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Centaur, Split: An Inquiry into the Human and the Animal

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Centaur, Split

Ben Koren

May 1st, 2011

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Introduction

At philosophy's root, where the ties to the mythological are the strongest, we see a first postulation of the complexities between human and animal. Gilgamesh, the obvious protagonist of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, is created by the gods in the image of man's perfection, given unsurpassed beauty, courage, and strength. The authors say that, "Two thirds they made him god and one third man," and perhaps this surplus of divinity (or the addition of the human to the divine) is why he is a terrible king, tyrannical, violent and unfair to his subjects (Sandars 61). Regardless, the gods respond to the pleas of Gilgamesh's people by creating Enkidu, a tempering opposite who enters the world in the company of animals. Enkidu, the authors write, "was innocent of mankind; he knew nothing of the cultivated land"(Sandars 63). For an amount of time unspecified, possibly because for him it did not matter, Enkidu "ate grass in the hills with the gazelle and lurked with wild beasts at the water-holes; he had joy of the water with the herds of wild game"(Sandars 63). Eventually, Enkidu comes across a trapper, who he stymies by freeing ensnared animals and destroying the trapper's traps. Enkidu and the trapper meet face-to-face, and while Enkidu makes no moves that suggest violence, the trapper is terrified by the encounter. The trapper goes to Gilgamesh for guidance, and Gilgamesh tells him to, "take with you a harlot, a child of pleasure. At the drinking-hole she will strip, and when he sees her beckoning he will embrace her and the game of the wilderness will surely reject him"(Sandars 64). The link between sexuality and humanity is otherwise unpursued by the text, though the result of the harlot's intervention is as Gilgamesh predicted; after sex "when he was satisfied he went back to the wild beasts. Then, when the gazelle saw him, they bolted away; when the wild creatures saw him they

fled...Enkidu was grown weak, for wisdom was in him, and the thoughts of a man were in his heart”(Sandars 65).

From this point onwards Enkidu is irrevocably human, and by tracing his course throughout the narrative, we arrive at some questions that will be foundational to our inquiry into the animal. The most notable moments besides those already mentioned involve Enkidu’s desire to go backwards, to stop being human and again become animal. After the harlot has forced him into the role of human, she asks him, “Why do you yearn to run wild again with the beasts in the hills?”(Sandars 67). Later, when he learns he is going to die, Enkidu bemoans his too-human fate, cursing the trapper and the harlot, and saying, “for I too once in the wilderness with my wife had all the treasure I wished”(Sandars 91). We hear this same sense of discontent with humanity and yearning for animality millennia later in T.S. Eliot’s *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, where he writes, “I should have been a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas”(Ellman 82).

Yet Gilgamesh is ultimately led to regard his being brought out of the wilderness as a blessing when the god Shamash reminds him of what the human world has given him; “Enkidu, why are you cursing the woman, the mistress who taught you to eat bread fit for gods and drink wine of kings? She who put upon you a magnificent garment, did she not give you glorious Gilgamesh for your companion, and has not Gilgamesh, your own brother, made you rest on a royal bed and recline on a couch at his left hand?”(Sandar 91). Many of these qualities - eating, clothing, leisure, and sociality - will appear in later discussions of the human and the animal but, in light of Gilgamesh’s inclination to both

bless and curse his humanity, one question comes to the front: what is the difference between being human and being animal?

That question leads us to another, one that the god Shamash implicitly forces us to consider. If there is a difference - even within the span of Enkidu's life - between being animal and being human, must Enkidu, along with us, create hierarchies around the human and the animal?

The hierarchy that Enkidu is referencing when he makes claims about one way of life being better than another is, of course, talking about the life internal, the way that he as a subject relates to external existence. What, if anything, can we say about how animals relate to the world? And what about humans? Finally, as all of Enkidu's musings on the animal life are retrospective, how should we understand the human's perception of being animal?

So far, our musings have been operating on the premise that Enkidu stopped being animal when he became human. Yet if this is false - or at least open to question - then the sharp delineation between human and animal becomes less intelligible. How is the human an animal, what does it mean for humans to reconcile themselves with their animality, and how is human identity constructed from being *not* animal?

In the language I have used thus far in discussing the questions that will arise in our inquiry into animals lies a problem, one that will open us up to the reasons that such questions are worth asking to begin with. As Derrida notes, talking about all animals as "the animal" is ridiculous, a conceptualization that cannot accurately represent the vast variety and difference of the animal kingdom. Talking about 'the animal' reduces plankton and dolphins, amoebas and apes into the same thing, becoming violent when it

allows for the equal exploitation of all animals (and, historically, groups of humans who have been deemed “animal”, e.g. the Holocaust, slavery, etc.). While changing the way that we speak is beyond the ambition of this paper (I will continue, out of linguistic necessity, to use “the animal”) its questions will, hopefully, address the ways that animals (or non-human others) are lost to us and exploited.

The human who is excluded from humanity – the Jews of the modern age and the barbarians of the pre-modern – brings us to the most pressing concern of our paper, that of self-knowledge, especially as a species. That the human could be an animal, or is, at the very least, descended from one, suggests a certain co-habitation within the human of human and animal, wherein humans have attributes unique to themselves as well as more common animal inclinations. What the anthropological machine that Agamben has forced us to confront has done (we will discuss it in more detail later) is excluded from the human all animal traits within the human *and* all humans who lack “human” qualities (or possess animal ones); what is understood as a human being is what is distilled from the stew of *humanitas* and *animalitas*, what is marked as “human” and separated from all that is “animal”. The problem with this (there are myriad problems, but I am referring to the most basic) is that human identity, without acknowledging and understanding the animality from which it constructs itself, is at best confused and at worst incomplete. Humans without knowledge of the animal are humans without self-knowledge, that form of knowledge that, if we give any credence to Plato, is knowledge of the most fundamental and important sort. Here we come towards the central question, one that we will pursue like Ahab’s white whale and one that will re-surface throughout; what role do

animals and animality occupy within the identity of human being, and how should the human treat what is animal?

1. What are humans and animals?

To discuss the animal and the human and how they are related, we must first come to an understanding of the separate parts, of what animals and humans are. In this section, I will provide a philosophical foundation of the human and animal (and their differences) from which we will be able to begin answering the questions posed above. I will proceed chronologically, beginning with Aristotle and tracing the ways that conceptions of humans and animals have changed through to Heidegger. Particular attention will be paid to the subjective operation of humans and animals, how animals have (or have not) been extended moral considerability, and the principles that justify philosopher's perspectives on humanity and animality. As a definition of humanity is rather beyond this paper's scope, I will deal primarily with humans *as they compare* to animals.

1(A). Aristotle

Aristotle gives us Ancient Greece's strongest definition of the animal, and takes as his starting point the workings of the soul. According to Aristotle, "The soul may therefore be defined as the first actuality of a natural body potentially possessing life; and such will be any body which possesses organs"(Aristotle 69). This sentence is undeniably confusing, though it quickly becomes comprehensible when we break it into parts. First of all, Aristotle judges every living thing that has organs (including plants, whose parts he considers organs) to be in possession of a soul. A living thing's matter (its body) has the potential for life, but that potential can only be realized through its form (soul), a relationship that I think can be best understood by reflecting on Frankenstein's monster being brought to life, its body animated by an electrical impulse that gives it soul

(it's worth noting that soul for Aristotle does not mean soul in the Christian sense, and finds a better approximation in psyche or, more broadly, being alive). The concept of form is a slippery one, but it can be understood in part as that which makes a whole out of an organism's components and compels it towards certain kinds of activity appropriate to that whole. Leon Kass, whose chapter *Food and Nourishing* in his book *The Hungry Soul* functions as a translation of Aristotle's *De Anima* into contemporary language, helps us understand, "Most fundamentally, living form is generally *functioning* form or organization, that is, form in its work or activity. To be a something, to be a particular animal in the full sense, is to be that animal-at-work: Really to be a squirrel means to be actively engaged in the constellation of activities we can call 'squirreling'"(Kass 38). A creature's form is the outward evidence of its soul, its interaction with the world as an interested organism.

The soul is the inward part of form, that which makes an organism interested and causes activity. In a plant, soul is that which causes it to burst forth from its seed and sprout upwards, the immaterial force that causes its materials to act together towards life. In an animal, the principle of soul is the same, though its workings become analogous to the human soul because of the shared sensation of touch. Aristotle, describing what an insect's possession of physical sensation must mean for its soul, writes, "if it has sensation, it must also have imagination and appetite; for where sensation is, there is also pain and pleasure, and where these are there must also be desire"(Aristotle 77).

Here we arrive at one of those previously anticipated junctures where keeping the animal and the human separate becomes impossible. Aristotle describes the movements of an insect's soul in the same language one would use to describe a human's, assigning

them the same emotions that we experience and explaining their behavior by way of the same drive towards pleasure and away from pain that he ascribes to us *homo sapiens*.

Three important observations spring forth from Aristotle's inability to describe the animal without an appeal to the human.

First, we must realize that the human has never been able to know the mind of an animal. In the words of Kass, "But of just how awareness guides food-securing action, even in the higher animals who hunt by sight, we are still largely ignorant"(Kass 46).

There is no way for us to know what an animal thinks – a fact that is largely responsible for animal philosophy in general – and everything that is said about what they think is simply conjecture based on observed behavior. Such observations are inseparable from human perception and thus animals, at least in our efforts to understand them, are a reflection of human experience. Wittgenstein's famous quote, "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him," nicely outlines the problem, pointing to the incomprehensibility of the animal other and the necessity of digesting their unlike-ness into some semblance of like-ness if we are to understand them at all. This does not, as we will see, mean that all philosophers regard animals as "like" humans (Wittgenstein's quote certainly showing that), but it does mean that any attempt to understand the *why* of animal behavior must use a human-thinking-as-animal as a starting point.

The other two things that Aristotle's use of the human to describe the animal brings out for us require more textual explanation to be fully appreciated. Aristotle bases his conception of the animal's soul in life's universal need for nutrition. The "appetite" of the insect that Aristotle mentions is not an incidental sensation, instead pointing towards the ever-present demands that matter places on soul if soul's existence is to

continue. To put it more explicitly, eating is the fundamental activity of the soul. Kass writes, “With the emergence of life, even in its most elementary forms, comes the emergence of a genuine ‘self’ – a distinct and separate being, potent but perishable, which persists by its own performance in metabolism and self-nourishing-pitted against but in active commerce with a correlative ‘world,’ in which, from which and against which it acts to maintain itself”(Kass 44). An animal, to maintain its matter, must constantly eat. Through the course of an animal’s life, many or all of the cells that make up its body will die and be replaced by other cells constructed from metabolized food. Eating thus becomes a process of making *unlike* material into self-same *like* material. The ‘self’ that Kass refers to operates on two levels, the first one being the material and metabolized self constituted and separate from external matter, while the second is the formal self, the soul in possession of an appetite that persists beyond the life and death of the individual cells of its body. The soul is not, as this account may suggest, separable from matter. On the contrary, its appetite forces it to make matter (both internal and external) its primary concern. The animal’s soul must contend with the world outside of itself if its existence is to continue, and appetite - along with the pleasure, pain and desire that come forth from it – is the movement of the soul that attaches the external to the internal.

Furthermore, the soul is, in its appetitive function, forward-looking, something that anticipates the potential for satiation. Kass quotes Hans Jonas, “With respect to the organic sphere, the external linear time-pattern of antecedent and sequent, involving the causal dominance of the past, is inadequate: while mere externality is, at least can be presented as, wholly determined by what it was, *life is essentially also what is go to be*

and just becoming: in its case, the extensive order of past and future is intensively reversed”(Kass 49). The animal-as-for-the-future is perhaps best understood by considering the actions set in motion by the appetite of a predator. A hungry mountain lion will search for prey, stalk it, and kill it to satisfy its initial desire for food. Yet the future-oriented character of animals does not, as we have said so far, reach its teleological end in the act of eating, the sustenance of life being an insufficient cause for life itself. Aristotle writes that, “But since everything should be named in view of its end, and in this case the end is the reproduction of the species, primary soul will be that which reproduces another like itself”(Aristotle 95). For Aristotle, participation in the divine is what all living things strive for, animals achieving this end by reproducing and, in doing so, securing for them selves at least the potential for immortality. The life of an animal is supported by food, though its life looks towards and is *for* a life beyond the limits of its own pleasure and pain. That, however, should not be interpreted in the Christian/Nietzschean sense of life in this world being lived for a life after. For Aristotle, involvement with the divine is the way to live the best life *in this* life, and a soul that has reproduced is a soul fulfilled. Though examples of Aristotle’s position abound in the animal kingdom, it finds its sharpest illustration in the mayfly. After a mayfly egg has been laid in a lake or stream, it will progress through a series of larval stages, molting 20-30 times over a period of several months to a year before reaching maturity. Upon reaching adulthood, the mayfly will take to the air, performing a mating flight (or dance) before consummating with a suitable partner. Afterwards, the female will commit her final earthly act, depositing her eggs by skimming across the water and letting them wash off a few at a time, releasing them in a dive bomb maneuver or, as is most common,

falling onto the water's surface and releasing them as she dies. In total, adult mayflies live for between 30 minutes and two days, every moment of that time devoted to seeing their lineage continue into the future.

What would Aristotle make of the mayfly? It's ridiculous to speculate too much, though it seems clear that he would understand its behavior as the result of something inward, as something driven at least by pleasure and, perhaps, by divine desire. Does the mayfly simply want to mate, or does it want to mate *for the purpose* of creating more mayflies? Ascribing "divine desire" to a mayfly feels contrived, though the fact that divinity and a mayfly can be mentioned together at all brings us to our second juncture of Aristotle's animal and human. For Aristotle, humans are the "rational animal", the "rational" standing for what separates us from other animals while the "animal" acknowledges that, despite our mental faculties, we still exist on the same continuum as the mayfly, the bird, and the lion, and share many qualities with them, in particular the quality of having soul. The concept of a continuum of life that envelops both humans and animals places an imperative on humans to treat the animal (who humans will, as we progress forwards from Aristotle, have an increasing amount of control over) with a dignity and respect that recognizes the animal's awareness of the world, its capacity to experience pleasure and, more pertinently, pain.

