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Deconstruction is not vegetarianism: Humanism, subjectivity, and animal ethics

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Abstract. This essay examines Jacques Derrida's contribution to recent debates in animal philosophy in order to explore the critical promise of his work for contemporary discourses on animal ethics and vegetarianism. The essay is divided into two sections, both of which have as their focus Derrida's interview with Jean-Luc Nancy entitled "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject." My task in the initial section is to assess the claim made by Derrida in this interview that Levinas's work is dogmatically anthropocentric, and to determine whether Levinas's conception of ethics leaves a place for animals. In the second half of the essay I turn to an analysis of Derrida's discussion of vegetarianism and its critical relation to the humanism and anthropocentrism that he is calling into question. The main argument that I seek to advance here is that deconstruction should not be strictly identified with vegetarianism (as certain of Derrida's readers have suggested), but rather that what is needed is a thorough deconstruction of existing discourses on vegetarianism, a project that remains largely to be developed.

For those readers who have been following the Anglo-American analytic debates on animal ethics over the past several years, it is difficult to allay the suspicion that these once thought-provoking and institution-changing discussions have for the most part become little more than pedantic disputes among scholars. Rather than deepening the discussion of what is at stake in animal ethics – which is nothing less than a contestation of the primacy of human beings with respect to the ethical – most writers have become content with fine-tuning one or another set of established arguments or theories. Discussions in animal ethics now typically focus on the soundness of the argument from marginal cases,[1] or the viability of certain esoteric elements of utilitarian, radical egalitarian, or contractarian ethical theory. It can only come as a welcome sign of relief, then, that the debates are being rehashed along new lines by feminist and Continental thinkers. Feminist philosophers such as Carol Adams, Josephine Donovan, and others[2] have begun to explore alternative foundations for animal ethics and politics that seek to move beyond the traditional rights-based theories that have dominated discussion up to this point. And in the Continental tradition, philosophers including Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri, have begun the process of re-examining various philosophical conceptions of animality

and the ethico-political consequences of the dogmatically anthropocentric milieu of Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian thought.[3] In comparison with these wide-ranging developments in animal ethics, my task in this paper will appear rather focused and modest. My goal here is simply to bring a small portion of Derrida's contribution to this recent trend in Continental philosophy to the foreground in order to explore its critical promise for contemporary discourses on animal ethics and vegetarianism.

Despite the modesty of this project, the arguments that I wish to make in this paper are somewhat intricate and will at times be difficult for certain readers to follow since they require a minimal familiarity both with Derrida's thought and recent discussions in animal ethics. I suspect, however, that the reader's efforts will be made considerably easier if I lay out a brief sketch of my main arguments and conclusions here at the outset. The paper is divided into two sections, both of which have as their focus Derrida's interview with Jean-Luc Nancy entitled "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject."[4] In the first section, I approach the question of animal ethics through Derrida's brief discussion of animality in the work of Emmanuel Levinas, who is perhaps *the* central figure in Continental ethical philosophy. In his interview with Nancy, Derrida suggests that Levinas's ethical thought, despite its potential for challenging certain aspects of classical humanism, nonetheless remains a "profound humanism" insofar as it is grounded in a problematic and dogmatic anthropocentrism. My task in the initial section is to assess this claim by Derrida and to examine whether Levinas's conception of ethics leaves a place for animals. Although I differ with Derrida concerning what role animals have in Levinas's writings, I ultimately agree with him that the latter's philosophy remains a profoundly metaphysical and dogmatic humanism. With this fundamental agreement about the dogmatic character of Levinas's ethical humanism established, in the second half of the paper I turn to an analysis of Derrida's discussion of vegetarianism and its critical relation to the humanism and anthropocentrism that he is calling into question. In order to elaborate what is at issue here, I examine David Wood's provocative article, "*Comment ne pas manger* – Deconstruction and Humanism," which offers a rather harsh and incisive critique of Derrida's statements on vegetarianism. Wood brings forth a number of arguments which suggest that Derrida radically underestimates the deconstructive and ethico-political potential of vegetarianism as a means of resisting anthropocentric discourses and institutions. I identify three chief arguments made by Wood against Derrida and attempt to counter these arguments with careful readings of certain portions of "Eating Well." My ultimate goal in this rejoinder is to argue that, counter to Wood's assertion, there is no essential co-belonging of deconstruction and vegetarianism and, consequently, that his chief criticisms of Derrida misfire. However, in arguing

that deconstruction should not be strictly identified with vegetarianism, I am not advocating the position that deconstruction is consistent with meat-eating, but rather pointing toward the necessity for a thorough deconstruction of existing discourses on vegetarianism, something that both Wood and Derrida fail to pursue.

1. Levinas and the Question of the Animal

Since at least 1985 Derrida has been involved in a sustained analysis of the place of animality in Western metaphysics, and more often than not, this has entailed a careful reading of one or more of Heidegger's texts. Beginning with the *Geschlecht* articles in the mid-1980's, and continuing up through *Of Spirit*, *Aporias*, and most recently, "L'animal que donc je suis," he has repeatedly contested the anthropocentric axioms that underlie Heidegger's determination of the "abyss of essence" separating animal life from human ek-sistence. The interview with Nancy, "Eating Well," constitutes another installment in this series of texts that poses "the question of the animal" in Heidegger's discourse. What is particularly interesting about this interview, though, is that Derrida here extends the question of the animal beyond the context of Heidegger's writings to other thinkers on the contemporary scene – most notably, Levinas. Despite acknowledging the many significant differences that separate Levinas and Heidegger, in this interview Derrida assimilates the two thinkers around their common reinforcement and sedimentation of particular aspects of traditional humanism. He explains this assimilation in the following terms: "Discourses as original as those of Heidegger and Levinas disrupt, of course, a certain traditional humanism. In spite of the differences separating them, they nonetheless remain profound humanisms [*Des discours aussi originaux que ceux de Heidegger et de Levinas bouleversent, certes, un certain humanisme traditionnel. Ce sont néanmoins des humanismes profonds . . . malgré le les différences qui les séparent*] . . ." (EW 113/BM 108). Derrida has devoted several pieces to demonstrating this claim with respect to Heidegger, but has written very little on Levinas along these lines. What is the status of this claim with respect to Levinas? In what fashion does Levinas's humanism both disrupt and reinforce traditional humanism?

First, to understand how Levinas's thought *disrupts* classical humanism, it will be helpful to recall Heidegger's determination of the essence of humanism. Heidegger elaborates his understanding of humanism most famously in his "Letter on 'Humanism,'"[5] but more complete developments of this thought can be found in essays such as "Plato's Doctrine of Truth,"[6] and the Nietzsche lectures from 1940.[7] The latter two works are especially important

for grasping Heidegger's understanding of humanism, since, on Heidegger's account, metaphysical humanism proper finds its origins in Plato and its fulfillment (*Vollendung*) in Nietzsche. For Heidegger, the beginning of the history of metaphysics originates in Plato's thought and coincides with the founding of a humanism in which human beings are given a central and privileged place among beings ("PDT" 181; "PLW" 142). What is at stake in Plato's and all subsequent humanisms, Heidegger argues, is to take "human beings," defined metaphysically (i.e., defined without posing the question of the truth of being) as "rational animals," and to direct them "to the liberation of their possibilities, to the certitude of their destiny, and to the securing of their 'life'" ("PDT" 181; "PLW" 142). This determination of the centrality, dignity, and destiny of the human reflects a shift in the essence of truth. Whereas previously truth was understood in terms of the un-concealment or unhiddenness of beings themselves, with Plato the meaning of truth is gradually shifted onto another register, one in which truth is located in the correct representation of "objects" by human "subjects." The unfolding of this latter understanding of truth is only just begun in Plato; we must wait until Descartes to see it reach its apex. With Descartes, concerns about correct representation lead to the search for a *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis*, an absolute, unshakable ground of truth.[8] This absolute ground is found in the self-presence and self-consciousness of the human *subiectum* which underlies representations and assures their correctness. With Nietzsche's reversal of Platonism and critique of the Cartesian cogito, metaphysical humanism reaches its end; but, according to Heidegger at least, the Nietzschean reversal of Platonic and Cartesian metaphysics itself remains locked within the closure of the history of metaphysics insofar as Nietzsche's thought is grounded in a subjectivist understanding of values and a perspectivist account of truth.

