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Animal Justice: Following Derrida & Other Animals

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in
Theory and Criticism

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**ANIMAL JUSTICE:
FOLLOWING DERRIDA & OTHER ANIMALS**

(Monograph)

by

Andrew Weiss

Graduate Program in Theory & Criticism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

What calls for justice? Are we called to do justice to other animals? How ought we to understand and relate to the other animals around us? The work of Jacques Derrida offers a strong foundation from which to consider these questions, and I build on his work by developing a set of clear conceptual tools to understand justice and animality (or animal alterity) through the demands they make on us. I argue that this interrelation between justice and animality can be addressed in a profound way by considering the figure of “the call”—including the calls of other animals and the call of justice. I use the “the call” to offer the reader a tool for opening up their own relations to other animals, their responsibilities to them, and the richly differentiated lives of those other animals, all of which can be addressed by carefully listening to the call.

Keywords

Deconstruction, Derrida, Justice, Difference, Alterity, Animality, Animals, Non-Human Animals, Compassion, Listening.

Acknowledgments

The work undertaken in this thesis would not have been possible without many other animals in my life, who through their singularity and their multiplicity of differences variously contributed to and enriched my life. I here express my profound gratitude as much as possible.

My supervisor, Sharon Sliwinski, with her patient attentiveness and careful interventions, taught me a great deal about how to listen to others, and her incisive contributions were made with an impressive balance of precision and gentleness.

My friend Jonathan Fardy, whose thoughtful, composed, and tireless character I admire and follow, offered me supportive guidance as much as an ever-expanding space to think together in excellent friendship.

Most importantly, I am endlessly grateful for the infinite hospitality of my family—my mother Patricia, my father Paul, my sisters Jennifer and Laura, and our beloved non-human companions, especially Jayden—whose love, support, and pride nourished and strengthened me, slowly but surely, in a precarious time.

May I have done justice to them and as many others as possible!

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Preface: Calling...

If we listen carefully, perhaps we will have heard that we are being called. We who are watching, reading, hearing, listening, thinking, we who are sitting, breathing, blinking—we who have already heard ourselves being called, and who have responded: to questions, concepts, problems, and affirmations from intense thinkers, inspiring texts, and traditions cherished or reviled; to the occasional “call for papers” inaugurating academic events, calling for our thoughtful contributions; to friends and colleagues calling our names or calling us by phone. And yet there are innumerable other kinds of calls to which we respond, too: we have responded to alarms calling us awake, to music calling us to dancing and to joy, to strangers calling for help; and perhaps we have responded to the howl of dogs in need of care, piercing the brick walls of shelters and calling to our hearts at home; perhaps we have responded to the quiet eyes of squirrels calling for our food in the park, to the backyard bird-charms of the robins’ morning song by hanging bird-feeders. We have gone great lengths to respond to the call for the transformation of past and future, perception and thought, action and affect. We have responded to the call to *listen*. And this is always a call to listen *to others*, even if those others seem to live within us.

In spite of the innumerable differences between all of these cases, these calls, we can ask questions that nevertheless make them converge in a profound way: What is it to be called? What or who calls on us, whoever we are? What kind of call is it? Can we answer that call even if we are uncertain of the source? And how to react, to respond when called? And how to do so *as best as possible*? In other words, *how do we do justice to these calls*?

If I focus on this figure of “the call,” it is so that I can make a kind of interconnection between, on the one hand, Derrida’s thinking of justice, and on the other hand, his thinking concerning animals and animality. I insist that justice and animality *call* for one another: justice

calls us to address animality, and animality calls us to address and to pursue justice—and this is transformative for both terms. I would like to open with a somewhat peculiar question: “What calls—and what calls for justice?” If I take the liberty of putting together two questions that might seem separate—“What calls?” and “What calls for justice?”—it is because I risk the hypothesis that these questions may be interrelated, for each can offer insight into the other. These questions call for one another.

What calls—and what calls for justice? In order to answer the question of who or what calls, I propose that we must first consider what is called justice. Following the thinking of Jacques Derrida, I will address justice as a name for relating to others—a meaning that extends before or beyond its usual meaning in legal or political contexts. I argue that Derrida’s thinking concerning justice is profound, even if it may initially seem obscure. In **Chapter 1: Justice**, I develop a close reading of words or concepts that will offer precision and clarity to that profundity. In doing so, I hope to pass Derrida’s thinking of justice on to the reader in a memorable way. Addressing justice in this way will lead us to those others we call “animals,” whom I insist on calling “other animals” for reasons to be addressed below. In **Chapter 2: Animality (Or: Animal Alterity)**, I develop several terms with which to address and think about other animals and our relations with them, which I call **§2.1 Animal Alterity**, **§2.2 Multiplicity**, **§2.3 Following**, and **§2.4 Passivity**, the last of these also deferring to the possibility of compassion. In order to condense these insights into a structure that can be more readily handled by the reader in other contexts, especially with regard to encounters with other animals, I then turn to the figure of “the call” in **Chapter 3: The Call**. For now, justice calls us.

Chapter 1

Justice

§1.0 Justice as Relation to the Other: Beyond Law

“The relation to others—that is to say . . . justice.”
—Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality & Infinity* (89)¹

“Deconstruction is justice.”
—Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law” (945)²

How does one begin writing about, addressing, or pursuing justice? We are already caught up in what I am calling justice, I argue, whether we explicitly use this word or not and no matter where we start; in other words, we have already begun pursuing justice. Nevertheless, in order to engage the concept or pursuit of justice in a deep way, it is necessary to find a productive starting point. Commentary on Derrida’s writing on justice often begins with an understanding of its relation to law: according to such commentary, justice should primarily be understood as the means by which we call law into question and seek its reform. This is understandable and perhaps even to be expected given that his most prolonged treatment of justice comes in a text bearing the word “law” prominently in its title, namely, “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority.” But while Derrida does discuss law at length throughout this text, and while he

1

Translation slightly modified. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality & Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1979. See also *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l’extériorité*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1961, page 62. Quoted in Derrida’s “Force of Law” (959) and *Specters of Marx* (26). Derrida slightly misquotes Levinas in both cases, omitting the final “à” or “to” from Levinas’ sentence: “But we wish to show also how, starting from knowing identified with thematization, the truth of this knowing leads back to the relation with the Other, that is, to justice.” However, this slight omission is not a substantive one, and the phrase is still as radical and worthy of following as Derrida makes it out to be.

² Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: On the Mystical Foundation of Authority,” in *Cardozo Law Review*, vol. 11 (1990), pp. 920-1045. This text was written in response to an invitation to give the keynote lecture in English on the topic of “Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice” at a colloquium of the same name at Cardozo Law School. Derrida initially wrote the text in French, but as he explains therein, it was “necessary” to address the audience in English; to that end, he had his friend and colleague Mary Quaintance translate the French into English, a translation which he then authorized by reading aloud at the conference. This version of the text has the French on even-numbered pages and facing English on the odd-numbered pages. I favour this translation for the above reasons.

rightly claims that “it is just that there be law,” (947) I argue that it is nevertheless misleading to overemphasize law in relation to justice. Such an overemphasis obscures the broader and deeper reading (or “thinking,” if you prefer) of justice as relation to others. Such a reading of justice can give us nuanced and profound resources for understanding the temporal and relational basis and standard by which law would be formed, judged, and reformed. But if justice were to be considered merely in relation to law, as if justice were parasitic on it or only conceivable as a project that had its beginning and end in law, we would miss the force and motivation of justice—we would neglect to ask about those for whom or for the sake of which justice is pursued, as well as the problems and opportunities that arise beyond the law. In “Force of Law,” Derrida writes:

I want to insist right away on reserving the possibility of a justice . . . that not only exceeds or contradicts “law” but also, perhaps, has no relation to law, or maintains such a strange relation to it that it may just as well demand the law as exclude it. (925)

Justice as the possibility of law “exceeds or contradicts law,” demands law as well as excludes it. But what is the character of this excess? How do we begin to address it, to respond to it by thinking—and beyond thinking? For what or whose sake do we pursue justice by trying to be more just?

Derrida’s most direct pronouncement on justice comes in “Force of Law.” In an astonishingly terse sentence, Derrida writes: “Deconstruction is justice” (945). But given that what is called deconstruction is always in part a form of reading other texts and other authors, it will be easier to interpret this pronouncement with regard to Derrida’s reading of Levinas, at least in passing. I quote the preceding context to draw attention to some of Derrida’s own reservations about Levinas, which I will interpret below. Derrida writes:

I would be tempted, *up to a certain point* [my emphasis], to compare the concept of justice—which I’m here trying to distinguish from law—to

Levinas', just because of this infinity and because of the heteronomic relation to others, to the faces of otherness that govern me, whose infinity I cannot thematize and whose hostage I remain. In *Totalité et Infini* ("Verité et Justice," p. 62), Levinas writes: ". . . *la relation avec autrui—c'est a dire la justice*" (" . . . the relation to others—that is to say, justice"). (959)³

Justice, as the relation to others, would be infinite and governed by those others. I will explain and explore this infinitude at length in **§1.2 Justice as Aporetic or Infinite**, but before doing so I address alterity because the aporetic or infinite character of justice depends on alterity, precisely—that is, on others to whom we are related and who irreducibly remain other to us.