Aristotle's animal is first and foremost a form of life, a being that experiences and interacts with the world through the inward movements of its soul. Soul is not a metaphysical and otherworldly substance bound for Heaven or Hell as it is usually understood in contemporary language, but is, as Kass eloquently puts it, "the species-specific psyche [that] might be said to be the vital form or ruling-beginning of each

animal, when the animal is regarded as a unified center of awareness, action, and appetite”(Kass 48). That Aristotle imagines the mind of the animal as such is, of course, conjecture, an attempt to constitute the unknowable mind of another from observed behavior. That Aristotle’s attempt to explain animal behavior applies the inward experience of being human (awareness, action, appetite) to being animal shows us that Aristotle regards the human as a type of animal and that the human’s unique “rationality” does preclude their animality or prevent them from understanding animal mind as analogous to their own. All animals are driven by their unceasing lack, their hunger that forces them to engage with the world as it allows them to feed themselves. The animal looks outward and towards the future in search of satiation, the activity of eating necessitating other activities - hunting, socializing, stalking - that generate value in themselves and beyond their end (think of a cat playing with its prey or the pleasure monkeys take in being with other monkeys). Eating is not an end in itself however, and functions as a way for the animal to partake in the divine, allowing them to reproduce and lay claim to an immortality of form like god’s (or, at the very least, the potential to extend their influence beyond their own mortal span). Aristotle will become the forefather of the school of thought that sees humans as animals, non-human animals as closely related to humans, and “soul” as the common principle of life that opens the actions of other creatures to intelligibility and compassion.

This is not, however, the total picture of Aristotle. His position with regard to humans and animals differs drastically between his zoological writings and his metaphysical and ethical ones, and while the former encourage a view of the difference between humans and animals as one of degree, the latter depict the difference as one of

kind. In this respect - and in the ontological suppositions that justify the difference-of-kind view – Aristotle is, somewhat ironically, also the forefather of the school of thought that sees animals as inferior to humans, mechanistic in their behavior, and morally excludable, objects that can be used in any way towards the end of human happiness.

The first premise of Aristotle’s that leads towards what I will term the “mechanistic” vision of animals is that humans, and humans alone, are capable of thought, thought being the only activity of the soul that can be separated from the body. In his book *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents*, Gary Steiner writes that, “In line with a commitment that extends at least as far back as Aristotle, Descartes presents an ontology according to which immaterial things are superior to material ones”(Steiner 135). For humans, rational thought (what Descartes will term the “immortal soul”) can be separated from their corporeal being (though for Aristotle thought is still tethered to the body in the sense that it will cease when the body dies). Because Aristotle’s god is so intimately entwined with thought (he describes god as “thinking of thinking” in the *Metaphysics*), and because the *telos* of all living is participation with the divine, thinking is the highest activity that humans can engage in. In Aristotle’s characterization of humans as “rational animals”, the rational (thinking) is privileged over the animal way of interacting with god (reproduction). As Steiner writes, “Happiness...depends crucially on the capacity for rational contemplation, which makes human beings most like the gods. Animals, on Aristotle’s view, lack this capacity and hence do not have any share in happiness. This makes animals ‘inferior in their nature to men’”(Steiner 60).

While Aristotle certainly does consider humans to be hierarchically above non-human animals, he also regards this view as compatible with the more sympathetic one

about animals we came to before. Human rationality does make humans better than animals and different from them, but it does not negate their animality; the difference, as we said above, is one of degree, not of kind. As further evidence, Steiner says that, “[Aristotle] implicitly recognizes that the possession of rational soul in human beings does not distinguish them in a cosmically absolute sense from animals”(Steiner 76). Nevertheless, Aristotle’s insistence that animals do not possess rational thought and that they are firmly and inescapably of the corporeal creates a break between humans and animals, one that will, with the help of Descartes, create a chasm between the two.

1(B). Descartes

There are two interpretations of Descartes’ conception of the animal, one that focuses on him as “a devoted dog owner” and another that takes into account his tendency to say the following; “If you slice off the pointed end of the heart in a live dog, and insert a finger into one of the cavities, you will feel unmistakably that every time the heart gets shorter it presses the finger, and every time it get longer it stops pressing it”(Steiner 149). Descartes proceeds from a similar starting point as Aristotle, writing, “I came to realize, however, that there are two different principles causing our motions: one is purely mechanical and corporeal and depends solely on the force of the spirits and the construction of our organs, and can be called the corporeal soul; the other is the incorporeal mind, the soul which I have defined as thinking substance”(Kalof 61). At a glance, Descartes’ animal ontology appears to be almost exactly the same as Aristotle’s. Descartes begins by acknowledging the corporeal capacities common to humans and animals which, he readily admits, allow for the “impulses of anger, fear, hunger, and so on”(Kalof 61). Humans are again distinguished from animals by virtue of their ability to

think, thinking being an activity that does not require the body. Until one considers the catastrophic (at least for animals) consequences of Descartes' use of the words "purely mechanical", Descartes does indeed seem like someone you would want to be owned by if you were a dog.

Mechanism for Descartes is action impelled by purely corporeal causes, a kind of reflexivity that is not accompanied by rational thought. As example, Descartes writes, "even if we expressly willed not to put our hands in front of our head when we fall, we could not prevent ourselves"(Kalof 60). The "corporeal soul" acts beyond our will and in response to a given circumstance; notably, the corporeal soul cannot chose *not* to respond. For Descartes, the action of a machine is due to the parts that make it up, and nothing else; "It is certain that in the bodies of animals, as in ours, there are bones, nerves, muscles, animal spirits, and other organs so disposed that they can by themselves, without any thought, give rise to all the animal motions we observe. This is very clear in convulsive movements when the machine of the body moves despite the soul"(Kalof 61). Animals act the way they do because they are "natural automata," acting in the world at the behest of their organs and wholly without thought.

If animals for Descartes are non-thinking machines, than where does that leave the soul that they had with Aristotle, the *psyche* that made the difference between them and us a matter of degree? The admission that animals act because of "anger, fear, hunger, and so on" does seem to point towards a psyche of sorts, but how does it operate? Descartes writes that, "animals do not see as we do when we are aware that we see, but only as we do when our mind is elsewhere...In such a case we too move just like automatons"(Steiner 146). The clear implication is that animal perception, from sense of

sight to feeling hunger, is *less* than human perception. Animals feel hunger and fear in the same way that a machine “feels” an impulse of electricity that causes it to act; while it impels it into motion, it does not affect it inwardly because animals, like machines, are not aware that they have an inward life. What makes hunger, fear and the other “passions” real is the human mind’s capacity for reflective awareness. Descartes describes; “I do not explain the feeling of pain without reference to the soul. For in my view pain exists only in the understanding. What I do explain is all the external movements which accompany this feeling in us; in animals it is these movements alone which occur, and not pain in the strict sense”(Steiner 147). The feeling of hunger or pain in a human is not analogous to hunger or pain as we see it in an animal. As animals lack subjective awareness, what they perceive does not properly “exist” except as a part of their mechanical function. Lacking consciousness of feeling is tantamount to not feeling at all.

This idea is in line with the totality of Descartes project, especially as it applies to the material vs. the immaterial soul. The material soul, as one would expect, is rooted in the corporeal, in “nature”. Nature for Descartes is an automatic mechanism, one that claims animals and their material souls as automata. The immaterial soul, as something that can operate completely independent of the corporeal, escapes nature’s “machine-ations” and can operate autonomously. Nature as, “pure corporeality or mechanism is not worthy of moral respect, and this allows human beings to treat nature as a storehouse of energy and raw materials that are available for the satisfaction of human desire”(Steiner 135). The imperative and right given to our immaterial souls is, as Descartes says, “the mastery and possession of nature”. The implications are two-fold. First of all, animals

are excluded from moral consideration because they lack an immaterial soul and the sentience that comes with it and because they are, as a result of being of nature, natural automata. Animals, like all of nature, can be appropriated by humans and used in any way whatsoever, humans needing to pay them no more heed than they would rocks, soil, or any other material resource. Secondly, “Descartes states that the possession of reason can enable us to gain complete mastery over our passions through knowledge of the truth, whereas the lack of reason in animals prevents them from achieving any kind of self-mastery”(Steiner 151). Even within the human being, Descartes encourages the subjugation of impulses and “animal spirits” to reason. This brings up a number of interesting questions. Is Descartes implying a hierarchy within the human, that those with the greatest amount of mastery are more human and those with the least less? What is the genealogy of self-mastery, what is it about humans that makes a value out of controlling our “passions”? What does it mean to be human if humans are not *of nature*? Are humans striving to be unnatural? Semi-divine? What do humans gain and what do they lose by being the masters to nature’s slave? As tempting as these questions are, I will leave them for later when we have given the animal and the human a firmer and more diverse foundation.

The final point that must be made about Descartes concerns his use of language. In his *Letter to the Marquess of Newcastle*, Descartes, speaking about the idea that animals have thought, says, “To which I have nothing to reply except that if they thought as we do, they would have an immortal soul like us. This is unlikely, because there is no reason to believe it of some animals without believing it of all, and many of them such as oysters and sponges are too imperfect for this to be credible”(Kalof 60). To regard

something that may be true for some animals as being true for all animals is simply not valid, a gross logical misjudgment that privileges the concept over the object it is meant to represent, and provides a clue as to the inability of the term “animal” to adequately describe all the forms of life that it claims as its own. Besides treating all animals as ontologically chained to their linguistic categorization, Descartes also severs the link between humans and animals. If humans were animals (as they undeniably are, at least biologically speaking) then they too would be consumed by Descartes’ universalized animal, and they too would be denied a soul because of their inseparability from “oysters and sponges”. Embedded within this quote is a whisper of Descartes doubt or, at the least, guilt. By using the in-credibility of oysters having souls to prove that higher animals also don’t have souls, Descartes reveals a weakness; apparently, it *is* credible that at least some higher animals do have souls. It is obviously disconcerting to think that the animal who violence is directed towards (regardless of purpose, be it experimentation, hunger or cruelty) has the potential for analogy to our own subjective state. Indeed, if this were a possibility, Descartes experiment on the chest cavity of a dog would be a horrific, unjustified action. Yet for Descartes, it is clear – especially when you discount his conceptualization of all animals as same, be they oyster or elephants – that it is possible, that more developed species exhibit behavior that makes their possession of an immortal soul wholly credible.

Descartes blending of animals into animal forces us to take a critical look at our own project; how can we examine the difference between humans and animals if animals inherit such a vast variety of forms? Are we trying to determine the difference between a human and a sponge, or a human and a dolphin? As we must, at least initially, employ

the broadest definition of animality relating to humanity (speaking from the point of view of the subjects) we will have to answer through Aristotle and for both sponge and dolphin. The task in both cases, however, will be very different. For the former, the challenge will be finding similarities, while in the latter (dolphins and several other species are known to possess language and self-consciousness) it will be parsing our common material into slim difference.

For Descartes, of course, the question of the difference between humans and animals is a non-starter; while humans and animals both possess a “corporeal soul” that resembles Aristotle’s account of soul, the animal’s lack of intellect (an “immortal soul”) renders them unaware of this corporeal soul, thus rendering them *unlike* humans and *like* machines. Humans, and humans alone, have an awareness of themselves imparted by their capacity for rational thought. As a consequence, animals are not analogous to humans, being different in kind rather than degree because their lack of awareness means that they are not properly conscious in the human sense, that their unawareness of their corporeal soul is tantamount to not having a corporeal soul at all. Animals are nature’s unfeeling automata and, like the rest of the material world, are *for* human use, meant to be mastered and controlled by the immaterial soul – the reason – of humans.

The split between mind and body that began with Aristotle and was expounded upon by Descartes is perhaps the most important tool we have for evaluating arguments concerning the animal. Thus far, mind (the capacity for rational thought) has been identified as *the* difference between humans and animals. Both Descartes and Aristotle agree on this, though they disagree in that the former sees mind as imparting self-awareness that allows humans to know that they *are* in the world and in control of their

relationship to it (consequently establishing that animals are different in kind) whereas the latter does not believe that this is the case, granting that animals are different but only in degree. For Descartes, awareness is a process of the *cogito*; because thinking is foundational to being and to knowledge, being aware of or knowledgeable about anything means that it must first pass through the structure of thought. As animals do not possess thought and because the senses without thought do not impart awareness, Descartes is justified in saying that, “animals do not see as we do when we are aware the we see, but only as we do when our mind is elsewhere”(Steiner 146).

For Aristotle, awareness is closely linked to how we perceive and how we know. Aristotle writes, “for each sense organ is receptive of the perceived object, but without its matter. That is why, even when the objects of perception are gone, sensations and mental images are still present in the sense organ”(Aristotle 147). Notably, Aristotle excludes the mind; for him, sensory input *and awareness of it* begins and ends in the “sense organs”.

Unfortunately for Aristotle, his account of the physiologics of perception is hopeless outdated. Sense organs do not bestow, “articulate awareness, from the start,” or without the mind (Craven 21). What the body perceives is meaningless without the input of the mind, the self always lacking awareness of sensory information without the mind’s interpretative faculties. In short, if animals don’t have a mind than they are, as Descartes says, nothing more than machines.

At this juncture, Descartes’ version of the animal as mechanistic and different from humans in kind is - given Aristotle’s theory of perception and awareness – the only valid account of the animal. There is, however, a way of redeeming Aristotle’s animal.

It begins with recognizing that animals, physiologically speaking, also have a mind. Almost all animals are endowed with a nervous system - and usually a brain - that gives them the cognitive abilities necessary to have at least a primitive mind (what Descartes would call their corporeal soul). The question then becomes one of awareness; what kind of mind does an animal need to have to make its suffering sufficient cause for moral considerability? If awareness is not derived from rationality, or if a non-human animal can exhibit rational thought (i.e. language), then Descartes' argument falls apart and humans must return to their place amongst the animals.

Descartes' line of thought on animals fails to produce a major successor who is willing to embrace the entirety of his position (possibly excepting Kant, who also accords animals minimal analogy to humans and also denies them moral standing). That said, Descartes' conception of animality remains present, either as justification in the mistreatment of animals or as perspective that engenders thinking of the *opposite*, and can still be considered one of the dominant modalities through which we understand and act towards animals. Darwin and Nietzsche offer some of the most compelling and lucid arguments about animals of the post-Cartesian era that respond, at least indirectly, to Descartes marginalization of the animal as it proceeds from his rigid and rupturous dualism. Darwin and Nietzsche draw from Aristotle in seeing humans and animals as existing on the same continuum, paying heed to whether or not the human conceit of centrality and superiority is justified and problematizing attempts to understand the human in opposition to animals.

