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THE *ANIMAL RATIONALE* THAT IS JACQUES DERRIDA:  
A REPOSE TO “ON BIODECONSTRUCTION”

I am both honored and grateful for Eyal Amiran’s invitation to respond to the articles included in this fine issue of *Postmodern Culture*, “On Biodeconstruction”. While it is not possible for me to address each article individually, since several offer direct critiques of my work, I have decided to explicate my position in regard to Jacques Derrida’s work on the living. I therefore also thank the authors of these articles for having helped me to refine and develop my views on this question. Contrary to what the authors argue here, I do still believe that if there is such a thing as “biodeconstruction”, it was never undertaken by Derrida himself. Biodeconstruction thus awaits its articulation, which will require that a challenge be mounted to several assumptions within deconstruction. For instance, as I shall demonstrate, the distrust Derrida shares with Heidegger in regard to Aristotle’s proposed definition “zoolopolitique” de l’homme<sup>1</sup>, whereby man is defined as a rational and political “animal”.

So why did I adopt this approach? The articles included in “On Biodeconstruction” refer to texts Derrida wrote in the 1960s that introduce a relation of solidarity between trace, writing and program. Since I have already presented a critical analysis of the texts from the sixties on several occasions, in the present context, I have opted to discuss later texts that take up the question of the animal and the relation to Heidegger, reexamining notions of writing and difference through “my” plasticity<sup>2</sup>. Several articles in this issue are, in fact, critiques of plasticity’s critique, which I therefore saw no point in repeating. I shall refer to it briefly initially, but I have developed my response in another field. Rather than diminishing the stakes of the dialogue undertaken here, this approach allows me to alter the perspective of our exchange in productive ways.

*Technoscience, humanity and animality*

Let me begin with a few reminders. According to Heidegger, the relational structure that connects the development of modern science to technological progress — a relationship

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<sup>1</sup>. *The Beast and the Sovereign*, I, 463.

<sup>2</sup>. See Catherine Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, trans. Carolyn Shread, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. *Changing Difference, The Feminine in Philosophy*, trans. Carolyn Shread, Cambridge: Polity Books, 2011. “*One Life Only*”, “*One Life Only. Biological Resistance, Political Resistance*”, *Critical Inquiry*, Chicago University Press, Autumn 2015, online version.

revealed in the neologism “technoscience” NO NEED OF A REFERENCE HERE — is determined by two significant metaphysical decisions, both of which grant a central role to life. The first, which emerges at the dawn of the philosophical tradition with Aristotle and governs it continually, is the definition of Man as *animal rationale*, in other words, as animal first and foremost. Heidegger characterizes this definition of man as “zoopolitical” SAME AS NOTE 1. At the dawn of philosophy a biological and zoological concept of human “life” was thus established. Heidegger asks, “Are we really on the right track toward the essence of the human being as long as we set him off as one living creature among others in contrast to plants, beasts, and God [...] But we must be clear on this point, that when we do this we abandon the human being to the essential realm of *animalitas* even if we do not equate him with beasts and attribute a specific difference to him [...] Metaphysics thinks of the human being on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of his *humanitas*.”<sup>3</sup> Clearly, Heidegger considers the biological and zoological definition of Man implicated in metaphysics to be ontologically impure, dissimulating, as it does, the essential difference between *life* and *existence*, from which, alone, the essence of Dasein is conceivable. Right from the start, the originary complicity of metaphysics and life, its alliance with what must be called the biological even before such is the case, condemns the biological to being nothing but an instance of concealing what is essential.

The second decision concerns the subsequent biological characterization of life that results directly from the first metaphysical definition which defines life as a program. In “The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought”<sup>4</sup>, the lecture Heidegger gave in Athens in 1967, he claims that in our epoch, which is that of a “universality of global civilization”<sup>5</sup>, the “scientific world” is ruled by calculability and therefore obeys the blueprint in which we find “the thoroughgoing calculability of everything, susceptible to experimentation and controllable by it.” Now in this “blueprint for a world”, “the activity of the individual sciences remains subordinated.”<sup>6</sup> This subordination is especially visible in the field of biology.

Calculability finds its full expression in the notion of genetic program, which is confused, in his definition, with cybernetic program. This representation “abolishes the

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<sup>3</sup>. *Letter on “Humanism”* (1946) in *Pathmarks*, trans. Frank A. Cappuzi, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 239-276: 246-247.