Derrida addresses Levinas' earlier work at length in his essay "Violence and Metaphysics."⁴ While an attentive reading of this long and rigorous essay would no doubt be worthwhile, such a reading would take us too far afield into Levinas' work, unduly distracting us from the project at hand, namely, the project of developing a clear and rigorous definition of justice and addressing its role in reconsidering and transforming our relations with other animals. Nevertheless, the essay is deeply instructive for doing justice to Derrida's inheritance of (and deviations from) Levinas' work, and so here I briefly mention in passing three of Derrida's crucial insights in this essay that inform my work in this thesis. First, between self and other, there is a certain reversibility rather than the strict one-directional relation, favoured by Levinas, from self to other: the self must be able to be other for the other, and the other, in order to be addressed, must to some extent remain itself (128). This symmetry of mutual exposure precedes the desire for asymmetry, that is, for the pursuit of justice. Second, infinite alterity requires finite mortality. As Derrida writes, "The other cannot be what it is, infinitely other, except in finitude and mortality (mine *and* its)" (114-115). That is, we are mortal others relating to other mortal others. Following Derrida, this focus on finitude and mortality—rather than Levinas' focus on

³ See my footnote 1 above.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Violence & Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing & Difference*, translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 79-195.

infinity and divinity—will offer us a way into addressing other animals as other in the robust sense. We will revisit the importance of mortality in **§1.3.1 Dis-juncture of Life/Death**, in **§2.2.1 A Heterogeneous Multiplicity of the Living**, and in **§2.4.3 The Undeniable Possibility of Com-Passion**. Third, we relate to others within what Derrida calls “an economy of violence,” but nevertheless it is always possible to strive for less and less violence toward others, a striving that I have here addressed under the heading of the infinite or aporetic pursuit of justice. That is, following Derrida, it is impossible to relate to the other without some imposition, some structural violence, however minimal, even if this simply means translating the other’s needs or words into one’s own terms, which imposes the self on the other. This structural violence, however, opens the relation to others, and is far less bad than absolute nonviolence or nonrelation to the other, which would be indistinguishable from absolute violence or erasure of the other. While I have found it more productive to privilege the language of “justice” over language of “violence,” both terms help provide mutually enriching insights. It is worth noting here that “Violence & Metaphysics” equips us to counter a common objection to the pursuit of justice for other animals: the pervasiveness of violence in the so-called “natural” world, that nature is red in tooth and claw, as they say, and would allegedly make other animals unworthy of our efforts in pursuing justice for their sake. This objection bears little weight in the face of Derrida’s insight that structural violence is pervasive in all relations among others, insofar as even when we merely seek to understand others we impinge on them—with our attention, our terms, and so on. We must begin from the understanding that is impossible to eliminate all violence whatsoever without eliminating all relations to others, which would be indistinguishable from the worst violence. The task then, with other animals (non-human or human), is to strive for less and less violence, the least violence possible. I now return to calling this striving the pursuit of justice for others; let us return, too, to the question of alterity and the word “other.”

What will provide the guiding thread for my reading of justice through Derrida is to be found in his text *Specters of Marx*: justice “as an-economic ex-position to others”. Below I develop a reading of each part of this formulation as deeply and clearly as possible in turn, addressing “an-economy,” “ex-position,” and the “alterity” of others.

§1.1 Justice as An-Economic Ex-Position to Others

§1.1.1 Alterity: The Otherness of the Other

Why call others by that name, “others”? In other words, what effects does this word “other” or “alterity” produce, of what associations is it generative, what differences does it mark? Alterity or otherness marks at least three differences or concepts: irreducible difference, arrival, and responsibility. We see these indicated in passing as Derrida writes in “Force of Law” that justice operates in a way “that is infinite, infinite because irreducible, irreducible because owed to the other—owed to the other, before any contract, because it has *come*, it is a coming, the coming of the other as always other singularity” (965, Derrida’s emphasis). Irreducible difference, arrival or coming, responsibility owed: what do these three phrases or concepts mean, then?

An irreducible difference can never be finally “reduced,” which is to say it cannot be done away with, bridged, closed off, or entirely ignored—even attempts to erase a difference rely on and therefore confirm it. One can always find shared affinities between others or between oneself and an other, but some irreducible difference will always remain: one cannot pass over into the other fully, and one never knows entirely what the other is thinking or feeling, where they have been or where they are going, what they want or what they need, even if they explicitly declare these. Neither is there some accessible point of origin that would determine these differences once and for all. I will return to this irreducible difference at length in **§2.1 Animal**

Alterity, but for now this briefer treatment will suffice to understand justice as a relation to such difference(s). There is always this irreducible difference, and hence an irreducible uncertainty; no matter how clearly affinities, purposes, histories, or futures might seem to be indicated, more differences can always develop, be noticed, or come into effect, and so we can never be certain once and for all as to who or what others are or what their arrival will have meant. I will consider this uncertainty as aporetic or infinite at length in the following section, **§1.2 Justice as Infinite, Aporetic, To-Come**.

The verb “to come”—*venir* in French—has a specific sense in Derrida’s writing, where it offers a general way of describing the emergence or arrival of differences or others. For Derrida this verb is also related to the unforeseen and unforeseeable future, *l’avenir*, literally the “to-come” or “*á-venir*” as Derrida sometimes hyphenates it, sometimes rendered “the future-to-come” by translators (as is Peggy Kamuf’s intervention in *Specters of Marx*⁵), and as distinct from *le futur*, the predictable, calculable, or foreseeable sense of the future. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida writes of the coming of the other by comparing the *arrivant* (often left untranslated or perhaps transliterated into English), one who arrives, with the *revenant* (a word that can be read as French or English), one who returns, often with ghostly connotations. I will return to discuss arrival at greater length in **§1.2.3 The Future-to-Come**, while the *revenant* will return in **§1.3 Justice as Dis-juncture**. For now it is sufficient to emphasize this generality of coming or *venir*, of whoever or whatever comes on the scene or into view.

§1.1 Justice as An-Economic Ex-Position to Others

§1.1.2 Ex-Position: Exposure, Predisposition, Re-Positioning

“There is no difference between the ethical and the ontological: the “ethical” exposes

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.

what the “ontological” disposes.”

–Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (99)

It is crucial to understand that this generality of coming or arrival is at stake when Derrida emphasizes justice as “beyond contract.” As we will read below, for Derrida justice names a responsibility to the other that is owed to the other simply by virtue of exposure, without reference to any agreement or specific commonality (whether nationality, religion, location, language, or any other criteria) that would act as an implicit or explicit contract for instituting responsibility. On the contrary, Derrida insists, justice is a responsibility beyond these limits, and exposure to others—any irreducible others who come, who arrive however and whenever—is sufficient to call for justice, for an infinite or aporetic pursuit of justice for them. This thinking of exposure at the heart of justice is perhaps what is most radical about Derrida’s thinking of justice—insofar as it goes to the *radix* or root of the matter and can grow into something with much wider branches and consequences—and so it will be necessary to understand in detail what it means and how it works. It will also offer us a clue by which to understand one way in which “deconstruction is justice,” insofar as this exposure can allow us to show the ground and limits of a narrower understanding of alterity while pushing beyond them. That is, justice as “an-economic ex-position to others,” deconstructs⁶ any notion of justice as exclusively the relation to other

⁶ Here I suppose that deconstruction is possible. Derrida is fond of these gentle conditional formations—“if deconstruction is possible,” “supposing that it is possible,” and so on—but importantly this is not merely a stylistic flourish or some kind of unfortunate lack of commitment, meaning, or responsibility. On the contrary, it quietly but powerfully expresses the heart of Derrida’s ethical and political thinking: writing, reading, thinking, “deconstructing,” is never done once and for all, since it engages ongoing problems that continually reappear in many different vocabularies and traditions, and since it depends on others, on current and future readers and their own reiterations of Derrida’s writing in other texts, arguments, conferences, discussions, defenses, and so on. To suppose that deconstruction is possible is to refuse to dogmatically assert it while nevertheless taking the risk of indicating and substantiating one’s investment in it by thinking deconstructively, as best as possible. While I will continue to gloss a clear definition of the word “deconstruction” whenever I make recourse to it so as to neither hide behind some disorienting vagueness nor alienate any reader less invested in the word than I am, I would like to foreground a working definition here. I take deconstruction to name a style of thinking or writing by which one unfolds the implications of a text or conceptual configuration as earnestly and thoroughly as possible in order to show the grounds and limits of that text, at which point one negotiates a different way of reading that will allow a thorough engagement with something important—an engagement that was foreclosed by the previous way of reading. See also footnote 14 below.

human beings, even if specific and worthy questions arise with respect to humanity. This kind of deconstruction would be a way of pursuing justice by making others (or rather, *other* others) visible, by opening a space to *let* them come, by hoping that my readers will also be able to open such spaces in their lives and beyond.