1(C). Darwin

Darwin's model of the gap between humans and animals proceeded, of course, from his scientific studies. As a preliminary note, it is an interesting exercise to consider Descartes' writings on the animal as symptomatic of Christianity (wherein anything that does not share in the divine through the practice of rational thought is reduced to thinghood) and Darwin's as moving distinctly away from Christianity, at least in its dogmatic senses and despite his "saying on several occasions that the theory of natural selection is not incompatible with a belief in God"(Steiner 196). This incompatibility with Christianity – and consequent challenge of Descartes – becomes apparent in Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin writes that, "man is descended from some less highly organized form," and Steiner, paraphrasing Darwin, adds that, "human beings and animals share 'a common progenitor,' and that human beings and animals are subject to 'the same general causes' and 'obey the same laws' of mental and physical development"(Steiner 190). Humans, in a way that would have been unimaginable to Descartes, are literally *from* the animal and, to extend the argument, come from a "common progenitor" that they share with animals who is not God but who is, more likely than not, a single-celled organism, life in its least-developed sense. It also seems that nothing – not even reason – can make humans *not* animal, as we are subject to the same causes and, most significantly, the same laws of *mental* development. Steiner summarizes the ideological ramifications; "By comparison with the theory of natural selection, the theory of creation lacks the power to explain the obvious developmental affinities between human beings and animals"(Steiner 190). In questioning the origins of

humans and animals, Darwin effectively undermines thought that takes as a precept the stasis of the forms and relations of humans and animals.

We hear echoes of Aristotle as Darwin says, “there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher animals in their mental faculties”(Steiner 190). The difference between animals and humans is again reduced to a matter of degree, though it is hard to not be reminded of Descartes when Darwin writes, “without any conscious intelligence...the lower animals are excited by the same emotions as ourselves”(Steiner 190). If an animal lacks conscious intelligence, then wouldn't it follow that it also lacks awareness and that its emotions are purely causes of its mechanical function? The possession or lack of conscious intelligence is where Descartes draws the line between humans and animals as different in kind. Yet Darwin seems to attribute conscious intelligence to the higher animals (as does Descartes through his inferential admission that it is credible that higher animals have immortal souls), which forces us to ask when (or if) a difference in degree produces a difference in kind. Does the behavior of all animals, as Darwin thinks, have at least some analogy to humanity? Or do animals at a certain undefined point of difference - as Descartes through Darwin seems to think – become so different from us that to call them *like* would be laughable?

It's almost impossible to provide a satisfactory answer to these questions, though Darwin seems to reject that animals are different in kind, especially in the mechanical Cartesian sense. Steiner, summarizing Darwin, writes, “The continuity between human and animal mental capacities is so great that it ‘seems extremely doubtful’ that capacities such as self-consciousness are unique to human beings. Each animal, possessing sensation, emotion, and at least rudimentary reason, is a subject of experience with a

sense of both the relationship and the difference between itself and other beings”(Steiner 193). Animals are not just similar to humans, they are, at least in some ways, the same, existing on a common continuum and possessing many of the qualities that some humans regard as exclusively their own. The difference between humans and animals proceeds from Hume’s notion of intelligence as the association of ideas. While every animal has the power of association, humans have, according to Darwin, an, “almost infinitely larger power of associating together the most diversified sounds and ideas”(Steiner 193). This difference in mental capacity is the only thing that separates humans from animals, though it isn’t enough of a difference to make humans *not* animal. Humans are essentially animals, governed by the same rules and even having “some few instincts in common [with animals]”(Steiner 192). Darwin even claims to have witnessed examples of, “courage, timidity, revenge, jealousy, ennui, curiosity, sympathy, and love in animals,” also stating that “all animals feel Wonder”(Steiner 190). For Darwin, human behavior is intimately connected to nature and especially to other animals, the actions and the mind of humans having emerged out of – and being informed by – the animal. The human’s subjective experience of the world is anything but unique, being shared in matters of degree by all animals.

Even those things that humans consider unique to themselves – morality, for instance – are, for Darwin, extensions of animal instinct. Steiner writes, “The origin of morality, which is unique to human beings, is the social instincts, which humans share with animals”(Steiner 193). Social instincts exist for the same reason that multicellular organisms do; individuals have a better chance of surviving and thriving when they form groups. The movement towards survival as a good accords with Darwin’s theory of

natural selection, wherein things that benefit the ability of an organism to survive are treated as biologically good.. There is, as Darwin says, “a fundamental identity between the moral good and the biological good”(Steiner 194). Indeed, Darwin directly adapts the morality of social animals in general into a human moral maxim, writing that, “the social instincts both of man and the lower animals have no doubt been developed by nearly the same steps, [thus] it would be advisable, if found practical, to use the same definition in both cases, and to take as the standard of morality, the general good or welfare of the community”(Steiner 194). The activity of humans, no matter how sophisticated or abstracted from its original instinct, is caused by animality, by the basic impulses that comprise the biological imperative of how we survive as social animals. So powerful are the animal instincts within us that Darwin – at his most compelling – insists that different types of animals would, if they were capable, have entirely different moralities that would accord with their instinctive function; if “men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering”(Steiner 196). This is precisely how foundational Darwin considers our underlying “corporeal” instincts to our behavior, regardless of the power of our reason.

Morality as a human activity with regards to animals does not necessarily exclude animals from the “community” of humanity. Darwin asserts that human’s awareness of the far-reaching consequences of their actions causes them to extend moral consideration to all the sentient beings that are affected. He writes that, “disinterested love for all creatures [is] the most noble attribute of man”(Steiner 195). It isn’t entirely clear how

this feeling can be derived from a social instinct, as a social instinct should, if it follows the rules of natural selection, promote the behavior of the species. Some clarity comes when Darwin writes, “it is certain that associated animals have a feeling of love for each other”(Steiner 194). If human realization that other beings are affected by their actions is grounds for extension to those beings of moral considerability, than it can be said that those beings are, through human action, associated with humans. Therefore, love makes sense by virtue of the associations of humans transcending the human.

The tension in Darwin between moral obligation to humans and moral obligation to all beings comes to a head when he speaks about the practice of vivisection; “I fear that in some parts of Europe little regard is paid to the sufferings of animals, and if this be the case, I should be glad to hear of legislation against inhumanity in any such country. On the other hand, I know that physiology cannot possibly progress except by means of experiments on living animals, and I feel the deepest conviction that he who retards the progress of physiology commits a crime against mankind”(Steiner 196). Here Darwin presents two actions that would be considered immoral, the first instance, for which he makes the interesting word choice of “inhumane”, being cruelty towards animals, the second being prohibition of cruelty to animals if that cruelty can lead to the progression of mankind. Though Darwin does, as we saw above, seem to include animals in his human community, when it comes down to the biological imperative humans have the greatest obligation to other humans. Darwin, unlike Descartes, acknowledges the suffering of animals as real and comparable to that of humans but, like Descartes, permits the use of animals as within human moral bounds, though with two apparent caveats. The first is that of utility; causing the suffering of an animal is legitimate only if it

benefits humanity, with “benefits” interpreted as contributing to humanity’s body of knowledge (specifically scientific knowledge) and possibly, as Darwin does not, like his contemporary Tolstoy, speak out against eating animals, that which contributes to humanity’s body itself, its physical corpulence. Secondly, as making an animal suffer unnecessarily is inhumane, any animal suffering caused in an animal’s use must be the minimum amount of suffering necessary, surplus suffering being unnecessary and therefore inhumane.

While Darwin does see humans as intimately related to and informed by animals and animality, he still regards humans as hierarchically *above* animals. He writes that, “man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale”(Steiner 197). For Darwin, the superior intellect of humans does indeed confer a degree of ontological superiority and, we may suppose through Darwin’s use of “pride”, a certain sense of self-importance that comes with the power to guide – at least to the extent that our instincts will allow – the course of humanity and that of the other species. Darwin’s defense of progress even at the expense of animal suffering shows that he thinks humans are headed somewhere, that we can improve ourselves and – as must be the case if one believes in self-improvement – rise up higher and further from what we *are*, from the “lowly origin” that our body marks us as possessing”(Steiner 197). While Darwin is the most sympathetic thinker towards the animal we have seen yet, he remains – despite the “common progenitor” of humans and animals – staunchly anthropocentric, believing that the human’s imperative (perhaps their biological imperative) towards progress constitutes a right to move upwards from our position at the top propelled by those organisms beneath us. But to focus too much

on this is to ignore Darwin's essential contribution. Darwin, by giving us a new origin, gave us a new way of seeing our relationship to other animals, one that firmly bases humanity in the animal and insists that the human's intellect does not remove him from animality or make his actions, thoughts, and feelings any different from every other creature in creation.

1(D). Nietzsche

Nietzsche follows Darwin in his affirmation of the fundamental sameness of humans and animals, but splits away from him in his anthropocentric thinking that places humans at the top of the hierarchy. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra searches his land for the origin of a pitiful cry for help. On the way, he encounters numerous "higher men" who have lost their way following in the footsteps of Zarathustra. He sends each to his cave, and tells them to, "first and foremost speak with my animals! The proudest and the cleverest animal – they should be the right advisors for us both!"(Parkes 233). That Zarathustra considers his animals to be the right advisors in his project to lead himself and others to a good life suggests that the traditional hierarchy of Western philosophy that privileges human over animals is entirely discarded by Nietzsche. This view becomes more interesting and complicated when combined with the standard interpretation of the animals that Zarathustra is referring to (an eagle and a snake) that sees them as a part of Zarathustra's psychology, and not as autonomous animals in their own right. That the animals *are* Zarathustra suggests that animality exists within the human being, and that that animality is in some way opposite to or in tension with humanity, as Zarathustra refers to them as something "other" than himself. While the animal as simultaneously other to and of the human does seem contradictory, I believe it

can be reconciled by Nietzsche's idea of animal-human difference where, as we will see, the faculties humans have that animals do not proceed from animal attributes without negating the animal from the human. By way of example, Nietzsche believes that humans have created abstract thought from the raw animal material of sense and emotion. Yet the ability to think abstractly does not preclude the ability to sense and feel. Thus, "animal" faculties can still exist within the human while also being "other" to it (the best example of this kind of other-ness with regard to the animal being Descartes' *cogito*). Notably, Nietzsche holds morality in the same light as Darwin, writing that, "The beginnings of justice, as of prudence, moderation, bravery – in short, of all we designate as the *Socratic virtues*, are *animal*: a consequence of that drive which teaches us to seek food and elude enemies...It is not improper to describe the entire phenomenon of morality as animal"(Calarco 4). In the case of the animal within as teacher of the human we see a reinstatement of hierarchy, but as something potential rather than vertical. Hierarchy in this case is something that is, in its oppositional character, always potential, an unresolved struggle for power between the animal, the human, and the concept of the Overhuman that serves to strengthen humanity (and animality).

Nietzsche's notion of hierarchy is drawn from his idea of the meaning of the differences between humans and animals. While Nietzsche does believe in language and reason as unique to humans, he very plainly does not believe, as Descartes did, that the animal's lack of reason makes it a mindless automaton without awareness or feeling. Nietzsche writes, "If we could communicate with a midge we would hear that it too floats through the air with the very same pathos, feeling that it too contains within itself the flying center of the world"(Lemm 131). Animals and humans exist along the same

continuum, the unique characteristics of humans elevating them above their relatives as little as the ability to fly makes a bird greater than a fish, or visa-versa. Along the life continuum we see co-dependence rather than autonomy, every species (including humans) relying on other species to give them life. In *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy*, Vanessa Lemm says that Nietzsche, "holds that any form of life that is cut off from other forms of life declines because it is separated from that which generates its life"(Lemm 3). This quote clues us into the most fundamental reason for Nietzsche's potential hierarchy; the highest value for Nietzsche is not thought, reason or "pathos", but the scope, depth, beauty and health of a being's ability to access life. The all-too-common human belief that the ability to think denotes superiority does just what Nietzsche warns against, isolating the human from other forms of life and thereby causing a decline in life. For Nietzsche, a hierarchy that is always potential and for the future lets life contact and compete with other manifestations of life, thereby making possible the creation of new life. Nietzsche makes it biting clear how much he thinks the human's illusion of superiority over the animal damages it, writing that, "the human being is, relatively speaking, the most unsuccessful animal, the sickliest, the one most dangerously strayed from its instincts – with all that, to be sure, the most *interesting!*"(Lemm 14).

Nietzsche's condemnation of alienating oneself from life by claiming superiority and his emphasis on instinct represent a critique of Descartes mind-body dualism, where Descartes crowns reason *supreme virtue* and gives it the authority to consider itself master over nature. Nietzsche writes, "I find those people disagreeable in whom every natural inclination immediately becomes a sickness, something that disfigures them or is downright infamous: it is *they* that have seduced us to hold that man's inclinations and

instincts are evil”(Calarco 5). To further the argument, let us also include Nietzsche’s conjecture on the first animals to emerge from the sea onto land, where he imagines, “these unfortunate creatures; they were reduced to their ‘consciousness,’ their weakest and most fallible organ!”(Calarco 4). For Nietzsche, embodied experience is more important to the health of an organism than reason, and reason – belonging to what Nietzsche boldly calls the “weakest and most fallible organ” – is not necessary to life. Returning to the body also signals a return to nature in a way that is analogous to Aristotle’s account of perception. What Aristotle’s “sense organs” perceive is never wrong just as Nietzsche’s instincts are not – fallibility is always a function of the mind’s failure to interpret the information it receives from the body and this fallibility is part of what is “true”. The sense organs “awareness” of reality *as it really is* again holds true for Nietzsche; instinct is the most powerful, most life-affirming way that all animals have of relating to the world. That both sense organs and instincts are firmly rooted in “body” means that they are also of nature, something that returns nature to its place as primary informant of humanity’s knowledge.

The key divergence in Nietzsche’s and Darwin’s conceptions of how humans relate to animals is in their differing beliefs on progress. Whereas Darwin regards human progress as a moral good – part of our biological imperative -, Nietzsche rejects it altogether, regarding the value of life as given always and only to our mortal span. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche admonishes Socrates for his, “improvement morality” and his method of improvement, reason. “Reason-virtue-happiness, that means merely that one must imitate Socrates and counter the dark appetites with a permanent daylight – the daylight of reason”(Kaufmann 478). For Nietzsche, “the sense for truth [is] really the

sense for security,” wherein security is the most basic, most animal instantiation of what humans complicate into truth. The obsession with reason that Socrates and Descartes develop is symptomatic of a pathological fixation on security, one that Nietzsche sees as life-denying especially in his emphasis on the role of contingency. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche tells us the place of reason, “A little reason, to be sure, a seed of wisdom scattered from star to star – this pinch of leaven is mixed into all things: for the sake of folly is wisdom mixed into all things!”(Parkes 143). When life becomes governed by reason and when reason feels that it is necessary to master the body, the human search for security has gone too far, sacrificing life to its preservation. Reason, Nietzsche seems to say, cannot progress life to a point of fulfillment that surpasses what reason precludes, the life given by nature, instinct, contingency, and a transcendence of the question of improvement. Humans, stripped of the privilege given to them by the twin conceits of reason and progression, have no grounds to claim any superiority over animals. Crucially, Nietzsche, just as he failed to clarify his notion of the Overman or elucidate his position on the place of violence (factors that contributed, albeit unforeseeably, to Nazism), also fails to explicitly anything about the moral standing of animals. A letter from Cosima Wagner writes that Nietzsche said, “it is morally important not to eat animals,” though in later years he turns to meat to try to ease his digestive distress (Wagner 289). It is thus difficult to say what Nietzsche would have thought; while his writings and Cosima’s letter would seem to lead to the conclusion that animal’s should be given rights, his later actions and his failure to write against violence towards animals leaves open the possibility that animals are – as in Darwin – for the community of humans.