<sup>4</sup>. Heidegger, Martin. “The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought” Trans. Dimitrios Latsis and Ullrich Haase in *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 44:2 (2013) 119-128.

<sup>5</sup>. Heidegger “The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought”, 122.

<sup>6</sup>. Heidegger “The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought”, 122.

difference between automatic machines and living beings.”<sup>7</sup> Cybernetics and biology engage in a circular relation. On the one hand, “the cybernetic blueprint of the world, the “victory of method over science” makes possible a completely homogenous – and in this sense universal – calculability, that is, the absolute controllability of both the animate and the inanimate world.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, on the other hand, biology is the field in which “the prospect of universal calculability, can be fulfilled experimentally in the most certain manner possible.”<sup>9</sup> Heidegger goes on to explain: “according to the method’s precepts, the defining idea of life in human life is the germ cell. This is no longer considered the miniature version of the fully developed living being. Biochemistry has discovered the scheme of life in the genes of the germ cell. This scheme, inscribed and stored as prescription inside the genes, is the programme of evolution. Science already knows the alphabet of this prescription. We speak of “an archive of genetic information”. On its knowledge is founded the firm expectation that one day we shall be able to master the scientific-technological production and breeding of the human being. The penetration of the genetic structure of the human germ cell by biochemistry and the splitting of the atom by nuclear physics belong on the same track, that of the victory of method over science.”<sup>10</sup> From the *animal rationale* to the life program there is but a single logic of subordination and mechanical and political instrumentalization of life, marked by the all-powerful genetics and, once again, inseparable from the constituting of a “stock” NO NEED OF A REFERENCE, MY FORMULATION or “patrimoine” SAME HERE whose goal, in Heidegger’s view, can ultimately be nothing but an eugenicist principle.

Apparently there is never any consideration given to the possibility that the all-powerful genetics might one day be shaken by biological research. From the Greek origin of the zoological definition of man to contemporary genetic manipulations, a single process unfolds. Biology has but one meaning, which is to obscure, if not to ruin, meaning. The “life” that biology grasps is a threat to “existence”, which is precisely that which never allows itself to be “programed” or instrumentalized.

### *Derrida, and Heidegger’s Immunity*

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida highlights the importance of the notion of genetic program, referring to François Jacob. He comments on the fact that the cybernetic conception

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<sup>7</sup>. Heidegger “The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought”, 123.

<sup>8</sup>. Heidegger “The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought”, 123.

<sup>9</sup>. Heidegger “The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought”, 124.

<sup>10</sup>. Heidegger “The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought”, 124.

of program determines his genetic definition, but does not draw the same conclusions from this as Heidegger. Indeed, for Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, the genetic program appears primarily as *writing*: “the entire field covered by the cybernetic *program* will be the field of writing [...] It is also in this sense that the contemporary biologist speaks of writing and *program* in relation to the most elementary processes of information within the living cell.”<sup>11</sup> Writing is understood as a characteristic of “all that gives rise to an inscription in general.”<sup>12</sup> Citing passages in which Jacob compares the living to a text, Derrida is complicit with the gesture that substitutes the essentialness of life for the economy of inscription and trace that is the “logic of life”.

Years later in “Faith and Knowledge”, an important text offering a comparative study of religion and scientific reason, Derrida returned to the question of the relation of life to genetic program. Both the project and tone had now changed. In 1967, the program designates the unmotivated trace, the feature of writing that precedes the constituted identity of all individuals. An open necessity of some sort. In “Faith and Knowledge”, the program, which is inseparable from the machine — in both its concept and functioning — is now characterized less as a mode of writing, less as a signature, than as a certain implementing of time, a relation to the future as anticipation and calculation. A program consists of a series of operations that determine and orient the future, thereby averting in advance the surprising and disruptive character of events. The genetic program appears as a particular case of the undertaking of programming that typifies the overall “performativity” of “*techné*, of technoscience, of tele-technoscience”<sup>13</sup>. In this framework, biology itself becomes “tele-biotechnological”<sup>14</sup>, a set of technical procedures that operate on life from a distance (“tele”) by working on its abstraction, virtualization and uprooting.