Heidegger attempts to counter this classical form of humanism by displacing the human subject from the center of beings. For Heidegger, man's essence is not found in a subjective lording over or dominating of worldly objects, but in being originarily exposed to other beings, ek-sisting in and guarding the truth of being "in order that beings might appear in the light of being as the beings they are [*damit im Lichte des Seins das Seiende als das Seiende, das es ist, erscheine*]."[9] Contemporary post- or anti-humanism, under the influence of Heidegger and others,[10] has continued this displacement of man from the center of beings but under different rubrics and with different aims. Levinas offers his own version of the decentering of the "subject" or "Man" of classical humanism, however his disruption of humanism is not presented as an *anti*-humanism, but instead as *another* humanism, a humanism of the other man. In his explication of this other humanism, Levinas begins within the horizon of contemporary anti-humanism, accepting much of the anti-humanist

critique of classical humanism. He readily admits that developments in social sciences such as anthropology and psychology, and the horrifying realities of countless wars, have rendered tragicomic the notion that the Man of Western metaphysics is the privileged point of reference, or telos, of the universe.[11] Modern anti-humanism attests to the displacement and ex-centering of man from the comfort, safety, and integrity of his self-presence by demonstrating the priority of language and structures in the constitution of subjectivity (anthropology), the primacy of the unconscious in the ego (psychoanalysis), and the primordiality of Dasein's finite ek-sistence or transcendence over and against man's self-presence (Heidegger and post-Heideggerian thought). As Levinas acknowledges the import of these advances in theory, there is no question of going back to a metaphysical humanism before anti-humanism in order to find a ground for his own humanism. Rather, Levinas posits his rethinking of humanism in the form of a question to contemporary anti-humanism. Thus, Levinas is not offering a backwards looking refusal of modern anti-humanism, but rather presents us with a "skeptical critique" of anti-humanism, to make reference to a remarkable article by Peter Atterton on this topic.[12]

What anti-humanism in its various forms shares in common according to Levinas is a contestation of the primacy of the inward world of the subject of classical humanism.[13] Prior to and more basic than man persevering in his own being and self-presence, anti-humanism discerns an openness to otherness at the very heart of the subject that renders self-presence derivative and compromised. This openness can be understood, Levinas suggests, in three ways: (1) as the "openness of every object to all others, in the unity of the universe" ("SI" 103; "NI" 145), that is, as the interaction or community of substances in the Third Analogy of experience in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 211-15/B 256-62, see especially A 211/B257-8); (2) as the openness of Dasein's ek-static mode of being and its ek-sistence in the openness of Being, or what Heidegger often refers to as an openness to the call of Being (*Anspruch des Seins*); and finally, (3) as an openness in the more radical sense that Levinas seeks to locate at the core of the subject, a "denuding of the skin exposed to wounds and outrage [*dénudation de la peau exposée à la blessure et à l'outrage*]" ("SI" 104; "NI" 146). This latter characterization of the openness or radical passivity of the subject, the one that Levinas wishes to privilege, is something that can be thought only *after* or *following* anti-humanism. In other words, before the subject can be determined as radically passive, there must first be a displacement of the autarchical ego, secure in its own self-presence. This decentering is what modern anti-humanism helps to accomplish. But the anti-humanist critique only clears the space for a thought of the subject as radical passivity; it does not itself pursue this understanding of what being-subject to alterity signifies.

Levinas poses this understanding of a more primordial "denuded" or "open" subject to anti-humanism as a skeptical question.[14] In a memorable passage from the last lines of "Humanism and Anarchy," Levinas suggests that, "Modern anti-humanism is perhaps not right in not finding in man, lost in history and in order, the trace of this pre-historical and an-archical saying."[15] What Levinas's guarded critique implies is that anti-humanism has perhaps overlooked the diachronic time of the saying of responsibility in which the sensible subject is open and radically passive to alterity beyond consciousness – in short, anti-humanism has perhaps ("perhaps," for there is no certainty, knowledge, or proof possible here) missed the time of ethics. To argue, as anti-humanism does, that structures (psychological, cultural, symbolic, linguistic, etc.) irreducible to the subject constitute its being does not answer the question of what a "subject" must be in order to be open to structures as such. Levinas's "answer" to this question, an answer that is itself another (skeptical) question, is that the very subjectivity of the human subject, its openness, is perhaps located in the diachronic time of ethics, responsibility, and radical passivity – all of these serving as different names for a time and entity that has its mode of being as being-responsible for the other human.

To return to our reading of Derrida's statement, then, we can say that not only does Levinas's thought disrupt classical humanism (as Derrida notes), but it also works to contest the limits of contemporary *anti*-humanism. Yet, as Derrida also suggests, despite this radical rethinking of the essence of humanism, Levinas's discourse remains a "profound" humanism. We can begin to make some sense of this second claim if we understand by "profound" something like "dogmatic" or "metaphysical," since to insinuate that Levinas's thought remains deeply committed to humanism is to state the obvious! Clearly, Derrida is getting at something more oblique here – an unquestioned, metaphysically humanist assumption that lies buried in Levinas's avowedly non-metaphysical humanism and which needs to be disclosed. Allow me to return to the earlier citation from Derrida that I interrupted with an ellipsis:

> Discourses as original as those of Heidegger and Levinas disrupt, of course, a certain traditional humanism. In spite of the differences separating them, they nonetheless remain profound humanisms *to the extent that they do not sacrifice sacrifice* [en tant qu'ils ne sacrifient pas le sacrifice].

The closing words of this sentence, italicized by Derrida, point us in the direction of the metaphysically anthropocentric ground of Levinas's humanism of the other man. For Derrida, the hidden contours that guide Levinas in his limiting of the ethical to the human betray an unwillingness to "sacrifice sacrifice," by which he means, an unwillingness to question the dominant

discourse of Western metaphysics that considers the putting to death of all non-human life as noncriminal. Derrida argues that when Levinas refers to the "Thou shalt not kill" which "speaks" in the frailty of the face of the other, he has determined in advance that this imperative can only be directed toward and arise from the other human being, never from a non-human living being such as an animal since it lacks a "face" (EW 105, 112-3/BM 100, 108). Derrida explains this anthropocentric limit in Levinas in the following terms:

> . . .the "Thou shalt not kill" is addressed to the other and presupposes him [*s'adresse à lui et le suppose*]. It is destined to the very thing that it institutes, the other as man . . . The "thou shalt not kill" – with all of its consequences, which are limitless – has never been understood within the Judeo-Christian tradition, nor apparently by Levinas, as a "Thou shalt not put to death the living in general.". . .The other, such as this can be thought according to the imperative of ethical transcendence, is indeed the other man: man as other, the other as man [*l'homme comme l'autre, l'autre comme l'homme*]. (EW 112-3/BM 107-8)