In order to better understand how we are related to others for Derrida, and in the process how deconstruction would be justice, I argue that it is necessary to understand a dense formulation made in *Specters of Marx*: “justice as incalculability of the gift and singularity of the an-economic ex-position to others” (*Specters of Marx* 26). Given that the incalculability of the gift is implied in an-economy and singularity is implied in the alterity of others, I will sometimes make recourse to a shortened version of this turn of phrase: justice as an-economic ex-position to others. What do these two condensed components mean, then? I shall consider each in turn.

I read ex-position to others to have a double meaning: to be exposed to the other and to be positioned toward the other. To be exposed to the other means that we can make contact with others, we can be affected by them, we can be approached or threatened or solicited by them, and that we can affect them in these various ways and more as well. To be ex-posed as positioned outward with regard to others would be a kind of extension of exposure. We ourselves are already involved across differences, in the lives and deaths and relations of others; we rely on others, we have come from others, been born, raised, nurtured, taught by others; we defend ourselves against others, pass by them, ignore them, suppress them in order to get by. Being already positioned outward, beyond ourselves, toward others, we must necessarily respond to them in some way, for even an attempt to not respond or avoid responding would itself be a form of responding to this ex-position, a way of responding by trying to close off that very ex-position. By being exposed to others, then, we are already ex-posed to or caught up in questions of *how* to respond to them, and therefore how to respond to others as best as possible. That is,

once we find ourselves among a range of possibilities for responding to others, we have already opened questions of evaluating better or worse ways of responding, and of these we are implicitly called by those very others to pursue the best of those possibilities (or even to push the limits of the possible). We may be tempted to ask for some concrete justification as to why we should wish to expend effort in better responding to our exposure to others, in better positioning ourselves outward with respect to others. In a sense, however, there is no concrete reason, at least not on our own behalf—because the pursuit of justice is for the sake of *others*, precisely. This is why it is necessary to insist on the specifically “an-economic” dimension of justice, to which I now turn.

§1.1 Justice as An-Economic Ex-Position to Others

§1.1.3 An-Economy: Justice as Gift Without Exchange

“The question of justice, the one that always carries beyond the law, is no longer separated, in its necessity or in its aporias, from that of the gift.”

—Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (30)

“Not for calculable and distributive justice. Not for law, for the calculation of restitution, the economy of vengeance or punishment Not for calculable equality, therefore, not for the symmetrizing and synchronic accountability or imputability of subjects or objects, not for a *rendering justice* that would be limited to sanctioning, to restituting, and to *doing right*, but for justice as incalculability of the gift and singularity of the an-economic ex-position to others.”

—Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (26)

“The gift must remain *aneconomic*.”

—Derrida, *Given Time* (7)

“For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt.”

—Derrida, *Given Time* (12)

Derrida explicitly affirms that justice offers a “demand” or “appeal” of the gift,⁷ while also

⁷ This word, *appel* in French, is also sometimes translated as “call”—a problem that will return in **Chapter 3: The Call**.

explicitly differentiating his sense of justice from other received notions of justice as calculable restitution, vengeance, or punishment. Why a gift? Derrida gives a clear exposition of justice as gift in “Force of Law,” where he writes that justice

seems to me to be irreducible in its affirmative character, in its demand of gift without exchange, without circulation, without recognition or gratitude, without economic circularity, without calculation and without rules, without reason or without rationality, in the sense of regulating mastery. (“Force of Law” 965⁸)

Justice must be pursued beyond any need or demand for exchange, circulation, recognition, gratitude, or circularity because all of these things would be insufficient to relate to others *as* others, that is to say, on their terms that are irreducible to our own. Any kind of circularity would risk reducing the gift to the giver, exchange or recognition being of the giver rather than the recipient of the gift, neutralizing its status as strictly a gift. We will return to this strict sense of the gift below.

This gift structure or an-economic character of justice is what motivates Derrida’s insistence on justice as “beyond contract”. As we have seen, Derrida does mention this non-contractual character of justice in “Force of Law” when he says that justice is “owed to the other, before any contract, because [the other] has *come*” (965), but in this text he does not explain what he means by contract. This may seem at first glance to be a petty concern, but in *Specters of Marx* Derrida elaborates in a way that is surprising and profound. Making use of the figure of the *arrivant* as discussed above, Derrida discusses a relation to the other, to “an alterity that cannot be anticipated” (81), a relation that we can therefore call justice, doing so justifiably and perhaps justly, even if Derrida does not use this word on this page of the text. He writes of justice as

⁸ Translation modified with reference to the French on 964. Curiously, the English version omits “au sens de la maîtrise régulatrice,” which I have added above as “in the sense of regulating mastery.” This error does not persist in the later edition and modified translation of “Force of Law” that appears in the essay collection *Acts of Religion*. See Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, edited by Gil Andar. New York: Routledge, 2001, 228-298, 254.

welcoming salutation accorded in advance to the absolute surprise of the *arrivant* from whom or from which one will not ask anything in return [this is the an-economic character of justice beginning to be evoked—A.W.] and who or which will *not* be asked to commit to the domestic contracts of any welcoming power (family, State, nation, territory, native soil or blood, language, culture in general, *even humanity*). (*Specters of Marx* 81-82, emphasis added)

What we must notice here is that “contract” means something much broader than its ordinary sense; here with regards to justice, contract names a structure anathema to justice as the relation to others, a structure by which others are reduced to the same or to the self, where responsibility excludes irreducible alterity by reducing it to the terms of similitude (considering others only insofar as they resemble oneself), terms that would be clearly outlined as if in a contract by which one would absolve oneself of responsibility to others not covered by those limited terms. Derrida’s parenthetical examples reveal the breadth of his thinking here and the immense demand raised by justice. I draw special attention to the last of these examples: “even humanity.” What would it mean to pursue justice “beyond contract” in general and beyond the contract of humanity in particular, in order to pursue justice for other (non-human) animals? My project is to open up this possibility for consideration and refinement through specific concepts that will make its pursuit possible, compelling, and resourceful. I also highlight this moment to dispel any doubts about the tenability (on Derrida’s terms and beyond) of my project here of conceptually justifying the pursuit of justice with and for other animals. Just as we easily refuse to accept that our responsibility to others could be limited by language, borders, family, lineage, citizenship, skin colour, and so on, even if important differences in experience are worth attending to here (which would be in the service of, rather than as a means of absolving our responsibility for, justice), we must open ourselves to our responsibility to other animals and the call for justice for other animals. I will return to this in **§2.1 Animal Alterity** when underscoring the urgency and possibility of reading other animals as *others* in the robust sense of the word, as

glossed above in §1.1.1 **Alterity**. What would it mean to say we are an-economically ex-posed to other animals? It would call for thinking about how we are *always already* ex-posed to other animals: we are exposed to them as they surround us, confront us, threaten us, solicit our attention, live in our houses and neighbourhoods and surroundings, as they appear on our plates, in our shoes and belts, in our families as “pets,” in our artistic artifacts as figures, metaphors, entertainment, and more. We position ourselves toward other animals in our lives, our writing, our styles, our diets, our leisure. I will return to this exposure under the heading of §2.3

Following.

But what of the an-economic character of justice? We have shown it to be relevant insofar as justice is “beyond contract,” including the contract of humanity. But how are we to act or expand on this in the pursuit of justice with respect to other animals? The other important clue Derrida gives is in describing justice as characterized by “the incalculability of the gift.” What does this mean? A gift, in order to remain a gift and not be annulled as gift and reducible to an economic exchange, cannot be given in order to expect something in return, even gratitude or acknowledgement. A gift, in order to remain a gift, cannot be given only if the recipient meets certain requirements or has certain capacities or will return the favour equitably or is a part of a contract in the broad sense detailed above. Derrida is unequivocal when he writes: “For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter-gift, or debt,” explaining that the gift “is annulled each time there is restitution or counter-gift” (*Given Time* 12). There may be different senses of giving in our everyday vocabulary—giving birthday gifts to family, taking a friend out to lunch—but because these traditionally require a reciprocal gesture, or at least come with the conscious or unconscious expectation of reciprocity, they would therefore not count as a gift in the strict sense explored by Derrida. This does not mean that such reciprocal gestures would be meaningless or bad. Rather, this strict definition of the gift shows that there is

something before and beyond reciprocity that is called for in our relations to others. This strict sense of the gift is at stake for us here with regard to justice.

