

Introduction

The Poetic Species

For beyond the vocabularies useful for prediction and control—the vocabulary of natural science—there are the vocabularies of our moral and our political life and of the arts, of all those human activities which are not aimed at prediction and control but rather in giving us self-images which are worthy of our species. Such images are not true to the nature of species or false to it, for what is really distinctive about us is that we can rise above questions of truth or falsity. We are the poetic species, the one which can change itself by changing its behavior—and especially its linguistic behavior, the words it uses. The ability is not to be explained by discovering more about the nature of something called “the mind” any more than by discovering more about the nature of something called “God.” Such attempts to “ground” our ability to recreate ourselves by seeking its ineffable source are, in Sartre’s sense, self-deceptive. They are attempts to find a vocabulary, a way of speaking, which will be more than just a way of speaking. To say, with nominalism, that language is ubiquitous and to deny, with verificationism, that there are intuitions to which our language must conform, is just to assert that we need nothing more than confidence in our own poetic power.

—Richard Rorty, “Contemporary Philosophy of Mind”¹

The title of this book is deliberately ambiguous. It should be read as having many valences. Humans are philosophical animals, that is, we are animals that philosophize, that is, that ask questions about their nature, their being, their finitude, their very animality.² We are the animal that is despondent at its animality. To be human is to wonder at our very

existence and how much our humanity is or is not an extension of our animality. As Anat Pick put it: “Being human is grappling with what is inhuman in us.”³ Here the “inhuman” is the shadow of the animal, but the animal is also shadowed by the human. Derrida’s “the question of the animal,” is always the “question of the human.” The two have always been inextricably tied. In this sense any and every attempt at an ontological analysis of the being of the human is inescapably entwined with the question of the being of the animal. Every existential ontology of the human—if this is not an oxymoron—is thus a “zoontology”—to use that felicitous expression of Cary Wolfe.⁴ Indeed, this was one of Derrida’s main points in his now indispensable *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.⁵ Humans, however, philosophize about their humanity and their animality by conjuring up philosophical animals. Our books of philosophy are veritable zoos of philosophical animals: from Plato’s dogs and Aristotle’s elephants, to Heidegger’s beetles and Nagel’s bats, to Haraway’s own menagerie. Our philosophical texts are populated by animals that philosophize, and of course, it could be said that this is philosophical ventriloquism, but even then, we are philosophizing with animals. Philosophy is a conversation of humanity with itself across time, as Gadamer taught us to recognize, but that conversation has been conducted by the means of these figures I call “philosophical animals.” In fact, humanity’s entire literary and poetic bequest is full of such animals, as Coetzee’s Elizabeth Costello teaches us in her lectures, “The Lives of Animals.” Let us imagine a *Gedankenexperiment*, following Arturo Danto. Take pages from Genesis, from Hesiod, from Aristotle’s *History of Animals*, from Plato’s *Republic*, Plutarch’s *Moralia*, Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*, Cervantes’s *The Dialogue of Dogs*, part 4 of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Montaigne’s *Essays*, Descartes’s *The Passions of the Soul*, Kant’s *Lectures on Ethics*, Heidegger’s lectures from the 1930s, Kafka’s parables—in fact, let us simply use Élisabeth de Fontenay’s monumental and indispensable *Le silence des bêtes*⁶ as well as Paul Waldau and Kimberly Patton’s ecumenical anthology *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*⁷ as our indexes and guides in this thought experiment in which we are selecting pages from these different texts and we are then putting them in a lottery wheel barrel, which then we spin, and as if picking winning numbers for the lotto, we take out a page and then ask: do we know whether this is a page from a “philosophy” book, or a novel, a comedy, a satire, a parable, a myth? It is not clear that we could, nor desirable that we should, be able to say: this is philosophy and this is fiction. For we are the animal that becomes human

by philosophizing with and through “philosophical animals.” Our human exceptionality is traced and caged by imagining animals that display what they lack that we have or have too much of what we imagine ourselves no longer to have. Armelle Le Bras-Chopard put it eloquently: “The meaning of humanity is nourished from the non-meaning of animality. The zoo only exists because it is full of vacuum, and the greater this vacuum, that is to say, the more extensive is animality, until it comes to affect group of humans . . . the more pure and perfect is humanity.”⁸ Le Bras-Chopard’s book, where the sentence I translated is to be found, is titled *The Zoo of the Philosophers: From Bestialization to Exclusion*. I want to claim that philosophy as a genre, as a discipline, as a form of intellectual domestication has been producing zoos, some with insurmountable fences and abysmal moats, some with broken fences, some with ever shifting boundaries.

In the epigraph I selected to open this introduction, Rorty writes about the “poetic species” for which it is more important to give itself “self-images which are worthy of our species” than getting things right. One of the claims of this book is that it is more important for us as the poetic species that when we philosophize as the philosophical animal that our philosophical animals be to the stature of our animality. In his beautiful book, *Biophilia: The Human Bond with Other Species*, Edward O. Wilson, wrote this provocative sentence, a very Rortyan one it should be added, “Scientists do not discover in order to know, they know in order to discover.”⁹ I like to riff on that sentence and claim that “philosophers don’t poeticize in order to philosophize, but philosophize in order to poeticize,” that is, create, conjure up, dream up, invite us to imaginary dialogues, better, more humane, more empathic, more compassionate, more dignified images of our animal nature and bond with other animals. Then, one of the central claims of this book is that we are the poetic species that creates and recreates itself, and in so doing, creates and recreates its world and the world of other animals, through its poetic inventions.