Reflecting on these remarks concerning Levinas and the rest of the Judeo-Christian tradition, one might be reminded of Augustine's *City of God* in which the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" is specifically limited to human beings alone,[16] or of Aquinas's remarks on human dominion over animals and the rest of nature.[17] And while one could certainly find examples that run counter to Derrida's generalization,[18] he has without a doubt accurately characterized the place of animals within the dominant schema of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The same could be said of Derrida's characterization of the place of animals in Levinas's thought. On the whole, it is true that Levinas makes no attempt to sacrifice sacrifice and rather uncritically limits his conceptions of "ethics" and the "face" to the other man. Besides the short essay in *Difficult Freedom* entitled "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights,"[19] Levinas appears to be wholly uninterested concerning the relation of animals to the ethical or justice-as-politics. However, in the same year that a portion of Derrida's interview with Nancy was published in French in *Topoi*, an interview with Levinas conducted by graduate students at the University of Warwick appeared in English, and in this piece Levinas somewhat complicates this standard picture of the status of animality in his thought.[20]

From the outset, the interviewers are concerned to question Levinas on the place of animals in his work. (And, although I will not do so here, much could be made of the scene of this interview. It is more than a bit interesting that Levinas does not take up the question of the animal at any length for himself until he is provoked to do so by *other human beings*. Why doesn't

the massive suffering of the animals themselves suffice to provoke Levinas to take up this question more often?) Indeed, the second question that the interviewers pose concerns the possibility of the animal taking on a "face." As we have seen, Derrida rather facilely assumes that, for Levinas, the animal does not have a face (and nearly everything in Levinas's work would suggest that this is the case). But when directly asked about the possibility of the command "Thou shalt not kill" arising from the animal, Levinas not only acknowledges that the animal has a face, but also that "the ethical extends to all living beings" (PM 172). This is a remarkable and unexpected claim – any serious reader of Levinas's work should be utterly astonished that he understands our responsibilities to extend to include *all* living beings.[21] For if it is indeed the case that the ethical extends beyond man to animals and other living beings, why then is there no trace of the consequences of this increased responsibility in Levinas's discussion of politics and the third party? Does Levinas ever seriously consider the complications that would arise for a discourse on human rights if responsibilities to animals and all other living beings were included in our political calculus? Along these lines we could ask, does it matter what I feed to the other human being facing me in destitution and hunger? Is killing an animal to feed a hungry human being problematic for Levinas? Or, for that matter, is what I feed to the other, hungry animal an issue? After all, do not most of us feed "our" hungry companion animals the flesh of other animals? Does Levinas ever seriously pose the question of the ethical and political implications of sacrificing and eating the non-human other?[22]

In considering such questions, it is evident that Levinas is only half-serious in his extension of the ethical to living beings. For Levinas, this extension of the ethical (by which he means the *human* "capacity" for responsivity to non-human alterity) must be understood as secondary to and derivative of a more primary responsibility to and for other human beings. If responsivity were in fact figured as originarily infinite, incapable of being delimited *a priori* to any particular group of beings, then we would be obliged to understand the distinction between responsibilities to human beings and responsibilities to animals as an *a posteriori* de-termination, one in need of an explanation or justification. That Levinas feels no need to offer such an account betrays an unwitting reliance on certain dubious *a priori* metaphysical assumptions. To illustrate this last claim, note that as soon as Levinas admits that the animal has a face, he feels the need to add quickly that the "priority here is not found in the animal but in the human face. We understand the animal, the face of an animal, in accordance with *Dasein*" (PM 169). Further on in the same interview, Levinas insists that the "human face is completely different and only afterwards do we discover the face of an animal" (PM 172). And after

claiming that the ethical extends to all living beings, and that we "do not want to make the animal suffer needlessly and so on," Levinas asserts that the "prototype" of this sense of obligation to other animals is "human ethics" (ibid.). Whence arises this priority of the human? Are these assertions based on careful phenomenological analyses? Or do they betray an unquestioning anthropocentrism and a veiled unwillingness to sacrifice sacrifice as Derrida suggests? In other words, might this priority of the human in the last analysis hold open the hope of justifying the sacrifice of the non-human other for our own and the other human's needs? We might also wonder about the following: If, as Levinas suggests, one can only respond to the other animal by way of transferring "the idea of suffering" gained from human ethics to the animal, are we still able in all rigor to call this an *ethical* response, as he would have us understand this term? Isn't *ethical* responsivity located at the level of sensibility, prior to "ideas" about suffering? It is as if Levinas believes one is unable to respond ethically and directly, without mediation or concepts, to "animal" suffering.

I have placed the term "animal" in quotation marks here in order to bring me to my next point. There is something deeply problematic about the way the distinction between "the human" and "the animal" is drawn in Levinas's discourse. The distinction is too clean, too pure to be trusted. For instance, when Levinas acknowledges the possibility of the animal face *in general*, it is clear that he has only *certain* animals in mind. This would seem to complicate Levinas's broad assertion that one "cannot entirely refuse the face of an animal," for with regard to certain animals, it seems that he *can*. For example, Levinas does not hesitate for a moment to attribute a face to dogs, but when it comes to snakes, he says that he "can't answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed" (PM 172). One perhaps wonders what kind of "analysis" would help one to "know" whether or not a given singular being has a face – as if the face were not precisely that which is irreducible to analysis and knowledge! Critical remarks aside, my point here is not to insist that Levinas ought to be logically and conceptually consistent in his use of the word "animal," that if he extends consideration to "animals" he ought to include *all* animals, whether it be snakes, dogs, or mice. This requirement presupposes that one already knows which beings are included under the category of "animal." Within the confines of certain biological or zoological taxonomic schemata, one can gain a level of certainty about what constitutes inclusion and exclusion under a given category; but within the time of ethical responsibility, at least as Levinas has given us to understand it, such knowledge is impossible. How would one ever gain the requisite *time*, in the face of the other's demand, to do an "analysis" or to make distinctions between "snakes" and "dogs" or "animals" and "human beings"? In short, we should be just

as wary of Levinas's definitive attribution of a face to "the animal" in the instance of "the dog" as we should be about his call for a more specific analysis concerning "the snake." We do not and cannot know in advance where the face begins and ends, and this non-knowledge should render any and every determination of the limits of responsibility problematic, contestable, and questionable – especially determinations as broad as "animal" or, for that matter, "human."

The tendency to distinguish sharply between human and animal continues in a different but related fashion when in the same interview Levinas takes up the motif of saintliness. Here Levinas worries about the implications of Darwinism for ethics, since if it could be shown that radical altruism (a close substitute for what Levinas means by saintliness) is ultimately reducible to biology, then the human would simply be another instance of animality, the "last stage of the evolution of the animal" (PM 172). Contesting the "widespread thesis that the ethical is biological," as well as the notion that human ethics is ultimately reducible to animality and biology, Levinas argues that, "in relation to the animal, the human is a new phenomenon" (PM 172). For Levinas, the human definitively departs from animality and moves toward ethics in breaking with its persistence in being. The animal, in contrast, knows nothing of ethics since it is wholly attached to its own existence in a "struggle for life without ethics" (PM 172). Of course, most of the time human beings are far from "human" and much closer to animals in Levinas's sense, more concerned (and *reasonably* so, he would add) about their own being and lives than the lives of others. Like Heidegger, though, Levinas contests the metaphysical thesis that being an *animal rationale* constitutes the essence of being-human. The essence of the human emerges for Levinas in saintliness, in a site beyond *ratio* and animality, where animality is figured as pure persistence in being: " . . . with the appearance of the human – and this is my entire philosophy – there is something more important than my life, and that is the life of the other. That is unreasonable. Man is an unreasonable animal" (PM 172).

