had a number of 'irresolvable' obstacles. The major ones were that it was too expensive, and that it smacked of Apartheid tactics. Deconstruction would have rejected the former objection's justification on the grounds of anthropocentrism, while the latter as misguided mistake in that the relocation of tahrs was as much for the benefit of the tahrs as the endemic wildlife. In New Zealand tahrs are farmed for their dairy products and as far as I understand, can be kept with a minimum of effort and expense and are quite happy in vast expansive rocky terrain. It is important to re-iterate that deconstruction does not go as far as finding such solutions as it goes against the grain of what deconstruction always sets out to achieve. It remains always a proto-ethic designed to keep the question open for further analyses and critiques.

The main possibility for an applied ethic though, if deconstruction were to be rigorously applied to the final rock-bottom of the abyss, is this: there are too many humans compared with (other) animals. If we are to extend respect toward other animals we need to consider ways of arresting, and even possibly of reversing human population growths. That, ultimately, is what is at stake here for with over 7 billion humans the hierarchical nature over (other) animals will remain entrenched. Deconstruction's response would ultimately demand a review of human over-population in the human/(other) animal divide. The most powerful aspect of a deconstructionist animal ethic emerges if we turn with Derrida to a critique of the logocentric language in which we speak about (other) animals.

3.3 REFIGURING LOGOCENTRISM

The transfiguration of logocentrism is perhaps one of the most pragmatic of aspects toward an applied ethic, one that can go a long way to solving the entrenched dichotomy between humans and (other) animals. Feminist and post-colonial theorists have taken giant leaps in the emancipation of their respective fields simply by altering the way we

use language. There has already been a significant shift in how we use the word ‘animal’. Writers like Wendy Woodward (Woodward, 2008) and others sensitive to the erroneous use of the word ‘animal’ are already commonly adding the term ‘non-human’ when describing (other) animals – although it remains anthropocentric, while my continuous use of the bracketed (other) when referring to non-human animals in this thesis serves as a continuous reminder that humans are animals too. So in a sense I am moving toward blending the two. Although not perfect (as it still marks the difference), this is precisely the style of language deconstruction entreats. It is *différance* at its most pragmatic because it defers the word ‘animal’ away from the reductive lumping of all non-human animals to now include humans as an intrinsic member of being-animal. By doing so the word ‘animal’ should eventually lose the stigma of meaning all that is carnal, brutish, uncultured, coarse and non-human.

Whether these terms, or the word ‘animal’ comes to include humans too, are workable solutions for the long term, who knows? I suspect though that most people, and even some protagonists of animal liberation even regard these terms as somewhat cumbersome and annoying. Already writers like Marian Stamp Dawkins who wrote *Why Animals Matter*, a scientific discourse in support of animal-welfarism, argued in her preface that

“To avoid unnecessary words, I have used the word ‘animal’ to mean ‘non-human animal’ as opposed to ‘human’ throughout the book. Although humans are animals too, putting in words ‘non-human’ every time becomes tedious and breaks the flow of the text.” (Stamp Dawkins, 2012: vi)

Such ‘unnecessary words’ may be tedious but the point is that such terms *must* break the flow of text and ergo the flow of thinking about animals. The terms ‘non-human animal’ and ‘(other) animal’ disrupt our reverie every time our eyes pass over them. In feminist discourse terms such as ‘humankind’ instead of ‘man’ and ‘chairperson’ instead of

‘chairman’ were initially irksome to minds familiar with the older terminology, but these days they are widely accepted. The equal political and social standing of women in many countries owes a lot to the altering of thinking away from gender-specific terms to describe non-gender specific related subjects. The same could be said for race politics. In South Africa it is now common to use the term ‘San’ – or even more recent and appropriate, ‘San-speaking’ – to refer to groups of people who were previously denigrated as ‘bushmen’. Not only is the term unnecessarily gender-specific (*bushmen*) the word is pejorative too (bush = wild, uncivilized, uncultured). The same could be said of North American Inuits who were until recently referred to with the pejorative ‘Eskimo’. Neither names on their own are particularly insulting (Eskimo is a French word, ‘*Esquimaux*’, of debatable origin) but they have come to represent disparagement largely because (and Derrida would have concurred) the names were given by those foreign colonialists flexing and brandishing their power by taking over the act of naming, much as humans have done with (other) animals.

Yet, even so, these are still us/them dichotomies. In South Africa there is a concerted effort to refrain from calling people based on racial differences. Terms like ‘black’, ‘white’, ‘coloured’ are avoided, at least in formal legal and political arenas. The heterogeneous nature of our country must be celebrated. By using oversimplified terms, the speaker denies all other phenomena that make up a person. If someone responds to a question like “What does Nelson do?” by replying “Nelson is a black lawyer,” his answer is inappropriate because the question was not asking for racial classification; it was asking what Nelson does. By saying “black lawyer,” the speaker wants the listener to make a racially prejudiced judgement *before* he considers what Nelson does. More important, the speaker highlights, if not preserves, a racial segregation or stereotype through innuendo, forcing out our prejudices before we consider anything impartially. Inappropriate use of language has this annoying ability to pre-determine our way of thinking.