Thus, Derrida does not question the term “technoscience” any more than he is deeply concerned about the equating of biology with a mode of calculating. Even if he does examine critically some of the assumptions of Heideggerian thought on science, he does not appear to break with the fundamental principle of this thinking: from genetic program to technoscientific programming, the unity between the march of capitalism — with its imperatives in terms of productivity, profitability, mastery and control — and the fulfillment

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<sup>11</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore : Johns Hopkins Press, 1974, 9.

<sup>12</sup>. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 9.

<sup>13</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. “Faith and Knowledge” trans. Samuel Weber, in *Acts of Religion* ed. Gil Anidjar, New York: Routledge, 2002, 42-101: 46.

<sup>14</sup>. Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, 58.

of metaphysics occur in a univocal and continuous manner. In “Faith and Knowledge”, we read the following irrevocable claim, with its clear Heideggerian influence: “teletechnoscience that is always high-performance and performative by essence”.<sup>15</sup> It is clear then that biology, subordinated to this performative logic, can be viewed only as the handmaid to techno-scientific sovereignty.

How should we understand what must be acknowledged as a faithfulness to Heidegger? This question immediately prompts another: doesn’t this faithfulness cause Derrida to leave intact, undeconstructed, the Heideggerian critique of the “zoological definition” SAME AS NOTE 1 of Man?

It is precisely this critique, and the faithfulness to this critique, that I seek to interrogate. Indeed, why didn’t Derrida ever ask himself whether the zoological definition of Man was, in fact, *the best*, if only considered from the point of view of the future? *Whether, right from the origin of philosophy, it actually contained the possibility of deontologizing life?* Indeed, read retrospectively, in the light of contemporary biology, the Aristotelian definition of man as rational and political *animal* makes it possible to resist the privilege accorded to Dasein over all other living beings, which is precisely what Derrida sought to do elsewhere.

I would like to return briefly to the Heideggerian critique of the concept of program. It is true that on this particular point, Derrida does appear to distinguish his thought from that of Heidegger, thereby opening the way to a possible dissidence. In fact, in “Faith and Knowledge” Derrida troubles the possibility of tracing a clear dividing line between life and machine considerably, and on first glance this would appear to unsettle the Heideggerian critique of program, cybernetics and genetics. Derrida does say that as soon as there is an effort to protect life from machine, one becomes caught up in the mechanics of this very gesture, which repeats itself like an automaton. The critique of program does not, itself, escape the program, it becomes a contradicting machine. Here is an excessive logic, situated at the limits of biology and politics, and which, as we know, Derrida named with a word borrowed from the field of biology: the auto-immune process.

In the same way that the living being suffering from an auto-immune disease, eventually attacks its own defenses, thought cannot claim to protect life from the machine without itself using the resources of the machine, without putting into operation a mode of mechanism that turns back against itself. It is therefore not possible to immunize life against machine without calling on the machine, without having recourse, in other words, to the

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<sup>15</sup>. Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, 66.

resources of machinic repetition. Derrida states “We are here in a space where all self-protection of the unscathed, of the safe and sound, of the sacred (*heilig*, holy) must protect itself against its own protection, its own police, its own power of rejection, in short against its own, which is to say, against its own immunity. It is this terrifying but fatal logic of the *auto-immunity of the unscathed*.”<sup>16</sup> Auto-immunity exists the moment that defends attack what they claim to defend.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, there is no “life” on the one side and threat of the “machine” on the other, “living being” and “program”. Their dissensual unity is originary and it is this that reveals their shared source as “double”. Since any reaction, any reactivity is immediate and quasi-automatic, it seems that everything one imagines one is defending is, for this very reason, mechanically attacked and poorly defended. Auto-immunity is this potentially pathological mechanism inscribed in living beings, a biological anomaly that becomes a philosophical aporia. Auto-immunity is the program that turns against itself — with this returning appearing virtually as its fulfillment. Gene against antigen, self against non-self, machine attacking itself. The anomaly that Derrida sees as contained in any program reveals its political meaning: auto-immunity is the infernal logic that is set off no sooner has one begun the process of identifying the enemy.<sup>18</sup>