Here again it is evident that Levinas's humanism takes Heidegger's delimitation of metaphysical humanism into account by not equating the essence of the human with the metaphysical determination of man as *animal rationale*. But Levinas's displacement of the humanist subject of metaphysics is only partially successful; it still retains and reinforces the anthropocentrism of classical humanism insofar as the *question* of the *animal*'s being is never posed but is instead determined homogeneously and in relation to the measure of man (a tendency which is largely true of Heidegger as well). For Levinas, the animal is without *human* ethics; the ethical relation with the animal is based on the "prototype" of *human* ethics – the human remains always and everywhere the measure of the animal. Nor does Levinas ever question this category ("the

animal") for its homogenizing tendencies – as if we could trust the notion that "the animal" signifies a homogenous group of beings located on the other side of the human. The thinking of singularity and radical alterity accorded to the other human being by Levinas never seems to extend beyond the human to the other animal, to the animal as other. It is these stubborn and dogmatic remnants of anthropocentrism that ultimately confirm Derrida's claim that Levinas's thinking remains a "profound humanism."

Now one could contest Levinas's anthropocentrism by turning the tables on him, i.e., by reversing this binary opposition and demonstrating that the animal *as such* calls us to responsibility or that the animal *as such* is itself capable of responsibility and saintliness. No doubt a good case could be developed along these lines for certain forms of animal life. But this critical response, however necessary and justified it may be, needs to attend to its implicit reliance on a set of metaphysical distinctions (The Human and The Animal) that found and undergird the very anthropocentrism being called into question. For those of us who are concerned about posing the question of animal ethics in the context of contemporary Continental thought and related theories and practices, the issue of how best to delimit and challenge this lingering anthropocentrism without naively reinforcing it is of primary importance. I have insisted on reading Levinas's remarks on animality at length because his anthropocentrism is representative of the manner in which many of those who work in the post-Heideggerian tradition tend to understand the place of "the animal" with regard to "the ethical," however this latter term is understood. Most contemporary Continental philosophers are not simply Cartesian or Spinozist, they are not likely to deny that animals have consciousness or to hold that vegetarianism is irrational or womanish. But when it comes to rethinking community, language, finitude, or relation (all of these terms serving as different names for a thought of "the ethical"), there is an implicit tendency to privilege the human and consider the animal as having a secondary or derivative role. Such anthropocentrism is evident not only in Levinas but also, albeit it in differentiated forms, in much of what goes by the name of "post-structuralism." The critical question that needs to be addressed, then, is not how to challenge a straightforward denial of the possibility of animal ethics, but rather, how best to respond to this more nuanced and surreptitious form of anthropocentrism.

2. The "who," sacrifice, and carno-phallogocentrism

What I would like to do now is to shift focus slightly and return more closely to Derrida's interview with Nancy in order to suggest that Derrida's thinking offers us not only the possibility of clearly delimiting this anthropocentric

closure in contemporary Continental thought, but also gives us a number of instructive remarks concerning what is involved in *contesting* this limit. In "Eating Well," Derrida takes up these issues by way of a discussion of subjectivity, occasioned by Jean-Luc Nancy's invitation to reflect on the question, "Who comes after the subject?" Nancy's question needs to be read carefully, for it is intended both to mime critically a complaint voiced by certain neo-humanists as well as to serve for further, positive reflection on the implications of the deconstruction of subjectivity. Concerning the formulation of Nancy's question, Derrida raises two major concerns. The first relates to the prevailing *doxa* concerning the deconstruction or critique of the subject. Derrida suggests that we should not go along with the neo-humanist notion that thinkers as diverse as Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, Levinas – and even Derrida himself – have somehow all contributed to the "death" or "liquidation" of the subject. To group all or even several of these thinkers together under that heading is possible only if massive ruptures and differences between them are smoothed over or ignored. There has been no simple liquidation or death of the subject in these texts any more than there can be a simple return to the subject beyond or prior to them. What has been effected in the writings of these authors, Derrida suggests, is a differentiated displacement, decentering, complicating, and questioning of subjectivity – not a death. The challenge thus consists not in avoiding these questions and returning to a pre-deconstructive conception of the Subject, but in measuring the effects that these displacements of subjectivity have for various forms of thought and institutions (EW 98/BM 93).

There is, after all, no Subject to which to return – which is another way of saying that there is no thinker of subjectivity (including the ones most typically relied upon in the return to the subject, viz., Descartes, Kant, and Husserl) that at some point in their work has not been forced to acknowledge a certain *différance* at the very heart of the self-present subject.[23] The "deconstruction of the subject" is not an alien thematic imposed upon the thinkers of subjectivity, but something that is at work in their own texts. What further complicates the *doxa* concerning the need to return to the subject is that the motif of subjectivity is retained in the work of certain of the authors deemed responsible for its very death, among others, in Lacan and Levinas. These latter thinkers might be understood as trying to develop a "post-deconstructive" notion of subjectivity, one that openly acknowledges and begins from a conception of the self as originarily ex-posed to alterity. The various motifs of affirmative exposure in Derrida's writings – the "yes, yes," *Viens*, the pledge, etc. – would seem to link him closely to their projects, *especially* with the writings of Levinas; but as we have seen, Derrida takes a critical distance from Levinas insofar as he suspects that the latter's re-thinking of subjectivity remains

problematically and profoundly reliant upon the very humanism it works to displace. Prominent commentators on Levinas and Derrida such as Simon Critchley seem to underestimate considerably the differences between them on this point in particular.[24] The differences between these two cannot be overcome, as Critchley seems to suggest, by merely extending the Levinasian conception of subjectivity and the ethical to animals, for this extension, which is based on a shared sensibility or sentience of human beings and animals, creates another set of fixed borders (this time between the sentient and non-sentient) that Derrida would find equally problematic.

What Derrida is trying to get at, then, with his precautions concerning the neo-humanist *doxa* is that the accusation made against poststructuralists of "liquidating" the subject consists in a "clumsy mixing up of a number of discursive strategies" (EW 96/BM 91). Not only has there been no death of the subject, but there are even critics of the subject who retain the term "subjectivity." What is more, among many of these so-called post-humanist thinkers there reigns an almost unquestioned anthropocentrism that ties them firmly to the humanist tradition they are attempting to call into question. It is on this anthropocentric terrain that many of those typically labeled "poststructuralist" or "postmodernist" reunite with their "neo-humanist" counterparts. Derrida is at some pains throughout the interview to distance himself from this uncritical anthropocentrism, especially the more subtle forms that persist in the post-humanist tradition. And it is in this vein that he raises his second concern with Nancy's question, "Who comes after the subject?" Nancy himself notes early on in the interview that by the "who" he is trying to designate a site that lies on the other side of subjectivity, "that place 'of the subject' that appears precisely through deconstruction itself [*cette place 'du sujet' qui apparaît justement par sa déconstruction même*]" (EW 98/BM 93). Derrida's response to this determination of the "who" is skeptical. He remarks that, "to substitute a very indeterminate 'who' [*substituer un 'qui' très indéterminé*] for a 'subject' overburdened with metaphysical determinations is perhaps not enough to bring about any decisive displacement" (EW 100/BM 95). And this is especially the case if we take Heidegger's Dasein to occupy the place that Nancy designates as "who." Derrida has repeatedly argued that Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein, while no doubt displacing a certain metaphysics of the subject, retains elements of self-presence that ground it solidly within the closure of metaphysical humanism and anthropocentrism. These traits include Dasein's capacity for questioning and the relation to the hermeneutic and apophantic "as such," all of which, for Heidegger, rigorously distinguish human Dasein from all other entities, and mark Dasein off as the exemplary entity for a working-out of the *Seinsfrage*. If we seek to locate a "who" in Derrida's text, then, it will not take the Heideggerian form of a purely human

capacity for posing questions concerning being or access to the "as such," but will instead be disclosed "in the experience of an 'affirmation,' of a 'yes' or of an 'en-gage' ... that 'yes, yes' that answers before even being able to formulate a question, that is responsible without autonomy, before and in view of all possible autonomy of the who-subject ... [*dans l'expérience d'une 'affirmation,' d'un 'oui' ou d'un 'en-gage' ... ce 'oui, oui' qui répond avant même de pouvoir former une question, qui est responsable sans autonomie, avant et en vue de toute autonomie possible du qui-sujet*]" (EW 100/BM 95). This is a who "besieged" by *différance*, the trace, affirmation, etc., a who that is responsible and responsive to alterity before being capable of self-presence and autonomy. Thus if we are to speak of a "who" in reference to Derrida's writings we should make certain that we understand this "who" not as an individual or atom, but as a "singularity that dislocates and divides itself in gathering itself together [*disloque ou se divise en se rassemblant*] to answer to the other ..." (EW 100/BM 95).