Philosophy, like literature and poetry, broadly construed, are exemplars of what I called in the subtitle of the book zoopoetics. Philosophy is an instance of zoopoetics, but one that must continuously produce its *animalia*, to be corralled into its imaginary or real zoos, including the human animal. In this sense, I am totally in agreement with what Matthew Calarco suggested with the title of his uncircumventable book *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*,¹⁰ namely that we are animals that leave traces, and the trace of our humanity/animality is precisely this writing about animals. I take it that Calarco’s “zoography”

is a paean to Derrida's work in general and more specifically a reference to the conference at Cerisy-La-Salle in 1997 devoted to Derrida's work, "L'Animal autobiographique," which resulted in the eponymously titled book that included the essay that went on to become *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.¹¹ I like to argue that before we have zoontologies, we must have zoographies, but before we can have zoographies, which turn out to be but autobiographies, as Derrida and Coetzee show, we must have zoopoetics. Philosophy, since its birth, has been creating zoos that include and exclude by creating a zone of exception that is predicated on sundering humanity from its animality. Zoos, however, have their dark counterparts in the abattoirs and slaughterhouses that feed humans and other animals. What must be included in a zoo is most likely not going to the slaughterhouse, but what goes to the slaughterhouse at some point made it there through the zoo. Le Bras-Chopard's book *The Zoo of the Philosophers* is instructively divided in three sections: the first is titled "What Is an Animal? A Non-Human," the second, "What Animals to Put in the Zoo?," and the third, "What Human Species Should be Sent to the Zoo?" This structuring of the book argues that the transit in and out of the zoo, on the way to the slaughterhouse, is also a transit humans have traversed with other animals. Zoos are counterparts of bestiaries—they are two sides of the same practice. This is why I devote a chapter to bestiaries, although I return to the trope throughout. Thus, another claim of this book is that insofar as philosophy produces its zoo, with its special cages and zones of exception, it is thus also always already projecting a bestiary.

Zoos are reprieves and preserves, anterooms of killing and extermination whether deliberate and machinated or inadvertent and thoughtless. I read, but don't remember anymore where, that when the Allies bombed Berlin toward the end of the war, the Berlin zoo turned into a slaughterhouse, and some of the animals there were used to feed the starving Berliners. Zoontologies, zoographies, and zoopoetics are implicated in the transit that takes place between the zoo and the slaughterhouse—in this sense every zoopoetics is always already an exercise in ethics. As Rorty notes in the passage I quoted above, the aim of our poeticizing is precisely to transform the moral and political languages through which we humanize ourselves. *This book is about what bestiaries our philosophical zoopoetics produces and thus what ethics of coexistence or non-coexistence it calls for and demands.*

The book is divided in three parts. In the first I am concerned with how we have imagined ourselves to have ceased to be animals, how through our zoopoetics and philosophical animals we have imagined ourselves to

have become non-animal. I begin, however, with an analysis of Coetzee's work through the lens of two intimately connected tropes in his work: women and animals. Cora Diamond captured beautifully the link between these two tropes when she wrote on *Elizabeth Costello*:

She [Elizabeth Costello] describes herself as an animal exhibiting but not exhibiting, to a gathering of scholars, a wound which her clothes cover up, but which is touched on in every word she speaks. So the life of this speaking animal and wounded and clothed animal is one of the “lives of animals” that the story is about; it is true that we generally remain unaware of the lives of other animals, it is also true that, as readers of this story, we may remain unaware, as her audience does, of the life of the speaking animal at its center.¹²

I argue there that the pivot on which these two tropes gyrate is the philosopheme of corporeal vulnerability. Horkheimer and Adorno wrote in one of their “Notes and Sketches,” titled “Man and Beast,” for their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: “For the being endowed with reason, however, concern for the unreasoning animal is idle. Western civilization has left that to women. They have no autonomous share in the capabilities which gave rise to this civilization.”¹³ Horkheimer and Adorno also analyzed the imbrication of bestialization with embodiment, that is, how when in Western culture we are urging the human to ascend to the exceptional pedestal of rationality, the human body has to be animalized in order to be domesticated, and in the process, women are put as an intermediary between corporeal animality and disembodied autarchic rationality. Domesticating our passions in order to be fully impassioned Cartesian subjects is a process of both domesticating our bodies, qua unruly beasts, and ceasing to be like women, at the mercy of their bodies. Coetzee's work, in my analysis offers us a zoopoetics that explicitly sets out to unsettle this trajectory and ascend up the marble steps of rational, dispassionate, and disembodied autonomy. Chapter 1, thus, also sets the tone for the rest of the volume, and that tone has to do with being attentive to the corporeal suffering of humans and animals, a suffering that is co-inflicted. What Coetzee's philosophical animals do is to invite us to be attentive to our “being-with” and “becoming-with” through our corporeal vulnerability so that we can also be attuned to what Ralph Acampora has called “corporeal compassion.”¹⁴

In the next two chapters I explore the theme of how zoopoetics produces bestiaries; some that like those found in Coetzee's work are pedagogies of the "good animal," to use that provocative expression from Adorno, as I show later in the book. In chapter 2, I offer an eagle's eye perspective of the role of animals in philosophy, but more specifically, about their role as figures of the political. If every zoopoetics is an ethics, it is also a politics. Every zoopoetics is thus also a prelude to a zoopolitics with its implied zoopolis.¹⁵ Since Aristotle, we speak of the human as the *zoon politikon* (ζῷον πολιτικόν), as the animal that in order to flourish must dwell in a political community, a community of friends, of companions who are his equal. But, we are friends not simply with other humans. In a wonderful book edited by Ivano Dionigi, titled *Animalia*,¹⁶ one can find two excellent chapters about the question of the animal and the political. One is by Massimo Cacciari, and carries the title of "L'animale politico" (with all its dual references), and the other is by Ivano Dionigi himself, with the title "*Res publica naturalis: animali politici.*" Both create the bridge I am trying to make in this first part of the book, namely the bridge of our being a political animal, whose republic is carved out of nature and is populated by all kind of political animals—both human and nonhuman. If the zoo is the sanctuary of the animal, the polis is the abode proper to the human; but the zoo is a polis and the polis is a zoo, as is already implied in the derogatory formulation "political animal"—I will unfold this argument later in this introduction.