Now, one might expect that having exposed this logic, Derrida would return to Heidegger in the last part of “Faith and Knowledge” to show how Heidegger mechanically becomes his own enemy. One might expect that the triggering of the play of auto-immunity would profoundly and enduringly shake the foundations of the Heideggerian analysis of technoscience. Once again, if any position of rejection is bound to machinically attack itself, the reactive critique of science, along with its supporting ontology, should, strictly speaking, self-deconstruct. The equating of genetics with a mode of calculation should turn back on itself, thereby already implicitly announcing the importance of epigenetics. *The rejection of the biological definition of man should also, in the same moment, reject itself*. Loaning two of its categories to deconstruction (immunity and auto-immunity), biology should simultaneously see itself invested with a new philosophical and critical role, finally leaving the enclave — both ontological and technoscientific — in which it is constantly quartered by Heidegger.

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<sup>16</sup>. Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, 79-80.

<sup>17</sup>. Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, 82.

<sup>18</sup>. Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, “repetition, which is to say, the division of the same”, 71.

And yet, strangely, at the end of “Faith and Knowledge”, we witness an interruption in the auto-immunity mechanism. We have to admit that ultimately the text produces no fatal malfunction in the Heideggerian defense. So what is it, then, in Heidegger that is secretly immunized by deconstruction? The zoological definition! This immunization of Heidegger is, to my mind, the greatest obstacle to the constitution of auto-immunity such as Derrida thinks it as an instrument of bio-deconstruction.

*Derrida reads Foucault and Agamben*

Even if, in *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida does question certain dichotomies again — between the living and machine, or dying and perishing— and even if he emphasizes Heidegger’s heavy silence when it comes to the animal, its subordination and animal suffering, he does not, for all that, displace the derivative character of the biological and the zoological in his work. He thus leaves in the shadow what he claims to elucidate, namely the meaning of these very categories.

Derrida returns first to the claims Heidegger developed on the *animal rationale* in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. He writes: “Heidegger [asserts] the secondary character, the fundamentally derived, late-on-the-scene, and (from the ontological point of view) fundamentally very unsatisfactory character of a definition of man as *animal rationale* or as *zōon logon ekhon*. Incidentally, he interestingly and unassailably calls this definition “zoological,” not only but also in the same sense that it links the *logos* to the *zōon* and claims to render account and reason [...] of the essence of man by saying of him that he is first of all a “living thing”, an “animal”. But the *zōon* of this zoology remains in many respects questionable (*fragwürdig*). In other words, so long as one has not questioned ontologically the essence of being alive, the essence of life, it remains problematic and obscure to define man as *zōon logon ekhon*. Now, it is on this unquestioned basis, this problematical basis of an unelucidated ontological question of life that the whole story of the West, says Heidegger, has constructed its psychology, its ethics, its theory of knowledge, and its anthropology.”<sup>19</sup>

Does Derrida, in turn, interrogate all of the “unquestioned basis” that shackles the Heideggerian analysis of the zoological definition of man? Certainly, it is clearly necessary to deconstruct the traditional zoological definition of man put forward by Aristotle. But again, what does it mean to deconstruct? To intensify Heideggerian doubts? *Or is it, rather, to*

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<sup>19</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. 1, 2001-2002, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 263-264.



*attack these very doubts and to see in the Aristotelian definition the beginning of a self-deconstructive process at work, a sort of time bomb, which, rather than fixing something like an essence of man for eternity, announces the possible birth of an animal-human subject?*

Derrida opts for the first of these two choices.

Indeed, one of the central themes of *The Beast and the Sovereign* is the critique of the Foucauldian concept of bio-politics and its reinterpretation by Giorgio Agamben. In order to level this critique, Derrida believes that he needs the doubts that Heidegger brings to the zoological definition of man. For Derrida it is a matter of countering the analysis of modern sovereignty as the emergence of the biopolitical (Foucault) and the lack of distinction between *bios* and *zôê* that ensues (Agamben). What counts for Derrida is showing that the Heideggerian distrust of the zoological definition of man is the first critical analysis of biopolitics and that in this sense Foucault invents nothing new. Heidegger would thus have understood long before Agamben that the zoological definition of man already undermined necessarily the categories of *bios* and *zôê*, biology and zoology.