This would be Derrida's preliminary answer to Nancy's question, "Who comes after the subject?": the who is a responsible and responsive, affirmative and en-gaged, singularity. But it is not *a priori* necessary that this thought of singularity be translated or transformed into a "who" – indeed, there are good reasons to avoid it, or at least to subject this translation to scrutiny. When prompted by Nancy to explain further his concerns with the question "Who?," Derrida returns to his previous remarks about Dasein and expands upon what is at stake in questioning Heidegger's limiting of Dasein to the human. What troubles him in the question "Who?" is that the question itself dictates a response that presupposes a set of "conceptual oppositions that have not yet been sufficiently questioned, not even by Heidegger" (EW 107/BM 102), viz., the binary opposition between ek-sistent Dasein and all other living beings. For Heidegger, only (human) Dasein ek-sists, is ex-posed, thrown (in)to the world; the animal, poor in world and without language, merely lives, enshrouded in a disinhibiting ring that renders it incapable of both eksistence and subjectivity.[25] The dominant tendency in post-Heideggerian thought (as seen, for example, in Levinas's discourse) has been to accept this opposition between (human) Dasein and the animal, and Derrida worries that Nancy's question also does little to challenge this opposition; in fact the question might unintentionally reinforce it. Derrida's chief point here is to make certain that his notions of singularity, ex-appropriation, *différance*, and so forth, are not reduced to an all-too-human Dasein or any other conception of a "who" that precedes and gives rise to the *human* subject alone. The various figures of difference in Derrida's texts are at work not only at the heart of human subjectivity, but "everywhere, which is to say, well beyond humanity [*partout, c'est-à-dire bien au-delà de l'humanité*]" (EW 109).

The reader might at this point be wondering: why does Derrida feel the need to insist that singularity and ex-appropriation are not limited to the human? Isn't it enough to say, along with Levinas, that human beings are open to and responsible for beings beyond man without granting a potential "subjectivity" or "responsibility" to non-human entities? There is no simple answer to this question. Derrida's underlying strategy in this discussion is exceedingly complex and difficult to disclose fully in the space of a short essay, but I would like to suggest, as a way of beginning to answer these questions, that he is attempting simultaneously to make two moves. First, he is trying to unsettle the entrenched binary opposition that Heidegger, Levinas, and others have inscribed between the human and the animal. If one is willing to follow Derrida and entertain the notion that ex-appropriation is at work beyond man, then one would be obliged to re-think Heidegger's and Levinas's reworking of the classical oppositional distinction between the human and the animal – between, on the hand, the ek-sistent Dasein in man (Heidegger) or the human subject-as-hostage (Levinas) and, on the other, the animal without ek-sistence or ethics. The differences that exist between human beings and animals would subsequently need to be re-thought in terms of the "logic" of *différance* rather than as simple, binary oppositions. Secondly, once this disruption of the oppositional distinction is effected or at least raised for thought, one is then able to call into question discourses and institutions grounded in these problematic distinctions. And perhaps the most troubling consequence that follows from the oppositional and anthropocentric approach to other animals is the massive problem of *sacrifice*. Levinas's and Heidegger's respective re-thinkings of humanism are being challenged by Derrida insofar as they uncritically inhabit and communicate with a discourse that forms the foundation for and justification of animal sacrifice, the assumption being that the task for thought is to call these foundations into question.

It is not my intent here to make an argument convincing the reader that one ought to go along with this assumption. And at the risk of being accused of using loaded language in the place of argument, I will say that if the exigencies of the immense and ubiquitous slaughtering of animals do not themselves provoke the reader to reflect critically on the justifications for this sacrifice, it would seem that an extended and rigorous argument would have far less chance of succeeding. Besides, there are others considerably more capable than myself to whom one might turn if arguments are indeed what are required in this instance.[26] What I propose to do here instead is to go further into the link that Derrida establishes between the "who" and "sacrifice" as a means of more clearly delimiting the question of anthropocentrism. Derrida returns to this connection between the "who" and "sacrifice" immediately following

the remark we were reading above on Levinas's "profound humanism" and his unwillingness to "sacrifice sacrifice."

> Going much too quickly here, I would still try to link the question of the "who" to the question of "sacrifice." The conjunction of "who" and "sacrifice" not only recalls the concept of the subject as phallogocentric structure, at least according to its dominant *schema*: one day I hope to demonstrate that this *schema* implies carnivorous virility. (EW 113/BM 108)

Derrida also calls this conjunction of traits underlying the dominant concept of subjectivity "carno-phallogocentrism [*carno-phallogocentrisme*]," where being a subject means being a self-present, speaking, virile eater of flesh. This is not unrelated to what Carol Adams calls in another context "the sexual politics of meat." For Adams, "[m]eat eating measures individual and societal virility;"[27] for Derrida as well, in order to comprehend the concept of the subject in its dominant form we must not only place the "virile figure" at its "determinative center," but also link it with the accepting of sacrifice and the eating of flesh (EW 114/BM 109).

Now if Heidegger's and Levinas's rethinking of subjectivity, and even Nancy's more modest question "Who?," do little to call this dominant schema of the carno-phallogocentric subject into question, then it would seem that pro-vegetarian discourses are more in line with Derrida's deconstruction of subjectivity. Perhaps what Derrida is ultimately trying to argue in the interview is something like the following: if the task of deconstruction is to critically interrogate carnophallogocentrism, and vegetarianism constitutes just such a critique, then "deconstruction is vegetarianism." At least this is what David Wood believes he *should* be arguing. In his essay, "*Comment ne pas manger* – Deconstruction and Humanism,"[28] Wood takes Derrida to task for falling short of making the conjunction of deconstruction and vegetarianism explicit. Further, Wood argues that Derrida's "repeated charge against Heidegger" – that "when it comes to the treatment of the animal, the revolution in thought comes to a halt and the deep currents of humanism reassert themselves" – is true of Derrida's own discussion of animality in "Eating Well" (CM 15). We ought to take these critical remarks by Wood seriously, for not only is he one of the leading expositors of Derrida's writings, but he has also been involved with discussions in animal ethics for nearly three decades. However, despite my respect for Wood's understanding of Derrida's work, I think that his charge against Derrida and the arguments in support of it, while provocative, are generally incorrect. And allow me to say that the disagreement here does not come down, at least not simply, to a matter of exegetical accuracy. Wood has missed something essential in Derrida's elaboration of the

question of the animal, and, in the process, he has also overlooked what I take to be the chief *limitation* in Derrida's thinking on vegetarianism and animal ethics.

Wood's charge against Derrida, that "the deep currents of humanism reassert themselves" in his work, is buttressed by a number of arguments which I think can be charitably and accurately reduced down to three main arguments. The first one revolves around Derrida's use of the phrase "the animal." Wood has just offered a brief reconstruction of Derrida's remarks on carnophallogocentrism before arguing the following:

> What Derrida is doing is at the very least drawing the question of the animal within . . . the program of the "deconstruction of the subject." . . . It is instructive, of course, and yet perhaps as necessary as it is a limitation, that Derrida uses the words "animal" or "the animal" – as if this were not already a form of deadening shorthand . . . My point is just this: there are no animals "as such," rather only the extraordinary variety that in the animal alphabet would begin with ants, apes, arachnids, antelopes, aardvarks, anchovies, alligators, Americans, Australians . . . (CM 29)

Wood's charge here, if I understand him correctly, is that Derrida vastly underestimates the "deadening shorthand" involved in using terms such as "animal" or "the animal." Now Wood is not saying that we are at liberty to dispose of these terms – hence the acknowledgment of their necessity – but his list of kinds of animals implies that we can at the very least complicate the homogenizing of differences that broad categories like "the animal" put into effect. This is a good Derridean point, and one which, if overlooked by Derrida, should be called to his attention.