What does this entail for our relations to other animals, that is to say, the possibility or pursuit of justice for other animals? It means that economic objections to the pursuit of justice for other animals are untenable and unjust. According to the reading of justice I am developing here, one emphatically cannot claim that other animals would be undeserving of justice because they cannot speak, because they cannot directly participate in the democratic state or in rational discourse, because they cannot reciprocate our efforts on their behalf, because they may lack a capacity for gratitude or an ability to express it. Even granting such a quick and enormous concession, supposing all of this were somehow easily and finally demonstrably true of all individuals of all species of non-human animals, none of this would be sufficient to absolve us of responsibility toward other animals; none of this would justify closing our ears to the call of justice, for justice for other animals. Responsibility, the call of justice, for justice, calls us to respond an-economically. In *Given Time*, his most prolonged engagement with the meaning of “the gift” and its possibilities or impossibility, Derrida writes: “We are not talking therefore about conditions in the sense of conditions posed (since . . . the gift, if there is any, [is] in this sense *unconditional*),” (*Given Time* 17, emphasis mine), continuing here in a footnote:

Of course, *this unconditionality must be absolute and uncircumscribed*. It must *not* be simply declared while in fact dependent in its turn on the condition of some context, on some proximity or family tie, be it general or specific (among human beings, for example, *to the exclusion of, for example, “animals”*). (*Given Time* 17 fn8, emphasis mine)

Here, Derrida explicitly asserts what I have argued above: because justice calls for the incalculability of the pure gift, this giving must be an-economic and therefore beyond contract of any kind. We are called to be generous—to give—to other animals. In what capacity or to what extent? This is not merely an enormous demand but an infinite or aporetic one. It is this infinite

or aporetic character of justice to which I now turn.

§1.2 Justice as Infinite, Aporetic, To-Come

§1.2.1 Infinitude: Infinite in Scope, Infinite in Number, Infinite in History...

“Deconstruction is already engaged by this infinite demand of justice, for justice...” (955)

“And I must . . . “address” . . . infinite problems, infinite in their number, infinite in their history, infinite in their structure, covered by the title *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. But we already know that these problems are not infinite simply because they are infinitely numerous, nor because they are rooted in the infinity of memories and cultures (religious, philosophical, juridical, and so forth) that we shall never master. *They are infinite*, if one may say so, in themselves, *because they require the very experience of the aporia...*” (947, emphasis added)

“I believe that there is no justice without this experience, however impossible it may be, of aporia.” (955)

–Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law”

Why does Derrida repeatedly identify justice with “the infinite”? That is, what can infinitude offer us through justice that a finite or clearly delimitable reading could not? While Derrida repeatedly makes use of the word “infinite” without elaborating or explaining, I read it as expressive of what he has called “differance” (with an *a*) or deferral since the beginning of his career: that is, infinitude calls us to differentiation and to deferral, both with respect to others, and to other concepts, other histories, other cultures, and so on.⁹ Derrida explicitly formulates a relation between justice and infinitude in “Force of Law,” as quoted in an epigraph above: justice calls us to address “infinite problems, infinite in their number, infinite in their history, infinite in

⁹ See Jacques Derrida, “Differance” in *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 1-28. For helpful introductory comments excised from that later version, see an earlier version in *Speech & Phenomena*, translated by David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, 129-160.

their structure” (947).¹⁰ All this would be impossible to exhaust, of course, and even more so in a modest document like the short thesis at hand. Nevertheless, how might it be possible to come to grips with the infinite or interminable character of justice? Let us begin by reading this sentence and suggesting a useful interpretation of infinitude (§1.2.1), before addressing several examples of the experience of aporia (§1.2.2), after which I propose that Derrida’s understanding of the “to-come” or “future-to-come” offers us a way of addressing the infinite or aporetic character of justice (§1.2.3), doing so in a way that has important consequences for our pursuit of justice with respect to others, including other animals. If I seem slow in addressing the ethical or political upshot of infinitude, it is because too quick a reading of infinitude can lead to crass dismissals of Derrida’s thinking. For example, it may be tempting to dismiss infinite demands as an exhausting, frustrating, and impossible standard for finite, mortal beings. It is of course true that we are finite and mortal—which is in part why we cannot do justice alone. We need others to pursue justice with us; we need others to help us be more just, and justice concerns precisely others, as we have read. Emphasizing our relations to others will help us understand the necessity and usefulness of this figure of infinitude. We will return to this possibility of dismissal or exhaustion in §1.2.2 **Aporia** in discussing the ghost of the undecidable and political philosopher Antonio Calcagno’s concerns about undecidability. In the meantime, let us confront and ponder infinitude.

How can we understand the infinitude of justice? Derrida writes that justice raises problems “infinite in number” because in any pursuit of justice, we can problematize any number of words, concepts, moves, texts, moments, histories, differences, and so on. If we were to try to

¹⁰ While Derrida makes this comment specifically about what is raised by the title of the conference at which he was invited to speak—“Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice”—I read it as also offering a helpful and clear indication as to how to think about justice more generally, a reading I take to be justified both for its usefulness and by his subsequent discussion, which takes up the “infinite structure” of the aporetic experience of justice through three examples, which I address below in §1.2.2 **Aporia**.

understand justice as responsibility, in order to take responsibility for this we would have to try to understand the way that the “concept of responsibility is inseparable from a whole network of connected concepts (property, intentionality, will, conscience, consciousness, self-consciousness, subject, self, person, community, decision, and so forth)” (955). While it will not be possible to exhaustively treat such a network of concepts or the problems related to such concepts, I suggest that by considering justice as infinite in its number of problems, we acknowledge the infinite complexity of any problem at hand—and are therefore better prepared to recognize shortcomings and injustices, and to broaden our thinking by formulating concepts and approaches that treat problems of justice in their breadth.

The problems raised by justice are infinite in their history because we can trace any of those problems through comparisons of any number of links along a chain of an infinite number of interactions, conversations, institutions, translations, changes, cultures, and so on—the last of these being a heading under which Derrida includes “religious, philosophical, juridical, and so forth,” emphasizing that cultural differences are more complicated than even national, territorial, linguistic, or temporal differences, even though they may intertwined with these. That is, even in trying to understand the word justice, we would find our problem amidst a network of related words from other languages, cultures, and so on: the “singular idioms” of “*Dikē, Jus, justitia, justice, Gerechtigkeit*, to limit ourselves to European idioms” (955). I would also add that we would find any one of these words treated by an infinite number of philosophers, legal theorists, and so on, including Derrida, Levinas, Heidegger, Benjamin, Schmitt, Heraclitus, and so on, even including differences between and within the works of each of these thinkers. While my project undertakes a close reading of Derrida, it does so in a way that is unavoidably tied to his readings of and differences from the above thinkers and more. The infinite history of problems of justice means that it would always be possible to address more numerous historical relations in

greater detail; and so while it would be possible and worthwhile to do so here, such a demand can be made of any and every pursuit of justice, and consequently cannot be fatal for any of them. It would instead be a call to continue working and thinking more broadly, a call to understand that the pursuit of justice is never finished. This point is true for more than the word justice, of course, and will equally well apply to our later readings of animality and its related concepts in **Chapter 2: Animality (Or: Animal Alterity)**.

What does this infinite history of an infinite number of problems mean for us in our pursuit of justice, then? Every term, every concept, every history is related to an infinitude of others; we should therefore be suspicious of any claim to have found the one and only fundamental key to thinking about justice, injustice, other humans, other animals, or other others. Nevertheless, any term can be read or interpreted as reflective of or related to any number of other concepts, positing that term as an axiom,¹¹ offering countless opportunities for insight, translation, and cross-pollination across different approaches of all sorts. This infinitude then means that we will have to decide—in the face of the undecidable, as we shall read below in **§1.2.2 Aporia**—which approach seems best to us, while trying to allow space for other possibilities, approaches, and voices in the future-to-come (**§1.2.3**). Where can we begin, then? With close reading and precision, as Derrida suggests. He writes: “One must be *juste* with justice, and the first way to do it justice is to hear, read, interpret it, to try to understand where it comes from, what it wants of us, knowing that it does so through singular idioms” (955). Perhaps justice begins with careful reading and interpretation, then. Through this thesis I aim to read in this way with respect to the words “justice” and “animality,” trying to understand how these are read in Derrida’s singular idiomatic terms and what they ask us to do. We have begun to read

¹¹ In this thesis, I rest on at least two axioms, then: justice as “an-economic ex-position to others,” as we read above in **§1.1**, and animals as *others* in the robust sense, as we shall read below in **§2.1: Animal Alterity**. Perhaps a third would also be at work there: Levinas’ “*tout autre est tout autre*” or every other is wholly other, which will also be treated in that section.

justice as offering problems infinite in number and infinite in history, then—what of the third aspect, infinitude in structure?