The final point to be made about Nietzsche's animal, which is tangentially in favor of the view that animals for Nietzsche were not for humans - goes to dispel any lingering remnants of anthropomorphism. While the fact that Zarathustra's eagle and snake are said to represent (respectively) pride and wisdom would seem to indicate that Nietzsche is applying human traits to animals that may or may not possess them, the reality of it is the opposite. Nietzsche writes, "But courage and adventure and pleasure in the uncertain, the undared – *courage* seems to me man's whole prehistory. He envied the wildest, most courageous animals and robbed all their virtues; only thus did he become man"(Calarco 6). Virtues for Nietzsche originate in animals before they become properly human. Zarathustra learns pride and wisdom *from* his animals, which helps explain why he recommends them as the best advisors to those he finds lost. As Alphonso Lingis writes, Nietzsche, "naturalizes the human species, attributing to humans the perceptions, feelings, and behaviors of other natural species"(Calarco 10). The human, as something that is composed of other things, that is, as Lingis so accurately states, *naturalized*, does not anthropomorphize when it calls an animal by a "human" emotion. Instead, the human recognizes that the human and its qualities – be they pride, wisdom, courage – originated outside of the human, the foundation, creation and existence of humans starting and remaining tied to the natural and the animal. Anthropomorphism implies that humans are at the center, a notion that Nietzsche and his midge clearly deny.

Nietzsche follows Darwin in seeing humans as beings whose existence is thoroughly informed by animality. Human characteristics are derived from animal instincts, though the task of being human is, as philosophy's very existence makes clear, more complicated than being animal. The co-existence of the animal and the human

within the human provides a productive tension, a hierarchy-in-potential that strengthens all parties. Isolating the human as *not* animal is, for Nietzsche, a non-sensical act, one that does not make sense, as humans exist along the same continuum as animals and are not made better by their higher capacity for thought, and one that alienates humans from the other life forms that are the source of generation of life. Accordingly, Nietzsche moves against Descartes, championing a return to the body and to nature as the greatest sources of vitality. Nietzsche's apparent belief in the equivalence of humans and animals in conjunction with his assertion that improvement and progression (at least in the traditional sense) are untenable would lead one to think that humans have no cause in privileging themselves over animals and, to some extent, this view is right. However, Nietzsche's failure to explicitly state that animals should be given rights allows violence against them for human purposes to continue unobstructed. This seems strange given the other aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy, in particular his efforts to *naturalize* humans instead of anthropomorphizing the world, a difference that removes humans from their previous place at the center. Nietzsche's moral regard for animals is difficult to establish, though the body of his philosophy suggests that humans are animals, that animals and humans are not essentially different, and that humans would do well to pay heed to their animal, embodied natures.

1(E). Heidegger

Heidegger's conception of human-animal difference diverges sharply from the accounts given thus far, Heidegger rejecting both the Cartesian theory of animals as mechanistic things which are different in kind, and the Aristotelian notion of animals and humans existing on a common continuum, differing only in degree. Heidegger begins by

saying that only humans have access to existence (coining the exclusive term *ek-*sistence), that “to exist” necessitates an encounter with finitude. Heidegger writes, “Mortals are they who can experience death as death. Animals cannot do so. But animals cannot speak either. The essential relation between death and language flashes up before us, but remains still unthought”(Calarco 18). Language for Heidegger changes the nature of the human’s relation to the world, acting “as the home that preserves [a being’s] essence,” wherein preservation casts a meaning of a being and a temporal sense of it, both of which serve to reveal the potential for nothingness that reveals beings to us *as such*. Steiner writes, “all our attempts to grasp or make sense of this something...are essentially partial, provisional, and subject to revision precisely because of the irreducibility of that which we seek to grasp”(Steiner 205). Nothingness is what language, because it cannot represent the totality of an object, fails to represent. Yet nothingness, by presenting us with what an object is not and with the potential for its non-existence, confers meanings onto things in a way that is uniquely human. As Heidegger writes, “Of all beings, only the human being, called upon by the voice of being, experiences the wonder of all wonders: *that beings are*”(Steiner 205). As far as reflection on our own human being is concerned, we experience nothingness as anxiety, a feeling concerned with the imminence of our death. Heidegger writes, “Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-that is, its *Being-free* for the moment of choosing itself and taking hold of itself”(Steiner 206). Anxiety, impelled by our ceaseless movement towards nothingness, allows humans to choose a possibility, one that will preclude, as language does, the other possibilities of *being*. A possibility, when it is chosen, functions as a totality, something that makes the actions of

a human meaningful by making them *of* and *for* a being. The possibility is realized in a (using Steiner's words), "moment of deciding on one's 'ownmost potentiality for Being,' that...makes incumbent on the individual a certain life task or set of choices"(Steiner 206). Yet the anxiety that revealed the possibility also revealed the other possibilities, the nothingness and contingency upon which beings become beings. Human beings must, following Nietzsche, affirm their possibility – their illusion – but also take on the task of questioning it, of constant contention with the paradoxical problems that continuously appear in life. These things, finally, are what it means to exist as a human whose allotment is short and complicated by the imperatives of language, and of being a being *as such*.

Knowing beings *as such* is crucially different for Heidegger than simply knowing a being. Heidegger distinguishes between the different types of things that are in the world by proposing that, "[1.] the stone (material object) is *worldless*; [2.] the animal is *poor in world*; [3.] man is *world-forming*"(Calarco 21). Material objects have no relation to other things whatsoever. A stone will lay amongst other stone's without awareness or worry about where it is, where it will be, or what is happening to it. An animal, by contrast, does seem to actively interact with the things that are around it. Heidegger uses the example of a lizard, who will bask in the sun on a rock and, if that rock is removed, seek out another rock. "Rock" and "sun" are recognizable beings in the lizard's world, part of the network of objects it knows as necessary to survival and sustenance. The human differs in that he is, using Kass' terminology, "omnivorous". Humans recognize all beings as being regardless of their immediate utility because everything has the potential to become part of the human's *Umwelt*. While animals are aware of things,

humans are aware of the *being* of things, of their possibilities as given and concealed by language and nothingness. As Matthew Calarco writes, “if by “world” is meant accessibility to other beings, we can say that the animal has world; but if “world” is in some way related to having access to the being of beings, to being *as such*, then the animal does not have world”(Calarco 22). In this way, Heidegger follows Descartes in denying conscious subjectivity to animals. Animals respond to their environment purely through instinct and without distance between themselves and their actions. Heidegger writes that animals exist, “*without any so-called self-consciousness or any reflection at all, without any relating back to itself*”(Calarco 24). Animals according to Heidegger cannot be described as having “self”. In their relation to the world they are almost self-identical, operating instinctively towards things without awareness of the difference of beings (including their own being) *as* beings. While animals can perceive differences and can distinguish between pain and pleasure, they cannot recognize possibility in world (even possibility of their own ending/existing) and cannot know things that could produce possibility without action that always lack distance from self. Thus Heidegger uses the animal’s world-poverty to say that, “The leap from living animals to humans that speak is as large if not larger than that from the lifeless stone to the living being”(Calarco 18).

While Heidegger seems to fully embrace a Cartesian viewpoint, his stance differs in some significant ways. First, Heidegger does not deny animals openness to being, instead insisting that openness for them is mostly or completely a process of instinct. Admittedly, this is extremely similar to Descartes position, though with an important difference; for Heidegger, the animal’s lacks do not preclude experience of the world or make the animal a pure mechanism – an animate inanimate - *for* human use. Indeed, that

the human is *world forming* while the animal is *world poor* is something purely illustrative of the human's way of relating to world, and does not – despite appearances – imply hierarchy. Heidegger writes, “For we encounter the greatest difficulty when we pose the question which are the higher and which the lower kinds of access to beings...However quick we may be to estimate the human as a higher being than the animal, such an evaluation is questionable, particularly when we consider that the human can sink lower than the animal; an animal can never become corrupted as a human can”(Steiner 212). Heidegger even goes so far as to say that the difference between humans and animals in terms of relating to the world is only a “difference of degree”.

That said, the difference is such a vast one that the nature of an animal is difficult for a human to understand. Heidegger writes, “Even what we attribute to the human being as *animalitas* on the basis of the comparison with ‘beasts’ is itself grounded in the essence of ek-sistence. The human body is something essentially other than an animal organism”(Calarco 19). In a way, Heidegger's position on what comes from the human's animal is similar to that of Darwin and Nietzsche; what begins as animal instinct becomes something else when it passes through the human, the social instincts becoming morality, the instinct towards security becoming truth, etc. Yet Heidegger differs by asserting that the lineage between the animal impulse and the human feeling is incomprehensible. The human mind, which creates the condition of “ek-sistence”, stands between the body and the perception of animal states *as they are in the animal*. Thus the animal's “subjectivity”, despite differing only in degree, is impossible for humans to relate to or know. As Steiner writes, “One might even say that ‘we cannot really image what [the

animal's] world looks like without reverting to anthropomorphism,' and that 'this is *our* poverty'"(Steiner 213).

For Heidegger, animals don't have access to the world in the same way that humans do. Humans have language and knowledge of finitude (and nothingness) that give humans the capacity for meaning, selfhood, and relating to beings *as such*. Their life, in how they see it and how they conduct it, is charged with possibility, with the imperative to choose and contend with one's choice in all of its paradoxes. Humans constitute their world through the limited unconcealing of the concealed and with the knowledge that beings (being beings) will remain mysterious even as they reveal themselves. The world of the animal, by contrast, is entirely unconcealed because it – lacking language and finitude – has no possibilities. Animals are tied to their environments by instinct, and do not have any distance between themselves and their actions. Without subjective awareness, animals can see the being of their surroundings, but cannot see its beings *as* beings. Yet for Heidegger, the comparative poverty of the animal's seemingly self-identical world to the human's does not make the animal ontologically inferior to the human. Though Heidegger claims that the difference between humans and animals is only a matter of degree, the human way of accessing the world – of ek-sistence - is so fundamentally different than the animals that humans are unable to provide an account of what animals experience, the difference of degree becoming closer to a difference in kind. Even the impulses of the human body, our most obvious connection to our animality, can only be known as human, and *not* as analogous to animals. In this respect, Heidegger asks us to confront the animal on its own terms, as an object of wonder that we should not try to interpret anthropomorphically. Heidegger's

conception of the animal gives birth to two ways of thinking about the animal that will be important to the rest of our project. The first takes up his notion of not thinking the animal in human terms, and encourages the foundation of a thought that thinks non-anthropocentrically. The second, which contradicts the first, creates the human through a negative and oppositional relationship to the animal, maintaining that the work of philosophy is recovering, “a definition and meaning for ‘the human’”(Calarco 29). For Heidegger, the central challenge is in questioning both of these modes of thought, in asking how to treat the ontological construction of the human with regard to the animal and, most importantly, if such a construction even makes sense.

With a philosophical chronology of humanity and animality as we have given it – filled with disagreements and tensions between every philosopher – we are scarcely closer to reaching anything definitive. However, our panoply of viewpoints provides us with the information and the motivation required to return to our original question with a focus towards de-ciding (or at least eliminating) the human and the animal *as such*. Repeating the fundamental question, we ask; what is the difference between humans and animals?

2. What can we say about the animal?

Yet this question moves us in the direction of what I termed the *central* question, which we come to by asking what end an account of difference serves. More pointedly, does it put animals to the task of serving humans, or does it inscribe humans and animals as co-habitants of a commonly held world? In either case, is it possible to avoid anthropocentrism, by which I mean knowledge that has as its end the human good? Can any knowledge avoid this omnivorous tendency (or at least ability) of the human to make everything a part of itself? Are our efforts to know animals and animality geared towards showing us how they influence human identity and, consequently, how to live the best sort of life? Even for Descartes, the thinker who is perhaps most dismissive of the animal, animality (as an extension of nature and as the “corporeal soul” that exists even in the human) plays an important role, acting as that which is mastered to help humans attain their ends. For Heidegger as well, though he claims he cannot discern hierarchy between the human and the animal, the animal is something he pays attention to purely as a way of understanding human *being* as it presents itself in contrast with animal *being*. We see the animal’s importance most sharply with Giorgio Agamben, who seeks to dismantle the anthropological machine that conceptualizes humans as human through an exclusion/inclusion of the animal. Agamben writes, “What is man, if he is always the place – and at the same time, the result – of ceaseless divisions and caesurae? It is more urgent to work on these divisions, to ask in what way – within man – has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human, than it is to take positions on the great issues, on so-called human rights and values”(Agamben 16). Clearly how

humans relate to animals and animality is of paramount importance but, in light of that, how should we regard anthropocentrism?

The key to answering this question is stated succinctly by biologist Bernd Heinrich, who has written extensively on animal behavior. In *Mind of the Raven*, Heinrich writes, “We do not know what they feel. We know only what they do”(Heinrich 82). Quite simply, we cannot know the mind of an other, be they human or animal. Anthropocentrism in its broadest definition, in its use of knowledge about animals *for* the human, is the only thing that makes sense, as humans only have access to their own human world. Certainly this view taken to its extreme risks a dangerous sort of solipsistic monadism of the kind that justifies every sort of relativism and profound selfishness. Yet that is to stop too short. While we may “know only what they do,” we can still make suppositions about what they feel. As a *New York Times* article notes, researchers have traced, “the roots of our animal love to our distinctly human capacity to infer the mental states of others”(Angier D2). Compassion, in an imaginative sense, allows us to know how the world of an other *feels*. Anthropocentrism’s self-centeredness is thereby complicated; while compassion allows us to - in some sense - know the world of animals, it also pushes us towards a responsibility for the feeling other. Our behavior towards the other is thus limited in a positive, unconcealing sense that places restrictions on how humans can relate to animals; to the extent that the human *knows* the animal, with necessary reference to self, the human has a responsibility to act with the animal’s interests in mind. While anthropocentrism always thinks from the (human) self and for the (human) self, thinking the (animal) other and for the (animal) other seem to be imperatives placed upon us by our inferential capacities. What thinking the other while

also recognizing the limitations inherent in thinking it *as* human opens for us is the world de-centered; human *Umwelt* is far from being the only way that beings have come to terms with the world and thus, given the preponderance of other relationships to environment, the world as a whole cannot be considered something *for* humans. Anthropocentrism is undeniably the source of human thought, though that does not preclude relating to other beings, or make humans, contrary to Descartes, the all-consuming center of the universe. While this conception of anthropomorphism makes sense in conjunction with the animal, it becomes almost intelligible when applied to animality, as animality is not necessarily separate from the human.