But I would suggest in response that if Derrida has accomplished anything in posing the question of the animal, it has been to raise these very limitations as questions. The question of the animal is, among several other things, a question about the phrase "the animal" and how it is used oppositionally to define and delimit "the human" (an equally problematic concept). He has made this point literally dozens of times. We can take the following citations as representative examples:

> . . .this is the irreducible and I believe dogmatic hypothesis of [Heidegger's] thesis [on animality in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*] – that there is one thing, one domain, one homogenous type of entity, which is called animality *in general*, for which any example would do the job. This is a thesis which, in its *median* character, as clearly emphasized by Heidegger (the animal *between* the stone and man), remains fundamentally teleological and traditional, not to say dialectical.[29]

> Against, or without, Heidegger, one could point to a thousand signs that show that animals also *die*. Although the innumerable structural differences that separate one "species" from another should make us vigilant about any discourse on animality or bestiality *in general*, one can say that animals have a very significant relation to death, to murder and to war (hence to borders), to mourning and to hospitality, and so forth. . .[30]

> . . .this proposition [Heidegger's assertion in *Was heisst denken?* that "Apes, for example, have organs that can grasp, but they have no hand"] marks the text's essential scene, marks it with a humanism that wanted certainly to be non-metaphysical – Heidegger underscores this in the following paragraph – but with a humanism that, between a human *Geschlecht* one wants to withdraw from the biologistic determination . . . and an animality one encloses in its organico-biologic programs, inscribes not *some differences* but an absolute oppositional limit. Elsewhere I have tried to show that, as every opposition does, this absolute oppositional limit effaces the differences and leads back . . . to the homogenous.[31]

One could also cite the following example given in response to Wood himself who has just asked Derrida at a conference at the University of Essex if the logic of *différance* risks blurring differences between humans and animals. Derrida tells Wood that he is seeking to *multiply* the differences between "human beings" and "animals," not *blur* them:

> More differences, yes. For at the same time you will have to take into account other discriminations, for instance, between human society and animal society. There are a lot of things to be said and done. But there are also other partitions, separations, other than Auschwitz – apartheid, racial segregation – other segregations within our Western democratic society. All these differences have to be taken into account in a new fashion; whereas, if you draw a single or two single lines, then you have homogenous sets of undifferentiated societies, or groups, or structures. No, no I am not advocating the *blurring* of differences. On the contrary, I am trying to explain how drawing an oppositional limit *itself* blurs the differences, the differance and the differences, not only between man and animal, but among animal societies – there are an infinite number of animal societies, and, within the animal societies and within human society itself, so many differences.[32]

There are a number of things that might be said about these passages, but the chief point I want to make is that Derrida is well aware of the "deadening shorthand" involved in using the phrase "the animal," and that is why he puts it into question in these passages, and why animal *figures* abound elsewhere in his writings: apes, hedgehogs, cats, birds, squirrels, ants, even Heidegger's lizard.[33]

Wood's second argument revolves around the question of "real" and "symbolic" forms of animal sacrifice. Rather than subjecting the reader to my own reconstruction, it is perhaps better to present Wood's argument in his own words:

> In other respects, Derrida's argument is deeply disappointing. First he assimilates – there is no other word for it – real and symbolic sacrifice so that real sacrifice (killing and eating flesh) becomes an instance of symbolic sacrifice. With this change of focus, the question of eating (well) can be generalized in such a way as to leave open the question of real or symbolic sacrifice. And to the extent that in this culture sacrifice in the broad (symbolic) sense seems unavoidable, there would seem to be little motivation for practical transformations of our engagement in sacrificial behavior. (CM 31)

I wish to make two main points as a rejoinder here. First, we might consider the possibility that perhaps there *is* another word for what Derrida does with the distinction between "real" and "symbolic" sacrifice. I would argue that he does not *assimilate* the two, but rather that he *complicates* the distinction between them – and if this is the case, then not only does Wood's argument against Derrida miss the point at hand, but it also calls into question Wood's own reliance upon this very distinction. Note that Derrida never speaks of real sacrifice as an *instance* of symbolic sacrifice; he argues instead that in the sacrificial structure that underlies Western notions of subjectivity, the concept of symbolic sacrifice is "impossible to delimit . . ." (EW 112/BM 107). What is at stake here is recognizing how the carno-phallogocentric subject is constituted not only through the "real" sacrifice of animals but also through their "symbolic" sacrifice, as well as the symbolic sacrifice of other human beings. The subject is not only virile and carnivorous, but also cannibalistic, in the "symbolic" sense of this term. Derrida explains that the "so called nonanthropophagic cultures practice symbolic anthropophagy and even construct their most elevated socius, indeed the sublimity of their morality, their politics, and their right, on this anthropophagy" (EW 114/BM 109). What he means here is that, even in the most elevated forms of humanist ethics and politics, there is an inherent tendency toward symbolic sacrifice insofar as those singular beings that we call "human" are named and configured *as* human. This is another way of saying that the universalizing of a singular being under the name "human," even if this occurs in the name of justice for all human beings, is a symbolic sacrifice. To paraphrase Blanchot paraphrasing Hegel: my language does not literally kill anyone, but it does annihilate the other in its singular mode of being.

This brings me to my second point. Wood no doubt would accept certain portions of the argument I have just made, but what likely raises questions for

him is the claim that Derrida makes next: "Vegetarians, too, partake of animals, even of men. They practice a different mode of denegation [*Les végétatiens eux aussi mangent de l'animal et même de l'homme. Ils pratiquent un autre mode de dénégation*]" (EW 114-5/BM 109). If, following Wood, we understand Derrida to be saying that the "real" sacrifice of animals is merely an instance of the larger question of the "symbolic" sacrifice of other beings in general, then the conclusion that follows is that vegetarians are ultimately no different than carnivores: both are sacrificial at bottom, both "partake of animals, even of men," and thus the attempt by vegetarians to resist "real" sacrifice is futile since no one is altogether capable of avoiding a more general, "symbolic" sacrifice. But this is not at all Derrida's point. Look carefully at his wording: vegetarians practice a *different* mode of denegation, i.e., one that needs to be attended to in its specificity. To my mind, tracking and analyzing this "different mode of denegation," this *vegetarian* sacrifice of animals and human beings, is the essential task at hand for those of us who are working on the contemporary scene of animal ethics and politics, and I will have more to say about such a project in closing.

But, in contrast to my concerns, Wood is more interested in saving vegetarianism's right to claim that it avoids "real" sacrifice from the hands of Derrida's critique, which seems to bring all forms of sacrifice under the broader "symbolic" form. I think that Wood's worry is misguided here; but for the moment, let us go along with this notion that the "motivation" for resistance to carnophallogocentrism lies in being able to avoid real sacrifice. Few people would want to deny that vegetarians go a long way in reducing the maltreatment of animals by avoiding the killing and eating of flesh, and that our ability as vegetarians to collectively curb (at least partially) animal suffering is one of the chief motivations behind many people going vegetarian. But among vegetarians, how many of us would claim that we are rigorously able to avoid "real" sacrifice? Isn't the daily life of even the most vigilant and scrupulous vegetarian fraught with the very real sacrifice of animals? Perhaps we do not eat steak or chicken wings, but we do consume and use a whole host of products that involve the killing of animals. In the face of such discoveries of real sacrifice, do we necessarily lose our motivation? Perhaps some do – but there are others who accept the inevitability of "real" sacrifice and subsequently do their best to limit it. Furthermore, what might a vegan (and let me be clear, since I am a vegan, that I am speaking for myself here) say in response to Wood's claim that vegetarianism avoids real sacrifice? Does not the difference between vegetarianism and veganism come down to a contestation of where one draws the line between "symbolic" and "real" sacrifice? Indeed, it is difficult to know whether the "life" of a typical battery hen or dairy cow in today's factory farms (the by-products of which most vegetarians consume

without hesitation) is an example of "real" or "symbolic" sacrifice.[34] Perhaps the distinction between real and symbolic sacrifice is "impossible to delimit in this case."