The third dimension of this threefold infinite—“infinite in structure”—is perhaps the strangest and most difficult term of the three, and the most necessary to attend to here because it is the most peculiar to Derrida’s work—and perhaps the most insightful and consequential as well. In short, problems of justice are infinite in structure because they cannot be finished or closed off once and for all. Derrida formulates this infinite structure through the figure of the “aporia” or non-passage, a term or concept that offers several complications and challenges, and is therefore worthy of an extended discussion. I shall now attend to a definition of the term before addressing the three examples of aporias given by Derrida in “Force of Law,” the most significant of which will be what he calls “the ghost of the undecidable,” which I will therefore treat last despite it appearing second in Derrida’s text.

§1.2.0 Justice as Infinite, Aporetic, To-Come

§1.2.2: Aporia: Non-Passage and Three Examples of Aporias

If justice raises problems not only infinite in number but “infinite in structure,” this is because they require, as Derrida puts it, “an experience of the aporia” (947). This deliberately paradoxical formulation articulates the tension of a contradiction: an experience is something one can pass through, something that is possible, while an aporia, *a-poros* or non-passage, is something one cannot pass through, something we cannot cross. In other words, one must address these problems, but not have finished with them—one must decide, but continue to attend to an unclosable undecidability. Even once one has decided—because one *must* decide, as we shall consider more closely below—once one has “made a call,” one must still listen for the call, for other calls, for the others who call, straining one’s ears even though one cannot

anticipate from whose voice, from what kind of being, or from where a call will come. To put the issue more plainly, justice and the problems raised by justice are “infinite in structure” *because* problems are infinite in number, and because of the unforeseeable arrival of infinite others; even after we have made a decision, others may bring it to our attention that the terms of the decision—its definitions or limitations that may have seemed necessary or even obvious at the time—may turn out to have been unjust and intolerable or at least problematic and worthy of rethinking. If we are to pursue justice, we must do our best to attend to this kind of ongoing exposure to others who may convince us otherwise, whether argumentatively or even performatively.

For Derrida, then, the structure of aporia is crucial for the pursuit of justice. Aporia, literally non-passage or the impassable, an impasse or an insoluble contradiction, is ordinarily thought to be a problem that ought to be solved and discarded by way of correct premises or a correct formula. This way of thinking is so pervasive that it will be necessary to guard against the temptation to fault Derrida for allowing justice to rely on the structure of an aporia. We will have to struggle to stay with the difficult demands put on us by such an unresolved and unresolvable structure; we will have to attend to and engage what the aporia lets us think about and what the aporia lets us do—and, as we shall see, what it allows *others* to do.

While in “Force of Law” Derrida gives three examples of aporetic experiences of justice, he insists that these are only *examples* of aporias, and that “in fact there is only one aporia, only one potential aporetic that infinitely distributes itself” (959). While Derrida does not explicitly make a claim as to what that one aporia is, I argue that it is best understood as the relation to others, the an-economic ex-position to others. While we have already discussed that formulation in detail above (§1.1), these three “examples” of aporias are nevertheless illuminating because of their more concrete structure, which will be easier to apply in our everyday relations with others. That is, addressing these examples will better allow Derrida’s thinking of justice to serve a

pragmatic function in our own lives, even at such moments of unresolvable difficulty. I will therefore attend to each of these three examples in turn, offering a clear summary of their stakes and aims, cautioning against tempting misunderstandings, and in each case I will offer a supplementary interpretation by which I will argue that each of these versions of the aporia of justice can and indeed must lead us to consider and reconsider our relations and responsibilities to other animals. I will also indicate ways of pursuing justice with other animals that are illuminated by aporia. As it turns out, the second version of the aporia—“the ghost of the undecidable”—is the most salient for my project here, and so I will treat it last and at greater length than the first and third.

We can understand this “one” structure of aporia in various terms: as the difference between the call of justice and the pursuit of justice, between the possibility of justice and the attempt to do justice, between thinking about justice or what may be just and attempts to formulate or enforce laws in order to try to be just, or between the call and the response. The three examples of this aporia that Derrida gives are named (1) the suspension of the rule, (2) the ghost of the undecidable, and (3) the urgency obstructing knowledge. Because these are only “examples,” we must avoid the temptation to put too much explanatory weight on any one of them or even all three taken together, since by definition other examples can and must be devised—or rather, examples will devise themselves—insofar as this aporia “infinitely distributes itself.” Nevertheless, taking a closer look at them will be illuminating for several reasons: to show how and why it is necessary to avoid over-emphasizing law in relation to justice, to understand the role of decision and its relation to undecidability (a concept particularly given to misunderstanding in readings of Derrida’s work), and to vividly show concrete ways in which it is possible and necessary to stay with the trouble that arises in hearing the call for justice. Derrida repeatedly emphasizes that this structure of aporia is “infinite,” and the understanding of

this word we developed in **§1.2.1 Justice as Infinite, Aporetic, To-Come** will aid in understanding Derrida's three examples of aporia, which in turn will help us address and respond to the "disjunction" of relating to others (**§1.3**).

Derrida calls his first example or version of aporia "the suspension of the rule." Here he explains that whenever one is trying to figure out how to respond to any situation according to a rule or set of rules, no matter what the situation or the rule—whether juridical law, convention, or some other kind—that the rule itself is never a guarantor of justice. Simply following rules that have been set up, however rigorous the standards, is insufficient for justice. One can always ask, and others can always respond, "This decision was legal or according to the established rules—but was it just?" That is, while one is undertaking considerations in order to make a decision, one always suspends the rule or rules one is trying to follow, insofar as one could always find the rules to require an unprecedented interpretation or else that they could themselves be unjust and in need of revision. But in order to avoid being constrained by an interpretation of Derrida's writing on justice that would be limited to law in the ordinary sense, it is crucial to understand that this suspension is in a legal judge's power as much as it is in the power of anyone faced with a rule of any kind. While Derrida's explains this aporetic structure of the suspension of the rule by way of a juridical scene—he evokes a judge considering a law—we should not take this to be an exclusive example, given Derrida's references here not only to law but also to rules and principles (961). This exclusivity would be entailed by an over-emphasis on law in interpreting Derrida's writing on justice, and it is for the sake of avoiding this exclusivity that I maintain that it is necessary to robustly understand justice in a much broader sense. In doing so, we would begin to understand the ways in which our interactions and relations with others are constantly governed by rules, principles, or conventions, however implicit or unconscious—which we can see daily in our greetings, our gratitude, our goodbyes, and much

more. What kind of possibilities would be opened up by including other (non-juridical) structures of law, convention, principle, or rule-following? Among many others, one example would be the unwritten rules and axioms by which we attend to or ignore the lives, existences, and needs of other animals. That is, in deciding how to respond to other animals, the unwritten rules by which we tend to respond—that they do not matter, that they can be exploited or used almost entirely without restriction—can always be suspended. It may be legal, it may be according to historical and cultural convention that we treat other animals in these ways, but is it just? We can always respond in this way, and we must struggle to understand this question as infinite and aporetic.

Going slightly out of order from Derrida's first aporia to his third, I now turn briefly to "the urgency obstructing the horizon of knowledge." This third example that Derrida gives of the aporetic experience of justice shows another tension: between the urgency of the situation and the need for knowledge about it, between immediate action and infinite knowledge. The infinite demand of justice would call for infinite knowledge: we should know as much as possible about the situation and the others to which and to whom we are called to respond. At the same time, however, this infinite demand calls us to respond immediately and without delay, for the sake of a more just future in which others will not have to suffer injustice. Here we can read Derrida's name for this third version of the aporia of justice, "the urgency obstructing the horizon of knowledge," as an eloquent condensation of this tension. The contradiction at work in this aporia is unresolvable insofar as the more we search for knowledge about a situation, the more we delay our response—and the more quickly we try to respond to an urgent situation, the less we will know about its details and the others caught up in them. This leaves us at an impasse with no course of action guaranteed to be just. What can we learn about justice by examining this contradiction?

Given the infinite number of problems of justice, in an attempt to emphasize the urgency

of certain injustices some may be eager to claim that we owe no responsibilities to other animals. Such claims often happen by discounting the worth of other animals, or by claiming insufficient knowledge about their lives—for example, that we cannot be completely certain that they feel pain, or that they are sentient, and so on. A counter-response to this would call for infinite knowledge: of the near-infinite number of species that have lived and an infinite detail and rigour in demonstrating capacities of sentience or pain. But there will also be an absolute urgency: if other animals are indeed sentient or do feel pain, then we would be called immediately to respond, and we would in fact already be late for the demand to respond to their plight as quickly and as widely as possible. We would then have the aporetic structure of justice that Derrida calls “the urgency obstructing the horizon of knowledge.” Because this structure is constitutive of justice broadly, it would be unjust to dismiss those who pursue justice for other animals because of their sense of urgency obstructing the horizon of knowledge, for such obstructions eventually become necessary in all pursuits of justice. Those who call for more information before beginning to consider the plight of other animals may be in danger of shirking the necessity of deciding in a moment of non-knowledge; those who decry the pursuit of knowledge as wholly unrelated to the pursuit of justice would be ignoring the necessary or call for knowledge. To face this aporia would mean to hold on to both poles here—the pursuit of knowledge and acceptance of the limits of knowledge, both of which would defer back to one another. While this tension may be unending, it will call us to address the future-to-come, as we will read below (§1.2.3).