Before we can give a description of the difference between humans and animals, we need to answer to the difference between animals and animality while also addressing a question we have been circling during our inquiry into anthropocentrism; how can humans know animals (and animality)? As the question of animality relies upon the animal (and is complicated by the human) lets begin by accounting for our knowledge of animals. By knowledge of animals, I don't mean a knowledge of their behavior or physiological processes, but a knowledge of their mind, of their inner states and causes. Humans, as we have already said and as is quite obvious, cannot explicitly *know* the mind of another. What they can do is know by analogy, something that gives to and, it could be said, is given by, language. An anguished face, or words ("I am so happy", "I see a brown building") signify the experience of a being in a way that is comprehensible to other beings. Comprehensibility is drawn from what is presumed to be a common pool of experience; inner states are only signified because the signifier believes that another being has knowledge enough to understand what they are trying to communicate. Herein

lies the problem with understanding the inner states of animals. As we lack a common language, any conclusions humans make from animal behavior about animal mind can only be drawn by appealing to analogous states *in humans*.

In the interest of keeping our animal momentum, I will postpone questions about animality to delve further into our burgeoning concern; knowing animals in the limited way that we do, what can we say about animals (and can we talk about animals as “animals”)? What we know about animals, as we discussed above, we know only through observation of their behavior. The leap from observing what animals do to claiming knowledge about their inner states necessitates a transformation. We can only know the animal if we make the animal *like*, if we consider the animal to be at least partially human. The knowledge that results concerning the nature of animals (if we consider such knowledge to be possible at all) creates the animal from the sum of the human capacities that the animal does and does not have, and from how those capacities are employed. Aristotle’s hierarchy of living beings ranked them in just this way, beginning at the bottom with plants, who share with humans the capacity for nutrition, then moving up to the lower animals (sensation), higher animals (locomotion) and humans (mind). Indeed, Aristotle’s template has remained the basis for almost every conception of the animal since, with philosopher’s beginning with a human that has every quality, and then defining the animal based on how the qualities it lacks and how that lack affects it.

If we are trying to ascertain what we can say about the animal, then the first task at hand is questioning whether we can say anything at all. Agamben writes that, “Heidegger constantly rejected the traditional metaphysical definition of man as *animal*

rationale, the living being that has language (or reason), as if the being of man could be determined by means of adding something to the ‘simply living being’”(Agamben 50). The same thing can be said for how humans make suppositions about the being of animals; the being of an animal cannot be determined by subtracting something from the human. While animals and humans may both have bodies, similar emotions, and a common environment of objects, the lack of language in the former and the possession of it in the latter separates their access to being by an “abyss”. Continuing to follow Heidegger, we can say that animals are never given by language into “the Open,” that space humans are given into which distances them from themselves and from their environment to a degree that allows them to see beings *as such*. Animals remain captivated between their own being (which they do not recognize as such) and their environment, and are thus deprived of *action* in the proper sense, left only with behavior as it is derived from instinct. The point that we are coming to is that animals, despite what they share with humans, have a way of being that is closed to humans because humans always and irresistibly know beings *as* beings. Knowing the subjective quality of being as ladybug or as a dolphin is impossible for humans, requiring us to *not* see the world as we see it. As Hub Zwart notes, “We cannot really image what [the animal’s] world looks like. We are deprived of the possibility to really understand them. If we want to describe an animal, we are likely to revert either to anthropomorphism, or to a mere biologicistic understanding. And this is *our* poverty”(Zwart 74). In this sense, we cannot say anything about the animal, except that it does have some sort of subjective relationship to its environment.

Bernd Heinrich, in the spirit of the continuity that Darwin and Nietzsche saw between humans and animals, offers a critique of Heidegger's uncrossable abyss through a defense of anthropomorphism. Heinrich, discussing the choice of a filmmaker to ascribe "love" to a penguin, writes, "I admired the boldness of the filmmaker...to face down the demon, if not the taboo, of anthropomorphizing his subjects...In a broad physiological sense, we are practically identical not only with other mammals but also with birds – muscle for muscle, brain for brain, hormone for hormone...Love is an adaptive feeling or emotion – like hate, jealousy, hunger, thirst – necessary where rationality alone would not suffice to carry the day"(Heinrich A23). The first thing to notice is that Heinrich is talking specifically about mammals and birds – what Darwin referred to as the "higher animals" – and not the myriad other forms of life that could qualify as animal. That does not go to say that other animals bear no analogy to humans, but instead references the fact that in the case of higher animals – and in this particular case, penguins – the similarities to humans are more striking than in something like a spider. These similarities form the foundation of Heinrich's anthropomorphism, which operates on the principle that humans and animals, having developed together for millions of years, use some of the same cognitive and emotional capacities to negotiate their environment. Anthropomorphism is simply the recognition of similarity, the ability to identify a different being's pain, or hunger, or love as precisely that, as something that also exists, though not exclusively, in the human. It is important to stress that Heinrich's anthropomorphism focuses on similarities *as* similarities and not as same. Heinrich writes that anthropomorphism goes amiss when it expects, "animals to feel and behave like human; they never will"(Heinrich A23). In the same way, humans will never be able

to feel and behave exactly like animals, something that allows Heidegger's abyss to still exist, though not as something that precludes the possibility of recognizing relatedness in the animal. Curiously, Heinrich's anthropomorphism alters the human's understanding of the animal into something that is not just a modified understanding of the human. As the central tenet of his animal epistemology is similarity, the subjectivity of the human is something that is shared, to a greater or lesser degree, by most animals. The human takes part in this subjectivity, but cannot claim love, hunger or desire as their own. Again we must confront Heidegger; does humanity's ability to assign terms to what is about the human fundamentally change the nature of what is symbolized? In a word, yes; the human mind shifts human perception of the human body. But, as we said before, the complicating factor of the human mind is not sufficient cause to negate similarities between humans and animals. While the mind of the animal may be unknown, we can know that animals (at least the higher animals) experience some version of what we experience.

At this point, it seems that we can say that some animals interact with their environments in a way that is analogous to how humans interact with the world, though in reality that perspective does not differ significantly from those held by every philosopher we have discussed thus far. Even Descartes, the thinker who attributed to animals the least, allowed that animals can express, "their fear, their hope, their joy," and that the "passions" available to humans are also available to animals through their "corporeal soul"(Kalof 60). Consequently, two problems leap to the fore, the first being Descartes notion of animals as automata, the second Heidegger's apparent position that the animal can only act instinctively, that, "The animal as such does not stand within a

potentiality for revelation of beings”(Agamben 54). Linnaeus challenges Descartes in his grouping of all animals under the concept animal. Descartes discredits the idea of an immortal soul in the animal by writing that it is, “unlikely, because there is no reason to believe it of some animals without believing it of all, and many of them such as oysters and sponges are too imperfect for this to be credible”(Kalof 60). As they lack an immortal soul, animals for Descartes are automata, an idea that Linnaeus elegantly refutes, saying, “surely Descartes never saw an ape”(Agamben 23). Descartes position proceeds from the belief that animals do not have the capacity for thought, a conclusion he arrives at from the animal’s lack of language; “there has never been known an animal so perfect as to use a sign to make other animals understand something which expressed no passion”(Kalof 60). As animals don’t have thought, they also do not have self-awareness, meaning that their actions are predetermined by their instincts and that animals, despite appearances, are not aware of what they do or of what is done to them. Animals for Descartes are machines that can be treated in any way whatsoever because what they feel is ultimately of no consequence, not even to them.

What Linnaeus brings to the surface is something that we saw with Darwin; the animal’s lack of language does not give humans enough evidence to support the conviction that animals cannot think, especially when higher animals can be so similar to humans that Linnaeus was unable to find, “a single distinguishing mark which separates man from the apes, save for the fact that the latter have an empty space between their canines and their other teeth”(Agamben 24). Darwin offers a similar argument based in animality that challenges Descartes on three points. First, and most fundamentally, Darwin claims that animals do communicate information that is not “of the passions”

through symbols. Modern biologists have demonstrated that even bees, a distinctly lower animal, perform a “dance-communication...[that] is exceeded in complexity and information-carrying capacity only by human speech”(Steiner 245).

Secondly, animals have demonstrated the capacity to become corrupted, to behave in a way that is contrary to instinct and detrimental to their bodily form. That this behavior is precipitated by causes that do not physically damage the animal suggests that something non-physical – namely thought – strongly influences their actions. Darwin writes that, “So intense is the grief of female monkeys for the loss of their young, that it invariably caused the death of certain kinds”(Darwin 39). Contemporary research on dogs and rats confirms Darwin’s findings, biologists demonstrating that a sense of depression and helplessness induced in dogs caused them to experience electric shocks when they could have easily avoided them (Steiner 244).

The final point, already addressed obliquely, concerns self-awareness. If animals actually do possess language (and thus at least elementary reason), and if their behavior can be modified by thought so that it runs contrary to instinct, then it follows that the basis for Descartes’ declaring that animals are without self-awareness is groundless, as they do possess a degree of rational *thought* that influences their behavior, meaning animal behavior is not purely instinctual and that, consequently, animal thought can recognize that it is not identical to its corporeality. Darwin recognizes this, stating that animals possess reason, Descartes’ pre-requisite for self-awareness (“Some animals extremely low in the scale apparently display a certain amount of reason”) and that it is “extremely doubtful” that humans are alone in having self-consciousness (Steiner 191/193). Therefore we can say that at least some animals, in addition to sharing the

causes of behavior that humans also possess, have sufficient self-awareness to be conscious of what they are doing and what is being done to them, and thus also have a share in pain and pleasure *as* analogous to how humans experience it (i.e. as something happening to an “I”).

Jakob von Uexküll, one of the great zoologists of the twentieth century and a precursor to Heidegger, helps us to understand, perhaps unwittingly, the difficulty of Heidegger’s position that animals cannot relate to beings in the world *as such*. Uexküll, “supposes an infinite variety of perceptual worlds that, though they are uncommunicating and reciprocally exclusive, are all equally perfect and linked together as if in a gigantic musical score”(Agamben 40). Living beings are aware of those things in their environment that carry significance; a fly is aware of dung, a lion of a gazelle, etc. The carriers of significance that an animal perceives constitute that animal’s world, and make it fundamentally unknowable to any other being except through an act of imagination. Uexküll, who had a particular fondness for “excursion in unknowable worlds,” in which he would reconstruct the environments of those animals most distant from humans, brilliantly illustrates the otherness of a tick; “This eyeless animal finds the way to her watchpost with the help of only her skin’s general sensitivity to light...If she is fortunate enough to fall on something warm (which she perceives by means of an organ sensible to a precise temperature) then she has attained her prey, the warm-blooded animal, and thereafter...can slowly suck up a stream of warm blood”(Agamben 46). The example of the tick serves to show the relationship it has to the world. For the tick, the world becomes three carriers of significance; the odor of butyric acid that all mammals secrete, the temperature of blood by which it recognizes blood, and the skin of its prey, which it

needs to know so it may navigate its way to a place where it can plunge its head into tissue. For Uexküll, “The tick is this relationship; she lives only in it and for it”(Agamben 47). Agamben opens us to the problematic nature of this view by commenting on another experiment of Uexküll’s, in which a tick was kept alive in a laboratory without nourishment for 18 years, passing the time in a state of stasis. Agamben asks, “How is it possible for a living being that consists entirely in its relationship with the environment to survive in absolute deprivation of that environment? And what sense does it make to speak of ‘waiting’ without time and without world”(Agamben 47). What Agamben is driving at is the possibility that animals are open towards the world in ways that transcend the narrowness of their captivation between themselves and their carriers of significance. If the tick *is* its environment, then its survival without its environment is unaccountable, and that it does survive by going into a sleep-like state points towards something entirely mysterious. If the tick is waiting, what is it waiting for? Why did it decide to enter stasis? Could the tick be open enough to the world to know that it is not in its environment? Could the tick be adapting, *self*-preserving?

The problem for Heidegger seems to be the same one that Uexküll has in trying to explain the tick; the relationship that animals (and the tick) have to their environment is not static as they seem to think, but is something that has been arrived at and will be departed from. If animals are poor in world and can only act instinctively towards carriers of significance, then how did they come into a relationship with their environments to begin with? Agamben’s description of the relationship between a spider’s web and a fly helps explain; “The spider knows nothing about the fly...and yet it

determines the length of the stitches in its web according to the dimensions of the fly's body, and it adjusts the resistance of the threads in exact proportion to the force of impact of the fly's body in flight. Indeed, the most surprising fact is that the threads of the web are exactly proportioned to the visual capacity of the eye of the fly, who cannot see them and therefore flies towards death unawares"(Agamben 41-42). This passage draws out several points that challenge Heidegger's thesis that animals are poor in world and are unable to relate to beings *as such*. First, and most spectacularly, is the spider's extensive knowledge of the fly. While the fly may simply be a being, the spider has the ability to build a web that conceptualizes the fly, one that will trap all flies whether they were immediately present or absent to the spider at the time of the web's construction. The spider makes its web with specific concern for the fly *as it is* a being, adjusting the strands in accordance with the size of a fly's body, the kinesthetics of its flight, and the its perception of the fly's perception. The spider's knowledge of the fly, and of the world of the fly, certainly seems to suggest that the spider relates to the fly as more than just a being.

Agamben's example of a spider is extremely well chosen. That the spider constructs the web *from itself* suggests a complication of the Heideggerian notion of animals as suspended between themselves and their environments. If the spider must create an essential part of its environment, then it must also be able to exist apart from its environment, able to distinguish between itself and that which it spins. If this is the case, then the relationship that the spider has to its web must be one that recognizes a self and an other as two separate entities, the web existing as something fundamentally *outside* of the spider. The spider can recognize the being of its web *as* a being that is not itself.

This should cause us to critically contest Heidegger; if a spider can recognize a being *as* a being (and can, presumably, also recognize itself as a being that is not the web) it would follow that other animals, especially higher animals, can relate to beings as beings even though they lack the human's sophistication in symbolizing.