But for all that, there *is* something to Wood's broader charge against Derrida. While Derrida does a great deal in helping to uncover the carnivorous virility that underlies the dominant concept of subjectivity, he ultimately gives short shrift to the role that vegetarian practices and discourses have in disclosing and at least partially resisting carnophallogocentrism. He flirts with the idea of starting a "support group for vegetarianism, ecologism, or for the societies for the protection of animals" (EW 112/BM 107), and also seems to recognize how vegetarians mark the outer limit of being-a-subject, but there is no sustained attempt critically to engage vegetarianism's critical potential in this context. Derrida bypasses such a project in favor of raising the more general question of "eating well." On Derrida's line of thinking, if (1) we can no longer trust in the oppositional lines drawn between the living and the non-living, human and animal, symbolic and real sacrifice, and if (2) we subsequently come to grips with the fact that there are only "infinitely different modes of the conception-appropriation-assimilation of the other," then the moral question of eating well no longer comes down to simply choosing between meat-eating and vegetarianism. The moral question becomes instead one of "determining the best, most respectful, most grateful, and also most giving way of relating to the other and of relating the other to the self" – in short, it becomes a question of what constitutes "eating well" (EW 114/BM 109). From the perspective of this question, vegetarianism is just one determination of eating well among others, one way of regulating the metonymy of introjection, incorporation, and sacrifice. And insofar as vegetarianism holds itself up as *the* moral mode of eating, it risks stalling the question of eating well and collapsing into a self-assured form of good conscience (a tendency that is evident in a number of contemporary discourses on vegetarianism). This is why it is important to remind vegetarians that they too "partake of animals, even of men," if only in a "symbolic" sense. The question of eating well cannot be decided once and for all.

But simply to criticize vegetarianism for its propensity to lapse into good conscience, as Derrida does, is to ignore the larger issue of whether or not vegetarianism is generally a more respectful and grateful way of relating to other animals than is meat-eating or others modes of eating. Holding open the question of eating well does not eliminate the necessity of having to make a specific determination concerning how one must eat well. Derrida's personal ambivalence on this latter issue seems to be the driving force behind Wood's essay. It is as if Wood is making a direct plea to Derrida himself, soliciting him to recognize that carno-phallogocentrism can at least be partially resisted

by switching to a vegetarian diet. Although I do not know Derrida personally and have never had the opportunity (as Wood presumably has) to ask him what he eats, I have been told by several people that he does consume animal flesh. If this is indeed the case, one might begin to understand the rather abstract question of "eating well" as the last ruse of a "beautiful soul," a final and desperate attempt to avoid taking a stand on one's eating habits. In response to this (possible) motivation underlying Derrida's thinking, Wood's final argument runs as follows: despite the idea that deconstruction cannot serve as some kind of "alternative ethical seal of approval," we need to move past a Derridean politics of the beautiful soul and consider the possibility that "deconstruction is vegetarianism." He explains:

> Carnophallogocentrism is not a dispensation of Being toward which resistance is futile; it is a mutually reinforcing network of powers, schemata of domination, and investments that has to reproduce itself to stay in existence. Vegetarianism is not just about substituting beans for beef; it is – at least potentially – a site of proliferating resistance to that reproduction. If we allow the imminences and pressures (and ghosts and cries and suffering) to which I have been yielding to have their say [Wood is referring to a number of issues he has raised earlier in the essay – the breaching of the man/animal boundary, the reduction of biological diversity, and the massive slaughtering of animals], we might well end up insisting that "deconstruction is vegetarianism." (CM 33)

Wood's argument here is both uncontestable and problematic. If carnophallogocentrism is defined as a "mutually reinforcing network of powers, schemata of domination, and investments that has to reproduce itself to stay in existence," and the task of deconstruction is to analyze critically and displace carnophallogocentrism, thereby opening up the possibilities for other less dominating modes of relating to other animals, then clearly we can yield to Wood's temptation to declare that "deconstruction is vegetarianism." Who could or would want to deny such an argument? Is there any doubt that a vegetarian diet is, in general (which is to say *typically* but not *always*), and in the context of contemporary western culture, a more respectful way of relating to other animals than meat eating? That it is in more line with the deconstruction of carnophallogocentrism and anthropocentrism than eating factory-farmed animal flesh? Certainly Derrida would not want to deny this, even if he fails to put it into practice (and again, I am not certain that this is the case – moreover, as I will suggest momentarily, Derrida's personal eating habits are beside the point). On this point, then, Wood's argument is correct but the conclusion reached is somewhat trivial. For those of us who wish to introduce a deconstructive approach to animal ethics into contemporary

debates in Continental thought, our task should not be limited to convincing Derrida that his discourse is compatible with vegetarianism. In a certain sense, it clearly is. But why convince Derrida of this point? So that, following his lead, his sympathetic readers might also be convinced? Derrida is not our pastor or physician, he should not serve as our guide to eating well. If Derrida is hesitant to openly declare that, for those who live in contemporary western, urban societies, vegetarianism is generally a more respectful way of relating to animals than meat eating is, then we should proceed without him. Let us not get mired down in such debates.

Where things get interesting is when the deconstructive question of eating well is posed back to vegetarians in a way that neither Wood nor Derrida pursues. To my mind, what we urgently need to do is pose the question of eating well *within the context of already existing vegetarian discourses and practices*, i.e., to question thoroughly discourses on animal ethics and vegetarianism concerning the consequences of the manner in which they regulate and determine the proper modes of ingestion and introjection, understood literally, symbolically, and metonymically. In brief, the most pressing task is not to demonstrate that "deconstruction is vegetarianism," but to think through the *disjunction* of deconstruction and vegetarianism in order to bring deconstructive thinking to bear on the undisclosed anthropocentric and carnophallogocentric limits of the dominant discourses in animal ethics and vegetarianism.

There is no possibility of fully elaborating such a vast project here, but as a means of bringing this discussion to a conclusion (and also to avoid the charge of sheer pedantry that I raised in relation to certain trends in analytic animal ethics) I would like to indicate briefly the outline of a few of the tasks that might be pursued under this rubric.[35] First, we need to begin to reflect on the implications of basing responsibilities to other animals on their *similarities* to human beings, e.g., a common sentience (Singer) or being-a-subject-of-a-life (Regan). While this strategy is particularly effective in the context of narrowly anthropocentric ethical, political, and legal discourses, it risks re-establishing the limits of ethical considerability at another equally problematic and contestable juncture (human and non-human animals on one side, and all non-animal beings on the other). My intent is not to criticize this strategy unfairly – I have nothing with which it could simply be replaced – but I would suggest that it ought to be understood as a provisional, finite delimitation of an illimitable and infinite responsivity to and responsibility for other entities that extends well beyond anything that we think of as "similar" to the human. If we were to begin from the latter perspective, an ethics relating to animals would no longer need to follow the dominant trend of *opposing* itself to a broader ethic extending beyond human beings and animals; instead the relation between animal ethics and a broader environmental ethic could

be reconceived as coalitional and radically democratic. Secondly, we might begin to consider at more length Derrida's remarks concerning vegetarianism's relation to the sacrifice of animals and human beings. In what ways do vegetarian discourses and practices continue to sacrifice animals, both in a real and symbolic sense, and human beings symbolically? How are the terms "the animal" and "the human" themselves sacrificial? And is there any hope of elaborating an "animal" ethics while working to displace or complicate these sacrificial terms? These and other such questions serve as guiding threads for a *deconstruction of vegetarianism*, a task which seeks to acknowledge vegetarianism's critical and ethico-political potential while, at the same time, examining the consequences of vegetarianism's unwitting reinforcement of carnophallogocentrism and anthropocentrism.[36]