In these two chapters I trace the trope of the founding of the political through the use and abuse of animals, their exclusion from the polis. The polis is precisely founded on the exclusion of the animal, the beast, the beastly—a philosopheme already present in Homer and Hesiod, and carried through in the political philosophy of the Sophists. In Homer, we find it announced in book 9 of the *Odyssey*, "In the One-Eyed Giant's Cave," about which I will say more later in this introduction. In Hesiod, it appears in his *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, specifically when he discussed the myths of Prometheus and Epimetheus, and what they both give to humans. These myths, and what they have to say about animality and the founding of the city, are taken up by Plato in his *Protagoras*, when he has Protagoras discuss the myths vis-à-vis the quest for justice.¹⁷ In Plato's *Republic*, the healthy, beautiful, Kallipolis is predicated on the exclusion of the Sophists, who are portrayed as beastly, as beasts that threaten to destroy the city. Philosophizing, however, may also make one appear beastly, unhinged, and rabid, like a violent wolf, as Plato says in

the *Sophist*. In these two chapters, however, I am interested in the critical task of demonstrating the ways in which the political is dependent on the definition of the animal versus the human. We have asked, along with Le Bras-Chopard, who should be in the zoo? We should also ask: who can be in the polis and who should be excluded? The transit in and out of the zoo is also the transit in and out the polis, where polis is a metonym for the sheltering dwelling of normativity, of the sheltering dwelling of the community of those worthy of moral considerability, and protection.

In chapter 3, “Heidegger’s Bestiary,” I set out to expand on the work of Matthew Calarco, Stuart Elden, and William McNeill on Heidegger’s phenomenology of animality by analyzing the intense and instructive shifts that take place in this work from the mid-1920s through the late 1930s. I look at this decade of work through the lens of the relationship of his phenomenology of Dasein, which grounds his metaphysical anthropocentrism, to his political ontology. I show that Heidegger’s work epitomizes the grounding of the political in the exclusion of the animal, with its inevitable logics of exclusion and extermination. Heidegger’s work also illustrates in chillingly precise images and philosophemes (especially in the lecture courses from the years when he was closest to the Nazis) the ways in which the traversal from the zoo to the slaughterhouse is one in which human and nonhuman animals commingle.

The second section is the staging of an exchange that never took place between two philosophers who have shaped the trails of this book, Derrida and Habermas, who are the two philosophical animals—should we say philosophical beasts?—I have tracked most assiduously. The question that brings together these chapters and engagements is: should we outlaw human cloning, human genetic engineering, and genetic therapy? Evidently, in the background is the specter of posthumanism and transhumanism, and inevitably, antihumanism.¹⁸ As I argue in these chapters, how Derrida and Habermas answer the questions about the “integrity and dignity” of the human species is dependent on their implicit dependence on what I called “negative philosophical anthropology.” We know that Habermas’s philosophical project began as a philosophical anthropology, inasmuch as he aimed to ground a theory of knowledge interests in the capabilities of the human species.¹⁹ In his 1965 Goethe University inaugural lecture, “Knowledge and Human Interests,” Habermas formulated five theses, which guided his work leading him to his magnum opus, the two-volume *Theory of Communicative Action*. The first thesis reads: “*The achievements of the transcendental subject have their basis in the natural*

history of the human species."²⁰ I like to underscore "the natural history of the human species," because I take it that Habermas as a historical materialist is informed by the post-Darwinian notion that we are animals that evolved the supreme evolutionary adaptation, namely language, and with it, culture. The third thesis reads: "*Knowledge-constitutive interests take form in the medium of work, language, and power*" (313). Here work, language, and power are the media through which we apprehend reality, by providing the following: *knowledge* that allows us to cope with and enhance our control of our natural environment; *interpretations* that enable and facilitate interactions with others and cultural traditions; and analyses and *self-reflection* that liberate consciousness from "hypostatized powers." The fourth thesis reads: "*In the power of self-reflection, knowledge and interest are one*" (314). This is so, because: "Reason also means the will to reason. In self-reflection knowledge for the knowledge attains congruence with the interest in autonomy and responsibility" (314). Knowledge is thus immanently self-transcending because of what Habermas calls the emancipatory knowledge interest. The fifth and final thesis proclaims: "*The unity of knowledge and interest proves itself in a dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed*" (315). Self-reflection, according to Habermas, is thus also the reconstruction and redemption of past repression.

Through my analysis, I aim to show that what informs Habermas's natural history of the human species is what I identified as the tradition of negative philosophical anthropology, which I think Derrida also subscribes to, albeit in more explicit and avowed ways, as I show in the third chapter of this section. I would like readers of these chapters to note how I used Habermas against Habermas to make Habermasian points, and how I am flanked by Derrida in making points that both would agree on, namely that we are the symbolic animal, the poetic species, that is continuously refashioning itself through its use of language. I draw attention, specifically, to Habermas's commitment to an unsustainable form of scientism and above all speciesism that is based on "genetic determinism." Habermas takes recourse to a conception of the human that is based on the notion of humanity's genetic identity, genetic sovereignty, and ipseity, one that is both simultaneously secured and threatened by biotechnology. I argue that just as there is no gene for human freedom, there is no gene for what is proper to the human. As Haraway has pointed out, we are made up of a soup of shared genomic material. If we follow Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in talking about "co-ontogenies,"²¹ we ought to think with Haraway that genetic sovereignty is both impossible and undesirable.