I argue that this way of formulating the aporetic experience of justice underscores and illuminates the necessity of considering the “future-to-come” as a crucial part of thinking and pursuing justice. We can easily understand that justice calls for infinite knowledge; whether in the case of an act of violence or institutionalized systemic violence, one is called to know who was or is involved, how their personal history or situation might affect their culpability, what

could be done to redress the situation as best as possible, what has been irrecoverably lost, what historical precedents exist and to what extent the situation at hand differs, and more. One can always read and learn more about others and the situations in which they are embroiled; in short, the horizon of knowledge is infinite. But what offers the biggest challenge here is not the call to know more, but rather the difficult necessity that one must always cut short its pursuit: a decision made in pursuit of justice is always irreducibly ungrounded and non-knowing. We can never know everything about a situation before deciding. Even if we were to refer to some ground that would seem to justify our decision, our deferral to it and the delay of temporality constitutive of such a deferral would put us in a position to decide anew on that ground, leaving us ungrounded.

As Derrida writes in “Force of Law,” a decision or response made in pursuit of justice happens “Not in the absence of rules and knowledge but of a restitution of rules that by definition is not preceded by any knowledge or by any guarantee as such” (967-969). What does this mean? When pursuing justice, we will always have established rules to follow and a horizon of knowledge established in advance. We may, for example, act according to a rule that we are ethically obligated only to other humans, and we may take ourselves to know that other animals do not think or feel as deeply as humans, or that they are less self-reflexive or less inventive or whatever other criteria one wishes to take, establishing a horizon of knowledge that would serve only to confirm this divide between humans and other animals, whether it makes use of biology, ethology, psychology, theology, or any other discipline(s) to establish itself. In the face of any call for justice for other animals, then, we would already seem to have an unassailable set of rules and a horizon of knowledge to follow in asserting that other animals would be beyond our concern. By thinking of and pursuing justice as aporetic experience, however, we can understand this situation as one of non-passage: that is, as we have read, we are called to address the ways in which we do not simply pass through pre-established rules because have the chance to suspend

them, to re-evaluate and change them for the better, that is, an-economically for the sake of the others to whom we are ex-posed. But given the aforementioned tension between urgency and knowledge—in other words, the fact that we can only suspend rules for so long—how can we continue to pursue justice without simply giving in to completely self-assured naivete on the one hand or an ethically idle pursuit of knowledge on the other? At the same time, how do we avoid the temptation to dismiss Derrida’s thinking out of hand or replace it with another paradigm? I argue that we can reckon with these problems in our thinking and pursuit of justice by understanding and trying to open up to what Derrida calls “the future-to-come.” But in order to better understand the necessity and stakes of addressing the future-to-come, I now turn to Derrida’s second version of aporia, “the ghost of the undecidable.”

Derrida’s second example or version of the aporia of justice is named “the ghost of the undecidable,” of which the “ghost” is just as important as the “undecidable,” for both terms transform one another. Primarily at issue here is the relation between decision and undecidability, and how this is borne out through what Derrida calls “the ordeal of the undecidable.” In addressing this ordeal, it will be necessary to guard against oversimplifying undecidability as some inability to make decisions. This is crucial to understanding what Derrida’s concept of undecidability offers us. In trying to understand undecidability, I will also address an objection raised by political philosopher Antonio Calcagno, whose concerns about the challenges and potential frustrations raised by undecidability are worth working through in order to clarify what is at stake in undecidability and what it calls us to do. In short, emphasizing alterity and our exposure to others will help us better understand why undecidability is crucial for justice, and this in turn will help us move toward an understanding of what Derrida calls the “to-come” or the future-to-come, the necessity and usefulness of which will be better understood in light of undecidability.

Derrida describes the unavoidable necessity of making decisions when he remarks that “Justice, as law, is never exercised without a decision that *cuts*, that divides” (963). Any decision, however, brings with it the necessity of facing what Derrida calls “the ordeal of the undecidable.” Derrida does not mean that no kind of decision whatsoever can be made or justified in any way, a kind of thinking that could easily lead one who followed it to be interminably paralyzed with indecision and a lack of conceptual resources to push through it. What *does* Derrida mean by undecidability, then? We can use as a guide either of the alternate phrases he uses, which reveal the stakes of undecidability each through a different figure: the “ordeal” of the undecidable or the “ghost” of the undecidable. First the “ordeal,” which will then help us understand what sort of “ghost” must remain haunting. Derrida explains that any decision “worthy of the name,” (965) that is, any act insightfully described as a decision, would not be quickly or easily made by reference to some received formula or by simply following some rule (963). A decision would be unnecessary if one already had a clear framework to solve the difficulty; the alleged decision would be made in advance and therefore annulled as a decision. Rather than a pre-resolved easiness, a decision always requires “the ordeal of the undecideable.” One must tarry with the weight of the decision, with the difficulty of trying to determine the best course of action or best possible response to others, deciding what may be the best possible way of ameliorating a situation. One who faces a decision is faced with options that cannot simply be weighed out by a rule—or the rule may seem to make contradictory demands. Such an ordeal is arduous, challenging, and inundated with objections from others.

So the ordeal of the undecidable does, in part, mean weighing options as carefully as possible, and eventually making a “cut,” the sudden and groundless character of which we addressed above with “the urgency obstructing the horizon of knowledge.” But Derrida complicates this ordeal when he claims that “the undecidable is not merely the oscillation or the

tension between decisions” or options (963). What is it in addition, then? It is a “ghost”; it remains haunting. Derrida claims that “any decision worthy of the name is never past or passed” (965). This is the meaning of his use of the figure of the “ghost” in “the ghost of the undecidable.” Derrida writes: “the undecidable remains caught, lodged, at least as a ghost—but an essential ghost—in every decision, in every event of decision” (965). Even if the ordeal of the undecidable can in some sense be left behind, its ghost remains haunting. This is because we can always call into question any justification or rule that would be given before or after a decision in order to attempt to justify it. That is, the “suspension of the rule” is always possible, and therefore remains ghostly or haunting. Put otherwise, an extension of the “horizon of knowledge” can always reflect back on any past decision in a new light. The reason I have emphasized undecidability over these other two interpretations of aporia is because it can offer us a clear articulation of both the “ordeal” and the “ghost” of the undecidable—that is, it indicates the experience of aporia that we all undergo in the face of a decision, and the haunting possibilities that always remain afterwards, even if we repress them. By considering the infinite or aporetic character of justice, we transform our way of thinking about “decisions,” and in turn we transform the very way in which we approach, make, and reflect on decisions. Undecidability means we cannot make decisions that are final or absolute; rather, what we call “decisions” must from now on be read as moments that can be revisited and revised. The difficulties here are real and never surmountable once and for all. I will argue that our best hope of confronting this insurmountable or infinite difficulty is by addressing the future-to-come, but before I offer this as a response I will address Calcagno’s frustrations so that we can better attend to the necessity and stakes of addressing the future-to-come.

Noting that Derrida’s thinking underscores the necessity of articulating differences, the difficulty or even impossibility of doing so within certain political structures, and the increasing

complexity of political communication, Calcagno offers three possible responses to Derrida's thinking: first, flat-out rejection; second, despair, paralysis, or resignation; and third, acceptance of the perpetual inadequacy of articulating differences in the face of which we continue to try anyway. I dismiss the first option, simple acceptance of a metaphysics of presence, for reasons I take to be undeniable and relatively obvious: others—whether we understand them as other living beings, other desires, other minds, other times, or otherwise—are not fully present to us, are not fully accessible, are not fully knowable at any time, whether in their past or future, or in any apparently “present” moment. This necessitates vigilant attention to differences—in time, place, context, and between others among whom we find ourselves. While in my own thinking and in the project at hand I have undertaken the third of these options, the second is perhaps the most interesting to discuss insofar as I am invested in helping others avoid such paralysis or resignation, and insofar as I encourage others to resist dismissing Derrida on the basis of such an interpretation. Moreover, offering an argument as to why the second possibility is not compelling will offer added justification and clarity to the third possibility.