The power to name and the need to reject reductive, pejorative designations, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, can be used to good effect with (other) animals. ‘Wild dogs’ and ‘killer whales’ ought to always be called ‘painted dogs’ and ‘orcas’ in order to defer the negative connotation attached to their current names. It is not only proper nouns that need revising, collective nouns like ‘parade’ instead of the all-lumping ‘herd’ when referring to groups of elephants, or ‘crashes’ of rhinos, or ‘dazzles’ of zebras to name a few. These words give the (other) animals a modicum of respect. There are dozens of other instances, verbs such as ‘react’ need to be deployed with circumspection, especially when ‘respond’ is the better term. Adjectives like ‘gregarious’ to only describe (other) animals when ‘social’ will do both for human animals and community-based non-human animals. Or refiguring the adjective ‘humane’ when it is clear that the most beastly of all beasts are humans. Perhaps these adjectives – ‘humane’ and ‘beastly’ (something Derrida repeated references with the continual use of French word *bêtise* in both *The Animal that Therefore I Am* and later in *The Beast and the Sovereign*) need their meaning switched – although this is just a reversal. Deconstruction would call for something far more radical like ditching the terms altogether.

However, the singular noun ‘animal’ remains the primary stumbling block, one that Derrida believed had to be overhauled before one moves toward an animal ethic. To use the word ‘animal’ to refer to all non-human animals and deny their heterogeneity is simply unethical. With his usual penchant for *archi-écriture* and paying particular attention once again to the diacritics at play, Derrida adds the replacement at the end of *The Animal that Therefore I Am*. (Derrida, 2008: 41) His simple sentence ‘*Ecce animot*’ is a distorted diacritical and phonetical imitation (the ‘t’ is silent) of the title of Nietzsche’s last work *Ecce Homo* (1888) in which the latter mockingly puts himself on trial as a philosopher. The title originates from the utterance of Pontius Pilate in the Vulgate when he presents Jesus Christ to a hostile crowd shortly before his crucifixion. The English translation is ‘Behold the Man’. Derrida’s ‘*Ecce animot*’ is read ‘Behold the Animal’ suggesting ‘Behold Man-as-Animal’. ‘Animot’ sounds exactly the same as the French plural for animals, *animaux*. Derrida is registering both his dislike for the use of

the word ‘animal’ and the common insistence of using the term in its generality, ‘The Animal’ (it is the same in French as in English) when one is referring to the entire heterogeneous grouping of non-human animals. ‘*Ecce Animot*’ says Derrida is “Neither a species, nor a gender, nor an individual, it is an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals ...” (Derrida, 2008: 41) In other words, ‘animot’ is a neologism that describes animals (including human animals) in their plural singularity. Thus, Derrida directs his readers to behold and marvel at the “plurality of forms, modes and relations of animal life.” (Calarco, 2008: 144)

Furthermore, the suffix ‘*mot*’ is French for ‘word’. Derrida explains:

“The suffix *mot* in *l’animot* should bring us back to the word, namely, to the word named a noun [*nommé non*]. It opens onto the referential experience of the thing *as such*, as what is in its being, and therefore to the stakes involved in always seeking to draw the limit, the unique and indivisible limit held to separate human from animal, namely, the word, the nominal language of the world, the voice that names and that names the thing *as such*, such as it appears in its being (as in the Heideggerian moment of this demonstration that we are coming to). The animal would in the last instance be deprived of the word, of the word that one names a noun or name.” (Derrida, 2008: 48)

The ‘*mot*’ is there to remind us that what is chiefly the reason behind our tendency to reduce and atomise to “a thing that consists of a collection of things” rather than seeing “a collection of things” (Pratt, 2000: 36) in their plurality and heterogeneity, is language. Derrida reiterates that the structure of language, which consistently calls the reduction of a multitude of entities to binary opposites, is the most fundamental challenge for a deconstructionist. It is these reductionist distinctions that separate human animals from all others that above all need to be dismantled in order to provide a workable ethic.

4. CONCLUSION

From an applied ethical perspective deconstruction could help chart a path toward something similar to the normative ethics of say the Deep Ecology Movement,. This is enetering rocky ground though, for once again, I must highlight that deconstruction is NOT about being an ethic per se, but rather it is about the displacement of inherent carnophallogocentric textual pitfuls inherent in various ethical ideals. However, one can see, by carefully avoiding the stumbling blocks one can see how movements like Deep Ecology, for an example, can provide a somewhat worthier ethic than Singer or Regan's principles.

Deep Ecology was developed by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. The eight basic principles behind the Deep Ecology movement as written as a manifesto by Naess are as follows:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try implement the necessary changes. (Naess, 1986: 84-5)

As one can see all these points are in line with the proto-ethical imperative outlined by a deconstruction of the animal question. I will take each point chronologically as they appear above and compare them with the demands of a deconstruction of the animal question.