The stronger point of this section, however, is that the task of humanizing ourselves is the task of producing normativity *ex nihilo*, but also only through languaging, poeticizing in the broadest possible sense. I play with the Latourian trope of “never having been,” and I talk about “never having been human,” but not because there is a humanity to be discovered, but because our humanity is a task. “We are not yet human” is an injunction and not an invective. Here then emerges another key theme of the entire book.

As the “mangled” and “incomplete” animal, to use Nietzsche’s language, part of our task as animals is to accomplish our humanity. But, we don’t accomplish it alone or against other animals. The “natural history of the human species” is the natural history of our being-with, dwelling with, worlding with other animals. This is something both Marx and Engels already acknowledged in their early writings, but this is a theme that is inchoate in all historical materialism. Donna Haraway, that other philosophical animal I have tracked most assiduously, coined the beautiful expression: “companion species.” The becoming human of the human animal could not have taken place without our fellow companion creatures with which we have “become with.” Haraway wrote in her 2012 essay “Species Matters, Humane Advocacy: In the Promising Grip of Earthly Oxy-morons”: “Companion species, the term and the fleshy knots, are relentlessly about ‘becoming with,’ and to focus on companion species is for me one way to refuse human exceptionalism without invoking posthumanism.”²² This “becoming with” that is implied by historical materialism leads me to also be reticent to speak of posthumanism in an unequivocal sense. Attending to animal welfare, our embodied compassion and co-vulnerability, does not mean that we must reject our own humanity. Rejecting metaphysical anthropocentrism should not lead us to embrace a form of posthumanism that may also mean disavowing what we owe to our companion species. I think an ethics commensurate with our corporeal vulnerability, as I argue in later chapters, is one that is already attentive to our webs of relationships with animals. If we are always already implicated in what Acampora calls “somatic sociability,” then animals don’t require a *ne plus ultra*, or a transcendental jump that uproots out from our alleged zone of human exceptionality.²³ They are already within our moral universe. They are already worthy and deserving of our moral considerability.

Learning to coexist with other animals cannot mean that we cease to be human, for we became human with other animals—in many ways, they humanized us through their interaction with us, and their many lessons, whether real or spoken through philosophical ventriloquism, have been

central in the story of “how animals made us human.” Thus posthumanism is acceptable to me, or my arguments in this book, but only as a philosophical position that advocates the overcoming of a certain conception of the human, one that could be characterized as “positive philosophical anthropology,” which sets out to delineate for us what the human as such is, should be, and is not. Stanchied humanism, the kind we may attribute to Thomists and Christian theologians, as well as metaphysical anthropocentrists, such as that of Heidegger, is the frontal face of an equally suspect posthumanism that is bent on rejecting the former. Acknowledging that we are not yet human is also a way to invite us to create new worlds in which we can begin to recognize our “becoming with” in the midst of earthly entanglements and communities of interspecies “intersomatic” vulnerability—to appropriate some language from Acampora.²⁴

The third part of the book is made up of two chapters that take on a positive key with the themes of being with, becoming with, being corporally vulnerable, and the demand and possibility of zoophilic polis. Chapter 8, “Interspecies Cosmopolitanism,” written at my countersuggestion for a handbook on cosmopolitanism, is an attempt to articulate a non-metaphysical grounding of animal rights. I think some colleagues are right to suspect that the discourse of rights is so entrenched in “metaphysical chauvinism” and above all “metaphysical anthropocentrism,” that pursuing the “rights” approach is a liability, a way to get into the lion’s mouth, so to say. As well intentioned as this reserve is, it is also misguided and self-defeating—fighting against the animal rights theory may lead at best to a pyrrhic victory, and at worst, to the obsolescence of our philosophical work and its having no political efficacy. Philosophy as a form of poesis is about changing the world, by changing how we conceive ourselves. But this change in self-images and self-conceptions has to have claws, jaws, hooves, tusks, toes, and fingers, so that it can change the way we make worlds.

Law, as Habermas has so aptly put it, is Janus-faced. One face is instrumental and administrative—it gets things done, it allows us to get things done, together, and it imposes on us a force of sanction that means that when we fail to respect it and fulfill it, we are liable and can be punished. The other face is moral-ethical. I deliberately use the dash because law (*Recht*) is where the post-Hegelian distinction between morality and ethics, i.e., *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, come together into the menagerie of the polis. What I mean is that in law is where particular ethical insights, projects, practices gain traction when they meet the scrutiny of morality. In the process of juridifying, of codifying into law, our ethical insights

and intuitions are tested against the procedural and normative demands of morality. Evidently, the more ethics pushes the legal envelope, the more we have a better insight into the horizon of normativity of morality. Law is the one mechanism through which universality become historically effective, as human rights have shown. De Fontenay's observation on rights is correct: "Rights cannot be inferred on the basis of scientific facts: either they are consecrated and proclaimed by the state on the basis of a metaphysical, transcendental-immanent conception of natural law, or else they are to be invented, declared, and proclaimed, proceeding the history of men."²⁵ The discourse ethics approach to law allows us to do the latter without taking recourse to the former. As Habermas has argued in recent texts, the history of rights is the history of our acknowledgment of violations to human dignity and, evidently, the dark and sobering history of human genocide. Implicit, however, in this history of human rights, and animal rights as well, is the "inventing and reinventing universality"²⁶—to put it as de Fontenay does. It is thus easy to see, I hope, why we simply can't abandon the animal rights theory, to use the language of Donaldson and Kymlicka. If our philosophical speculation about what we owe to animals is to have any traction, we thus must also be committed to transforming the ways in which we generate and produce those tools that coordinate our interactions. I thus agree with what Ian Hacking said with respect to Peter Singer's advocacy for animal rights: "The place of Singer's reasons may be more forensic than moral. We need codes and precedents to regulate civil society. Singer and his fellows are forging the laws of tomorrow. Laws have moral stature not only because they create legal duties and obligations but also because they are bench marks from which to move on."²⁷