If they had read Heidegger as they should have done, Derrida asserts, Foucault and Agamben would have understood that there was *nothing new* in “modernity”, that the definition of man as *animal rationale* and *zōon politikon* already initiated the program of biopolitics. Derrida writes: “I am not saying [...] that there is no “new bio-power”, I am suggesting that “bio-power” itself is not new. There are incredible novelties in bio-power, but bio-power or zoo-power are not new.”<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere he explains: “The zooanthropological, rather than the bio-political, is our problematic horizon.”<sup>21</sup>

Derrida’s problem does not therefore lie in attacking the way in which Heidegger attacks the notion of *animal rationale* at all, but rather in entering into a polemic with Foucault and Agamben that glossed over the fundamental importance of this Heideggerian gesture far too quickly, even though, in so many respects, it prefigured their own critique.

Attacking the Heideggerian attack instead of justifying it would have been to leave aside this polemic in order to usefully emphasize all the metaphysics still included in its rejection of the zoological and the biological. It would have been firstly to raise doubts about the very term “zoology”, an appellation whose obsolete and already outdated aspect even in Heidegger’s time, Derrida does not once comment upon. For a long time already there has no longer been any zoology, but rather a biology of organisms. “Zoology” has radically renewed

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<sup>20</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 330.

<sup>21</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 65.

itself by integrating the contributions of phylogenetics, biochemistry, population genetics, animal physiology (which develops from biochemistry and cellular biology to comparative anatomy via histology), and lastly ethology and ecology, which study the interactions between living beings and their environment and which shows as much interest in animals as in plants, fungi and abiotic elements. It would have been to try to name the extent to which these disciplines have largely enabled a destabilization of traditional concepts of the animal, the relation between man and animal and the relation between man and the non-animal living...by perhaps offering a new meaning to “political animal”.

Can we not claim, in fact, that there is a non “zoological” animal, and hence non metaphysical, definition of man? *That in the Aristotelian definition there is perhaps something that contains an extra-metaphysical meaning of biology – one that would therefore announce a philosophical revolution?*

Contemporary developments in “zoology” are indeed mentioned in Derrida’s seminar, but they are immediately reduced to being nothing but actors in the general program of instrumentalizing the living and the subordination of the animal implemented by “tele-techno-biology”. Derrida writes about: “the joint developments of zoological, ethological, biological and genetic forms of *knowledge*, which remain inseparable from *techniques* of intervention *into* their object [...] the living animal”<sup>22</sup>. And what are these techniques? They include “farming”, “regimentalization”, “genetic experimentation”, “industrialization”, “artificial insemination on a massive scale”, “more and more audacious manipulations of the genome”, “the reduction of the animal not only to production and overactive reproduction (hormones, genetic crossbreeding, cloning, etc.) of meat for consumption, but also of all sorts of other end products, and all of that in the service of a certain being and the putative human well-being of man”<sup>23</sup> ... Biological “knowledge” — and here again, of course, we run into the phobia of everything’s genetic — thus lead straight to catastrophe. As Derrida reminds us, “L’ordre du *savoir* n’est jamais étranger à celui du *pouvoir*”REF. the order of knowledges is never a stranger to that of power *The Beast*, I 279

Like power, biological knowledge has the power of life and death over its object.

As an example of this power, Derrida comments on the dissection of the large elephant from the Jardin des Plantes in 1681. Indeed, this is the only example he offers in the seminar

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<sup>22</sup>. Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal that Therefore I am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills, New York : Fordham University Press, 2008, 25.

<sup>23</sup>. Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, 25.

on “zoological knowledge”.<sup>24</sup> The link between zoological knowledge and sovereign power appears with all its force in this example, which reveals “mastery, both political and scientific, indissociably political and scientific, over an animal that has become an object of knowledge – knowledge of death, anatomical knowledge above all – for the sovereign, the king or the people.”<sup>25</sup> Later in the text, Derrida reasserts the strength of this bond: “Knowledge is sovereign; it is of its essence to want to be free and all-powerful, to be sure of power and to have it, to have possession and mastery of its object. And this is why, as you had understood, I began and ended last time with a dead body, an immense dead body [...] I’m speaking, then, of the picture of the dissection of an elephant *under* the orders and *under* the gaze of the greatest of kings, His Majesty Louis le Grand. The beast and the sovereign is here the beast as dead ob-ject, an enormous, heavy body under the gaze and at the disposal of the absolute knowledge of an absolute monarch.”<sup>26</sup> The meaning of zoology is thus fixed once and for all with this example, which extends from animal anatomy to zoo science.