1. *The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.*

(Other) animals have an inherent value independent of human interpretations that, like Descartes and Kant, view them as commodities without moral value. Naess insists that there ought not to be a difference between human and (other) animals when it comes to morality. In deconstruction terms, human and non-human life cannot be presented as opposing binaries where one dominates the other. Instead, *différance* dictates that such notions be deferred so that each entity within the diversity of entities has value in themselves. This is a fundamental point in that, as Naess explains, it “includes individuals, species, populations, habitat, as well as human and non-human cultures” and “this implies a fundamental deep concern

and respect.” (Naess, 1986: 85) This is in harmony with Derrida’s extension of Heidegger’s fundamental aspect of *Dasein*, namely ‘care’ or ‘concern’, onto (other) animals. But, more fundamentally, the use of the neologism ‘*animot*’ is important here in that the word represents “Neither a species, nor a gender, nor an individual, it is an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals ...”. (Derrida, 2008: 41)

2. *Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.*

The implication is that no single life form takes precedence over the other. Value is measured by the interlinking of all life forms from amoebas to human-apes. Deconstruction points out that the value of the richness and diversity of life forms includes all life forms, not just ‘higher-order’ mammals that possess sentience or reason as Singer and Regan expound. ‘Lower-order’ life forms like microbes, cockroaches, bats and even plants have both value in themselves *and* contribute to the richness of diversity, they do not have *less* value than the ‘higher’ life forms. Also, ‘lower-order’ life forms are not, as Naess argues, “merely steps toward so-called higher or rational life forms.” (Naess, 1986: 85) The exclusionary logic and arbitrary line drawing between ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ or ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the ethical ambit has no place in Deep Ecology and agrees with a deconstruction challenging the Consideranda Club.

3. *Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.*

This means that animals are not ‘things’ to be used and abused for human pleasure. Hunting, fishing, vivisection, mass-breeding animals in factories for

human consumption and circuses use (other) animals purely for the benefit of the human animal. Deconstruction blurs this binary hierarchy too and follows the same path. The term 'vital need' is ambiguous as it allows for latitude in judgement (Naess, 1986: 85). This point allows space either for a limited or no consumption of meat as long as it is a vital need but defers from absolute vegetarianism or veganism as a concept, something deconstruction avoids at all costs.

4. *The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.*

This is the real problem with the human-animal dichotomy. It is the end of the line, the rock bottom, in terms of a deconstruction of the animal question. Human overpopulation is the central malaise that needs to be urgently and thoroughly addressed before it is too late. Immediate measures will take time but the process must begin, because point (3) cannot function without the stabilization and reduction of population growth, neither would a suitable applied ethic be formulated as long as these current trends continue.

5. *Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.*

The destruction of wild areas of the planet due to mono-crops and industry for exclusive human use need to be curtailed in order to preserve the great variety of life. Anthropocentric greed is beyond doubt a massive hurdle to overcome and deconstruction calls for a radical non-anthropocentric outlook. And, the excessive industrialized slaughter of millions of animals is unethical and must be stopped.

6. *Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.*

Deep Ecology calls for a paradigm shift of the anthropocentric mindset. Logocentric usage denigrating (other) animals needs to be carefully re-written and refigured out of political and ideological policies, and local community self determination as mentioned in (3) are ethically better alternatives to current economic and technological trends that ignore (other) animals as beneficiaries.

7. *The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.*

Naess argues one cannot quantify 'quality'. 'Quality of life' therefore is non-quantifiable. Derrida also argues that qualitative things like sentiment, purported by Bentham and Singer, is something that cannot be measured, instead any life ought to be regarded as a quality that elicits respect and reverence.

8. *Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try implement the necessary changes.*

Despite their success as a 'movement' animal rights thinkers remain mired in anthropo- and logocentric pitfalls. The result is the question of (other) animals is marginal to other 'bigger' human issues. Deconstruction, on the other hand, is the

ideal tool to continually assess and re-assess the changes made to include all (other) animals into the moral ambit. The obligation and responsibility toward (other) animals is ours to make and ultimately could meet this fundamental tenet of the Deep Ecology principle.

While deconstruction functions primarily as a proto-ethic, as one can see with normative ethical evaluations like Deep Ecology, it works *toward* the constructive. As far as ethical consideration goes deconstruction in its rigorous analysis lays a far more solid foundation than Singer's anthropocentric-bound Equal Consideration Principle and Regan's shallow ideology of the rights of (some) animals. Deep Ecology and Birch's Universal Consideration are far more conclusive as normative ethics in that they disrupt anthropocentric attitudes, avoid reductionist logocentrism that place (other) animals in a single class separate from humans, they arrest and link the divergence of animal and environmental ethicists and, finally, deconstruction insists that each irreplaceable individual in its irreplaceable context counts as much as any other. Such are the reconstructive possibilities of deconstruction.

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