Now, this chapter is my contribution to the Frankfurt School theory of Critical Theory, in a positive and constructive way. I was a student of Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, and I consider myself a critical theorist, for the simple reason that I am also a historical materialist and a de-colonial Marxist. But in this chapter I begin with the argument that Habermas, along with his students and colleagues, have produced a mighty and very impressive discourse on law and democracy, which more than adequately makes up for the "state and law" theory deficit of Marx, but which above all is uniquely and powerfully endowed to give us the tools that we animal rights advocates need. The argument is that we need to give teeth to those powerful intuitions that Adorno and Horkheimer had in their work. I am arguing that we post-Habermasian critical theorists don't forget the historical materialist sensibility to the becoming together

with other animals, and above all to strive to co-dwell in the zoophilic polis by Adorno's other version of the categorical imperative: "to have lived as though we had been good animals"—to anticipate the focus of my chapter on Adorno in the last section.

With the last chapter, I wanted to bring us full circle to the first chapter, namely zoopoetics. In this chapter, however, instead of focusing on literary or written texts, I wanted to focus on some artists who have been doing in their installations, performances, and creations what Coetzee did for us in his fiction, namely bring us to the food bowl of corporal compassion. However, this chapter would have entailed spending months acquiring permissions, high-quality reproductions, and so on. The chapter is now in a book that is easily accessible.²⁸ Instead, this new last chapter is about my animal autobiography, that is, how I grew up around and with animals, how they sheltered me, fed me, gave me companionship, and how they touched me, physically and figuratively. I return to the theme of the bestiary, but now from another angle, what I call the bestiaries of extinction. I focus on horses for three reasons: because they were essential to our humanization; because they were pervasive in our existences until cars took over the streets of cities, and the highways their hooves had carved into the soil and mountains; and because notwithstanding their emotional and physical prowess, they have become "relic species." In this last chapter I turn to another one of my teachers: Reinhart Koselleck, the major German intellectual historian. Koselleck, who had been a soldier in the Eastern Front during World War II, argued that human history can be divided in terms of our relationship to the horse: prehorse, horse, and posthorse epochs. Horses, like few animals, have inspired our imaginations, ability to project affect, and to develop what I call forms of interspecies cosmopolitanism.

Rorty argued for the greater efficacy of literature, over philosophy, in our moral pedagogy. I think he is right. But fiction can't do the work it does, without translations, without interpretation, without vociferous and irreverent engagement. By the same token, without art, we cannot learn and unlearn how to be human and how not to become a certain type of hideous human animal. Adorno wrote in his *Aesthetic Theory* that great artists produce "works" that we don't know what they are, but which educate us to understand them. In the chapter I would have included, but which I did not, I argue that we have to learn to become a different kind of animal, and that the work of Patricia Piccinini, Jane Alexander, and Guillermo Gomez-Peña, along with Koselleck's reflections on the horse

and human history, challenges us to understand our corporal vulnerability and “somatic sociability” in ways that we can translate into learning to be a good animal.

The book, thus, is structured according to the logic of both discourse ethics and deconstruction ethics. In her book, *Without Offending Humans: A Critique of Animal Rights*, de Fontenay writes: “I will be distinguishing among three levels of deconstruction that are, even as they interpenetrate one another, testimony to the radicalization and shift of argument: a strategy *through* the animal, exposition *to* an animal or *to this* animal, and compassion *toward* animals.”²⁹ I was electrified when I read that passage, because I then realized that this is what I was also trying to do as a critical theorist. First, we must work through how we conjure up and corral our philosophical animals. Then, I have sought to focus our attention on specific animals, our companion species, and as it is evident throughout the chapters, I have been a fortunate beneficiary of both animal love and animal interpellation (should I say with Rainer Forst, demand to justify myself, give an account of myself?). Third, this is a book about what we owe to animals, not because it is something extra, but because it also something we owe each other. For in the end, we circle around each other like dogs smelling butts, and walk together like elephants holding up each other, and howl and wail when we lose each other.

Animal Philosophy

On the stairway of the Tower of Victory there has lived since the beginning of time a being sensitive to the many shades of the human soul and known as the A Bao A Qu. It lies dormant, for the most part on the first step, until at the approach of a person some secret life is touched off in it, and deep within the creature an inner light begins to glow. At the same time, its body and almost translucent skin begin to stir. But only when someone starts up the spiraling stairs is the A Bao A Qu brought to consciousness, and then it sticks close to the visitor’s heels, keeping to the outside of the turning steps, where they are most worn by the generation of pilgrims. At each level the creature’s color becomes more intense, its shape approaches perfection, and the bluish light it gives off is more brilliant. But it achieves its ultimate form only at the topmost step, when the climber is a person who has attained Nirvana and whose acts cast no shadows. Otherwise, the A Bao A Qu hangs back before reaching the top, as

if paralyzed, its body incomplete, its blue growing paler, and its glow hesitant. The creature suffers when it cannot come to completion, and its moan is a barely audible sound, something like the rustling of silk. Its span of life is brief, since as soon as the traveler climbs down, the A Bao A Qu wheels and tumbles to the first steps, where, worn out and almost shapeless, it waits for the next visitor. People say that its tentacles are visible only when it reaches the middle of the staircase. It is also said that it can see with its whole body and that to the touch it is like skin of peach. In the course of centuries, the A Bao A Qu has reached the terrace only once.