How, precisely, does Calcagno outline his objection? In his 2007 book *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events, and Their Time*,¹² he writes:

[W]e can simply despair and remain frustrated by Derridean undecidability. We become overwhelmed by the fact that ultimately all that is to come is undecidable and uncertain. A feeling of paralysis ensues in that one ultimately realizes that reality and any decisions we make about reality, especially political ones, will never come to presence and will continue to undo themselves as they attempt to come to some kind of presence. Why bother doing anything or why respond politically when undecidability becomes so arch-structuring? (31)

Calcagno does not ultimately side with such an objection, conceding that “[t]hough undecidability is frustrating, this does not mean that we need stop trying to intervene to bring about justice, even though it is undecidable” (59). Calcagno finds an antidote to that frustration

¹² Antonio Calcagno, *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events, and Their Time*. London: Continuum, 2007.

or exhaustion in the call and motivation to pursue justice, and on this point our projects coincide: “one can read a Derridean sense of oblique justice as that call for a continual responsibility to be just” (50), adding that “it is the very non-achievement or imperfection of justice (i.e., injustice) that serves to motivate us or call us to act even more justly. We are called to respond by its very inachievement” (50). We have discussed a version of this problem under the heading of §1.2.1 **Infinitude** above, and will discuss various aspects of it below under the heading of §1.3 **Disjuncture**. However, Calcagno again raises the specter of exhaustion in the conclusion to his book (94).¹³ Here he turns to Derrida’s decisive political stances—against the death penalty, for example—for guiding evidence that even Derrida is willing and able to make decisions in the face of undecidability (94).¹⁴ Such a clear example will be illuminating, since it will help us understand the way in which undecidability names more than a relationship to a decision that can or must be made, insofar as it also names a relationship to decisions that *have been* made. This doubled temporality of undecidability—that is, as undecidable with respect to not only the future but also the past—will become clearer with respect to alterity, insofar as it indicates and underscores the necessity of deferring to others. In turn, this will help us understand the

¹³ There Calcagno writes: “...if matters remain undecidable, then how do we make any concrete, and consequently limited, decisions, especially when the pressing violence or injustice of a situation calls us to act? If undecidability emerges as a concrete result from the temporal structure of the democracy to come, then any kind of temporalized politics will concomitantly suffer from this undecidability. Why bother acting when things will ultimately remain open-ended and unresolved?” (93-94)

¹⁴ Calcagno also reads Derrida’s “deconstructive” style of thinking as itself a founding and continually renewed decision. He writes: “Though this is problematic for Derrida, we can turn to his own adamant political temporalized decisions and choices.” He continues: “Primary among Derrida’s decisions is his decision to continue to choose deconstruction as his singular political intervention.” This example is illuminating, but I would argue that even Derrida’s “deconstructive” style, if it can be characterized as the result of a kind of decision, would best be characterized as undecidable. Throughout his work, Derrida often makes recourse to conditional statements about deconstruction: e.g., “Deconstruction, if such a thing exists” (“Force of Law” 945). See also “Deconstructions: The Im-possible,” in *French Theory in America*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer and Sande Cohen. New York: Routledge, 2001, 13-32, especially 23 and following. See also footnote 6 above. This is to say that even in his writing, Derrida continually maintains that he cannot decide once and for all on the meaning of his work, on the meaning of the word deconstruction, or even if what he has done will have been regarded as deconstruction. Far from leading us to frustration or exhaustion, I read these gestures—and undecidability more broadly—as gestures of generosity and attempts to make space for others: for other readers, other writers, other thinkers, and other others still. Derrida invites us to respond without merely accepting his decisions as our own. Might deconstruction have lead us to become more just to other animals? Perhaps; my wager of the thesis at hand is written in that space opened up by Derrida’s writing.

undecidability at stake in my project and in relating to other animals broadly.

While Calcagno does not give into the specter of exhaustion that he raises, I take the objection to raise an earnest danger, and in dealing with it we will have more compelling reasons to undertake a thinking and pursuit of justice in the Derridean terms I have laid out here. It is therefore worth clarifying and expanding on the problem and Calcagno's way of dealing with it, which defers to "the flux of reality" and the undoing of presence named by undecidability (58-59). I am in wholehearted agreement with Calcagno on this point: it is indeed necessary to accept, tarry with, and attempt to do better in spite of ongoing change and differentiation. Nevertheless, I ask: how can we get critical purchase on this flux, apart from understanding it as undecidable and undoing presence? In what other terms or by what other means can we hope to respond well?

Derrida's opposition to the death penalty is instructive and illuminating. What is undecidable about the death penalty for Derrida would be what the death penalty *is* precisely and what its *limits* are. In Vol. I of his seminars *The Death Penalty*,¹⁵ Derrida suggests that "the death penalty" can be thought as a much broader structure than what we usually call "capital punishment"—that is, the legalized putting to death of "criminals"—suggesting it may concern the putting to death "of one living being by another living being in general" (231). If we follow through on this kind of thinking, opposition to the death penalty would call us to think about others put to death in war or left to die in poverty, for example, and he even suggests that we should consider the deaths of other animals when we consider the death penalty. The above quotation drawn out in a slightly larger context bears this out:

at the horizon of our seminar, obviously, there is the question of man's putting to death of animals and of whether one can speak of a death penalty inflicted by man on animals, or whether the death penalty is something proper to man, a putting to death only of man by man and not of one living being by another

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *The Death Penalty*, Vol. I, translated by Peggy Kamuf. University of Chicago Press, 2014.

living being in general (231).

Derrida does not definitively claim here that we ought to do so, but by raising it he does indicate it as a necessary and worthwhile question. A reading of Derrida's *Death Penalty* seminars with respect to the pursuit of animal justice would then become salient and perhaps transformative.

Derrida follows a similar path of thinking much more provocatively in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* when he asks: "Do we consent to presume that every murder, every transgression of the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' concerns only man . . . and that, in sum, there are crimes only 'against humanity'?"¹⁶ (48) Since the question follows a declaration that the confusion of the category of "the animal" is "a crime . . . against animals," the question is more pointed than it may appear out of context. We will revisit these claims in **Chapter 2** with regards to the question of animal alterity (§2.1) For now it will suffice to emphasize that these provocations call into question the terms and limits of the concept of "the death penalty," or in other words, they make its concept undecidable insofar as it is haunted by other possibilities, such as the possibilities of addressing other animals under its heading. To say that the death penalty or any other atrocity is undecidable, then, is not to say that its severity is lessened, but rather that its terms and decisions made on them are never final and can be reinterpreted. Our reinterpretations will still have to answer to others, and will still call for precision and infinite responsibility. In other words, the meaning of past and future discourses on the death penalty can change, and therefore new problems of justice and injustice can be raised and addressed, or old problems can be reformulated and readdressed. The specter of exhaustion still remains, however. How can we respond to it?

I argue that in order to answer both of the questions I have raised through Calcagno's work—to "why bother?" and "how to get critical purchase on undecidability or the flux of

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, translated by David Wills. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

reality?”—we should look to alterity and the future-to-come. That is, we can and must engage the undecidability of any situation by, with, for, and through others, and by means of the unforeseeable future-to-come. We must accept and confront undecidability because we have to go on living and especially because we have to go on living with others—others who will come to change the meaning of past decisions and who will bring about future changes that will have to be confronted anew.¹⁷ As we have seen (in §1.1), justice as ex-position to others reveals that we are exposed to others, we are called to understand our predispositions and to reposition ourselves; we are also called to do so an-economically, that is, without looking for a profitable return on an investment. It might still be insisted that the frustration of aporia or undecidability, of never being able to know whether one is just, seems to be an unbearable burden.

Undecidability is indeed unbearable in the present: it cannot be solved, resolved, or dealt with in the present. Any attempts to reckon with the undecidable and have done with it in the present will surely end in disappointment, in exhaustion, in resignation, or worse.

What does this mean, then, if undecidability cannot be solved in the present? A decision, if it has any hope to have been just, will have to open itself to others and to what Derrida calls the future-to-come, which also means that the legacy of the past is never assured. This does not mean waiting for a future present in which everything undecidable will be solved once and for all. Rather, it means an ongoing attentiveness to the unforeseeable and the arrival of others, as we shall now read.

§1.2 Justice as Infinite or Aporetic

¹⁷ Even an attempt to resort to complete skepsis would itself be a decision on the undecidable, one that would proceed as if it were possible to know once and for all that all is undecidable. The double-bind of Derrida's thinking of undecidability—that is, being bound to decide, but also bound to the impossibility of deciding once and for all—prevents such a totalization. I kindly nod to Antonio Calcagno for this excellent insight, given in personal correspondence.

§1.2.3 The Future-to-Come: Tarrying with Infinitude/Aporia

“‘Perhaps,’ one must always say perhaps for justice.”