It is now crystal clear that the real reason why Derrida interrogates zoology and biology is not with a view to provoking a rejection of the Heideggerian rejection, nor to seeing how contemporary definitions of the animal in particular and the living in general might destabilize not only political sovereignty but also what must be called ontological sovereignty. As we have seen, even without being examined, the question is *already settled*. Biological “knowledge” upsets nothing, and in any case, it’s not what’s at stake. What counts is not attacking Heidegger, but rather protecting him against those who do not read him, or who do so poorly, even as they claim to know something about the Greek meaning of *bios* and *zôê*. First and foremost, it is a matter of salvaging the primacy of the Heideggerian analysis, marking it as logical and chronological antecedent over subsequent thought on biopolitics.

“Neither the one nor the other [i.e. Foucault and Agamben] refers, as I believe it would have been honest and indispensable to do, to the Heidegger [...of] *Introduction to Metaphysics*”<sup>27</sup>, the text in which Heidegger shows that the *logos* was originally a “zoology”: “uniting in one and the same body, or one and the same concept, *logos* and the life of the living, *logos* and *zôê*.”<sup>28</sup> This “*zoo-logy* or [...] *logo-zōēy* [...] will, according to Heidegger,

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<sup>24</sup>. Cf. the passage from Ellenberger cited on p. 275 of *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminar.

<sup>25</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 273.

<sup>26</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 280.

<sup>27</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 317.

<sup>28</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 321.

have imposed its authority, even its sovereignty, its hegemonic predominance both over the originary interpretation of the Greek *logos* and over the Aristotelian definition of man as *logon zōon ekhon*, the animal that has the *logos*.”<sup>29</sup> As Derrida also writes, Genesis already said it: “[the *logos*] was life (*zôê*).”<sup>30</sup> From that point then, if a biopolitics exists, it is indeed because “there seems to be some ontological affinity between *life*, *zōē*, and *logos*.”<sup>31</sup>

Derrida continues: “it goes without saying that when Heidegger, *on the one hand* condemns biologism (and clearly modern biologism), and *on the other hand* denounces as metaphysical and insufficiently questioning the zoologism of a definition of man as *zōon logon ekhon* or, a fortiori, as *zōon politikon*, he is going exactly in the direction of this whole supposedly new configuration that Agamben credits Foucault with having inaugurated.”<sup>32</sup>

Focusing on this point, we thus discover that 1) it is impossible — at the explicit level of the analysis— to make a clear separation between *bios* and *zôê*, which thus invalidates Agamben’s analysis, and consequently also Foucault’s analysis, for there is nothing “new” in biopower; 2) it is therefore impossible to deconstruct the Heideggerian rejection of the bio-zoological and the ontological background that supports it.

To conclude, there is no question that Derrida is fully aware of a transformation of biology. In the question of the animal he sees a new approach to life appearing, and this necessarily troubles the heavy apparatus of the question of being and its consequent thought of time and history. Moreover, through its insistence, the animal question shakes up the ontological arrangement of the “always already” and threatens the Heideggerian rejection of the bio-zoological definition of man. With the two instances of auto-immunity and animal, Derrida has a powerful *machine* (auto-immune mechanism) *with which to deontologize life* (and to grasp the unprecedented political stakes of a redefinition of the political subject as a living subject).

And yet, as we have seen here, this operation of mechanical deontologization — or self-deconstruction — does not occur. It remains stopped at its threshold. Although Derrida would not recognize it under this name, I believe that the problem is indeed that of a loss of meaning, a threat of desymbolization represented by the idea of a deconstructive power within biology. That the symbolic might elude difference, *that it might start living*. That it might become animal, and thereby cease being what it is. Therein lies the problem.

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<sup>29</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 321.

<sup>30</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 313.

<sup>31</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 314.

<sup>32</sup>. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 324.

How can it be thought? This question calls for another deconstruction. Or perhaps something other than deconstruction. I hope to see this discussion developed in the years to come. Indeed, the stakes in contemporary biology concern not only the living, but also nature as a whole, in other words, everything constituted within contemporary ecological concerns. It is urgent that we continue freeing biology from the hefty accusations of biologism that it is still burdened with in order to finally initiate the interrogation that the survival of Earth demands with utmost urgency.