—Jorge Luis Borges, *The Book of Imaginary Beings*³⁰

I argue in this book that philosophy has been complicit with the project of exiling animals from the world of moral considerability as well as from the polis. Additionally, philosophy is that which alone a certain type of animal does, and thus philosophy is property of the human, or the humanity of the human is defined in terms of its ability to philosophize. The definition of philosophy is therefore implicated in the definition of the human—this is what I also intend to draw our attention to with the title of the book: the philosophical animal. Derrida’s extensive analysis of the phrase that the human is the *zōon logon echo* (ζῷον λόγον ἔχον) allows us to recognize that inasmuch as nonhuman animals are deprived of language, they are also deprived of philosophy. Philosophy after all is only possible in and through language. The point I want to make, however, is that when we triangulate philosophy, humanity, and the “animal” we can see that the question of the animal, which is the question of the *humanitas* of humanity, which is the question of what is and who does philosophy, we can come to the realization that the animal question in philosophy is a metaphilosophical question, that is, that it is a question about what philosophy itself is and should be for those to whom it is allowed, granted, gifted, or claimed in the name of. In what remains of this introduction, I want to undertake a metaphilosophical reflection about how the question of the animal is at the heart of the birth of philosophy itself, and how we have to begin to poeticize different philosophies. I will do so by revisiting two key mythemes that are foundational for the development of critical theory. I am referring to Odysseus’s encounter with Polyphemus, the Cyclops, and the story of the Sirens. But, I will revisit Polyphemus’s cave after having come out of Plato’s cave in book 7 of the *Republic*. I want to weave a trace between Homer’s Odysseus, Plato’s alpinist of caves, the

philosopher par excellence, and Horkheimer and Adorno's dialectics of the enlightenment qua critique of the myth of enlightenment.

Book 9 of the *Odyssey* narrates the story of Odysseus's cunning escape from the one-eyed giant's cave. The story however is also Homer's reflection on what constitutes the humanity of the human and the animality of the animal. The Cyclops dwell in caves, they don't toil the lands, for their island is plentiful and provides for all their needs. They don't have merchant or war ships, and thus they neither wage war nor engage in commerce. They are, as Homer puts it: "lawless brutes, who trust so to the everlasting god they never plant with their own hands or plow the soil. . . . They have no meeting place for council, no laws either, no, up on the mountain peaks they live in arching caverns—each a law to himself, ruling his wives and children, not a care in the world for any neighbor."³¹(9.120–27) They are brutes, or as classist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff put it, the Cyclops were "really animals."³²

The story is well known, and I will return to it in chapter 1. The Cyclops "inadvertently" captures Odysseus and his men, when he returns from pasturing his flock of sheep. Odysseus had entered the cave intent on stealing food from it but is imprisoned when the Cyclops closes the exit with a boulder that neither Odysseus nor his men can lift. If Odysseus kills the Cyclops as he sleeps, then they are doomed, as they cannot exit the cave. Odysseus thus comes up with a stratagem to have the Cyclops lift the boulder that closes the cave. The plot entails getting him drunk, and then Odysseus and his men slipping out of the cave, under the bellies of the sheep, when the Cyclops has to pasture his flock. To do this, Odysseus has to wound but not kill Polyphemus, and he has also to partly ingratiate himself to him, so as to get him drunk. In order to do this, he has to identify himself and thus name himself. This is where Horkheimer and Adorno find traction for their own unpacking of the dialectic of the Enlightenment. In order to save himself, Odysseus has to refuse his name. He identifies himself as "Nobody (*Udeis*)" (9.409–10). The path to subjectivity is that of the rejection of identity. To use some Freudian language, the inner space of subjectivity is an empty castle won at the expense of rejection of one's somatic vulnerability. Horkheimer and Adorno put it this way: "In reality, Odysseus, the subject, denies his own identity, which makes him a subject, and preserves life by mimicking the amorphous realm. He calls himself nobody because Polyphemus is not a self, and confusion of the name with the thing prevents the duped barbarian from escaping the trap" (53).

We cannot leave unmentioned that the staging of this drama, for the sake of exhibiting Odysseus's cunning, is really a debacle instigated by his curiosity and above all his narcissism and need to win admirers and the gifts of strangers.³³ On the other hand, we ought not to neglect the juxtaposition between Polyphemus's anthropophagy and his gentle tending to his herd. Here is Polyphemus addressing his ram, which Odysseus will later sacrifice: "Dear old ram, why last of the flock to quit the cave? In the old good old days you'd never lag behind the rest—you with your long marching strides, first by far of the flock to graze the fresh young grasses, first by far to reach the rippling streams, first to turn back home, keen for your fold when night comes on—but now you're last of all. And why? Sick at heart for your master's eye that coward gouged out with his wicked crew? Only after he'd stunned my wits with wine—that, that Nobody." (9.498–508).