Finally, to return to something we touched on at the beginning of this inquiry, Heidegger's notion of animals does not allow animals to become animals, regarding their relationship to the world as pre-existing and static. For an animal to have a relationship to an environment, it must adapt to it, something that requires knowledge of the beings in it as beings that are potentially useful. Understanding what I mean by this is aided by asking how spiders came into their current relationship to flies. I confess that I don't have the answer to this question, and that any attempt to do so would probably force us into the messy, ill-understood ground of intelligent design or evolution. That said, if we take the view that there is no God, the existence of a spider that can catch flies with a web must have been arrived at through a lower animal, whose body or mind had enough knowledge of the beings in the world as they are to evolve into the present iteration of the spider. How this happens is wondrous and absolutely mysterious, though it seems that for it to happen without the existence of God, animals must somehow have access to beings *as* beings whose relationship to themselves is fluid and subject to change. Put another way, for animals to change themselves in their relationship to beings and in what beings they relate to, they must have some faculty that gives them access to the *relationship* and its parts, to beings as they are beings, to their own subjectivity as it is separate, and to how that subjectivity can accommodate beings into its world. Thus it seems that Heidegger has underestimated the animal, and that it is, despite its apparent

lack of language and in unknown ways, able to relate to beings as they are beings and to itself as something separate from environment. Furthermore, the animal, in coming into relation *with*, must be able to act in a manner that is not purely instinctive, as its relation – its instinct – is necessarily created by itself (*itself* being it and its line of descent) and, as creation of a relationship requires an openness to beings and to self outside of what their relationship *was*, animals must access to non-instinct, to being *as it could be*. The animal in its becoming becomes different than what Heidegger, through his subtraction of language from the human, supposed.

Yet that does not go to negate Heidegger's notion of the animal altogether. Agamben writes that, "Heidegger seems here to oscillate between opposite poles, which in some ways recall the paradoxes of mystical knowledge – or, rather, nonknowledge. On the one hand, captivation is a more spellbinding and intense openness than any kind of human knowledge; on the other, insofar as it is not capable of disconcealing its own disinhibitor, it is closed in a total opacity"(Agamben 59). Heidegger is right in denying animals the multiplicity of possibilities open to humans, and in identifying the relative simplicity of the world as it is given to animals (though he is wrong in the degree that he claims animals are not open). It is at that juncture that the words of Enkidu ("for I too once in the wilderness with my wife had all the treasure I wished") and J. Alfred Prufrock ("I should have been a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas") begin to make more sense. The propensity of humans to describe the world of the animal as better than that of the human comes from what Agamben terms the "mystical". The animal, lacking the nothingness that undercuts the concreteness of its world, experiences the world powerfully and as if its perception of it were true; the animal's world is a unity

never broken by questioning. Yet this inability to question also undercuts the animal's mysticism, making it impossible to access its own subjectivity *as* it is. I realize that this view is not compatible with my previously voiced assertion that animal's are open to beings *as* beings, but I think the two can be reconciled by appealing to difference by degree. The animal is not nearly *as* open to beings as beings as humans are, but it does have the ability to question its own subjectivity – as evidenced by its becoming itself and its relations – differing, of course, according to what animal we are talking about. If we accept this as true, then we must also say that the animal's world does experience fractures, and that it is not “closed in opacity”. For if the animal's subjectivity was not available to it as a subjectivity, becoming something else (a different animal, a different set of relationships) would be unimaginable and, consequently, impossible. The fractures are similarly necessary, as without them the animal would not know what to become.

Yet Heidegger's argument remains difficult to deny, the animal's subjectivity, at least as we have access to it through its actions, plainly exhibiting an already-given world and a lack of doubt about how it is to navigate that world. What I would like to suggest is a reconciliation of the two views; while the animal's existence is a unity for the most part, and is opaque for the most part, neither the unity or the opacity happen as total. The animal remains open to beings as beings, though not to a degree that it can question the entirety of beings (particularly its own). Thus we can confirm Heidegger's notion of the animal's world as a mostly unified whole that experiences itself as mostly true, with the caveat that the animal can experience the world in small (e.g. non-totalizing) ways as other, other in this case being potentially different. Whether this way is “better” than human being or not is, as Heidegger says, “questionable,” the quality of one being's

experience being unknowable to another being. That this view exists at all suggests an interesting difference between humans and animals, wherein humans are the only type of being that can wish it was another kind of being. In this sense, humans can be lower than animals. As Heidegger notes, “an animal can never become corrupted as a human can”(Steiner 212).

The animal as we have construed it is something that is fundamentally different than humans that cannot be fully understood as we can only think it as humans. Despite that difference, the animal - especially the higher animal - and the human are strikingly similar in virtually every way, meaning that anthropomorphism as a way of understanding the animal is less a transformation of animal into human than it is acknowledgement that what we feel is not exclusively ours. Furthermore, at least some animals, contrary to Descartes, have sufficient self-awareness to know that what is happening to them is something happening to an “I”, a being – not a machine – for which pain and pleasure have meaning. Agamben helps us see that animals, in their capacity to adapt and *become*, have a relationship to themselves and to their environment that transcends the limited, closed and instinctive one that Heidegger supposed. While the animal’s world is more circumscribed than the human’s, it remains, at least in a limited sense, aware of how its world *as it is its* world could be different than it is.

3. What can we say about human animality?

The animal thus defined forces us to consider the question of animality in a new light; what is the connection between the animal and animality? Animality as we will define it for the purposes of this part of the paper will denote what is animal about the human. In that respect, we can provisionally call animality the part of the human that is not exclusively human, while what is human is necessarily that which is animal in the human *and* what is exclusively human. Animality cannot be synonymous with the animal, as the animal is exclusively animal and cannot be wholesale subsumed into the human. Thus animality is what humans consider as continuous between themselves and animals, humanity being that which excludes animality and the human operating as what excludes the animal.

The separation between humanity and animality begins with Aristotle, who gives us the human as a mind and a body. This postulation reaches its zenith with Descartes, who says that, “As for the movements of our passions, even though in us they are accompanied with thought because we have the faculty of thinking, it is none the less very clear that they do not depend on thought, because they often occur in spite of us”(Kalof 60). For Descartes, rational thought becomes the center of human being while the body (along with the “passions” that come from it) is something animal, natural and other over which we should become masters. Agamben writes, “Perhaps the body of the anthropophorous animal (the body of the slave) is the unresolved remnant that idealism leaves as an inheritance to thought, and the aporias of the philosophy of our time coincide with the aporias of this body that is irreducibly drawn and divided between animality and

humanity”(Agamben 12). The body as it is included by thought marks the limit of the human, while what is excluded falls onto the other side of the limit in the realm of the animal. What is especially interesting here is the degree to which body becomes slave and mind master, the human (thought) able to lay claim on what is humanity and what animality while the animal (body) is afforded no influence whatsoever. Hegel writes that, “the quest of self-certainty is for an object that will fully reflect the inchoate *life* and *freedom* that characterizes Self-Consciousness in the state of immediacy. This quest initially leads Self-Consciousness to a life-and-death struggle with its ‘other’ for recognition. And this struggle has tragic consequences. In the aftermath, Self-Consciousness settles for a compromise – the one-sided recognition of a Master-Slave relationship. This relationship runs its course until it arrives of its own accord at an ironical reversal”(Hegel 49). What we can infer from Hegel with regard to humanity and animality is that thought subjugates and divides the body (the other) into human and animal so that it may create the self-conscious conditions for life and freedom *as they exist* for thought. Yet the movement towards self-certainty, the privileging of the human over his animal, becomes derailed by the nature of the relationship of master to slave. In the relationship’s reversal, animality gains its own kind of self-sufficiency, and power over the human (Romanticism as something from Cartesian philosophy exemplifies this). The master slave-dialectic indicates that the project of constructing human life as a product of the conflict between humanity and animality is perhaps misguided, and that the relationship of the human and its animal (if we can even construe them as such) needs to be fundamentally rethought.

Linnaeus's taxonomical explanation of humans differs in that "he does not record – as he does with other species – any specific identify characteristic next to the generic name *Homo*, only the old philosophical adage: know yourself"(Agamben 25).

Linnaeus's imperative infers that being human is not a given state, and that to be human one must recognize oneself as such. But out of what can the human be seen? Agamben writes that, "At the time when the sciences of man begin to delineate the contours of his *facies*, the *enfants sauvages*, who appear more and more often on the edges of the villages of Europe, are the messenger's of man's inhumanity, the witnesses to his fragile identity and his lack of a face of his own"(Agamben 30). Facelessness is tantamount to animality, and the face that humans give themselves at once partake in this animality, while at the same time rejecting or transcending it. The human, by setting limits on humanity, creates itself in tension with the animal. Agamben terms this constitution of the human as a space of the exclusion/inclusion of the animal the anthropological machine, and sees it as deeply problematic. Agamben writes, "Like every space of exception, this zone is, in truth, perfectly empty, and the truly human being who should occur there is only the place of a ceaseless updated decision in which the caesurae and their rearticulation are always dislocated and displaced anew. What would thus be obtained, however, is neither an animal life nor a human life, but only a life that is separated and excluded from itself – only a *bare life*"(Agamben 38). In creating itself as other than the animal, the human is kept from human being in its fullest sense.

Heidegger's notion of truth "as the conflict between concealedness and unconcealedness" bears a direct relation to the anthropological machine (Agamben 73). The human creates his openness to the world only out of the animal's not-openness and,

in animality's suspension, the human as it has been obtained must keep itself open to the closedness of animality (to make this discussion comprehensible: openness is analogous to language, wherein a single object can become meaningful in many ways, while closedness, as language-less, sees beings as part of a unity but is denied their multifacetedness). Yet the human, in needing to be open to what is closed, experiences closedness in openness. Agamben writes, "The open is nothing but a grasping of the animal not-open. Man suspends his animality and, in this way, opens a 'free and empty' zone in which life is capture and abandoned in a zone of exception...it closes itself to its own openness"(Agamben 79/77). The imperative of openness captures humans between themselves and what they are open to in the same way that Heidegger says animals are captivated between their being and their environment. Openness as the distinguishing characteristic of humans is precisely what makes them *not*-open and, in effect, animalized. At the same time, the exclusion of animal closedness produces a radical openness that denies humans the "mystical knowledge" that the animal has in its closed relationship. Agamben writes, "being is always already traversed by the nothing, the *Lichtung* is always already the *Nichtung*"(Agamben 80). Yet it seems that we have contradicted ourselves; if the human's closedness is his openness, than it would seem that the being and nothingness of beings must be founded upon the ground of being, and that being is fundamentally not nothingness. In the same way, we could say that the exclusion of closedness for the sake of openness ultimately produces a closedness (the closedness of being open) that functions as a reincorporation of animality. While these reservations do threaten Agamben's notion of Heidegger's anthropological machine, I believe that they can be at least partially dismissed by appealing to the radical

destabilization of human closedness by the openness (the nothingness) of beings. Human closedness as it is produced by Heidegger can never become mystical because the way it knows beings undermines the possibility of a unity of beings into itself. Heidegger's anthropological machine produces only a zone of exception, a space that produces closedness where it tries to produce openness and nothingness in trying to remain open to what is closed. For post-historical humans, the results are even grimmer, "such a humanity, from Heidegger's perspective, no longer has the form of keeping itself open to the disconcealed of the animal, but seeks rather to open and secure the not-open in every domain, and thus closes itself to its own openness, forgets its *humanitas*, and makes being its specific disinhibitor"(Agamben 77). As predicted by Hegel, "The total humanization of the animal coincides with a total animalization of man"(Agamben 77). The anthropological machine, in answering the facelessness of Linnaeus, fails to produce a face.

Agamben is somewhat more mysterious in reimagining the relationship of humans and animality. Speaking about Benjamin, Agamben writes, "What does 'mastery of the relation between nature and humanity' mean? That neither must man master nature nor nature man"(Agamben 83). Mastering the relationship must mean, as Agamben seems to infer, a refrainment from mastering, as actively mastering presupposes an understanding of the human and nature as separate entities whose existence as such would require the anthropological machine. Yet beyond that, it is difficult to place what Agamben means; "in the reciprocal suspension of the two terms, something for which we perhaps have no name and which is neither animal nor man settles in between nature and humanity and hold itself in the mastered relation"(Agamben 83). One possible

explanation references Lord Monboddo, who wrote that, “reason and animal sensation, however distinct we may imagine them, run into one another by such insensible degrees, that it is as difficult, or perhaps more difficult, to draw the line betwixt these two, than betwixt the *animal* and *vegetable*”(Agamben 31). If we apply this to Agamben’s “suspension of the two terms,” then we begin to see that what Agamben could have mind is a refusal to identify animality as animality or humanity as humanity, a letting be that allows both to become without a zone of exception that limits becoming. This idea finds support in the conclusion of *The Open*, when Agamben writes, “Here darkness and light, matter and spirit, animal life and *logos* (the articulation of which in the anthropological machine produced the human) are separated forever. But not in order to close themselves in a more impenetrable mystery; rather, to liberate their own truer nature”(Agamben 90). The separation seems to be a refusal to define and, more than that, an end to the construction of terms as dialectically opposed. Being for Agamben is most open when it does not create its openness in opposition to closedness, as both openness and closedness operate *within* the other and not against. Indeed, the “truer nature” that Agamben speaks of as a result of separation takes place because the oppositions he names (particularly, for our purposes, animal life and *logos*) are part of each other, and to dismantle them as dialectically-bound entities that create one another by means of exclusion allows them to become *with* what they had been opposed to. Returning to animality, the human’s creation of itself out of its opposition to the animal limits what the human can become, as what is animal in it becomes excluded entirely or demoted to a position of subordination under the human. To approach an existence that can “liberate” its own “truer nature” requires us to reject the term human altogether in the same way that Nietzsche rejects the

permanent “daylight of reason” as something that precludes the existence of important ways of being (Kaufmann 478). Being for Agamben is something that should be akin to Nietzsche’s twilight, a mixing of the poles of “human” and “animal” to create something that is neither but that is also, paradoxically, more true to both.

Nietzsche’s position with regard to the human and animality (if we can still describe them as such) is remarkably similar to Agamben’s, and gives more detail to the being that arrives through the deconstruction of the human as something apart from and above the animal. Talking about the mind and body (the traditional location of human/animal difference as definitive of humans) Nietzsche writes, “Body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is merely a word for something about the body...A tool of the body is your small reason too, my brother, which you call ‘spirit’, a small tool and toy of your great reason”(Parkes 30). By inscribing mind within body, Nietzsche refuses to make the mind something definitive about the human *in opposition* to its animality, thereby freeing the human to be, as Agamben suggests, the result of the mastered relationship between human and animal. Indeed, in the beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes that, “The human is a rope, fastened between beast and Overhuman”(Parkes 13). By appealing to Aristotle, we can interpret “Overhuman” as mind, the intellect for Aristotle (and for much of Western philosophy) being of the divine and, in its divinity, possessed of the potential to lead humans to a life that is better than human life (Aristotle 471, *Nicomachean Ethics*). As the human is the rope *between* (the beast being, more obviously, the human’s animality) the human remains in a state of nonidentification, becoming itself by letting itself be all its constitutive elements, its “human” and its “animal”.