Notes

1. For an exhaustive study of this argument, see Daniel A. Dombrowski's *Babies and Beasts: The Argument from Marginal Cases* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
2. See, for example, Carol J. Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (New York: Continuum, 1990), *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1994), as well as the essays gathered together in *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals* eds. Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (New York: Continuum, 1996), and *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations* eds. Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).
3. Derrida has a number of pieces that deal with the motif of animality. See "*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger's Hand," trans. John Leavey, in *Deconstruction and Philosophy* ed. John Sallis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)/"La Main de Heidegger (*Geschlecht* II)," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1987), 415-52; *Of Spirit*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)/*De l'esprit* (Paris: Editions: Galilée, 1987), especially section VI/*Aporias: Dying – awaiting (one another at) the limits of truth*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); "Apories: Mourir – s'attendre aux limites de la vérité," in *Le Passage des frontières: Autour du travail de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 309-38; and "L'animal que donc je suis," in *L'animal autobiographique: Autour de Jacques Derrida* ed. Marie-Louise Mallett (Paris: Galilée, 1999). Jean-Luc Nancy's recent work *Being Singular Plural* (trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000]/*Être singulier pluriel* [Paris: Galilée, 1996]) attempts to develop a non-anthropocentric conception of being-with and exposure. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's provocative notion of "becoming-animal" can be found in, among other places, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987)/*Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980); and *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)/*Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1975). Deleuze and

Guatarri's discussion of becoming-animal has been helpfully elucidated by Lynda Birke and Luciana Parisi in "Animals, Becoming," in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life* ed. H. Peter Steeves (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 55–73.

4. "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Who Comes After the Subject?* eds. Eduardo Cadava et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 96-119/ "'Il faut bien manger' ou le calcul du sujet: Entretien (avec J.-L. Nancy)," in *Après le sujet qui vient* (Paris: Cahiers Confrontations 20, 1989), 91–114, henceforth cited respectively as EW and BM.
5. "Letter on 'Humanism,' " trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, in *Pathmarks* ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)/"Brief über den 'Humanismus,' " in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967).
6. "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," trans. Thomas Sheehan, in *Pathmarks*, William McNeill, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)/"Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967), henceforth cited respectively as "PDT" and "PLW".
7. *Nietzsche, Volume IV: Nihilism*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper, 1982)/ *Nietzsche, Zweiter Band* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske Verlag, 1961).
8. *Nietzsche*,*Volume IV*, 97/*Nietzsche, Zweiter Band*, 142.
9. "Letter on 'Humanism,' " 252/"Brief über den 'Humanismus,' " 161–2.
10. For a more extensive account of the origins of anti-humanism, see Reiner Schürmann's discussion of Marx's, Nietzsche's, and Heidegger's contestation of humanism in his *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, trans. Christine-Marie Gros (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), especially 44–60.
11. "Humanism et an-archie," in *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Paris: Fata Morgan, 1974), 73-4/"Humanism and An-archy," trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 127.
12. Peter Atterton, "Levinas's Skeptical Critique of Metaphysics and Anti-Humanism," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 41 (4), 1997.
13. "Sans identité," in *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Paris: Fata Morgan, 1974), 100/"No Identity," trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 144, henceforth cited respectively as "SI" and "NI" in the text.
14. The phrase, "It is time to raise some questions," begins the important section on "Subjectivity and Vulnerability" in "No Identity."
15. "Humanism and An-archy," 139; "Humanisme et an-archie," 91.
16. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Book I, chapter 21, 32–3.
17. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. English Dominican Fathers (New York: Benzger Brothers, 1928), Third Book, Part II, Ch. CXII.
18. For a much more nuanced and sympathetic discussion of the place of animal life in the history of Christianity, see the work of Andrew Linzey, especially *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).
19. "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990)/ "Nom d'un chien, ou le droit naturel," in *Difficile Liberté: Essais sur le judaïsme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1976). I will not discuss this essay here since it has previously been done so well by others. See John Llewelyn's *The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience: A Chiasmic Reading of Responsibility in the Neighbourhood of Levinas, Heidegger, and Others* (London: Macmillan, 1991), and David Clark's "On Being 'The Last Kantian in Nazi Germany:' Dwelling with

Animals after Levinas," in *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History* eds. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

20. The interview is entitled "The Paradox of Morality," trans. Andrew Benjamin and Tamra Wright, in *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 168-80, cited henceforth as PM.
21. In saying this, I am taking a certain distance from John Llewelyn's overly charitable reading of Levinas on animality. Llewelyn, commenting on Levinas's response in the interview to the question regarding the killing of animals, writes: ". . . in reply to the question whether we have obligations to animals, he [Levinas] answers, as we have never doubted for one moment that he would, Yes we do" (*The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience*, 64). In contrast to Llewelyn, I had my doubts all along; and despite Levinas's affirmative answer, I still have them.
22. In the essay, "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," Levinas briefly poses the question of the ethics of killing animals for their flesh, but does not pursue at any length the implications of this question for politics.
23. Concerning this theme, Derrida mentions his own work on Husserl in *La voix et le phenomène* (Paris: PUF, 1967) and Nancy's *Ego sum* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975) on Descartes.
24. See Critchley's essay "Post-Deconstructive Subjectivity?," in his *Ethics – Politics – Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas, and Contemporary French Thought* (London: Verso, 1999), es 80, n. 54.
25. I refer the reader to Heidegger's discussion of animal life in his *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)/*Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit,* vol. 29/30 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983).
26. See Peter Singer's utilitarian argument in *Animal Liberation* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1990), and Tom Regan's radical egalitarian case for animal rights in his *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).
27. Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (New York: Continuum, 1990), 26.
28. David Wood, "*Comment ne pas manger* – Deconstruction and Humanism," in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life* ed. H. Peter Steeves (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 15–35, henceforth cited in the text as CM.
29. *Of Spirit*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 57/*De l'esprit* (Paris: Editions: Galilée, 1987), 89–90.
30. *Aporias: Dying – awaiting (one another at) the limits of truth*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 75–6/"Apories: Mourir – s'attendre aux limites de la vérité," in *Le Passage des frontières: Autour du travail de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 336.
31. "*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger's Hand," trans. John Leavey, in *Deconstruction and Philosophy* ed. John Sallis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 173-4/"La Main de Heidegger (*Geschlecht* II)," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1987), 428–9.
32. "On Reading Heidegger: An Outline of Remarks to the Essex Colloquium," *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987): 171–85, 183.
33. See the long list of references to animal figures in his work that Derrida offers in the "autobiographical animal" essay, "L'animal que donc je suis," 286–90.
34. For an extensive analysis of the lives of dairy cows and battery hens, see Bernard E. Rollins's *Farm Animal Welfare: Social, Bioethical, and Research Issues* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995).

35. A more complete discussion of these themes will appear in a forthcoming study on "Derrida and the Question of the Animal."
36. I wish to thank Peter Atterton for helpful discussions concerning the issues raised in this paper, as well as Bassam Romaya for inviting me to present portions of this material to members of the San Diego State Philosophy Department.