The second mytheme is that of the Sirens, which appear in book 12 of the *Odyssey*. In order to descend to Hades and consult Tiresias, Odysseus must pass by the island where these enchantresses dwell. The Sirens "spellbind any man alive" with their voices. "The high, thrilling song of the Sirens will transfix him, lolling there in their meadow, round them heaps of corpses, rotting away, rags of skin shriveling on their bones" (12.50–53). Following Circe's instructions, Odysseus plugs up the ears of his men, who must row, and has himself bound to the mast of the ship. He alone can hear the Sirens' transfixing voices, while his men are deprived of their beautiful singing. For Horkheimer and Adorno, Odysseus binding himself in order to hear the voice of the Sirens is a defiance of the gods and a rejection of fate. Odysseus's "cunning" is "defiance made rational" (12.46). This cunning thwarting of mythic power and divine predetermination is achieved at the price of the self's sacrifice. Both subjectivity and civilization are based on the "introversion of sacrifice—in other words, the history of renunciation" (12.43). Odysseus must sacrifice himself in order to survive. He must give himself to the gods, precisely in order to cunningly defeat them at their game. Odysseus is the sacrificial victim that demands the abolition of sacrifice. For Horkheimer and Adorno, then, already in Homer's retelling of the archaic myths of the Greeks there is a critique of myth. Homer's mythology as anti-myth is proleptic of the Enlightenment. Myth is already a form of the critique of myth, at least as it is poeticized by Homer.

At play in Homer's texts, from the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey*, is also a critique of reason as that which must subdue and domesticate nature and

the animal. The *Iliad* may be the first and last great hymn to war, but it is also an exacting document of the fury and destruction human war unleashes on nature and other animals. The misery, destruction, anguish unleashed by the fury of men with his death-dealing weapons of war is depicted with equal gore whether it cuts down men or animals. One may even speak of animal compassion in Homer. As Gary Steiner notes in his *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents*, Homer's work is guided by identification of humans with animals and animals with humans. "Homer's view of the relationship between human beings and animals is not . . . a conception of the fundamental superiority of human over animals. Like the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* gives prominence to a sense of continuity."³⁴ It is this sense of continuity that allows Homer to recognize how important and irreplaceable our "companion species" are to us. It is important to note that one of the most foundational stories of Western culture also contains one of the most moving stories about human and animal companionship. When Odysseus finally returns to his beloved island, no one recognizes him except his faithful dog Argos. "Infested with ticks, half-dead from neglect, here lay the hound, old Argos, But the moment he sensed Odysseus standing by he thumped his tail, nuzzling low, and his ears dropped, though he had no strength to drag himself an inch toward his master. Odysseus glanced to the side and flicked away a tear, hiding it from Eumaeus" (17.328–34). Again Steiner: "The encounter between Odysseus and Argos [*sic*] bespeaks an intimate sense of kinship and community that puts to shame Odysseus's relationship with other human beings."³⁵ To become himself, he must deny his name and identity before an animal, the Cyclops, but to return to himself and be recognized as himself, he is acknowledged as himself by another animal, Argos. In Homer, thus, we can discern another philosopheme that resounds between two names: Argos and Bobby (Levinas's dog). "Perhaps the dog that recognized Ulysses beneath his disguise on his return from the *Odyssey* was a forebear of our own. But, no, no! There, they were in Ithaca and the Fatherland. Here, we were nowhere. This dog was the last Kantian in Nazi Germany, without the brain needed to universalize maxims and drives. He was a descendant of the dogs of Egypt. And his friendly growling, his animal faith, was born from the silence of his forefathers on the banks of the Nile."³⁶

If Homer's mythopoesis unleashes the dialectics of enlightenment, Plato's own mythopoesis instigates its own form of reason as myth. Commenting on Rachel Bepaloff's reflections on Homer's and Plato's mythogenesis in her *On the Iliad*, Hermann Broch writes: "Philosophy is

a constant fight against the remnants of mythical thinking and a constant struggle to achieve mythical structure in a new form, a fight against the metaphysical convention and a struggle to build a new metaphysics; for metaphysics, itself bounded by myth, bounds philosophy, without which these boundaries would have no existence at all.”³⁷

There is no place where this reversion of reason into myth, and the creation of myth to bind philosophy, is executed more exemplarily than in Plato’s *Republic*. Plato’s relation to the founders of the Greek intellectual tradition is a fertile territory, but at the very least, one can claim that Plato works are rewritings of Homer and Hesiod, or very original and generative rereadings of those two founding fathers. As David K. O’Connor put it: “We are never closer to Plato as writer than when we are reading Plato reading.”³⁸ As O’Connor argues, we should read Plato’s characters and dramatization of the *Republic* as Plato’s skillful readings and rewriting of key moments in both Homer and Hesiod. Thus, the *Republic*’s repeated language of descent and ascent are modeled on Homer and Hesiod’s mythemes of both descent and ascent from Hades, the escape of the gods from the underworld of the earth, the fashioning of humans from the earth, and so on. The transit between the underworld, the earth, and the heavens allows us to talk about a mythological geography or topography. In parallel, Plato’s *Republic* is also configured around a topography of reason. The *Republic* begins with Socrates descending to Piraeus, the port of Athens, where he had gone to offer a prayer and see the celebration of the new rite to the goddess Bendis. It culminates with the retelling of the myth of Er, which is about metempsychosis or the ascent of souls. Socrates says to Glaucon: “But if we are persuaded by me, we will believe that the soul is immortal and able to endure every evil and also every good, and always hold to the upward path, practicing justice with wisdom every way we can, so that we will be friends to ourselves and to the gods” (621c). Socrates departs the Piraeus as he departs the cave. If the former stands for the mundane of politics, the latter stands for the quotidian existence of the masses in ignorance. The trope of ascent also determines how Plato conceives of politics. Descending and ascending from the Piraeus is an allegory of the leave-taking of the world of politics, which is also the world of shadows. Piraeus is the *pars pro toto* of the metonymic “city of pigs” (372d), which is juxtaposed to the “true city,” Kallipolis.