Animality, in light of Agamben and Nietzsche, is not something that humans construct themselves in opposition to – as in the anthropological machine – but is instead something that informs and shapes human life at every level. Nietzsche’s example of the relationship of mind to body nicely illustrates the connection of humanity to animality; as the body encompasses everything that a living being is, the mind is something *about* it, a nonseparate substance that is not autonomous from or over (in a controlling, hierarchical sense) the body. In the same way, the human is something about the animal, both being separable only in Agamben’s sense of separating them as opposite poles who define one another through exclusion. Does this mean that the human and its animality are synonymous, that the descriptive power of the term “animality” is threatened? Essentially, yes; the human does not have an animality, it only has itself. For Nietzsche the instantiation of animality and its separation from the human since at least the time of Aristotle necessitates a reconciliation with “animality” as it is understood, a de-privileging of reason over instinct and human over animal to recover a human that does not exclude itself. As Agamben writes, “To render inoperative the machine that governs our conception of man will therefore mean no longer to seek new – more effective or more authentic – articulations, but rather to show the central emptiness, the hiatus that – within man – separates man and animal, and to risk ourselves in this emptiness: the suspension of the suspension, Sabbath of both animal and man”(Agamben 92). Coming to the “truer nature” of the human is a coming to the untruth of the differences between the human and the animal, an acknowledgement that the human and its face can be found in the play - “the emptiness” – between. Just as Zarathustra gets his pride and his wisdom from his eagle and his snake, so too can the human become its best by existing in

a liminal state wherein animals and animality can – without restrictions – commingle with humanity.

4. What is the difference between the human and the animal?

With that in mind, what can we say about our original question concerning the difference between the human and the animal? To say that there is no difference – as our description of animality might suggest - seems like a gross conceptualization on par with Descartes' insistence that all animals are equivalent to sponges and oysters, a willful blindness towards the strangeness and vastness of *human* experience (one can't look anywhere without noticing it – psychoanalysis, daytime television, dieting – and feeling some sort of wonder at the bizarreness of it all). Yet to say that there is a difference, especially as that difference is definitive of humans, is to revive the anthropological machine, which we have just debunked. Something that Nietzsche says suggests a new way of regarding difference; “the human being is, relatively speaking, the most unsuccessful animal, the sickliest, the one most dangerously strayed from its instincts – with all that, to be sure, the most *interesting!*” (Lemm 14). What Nietzsche achieves here is a radical de-conceptualization of the animal; humans as animals are a *certain kind* of animal that *as an animal* is different than other animals. What is different with regards to human difference in light of Nietzsche and Agamben is that human difference, in a stroke of anti-anthropocentrism, does not organize all others species in opposition to itself, but instead recognizes them as similarly different and unique. The human is something about the animal in the same way that the mind is something about the body, and in that way what is different about the human is a process of how it is different as an animal. What this means, as Nietzsche's use of “relatively speaking” emphasizes, is that humans, as beings that are animals, are different from other animals only in a matter of degree. Perhaps we have the greatest powers of reasoning, perhaps we are “the sickliest”, but

human differences, no matter how hyperbolic, are not enough to make us not animal. Humans are not like animals only in the sense that animals are not like other animals, wherein each animal has access to the world in a way that is entirely its own, only able to know the environment of another animal through analogy and reference to self. As Thomas Nagel writes, “Insofar as I can imagine this (which is not very far), it tells me only what it would be like for *me* to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat”(Nagel 169). The world of each animal is distinctly its own and in this way humans, like all animals, are different from animals in kind.

Does the human situated within difference as a species next to other species, differing in kind but mostly in degree, satisfy the profound distance that seems to separate us from them? Agamben admits that a “central emptiness” separates humans and animals, and even Derrida, a thinker markedly opposed to the anthropological machine (to think of how our identity is constructed from this opposition is to take things too far) writes of the “abyssal rupture” that separates “we men” and “what we call animals”(Calarco 136). Clearly we are different than they are, but what Agamben tells us (and what have already said) is that the emptiness (the abyss) that separates us is precisely the location of human identity so long as we can resist making it into a zone of exclusion (exclusion still creating human identity, but of a more fractured, less true sort). In understanding this, it is helpful to remember that everything that has been said, with an air of indubitability, to separate humans and animals – language, reason, self-awareness, openness – has been called into question to a degree that disallows certainty, the border as it is constructed always becoming faint, indistinct and unknown. Agamben’s

emptiness creates an area without rigidity, where what is human and what is animal exist in a state of play that does not limit or eliminate the other. This conception of difference as it relates to self-understanding tells us that humans, as beings that are animal, cannot claim that they are not animal if they are to fully understand themselves.

5. How should humans think animals, and how should they relate to them?

While Derrida's analysis of difference similarly serves to answer questions of human self-identity, it is also concerned with difference as it frames the way in which humans treat animals. Derrida writes, "The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name that they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to another living creature"(Calarco 118). What underlies Derrida's umbrage at the human's institution of 'animal' is the profoundly troubling nature of humanity's relationship to other living beings. Indeed, the animal's status as something that can, in the Cartesian tradition, be used in any way towards human ends carries with it the most monstrous aspects of the anthropological machine, wherein a human can exclude another human from humanity. Drawing an analogy between the human treatment of animals and the Holocaust, Derrida says, "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 overproduction 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 of the imposition of genetic experimentation or extermination by gas or by fire...Everybody knows what terrifying and intolerable pictures a realist painting could give to the industrial, mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and genetic violence to which man has been submitting animal life for the past two centuries"(Calarco 120). That the Holocaust happened is a testament to the human's myopia in recognizing a living being that is like itself or, conversely, the extent to which humans can alienate themselves from beings that they *know* are like

themselves by becoming compassionless, by considering them closed. What Derrida wants us to see is that something akin to the Holocaust, to genocide, is still happening with the complete consent and complicity of the majority of humankind. Following Bentham, Derrida privileges one question regarding the shared capacities of humans and animals above all others; “Can they suffer?”(Calarco 121). If they can suffer (Derrida writes that, “No one can deny the suffering, fear or panic, the terror or fright that humans witness in certain animals...it is not even indubitable; it precedes the indubitable”) then the way that humans have regarded animals must become different (Calarco 122). But the knowledge of the suffering of animals does not answer the entirety of our concerns, for what of the possibility that humans know, as they must have known during the Holocaust, that they are causing the suffering of a being that can suffer like themselves, yet cause their suffering anyways? In this instance, it is not the human perception of animals that must be made different, but the specific *how* of their knowing them. As David Wood writes in his essay on Derrida’s *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, “I am suggesting that the question of the abyss is inseparable from the question of the kind of relationship that obtains between a man and an animal”(Calarco 137). Animals in this sense are like words, symbols whose meaning is derived from context, and whose being and suffering only materializes as real and affective when the human’s situation towards them takes the form of reciprocity. In re-imagining human-animal relations, we will take the certainty of animal suffering as our starting point to re-think how the animal is thought by the human, and the possibility that humans are unaffected by animal suffering to re-shape the how of the human’s knowing.

To begin re-thinking according to suffering, we must first look back and qualify suffering as something that the animal feels in a way that can be qualified as suffering. Descartes does not deny that animal's suffer, but proposes that animals, in their supposed lack of self-awareness, only experience suffering like machines experience electrical impulses, as something that passes through a body to cause an action without creating an associated feeling. Derrida critiques Heidegger for holding a similarly exclusive position, excoriating him for holding suffering and anguish as, "words or concepts that they will still reserve for man and for the *Dasein* in the freedom of its being-towards-death"(Calarco 122). The problem with marginalizing the apparent suffering of animals is what is always the problem in suppositions of animal difference; as the animal's mind is unknowable, any claim towards knowledge (especially those claims that contradict behavior) must be treated with suspicion and as something that is from the human and for the human. As we have already addressed the question of the animal's consciousness of itself, I will move on from it with a final word from Derrida, who writes, "[the problems] begin where one attributes to the essence of the living, to the animal in general, this aptitude *that it itself* is, this aptitude to being itself, and thus the aptitude to being capable of affecting itself, of its own movement, of affecting itself with traces of a living self, and thus of *atuobiograparaphing* itself as it were. No one has ever denied the animal this capacity to track itself, to trace itself or retrace the path of itself"(Calarco 127). The location of the animal's suffering is precisely in this "I" that the animal is unable to speak, in the distance it has from itself and from its environment as we saw in the spider with its web.

The animal's suffering thus affirmed, re-thinking the animal begins with the abandonment of "the animal" as we have used it. Derrida writes that, "The confusion of all nonhuman living creatures within the general and common category of the animal is not simply a sin against rigorous thinking, vigilance, lucidity or empirical authority; it is also a crime"(Calarco 126). The last charge – that referring to the animal as such is a crime – bears out the fact that everything that is an animal, be they, to use what has become an oft-cited point of Descartes', oyster, ape, or whale, is treated equally regardless of their difference. That a whale loses its specificity when it is subsumed by 'animal' means that it can be used, violently or otherwise, without regard for the suffering that may be evident in its whaleness, as this is precluded by its animalness. To answer this, Derrida suggests that "animal" as a descriptive category is empty, and that our thinking of animals should be a thinking of the animal that is present to us. In his most radical re-formulation of the animal, Derrida describes a cat as, "*this* irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, enters this space where it can encounter me...Nothing can ever take away from me the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized"(Calarco 116). Animals can never be described as 'the animal' and, Derrida seems to say, *this cat* is not given to us in its entirety if we think of it as *a cat*, its particularity, its autobiographing yet silent 'I' obscured, destroyed by thinking that its being can be captured in generality. The animal as something that cannot be conceptualized is an animal that humans can "encounter" and, in a related and more pressing sense (at least for the animal), is a being that exists outside of human possession in a space that is not *for* human use.

If animals are specific and not for the human, then does their use and abuse always denote a misthought or a “crime”? That animals become useable in their conceptualization suggests that some animals can be used without violating a moral boundary, as the “all” necessarily comes from the “some”. Derrida, in clarifying the difference between, writes, “that this abyssal rupture does not simply have two edges (such as Man and Animal)...what we take to be ‘animal life’ is ‘a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living,’ or better ‘a multiplicity or organizations of relations between living and dead’”(Calarco 136). Animals, in their difference from humans, occupy a wide variety of positions that, in their “life” or “death”, denote different degrees of moral considerability. Those animals that appear as “I” are extended some (or all) of the rights with regards to infliction of suffering that humans have, while those without can be treated as “the animal” was, as beings that can be used. Drawing this border is, as one would expect, problematic. How can we know what animals suffer accompanied by an “I”, and what animals do not? Inevitably, the decision of inclusivity, deciding in a position of ignorance with regards to the subjectivity of another, must either act in the spirit of human likeness, or reject it altogether and leave the possibility of sentience open to all living things. The latter position borders on unintelligibility; if there is no basis for judging whether living things can or cannot be used, then plants and fungi must be included within the human moral sphere (and that is to say nothing of bacteria or protozoans who are killed and “used” by the existence of the human body in incomprehensible numbers). Even if we limit sentience to the animal kingdom, can we really say that sponges (which lack a nervous system, but are considered animal) or mosquitoes, which are incredibly aggravating, deserve our moral concern? Perhaps the

more imperative point is that humans, like all animals, have no choice but to use and kill other beings in the course of their existence regardless of what they may or may not feel.

With that in mind, humans are forced to draw a line, to leave be those beings in “life” while marking others as in “death” enough to consume. This solution, forced as it is to decide from ignorance, is imperfect, bound to err in drawing the new boundary between animals with capacities enough to suffer and those without. Yet in thinking, as Derrida suggests, about *this* animal, we gain some clarity. In encountering an animal, be it a ladybug or an elephant, we are, in the words of Wood, “addressed ‘from down there’”(Calarco 135). The form of the animal’s address is multifaceted, but what becomes pertinent is that the animal asks something of us in our encounter with it as a specific being, an “I”. Wood writes, “And it could well be argued that much compassion we feel for the physical pain of other humans is directly extendable *without translation* to other mammals”(Calarco 140). In compassion, the human is called into a relationship with the animal that recognizes it as an “I” with interests of its own who does not want to suffer. That compassion should determine the boundary and not a specific capacity or rule of reason derived from thought makes an odd sort of sense, compassion commonly being thought of as something *embodied* and, by association, animal. In this way, what lets us encounter animals is our own animality, suggesting, as Derrida indeed does, that violence towards animals is a byproduct of our own fractured relationship with our inner animal. Wood writes, “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 legitimate all kinds of other violence”(Calarco 139). By

acting compassionately, the external animal becomes a symbol for something that, in its independence, is capable of a kind of reciprocity with the human it encounters. In the same way, the internal animal ceases to be something that must be overcome by the human, instead becoming – as in Agamben – a suspended pole of the animal-human, wherein the human is what lies between. That said, compassion as the boundary marker between what is owed moral consideration and what is not becomes troublesome precisely in its lack of firm reason; compassion can be extended to things that have no need for it (i.e. inanimate objects) and be denied to things that do (humans, most pertinently victims of genocide). Wood says that, “Perhaps we could propose instead an *objective* compassion, which tries, as far as possible not to be limited by our actual capacity for fellow-feeling, and recognizes ‘life itself,’ in each of its forms, as addressing us”(Calarco 140). By making compassion objective, we are able to give moral regard to all living beings (something that necessitates respectful use), but are still forced to draw a dividing line within compassion between those beings that we know to suffer like we do and those that do not. As we said before, if it is evident that an animal is suffering then it must be accepted as fact that it *is* suffering, while animals who are more different and whose suffering is not as apparent can be included or discluded on the strength of their capacities, the evidence of their “I” (I am thinking here of spiders, an animal that I am deeply afraid of and disgusted by, yet one that, at this point in the thesis, I am compelled to defend).

That animals suffer is a given, and that animal mistreatment has reached such incredible proportions is one of the tragedies of the modern era. Re-thinking the animal begins with de-conceptualizing it, with thinking of animals as the irreplaceable,

independent beings that they are, and not as exemplars of categories. The problem then becomes one of necessity and separation; as humans need to use living beings to support their survival, on what basis can we decide what animals are useable, and what are not? We have said that compassion, as that which makes the human interested in the animal's interests, is both the marker of this boundary, and something that is, as objective, extendable to all living things. The obvious contradiction is reconciled by pointing towards compassion as something that can occur by degree according to an underlying reason; what humans feel the most compassion for are those beings that are *like* humans in their apparent capacity to suffer and in their possession of an autobiographing "I". At this juncture, we see another function of compassion as objective. Those animals that are able to suffer and have an "I", yet are not (at least in appearance) like humans – think spiders, snakes, bats – are also extended the "most compassion" that removes them from the category of beings that can be violently used. The need to divide living beings as such is highly problematic, and contradicts much of what we have said. Dividing between animals that are "useable" and "not useable" creates a fracture reminiscent of the anthropological machine, and reflects a kind of capitalist logic according to utility that demands even the "not useable" have a sort of use, a polarity that once again creates divided internal identity from external suppositions of difference. In addition, categorizing beings as deserving compassion in greater or lesser degrees diminishes Derrida's notion of an encounter as something with a specific being, with *this* animal and not this type of-. What is most difficult in objective compassion is assigning compassion; how can we know what animal suffers as an "I" and what animal does not (clearly compassion, as something that needs to be objectified, fails in making accurate

distinctions)? One partial solution sees compassion as the *terms* of use rather than the determinant of whether something can or cannot be used. In using a being according to compassion, our new maxim states that that a being must be used with its interests in mind, necessitating a minimum of suffering and, as humans are largely ignorant to the interests of others, a letting be within the being's environment. Yet we still must contend with the boundary, and say how humans can decide what animals can be used (in this discussion, categorization and utility will be considered necessary evils). If we think from human likeness, then those animals that are most similar to us in that they are known to possess *mind* must be given equal status as autonomous beings whose use (use here denoting appropriation) is inherently criminal. I am thinking here of great apes, dolphins, and elephants, all animals sophisticated enough to recognize themselves in mirrors (Article 1). For those animals that cannot recognize themselves as such but are still *like* humans enough that their suffering is plainly discernible, the problem becomes more complex (this category, though it certainly does an injustice to some animals to frame it as such, is comprised of the remainder of mammals and birds). Certainly some forms of use, like riding a horse or owning a dog, do not seem to cause suffering to the creature in question, while others, like killing a cow or keeping it in a factory farm, do. For these animals, what is called into question is their violent use, something that I am reluctant to reject wholesale. Animals that do not exhibit incontrovertible evidence of self-recognition mark a limit of human knowledge about the subjective states of others, and also mark the limit of the human's ability to *think* the animal, beyond which only compassion, imagination, and inference from behavior can go. How we should think the

animal gives way to (or, more accurately, goes forward with) context, the question of how we should be in relationships with animals.

To remind ourselves, re-shaping the way that we relate to animals will help us think past the limit of thinking, but will also attempt to answer for compassion's lack, for the human's historically demonstrated ability to cause harm even with a full view of what their actions inflict. Wood lends us support in framing the question, writing, "does not the manifold shape of the abyssal rupture between 'we men' and 'what we call animals' depend to a great extent on our mode of mutual engagement"(Calarco 137). An absence of engagement lends itself to distance, to a widening of the abyss that negates compassion in its lack of an object. Thus we can say, quite simply, that compassion necessitates engagement, and that no animal can be conscientiously acted against violently without first being engaged. Wood's use of "mutual" tells us that engagement cannot be already appropriated, and that the animal must be allowed to address us as something independent, as a presumed "I". From this we can derive a tentative precept; any efforts to use an animal without first establishing a relationship of engagement and reciprocity is morally reprehensible in that it precludes compassion and alienates the user from the consequences of his use. While a human may use an animal, its use must happen on the terms and within the limits of *that* animal. Killing and eating a cow is not explicitly wrong, but doing so - directly or indirectly - without any acknowledgement of it or its interests and without any connection to its death is. What we are saying could seem backwards. Why should we pay any interest to the life of a cow if its life is ultimately of a low enough value to be takeable? Is concern for its interests before and during its death just a way of assuaging guilt, of putting out of mind the real possibility

that a cow's suffering is as great as a humans in every respect? The suffering of animals as tantamount to that of humans will remain with us, beyond proof one way or the other, yet so will the human imperative to use, to consume the matter of other living beings. Of course we could eat plants, who don't display any obvious or conclusive signs of suffering, but then what would become of our relationship to animals? Writing about Nietzsche, Alphonso Lingis writes, "It is in interaction with these species that humans acquire their traits: the courage of the torero rises in his confrontation with that of the black bull; in hunting them or with them, humans acquire the single-mindedness, sensibility, and intelligence of predators"(Calarco 11). The human, like Zarathustra with his pride and wisdom given to him by his eagle and snake, gets a face in interaction with the animal. Yet interaction is something different than owning a pet, where the pet is already co-opted by its owner in non-mutuality (40% of married women reported receiving more emotional support from their pet than from their spouse) or happening upon a wild animal, where the relationship is not engaged (Angier D2). Mutual engagement, at least for beings that do not possess language or self-consciousness, is almost always a form of use, a being-towards-an-end that brings the animal forth as a means. The hunter becomes engaged with the animal by trying to capture it as food, mutuality in this case coming forth as the animal's resistance, its being and its *Umwelt* (its relationship to its environment) opening in pursuit (think here of what it means for the spider to hunt the fly). While hunting, the hunter must be able to see *as if they were* the animal they are pursuing, learning how it moves through its world, what attracts it, and what repels it. In this respect, the hunter's world takes on some what is "mystical" about the animal, draping the animal's subjectivity around himself like a hide and seeing

the environment in its unbroken significance to the animal, seeing it all as the signs that will lead him to the kill. As we have said that a relationship of mutual engagement is a pre-condition of thinking animals compassionately, use, even use that has a violent end, is permissible as a way of interacting with animals who do not display outward evidence of self-consciousness. Objectified compassion - the only way that compassion could precede a relationship – is weaker than compassion-from-use precisely because it has no object, acting out of a generality that already obscures an animal’s specificity and the possibility of engagement with it. In our reading, relating to animals becomes more important than the value of not-suffering, the concern for suffering coming, paradoxically, from the animal’s use. This view, of course, comes with its own problems, most notably the fact that the animal still suffers. It is entirely possible that I am completely wrong, and that causing any degree of suffering for the sake of a mutually engaged relationship is a monstrosity. Towards that end, and expanding upon the tenets of compassion, it seems important to note that suffering must always be an unfortunate consequence, something that can never be inflicted as an end in itself, without sufficient end, or in excess of the minimum amount necessary. Additionally, suffering cannot be delivered *without* compassion as it comes from mutuality, as is seen most disturbingly in factory farms. Yet our relationship to animals must remain *as a* relationship, as something that is our reason for thinking the animal compassionately and connection to our own being as between human and animal. Re-shaping the human’s relationship to the animal means becoming hunters, farmers, falconers, and biologists, participants in a reciprocity in which the animal can give itself meaning and, in doing so, create the conditions for compassion and the recognition of suffering.

Conclusion

Our attempt to answer the question of the animal reminds us of Enkidu's uncertainty in his own ontological identification; what is unknown about the human in Enkidu's situation as animal and what he cannot remember about being animal after he has become human makes it difficult to say what it is like to be one or the other, and complicates notions of how they commingle or separate. The complications in saying what the animal is reminds us of our own, necessarily anthropomorphic perspective that can only see the animal in how it is analogous to the human. This threatens our knowledge of the animal altogether, as knowing how an animal is and how it relates to its environment *as it* relates to it is beyond the bounds of human possibility.

Anthropomorphism is prevented from alienating the human and the animal entirely because of the inability of human to claim what it experiences as exclusively its own; other animals, having developed along the same curve as humans, share with them similar capacities for perception, emotion, even (in some cases) self-awareness. In ascribing qualities to animals, like the love the penguin feels for its hatchlings, we are not anthropomorphizing, but simply acknowledging that what humans know is not theirs alone. While every animal is 'different in kind' in the sense that its specific way of being in relation to its environment is unique and unknowable (to misappropriate Heidegger, the duck's being-in-the-world and the bat's are equally unknowable in their own *duckness* and *batness*) there is enough that is *same* that humans can, to some degree, speak about animals.

What we can say about animals is that they are not, as Descartes would have it, machines. Descartes' point that animals cannot communicate anything besides what is

given to them through “the passions” is problematic for several reasons, the first being the easy separation Descartes imagines humans can make between the passions as a cause and whatever can be considered a dispassionate cause. As Nietzsche notes, the line between passionate instinct and rational reason is insensible, both being abundantly interrelated and impossible to separate as discrete entities. Nietzsche says that what is human (e.g. truth) blossoms from what is animal (e.g. the instinct towards security) and, regardless of the validity of this specific claim, it shows us the difficulty of conceptualizing human speech as apart from “the passions” and the irrationality of negating animal speech and animal thought on the basis of its association with the passionate. That, combined with the proven ability of animals as simple as bees to communicate complex information, is enough to, at the least, seriously challenge Descartes’ view of animal language and thought.

Descartes’ belief that animals don’t have self-awareness is more troubling, especially in its implicit argument that animals can be used by humans in any way whatsoever, not being self-aware tantamount to being mechanistic and entirely unfeeling (his description of vivisectioning a dog emphasizes this point). Descartes is partially disproved in this matter by his misjudgment of animal language and thought, which acted as the basis for his assertion that animals lack self-awareness. Darwin attacks him further, telling us that most animals possess elementary reason (something he describes as the ability to make associations between different things), and that at least some animals, particularly the higher animals, almost certainly possess self-consciousness. Thus we can say that some animals, and perhaps most or all animals, share the causes of behavior that humans also possess, and have sufficient self-awareness to be conscious of

what they are doing and what is being done to them, and thus also have a share in pain and pleasure *as* analogous to how humans experience it (i.e. as something happening to an “I”).

Heidegger’s assertion that animals cannot relate to beings *as such* is similarly deserving of our suspicion. Following the Christian notion of how things exist in the world, Heidegger seems to regard the relationships of animals to their environments as static and pre-existing, as something that did not come to be but was *always already*. The animal’s orientation towards its environment – as described through Uexküll’s tick and the spider’s construction of its web specifically for the fly – suggests that either the animal has an awareness of the being of the beings in its environment (including itself) that allows it to modify itself and its relationship to other beings, or that God exists. That animals exist as closed and behave instinctively is unintelligible in light of the animal’s need to *become* itself and its relations to its environment. Animals are certainly more closed to the world than humans, and are fundamentally different in the specificity of their animalness, but are, on the whole and in differing degrees, analogous to humans.

What the human can say about animality is, in some ways, a more complex question, guided here by Agamben and his objection to the anthropological machine that constructs the human from its opposition to the animal, as we have seen in its most pronounced form in Aristotle, Descartes, and Heidegger. Dividing humanity from animality privileges one form of being while excluding the other, meaning that the human’s construction of itself functions as a kind of self-exclusion. To return the human to a truer version of itself (and to disallow the kind of atrocities that occur when humans are excluded from humanity) means a suspension of the oppositional nature of “animal”

and “human” as it delineates one from the other and a “risking” of the self in the uncertainty of the space that lies between. In this view, the term “animality” becomes meaningless, the human in its being between relating to “animality” as a part of itself, as a human element indistinguishable from what was previously termed “human”. The human at its best and most human is a human that refuses to identify itself as *not* animal, that is the place of the play between what had been identified as human, or animal.

That humans should not identify themselves in opposition to animals could be seen as suggesting an absence of difference between the two, yet the differences between humans and animals are so pronounced that such an absence seems ridiculous. At the same time, identifying particular differences as indubitable - reason, language, self-awareness – seems equally ridiculous, as every boundary declared absolute has been ruptured by the animal’s apparent capacity for the same, by the questions that arise as to whether or not the animal has crossed into what had been deemed exclusively human. The difference between humans and animals cannot be marked as differences that privilege the human over the animal, or deny the human’s rootedness in animality. Differences become legitimate when they are differences that proceed from the assumption that the human is also animal, as seeing the human as not animal limits the human in the same way that the human is limited in thinking its animality as “other”. Humans are different, albeit more different, from other animals in the same way that a beaver is different than an eagle and a dolphin a shrimp.

That “the animal” cannot be properly separated from the human suggests that humans must fundamentally rethink their relationship to animals, something that becomes especially important when we think of the animal as something analogous to the

human in its capacity to suffer. Following Derrida, “the animal” as a category must be dismissed as something that obscures the specificity of different animals and allows violence even in cases when violence begins to resemble the worst atrocities committed by humans against other humans. With the particularity of animals as a starting point, humans must create another boundary, problematic as it may be, between those animals that can be used and those that cannot. The capacity for suffering helps us decide what animals cannot be used, though even that is fundamentally unknowable as judging suffering would require us to think *as* the animal who may or may not be in pain (even grass, from the ignorance of the human’s perspective, could suffer). Furthermore, whether an animal can conceive of itself as an “I” or not plays some part in the decision, as humans have the greatest stake in not harming those creatures most *like* themselves. Wood, through Derrida, suggests that we extend an objective compassion to all living creatures, one that, regardless of appearance (i.e. koala bears *and* disgust-inducing spiders) forces humans to act with the interest of other animals in mind. Objective compassion, however, is limited as it still fails to draw a line between what animals we can or cannot use (and we must, by virtue of our existence, make use of living matter). We could, of course, endorse vegetarianism, though even this is no guarantee of not making another being suffer and, more importantly, alienates us from animals and from the compassion that, paradoxically, makes humans want to minimize the suffering of animals. While self-awareness is not a mark of hierarchical superiority, those beings that can demonstrate the ability to recognize themselves must be removed from the pool of animals that humans can use, as those animals are similar enough to humans that their use, let alone their violent use, is criminal. That said, the relationship that humans have

to animals largely depends upon use, and violence against those animals is, to a point, justified if it prevents the relationship's disappearance. The relationship must be mutually engaged, mutuality coming from the animal not being already appropriated and by allowing it to engage us as a presumed "I". This way of relating allows us to know animals, to feel compassion for them and to – as with Zarathustra's animals – let them give us face. What must be emphasized here is the specificity of such a relationship and that it be mutually engaged; the hunter and the farmer have such a relationship, the factory farmer does not. Compassion is a byproduct of mutual engagement with an animal, the animal treated with respect and with its own interests in mind even at the moment of its death. While the profound wrongness of this view is a definite possibility with regards to the suffering that animals experience, I believe that it is ultimately justified on the grounds of animals still being a pertinent part of the world of the human, and the care and compassion that humans, through engagement, give to animals.

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