We can thus speak, along with Luce Irigaray, of a Platonic topology or topography of reason that involves the ascent from the cave of shadows and doxa, of subjection and delusion, to the blinding light of reason

and liberation from ignorance, and the immortality of the gods.³⁹ This topography of reason is determined by the vector of escape and ascent from the cave of subjugating ignorance. Philosophy as a praxis is this escaping from caves. Philosophy is a *Höhlenausgänge*, to use that wonderful expression by Hans Blumentberg.⁴⁰ Plato's topography of reason, with its geography of escape from ignorance and ascent to wisdom, is succinctly and poetically captured in the "Allegory of the Cave." In fact, this allegory becomes the *locus classicus*, the point of condensation, for Plato's own metaphilosophy. In as much as the allegory of the cave is a rejection of doxa and the role that Sophists play in contributing to our subjection to the world of shadows, and the injunction to engage in the pursuit of the true love of wisdom, it is the summary articulation of Plato's own philosophy of philosophy. The allegory of the cave is the synecdoche for Plato's topography of reason. It is also, as Irigaray notes, the "silent prescription for Western metaphysics but also, more explicitly, proclaims (itself as) everything designated as metaphysics, its fulfillment, and its interpretation."⁴¹ The allegory of the cave, then, is the ur-metaphor that conditions all of Western thinking.

"The famous 'Allegory of the Cave' is many things. But prominent among them, it is a rewriting of Homer. Socrates has guided Glaucon to a new mythic identity, from an ambitious Achilles to a chastened Odysseus. But this rewriting has complicated and elaborated Socrates's own mythic projection onto the triumphant hero."⁴² In this passage O'Connor has captured exactly the ways in which the cave is key to Plato's appropriation and rewriting of both Homer and Hesiod, for at the pivot of Plato's own turning is the ambivalent casting of Socrates as Odysseus. "Plato's myth [of the ascent from the cave] refuses us the satisfaction of Homer's *Odyssey*, since we cannot say whether the main character found his way through many labors at last to home, or remained stranded in that dead-world of politics and ambition, saving others though he could not save himself. It is hard to see an accident in an ambiguity so subtly composed."⁴³

Odysseus and Socrates must escape caves. In order to do so, they must blind. In one case, Polyphemus must be blinded, so he can still remove the bolder that closes his cave. In the other, Socrates, or the philosophers, must submit to a temporary blindness of eternal truth, the light of reason. We should thus speak with Irigaray of a hysterical philosophical optics.⁴⁴ Polyphemus and the Sirens are animals, and Socrates, who is sometimes referred to as an ox, a gadfly, and is compared by Alcibiades to Silenus and the satyr Marsyas (*Symposium*, 215b), is too not entirely human. All

are mixed creatures, embodying the animal in man and the human in animals. Satyrs, which should remind us of Jonathan Swift's Yahoos, "had the sexual appetites and manners of wild beasts and were usually portrayed with large erections. Sometimes they had horses' tails or ears, sometimes the traits of goats."⁴⁵ Socrates is thus also an animal, a long distant cousin of Polyphemus.⁴⁶ Between Homer and Plato, then, the project of ascent to our rational autonomy is a project of the blinding and muting of our nature, the blinding and silencing of our animality. Philosophy, in Plato's topography of reason, is this blinding of animal nature qua blinding of the animal philosopher, the departure from the city of pigs to the city of philosopher-kings. To become a philosopher means to cease to see and hear like an animal, to cease to live like one, to be blind and deaf to the color and sound of nature.

Franz Kafka has many animal parables, but among them there is one that is particularly chilling and edifying. It is titled "The Silence of the Sirens." There he writes:

Now the Sirens have a more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence. And though admittedly such a thing never happened, still it is conceivable that someone might possibly have escaped their singing; but from their silence certainly never. Against the feeling of having triumphed over them by one's own strength, and the consequent exaltation that bears down everything before it, no earthly powers could have remained intact . . . Ulysses, it is said, was so full of guile, was such a fox, that not even the goddess of fate could pierce his armor. Perhaps he had really noticed, although here the human understanding is beyond its depths, that the Sirens were silent, and opposed the afore-mentioned pretense to them and the gods merely a sort of shield. These are the seductive voices of the night; the Sirens, too, sang that way. It would be doing them an injustice to think that they wanted to seduce; they knew they had claws and sterile wombs, and they lamented this aloud. They could not help it if their laments sounded so beautiful.⁴⁷

I began this section with an extensive quote from one of my favorite books of Borges, *The Book of Imaginary Beings*. Borges first wrote this book in the 1950s and continued to expand it and revise it, until its English edition, which was done with the cooperation of di Giovanni, his trans-

lator. The original 1957 edition was titled *Manual de zoología fantástica* (*Handbook of Fantastic Zoology*). It is unfortunate that this original title was dropped. I argue in this book that we think of philosophy, among the many things it is, as the writing, gathering, imagining of a fantastic zoology. Some of the fantastic animals that populate the philosopher's zoo have domesticated us to growl and screech at the sight or mere thought of animals, to demean the animal in us as our inhumanity; others have husbanded us into docile animals that are happy to curl up with a dog or two, a cat or two, in bed. Borges surely did not by accident open his book with the A Bao A Qu, nor was his pen forced by the logic of alphabetic ordering. I take it that for Borges the A Bao A Qu is the perfect allegory for the human-animal, animal-human relation. So are Kafka's lamenting and barren Sirens. We can't ascend to our enlightenment without our companion species; their well-being is our well-being. Their silence or their lament is the silence and lament of our own nature.⁴⁸ We need animal philosophy that is to the height of this ascent, in which we neither blind nor silence those with whom we have to accomplish our humanity.