–Derrida, “Force of Law” (971)

I argue that it is neither by accident nor by distraction that Derrida mentions the future-to-come when discussing the third version of the aporetic experience of justice, a moment that is relevant to all three versions due to their similarity and interrelations, as we have seen. While he does not explicitly explain its relation to aporia and justice there, what Derrida calls *l’avenir* or the future-to-come offers a way of understanding how to bring together justice as aporetic experience with justice as an-economic ex-position to others, also offering an indication of how one can comport oneself in the pursuit of justice—that is, how one can try to be more just to others.

I take the future-to-come to have two main features: arrival and retrospection, both of which are unforeseeable. Arrival is a name for change, for what happens or befalls us, and it is somewhat vague for good reason: it is inclusive of other events and other beings. That is, what arrives can be a being or an event, and the term “arrival” does not presuppose the priority of one or the other of these terms. Indeed, it even leaves the way open to other terms, to what may arrive or come in terms that we do not have yet. This openness, uncertainty, or lack of presupposition about the future is what is meant by the unforeseeable, and characterizes the future-to-come. This unforeseeability is what distinguishes Derrida’s use of two French words for “the future”—*le futur* and *l’avenir*—which I here translate as “the future” and “the future-to-come,”¹⁸ respectively. The future, *le futur*, is foreseeable, calculable, and predictable: it is a part of my future that I will have to pay the rent, to take a banal example, or that I will be able to vote in an upcoming election, and the like. With respect to the concerns of my project here, namely

¹⁸ By using “the future-to-come” I follow translator Peggy Kamuf’s invention in her translation of *Specters of Marx*. I note here that the French *l’avenir* is sometimes varied by Derrida with a hyphen: *l’à-venir*, literally “the to-come.”

relations with other animals, it is part of the foreseeable future that most humans will freely eat other animals, many will keep companion animals, others will visit animals in zoos, many will support and/or benefit from all manner of experiments on other animals, and so on. By contrast, the future-to-come names the unforeseeable, the incalculable, the unpredictable. An unexpected event, good or bad—a revolutionary invention, the arrival of new living beings, human or otherwise, as birth or emergence of a new species, or the extinction of one or many—could all be a part of the future-to-come. Winning the lottery, getting in a car crash, or the arrival of mass-produced and pervasive solar energy could all be relatively banal examples of unforeseeable arrivals from the future-to-come, although perhaps even these would be too predictable for our time since we would be all too prepared to deal with these conceivable futures. What arrives may be much less predictable.

What about retrospection, then? Retrospection from the foreseeable future would be predictable and calculative—one might realize that one had calculated well or miscalculated with respect to some particular features of a situation, and even if those features were initially overlooked they could conceivably have been foreseen. This kind of retrospection will be available to us and others like us. But the retrospection of the future-to-come is different, inasmuch as the future-to-come names a possibility of retrospection from an unforeseeable perspective—one which has not arrived yet or who has not arrived yet. Thus it is not sufficient to simply take into account the perspectives of as many others as possible, since any rules or conventions according to which those perspectives would be “taken into account” can be suspended, even if it is still necessary to try. In order to offer the promise or possibility of being more just, one would have to be more attentive to others—both to those being addressed and those not yet addressed—and make space for them to arrive, to react and respond meaningfully, simply because they are other (as we have discussed in **§1.1 Justice as An-Economic Ex-**

Position to Others). What comes to the fore here with the future-to-come is the fact that no one can foresee the reactions, the perspective of the other—and this is true of those alive now as much as it is of those who have yet to arrive. In the pursuit of justice, one must also try to make a space for the arrival of others to come, that is, others who may arrive and which or whom we may struggle to understand, or for which or for whom we may not yet have terms. More importantly still, we must also try to make a space for them to react meaningfully or respond in their own way to the space, the decision, the rule or other text we may have established.

To briefly consider a handful of examples: we can look back on historical practices like vivisection as unbearably cruel and unjust, but we must also face the future-to-come that may look back on practices we take for granted and judge them to be cruel and unjust as well. Perhaps factory farming, perhaps animal experimentation, perhaps the existence of zoos or the rate of extinction of species all over the world will all be seen as impossibly barbaric in a way that will be felt deeply at the heart of some culture to come. The changes implied in each of these examples would involve carefully listening to and addressing others that for many do not (yet) count as others: other animals. This will be our point of departure in **Chapter 2**, unfolded in **§2.1: Animal Alterity**.

Crucially, there are no guarantees in addressing the future-to-come, nothing *present* that can assure us once and for all; we have to lean in to listen and wait. This is not a call to quietism, to a hapless resignation to doing nothing. On the contrary, it is a hyperbolic raising of the stakes: not only does justice call for you to do your best for the sake of others here and now, it also calls you to attend to your exposure to the future-to-come: whatever you do, you will not know immediately whether you have done well, and you will have to continue to figure out how to listen to others, to listen well, and perhaps to change your decision, your projects, your plans, or even yourself accordingly. You will have to ask how you might let such other possibilities arrive.

This project of learning to listen to others, to engage them, to make space for them, is infinite or aporetic, as we have already said, which we are here reading as oriented to the unforeseeable future-to-come—to the arrival and retrospection of others. How can we think clearly about these possibilities to come in order to orient our thinking and responding?

We can gain a great deal of clarity on Derrida's thinking of justice by offering a condensation of his intervention through a pair of contrasting phrases: the unjust example of "I am just" in comparison to the more just phrase, "Perhaps this will have been just." It would not be just for anyone to declare "I am just," or even that a person or decision *is* just (961-963), as if according to some present calculation or indubitable certainty one could be totally self-assured of justice. Why is this so? In short, to recapitulate what we have read above, because such a declaration or corresponding comportment would exclude the arrival and retrospection of a future-to-come; it would render the infinite or aporetic experience of justice prematurely finite or passable; it would close off an an-economic ex-position or exposure to others by way of some economic calculus. By contrast to declaring oneself just or aspiring to do so, in the spirit of Derrida's thinking I offer a condensed but tentative alternative declaration, or rather a tentative promise: "Perhaps this will have been just." Derrida writes: "Perhaps, one must always say perhaps for justice" (971). I argue that this tentativeness is made for ethical reasons, that is, for the sake of justice—which is to say to address the contingent fragility of one's exposure to others and to the future-to-come. To say perhaps—*peut-être*, literally may-be in Derrida's French—is to offer in one's actions and words a genuine attempt and the promise of a better future, while at the same time offering a place for others, for their reactions, feelings, thoughts, objections, or other engagements. To offer hope for what "will have been" is to attend precisely to what I have been calling retrospection: that one must hand it over to others to judge what will have happened in our lifetimes in light of future events and perspectives. This could even include changes in

ourselves; we will have different perspectives in any future-to-come.

How, then, does this pertain to my project, namely the development of conceptual resources for the engagement with and potential amelioration of relations to other animals—that is, for the possibility of a more just future-to-come? With regards to our relations with other animals, let us begin to compare the possibilities of the future with those of the future-to-come. The predictable, calculable, foreseeable future includes the familiar and pervasive modes of relating to other animals: as used for food, as meat or through other products like dairy and eggs; for clothing, in the form of leather or fur; in medical research, testing chemical compounds on rats or mice prior to human trials, for example; in entertainment through film, television, circuses, rodeos, and zoos; as companions or sources of amusement under the heading of “pets”; as disposable and distasteful disruptions as “pests” or “trash animals,” or through other relations still. As Derrida notes in “Force of Law,” animals do appear in the law both historically and in our time, even including some “animal rights” and laws against inflicting some forms of suffering on other animals, but he notes that “these are considered to be either archaisms or still marginal and rare phenomena not constitutive of our culture” (951). Indeed, animals that are protected are generally treated as property of the human beings considered real legal subjects who may decide to speak on their behalf, offering secondary or marginal legal protection; nevertheless protections disappear when these “owners” profit from the suffering of their animal subjects, as a even a cursory comparison between “pets” and farmed animals reveals, where protections for the latter are close to nonexistent. These kinds of examples would all be a part of the foreseeable future, the limited and calculable *futur*. In contrast to this relation to other animals as marginal and secondary at best, my project aims to open the possibility of thinking our relations to other animals and responsibilities to them as pervasive and as fundamental to who and what we are and as called for in our ethical and political undertakings. I address this

directly in **§2.1 Animal Alterity** by considering alterity as a crucial axiom in relating to other animals. But because such an axiom is not widespread—“still marginal and rare”—the broader implications of such an axiom seems less a part of the calculable future and better thought of as perhaps a part of a future-to-come.

What, then, can we say about a future-to-come in our relations with other animals? In order to open the possibility of a more just future-to-come we would have to pursue a more just an-economic ex-position to these other animals. That is to say, we (and others to come) would have to discover or invent ways of recognizing our unavoidable exposure to other animals, which would then lead the way to re-positioning ourselves with respect to that exposure. Such a re-positioning would be undertaken an-economically, that is, generously and without any expectation of economic return on the investment, as we read in **§1.1.3 An-Economy**—for example, not for the sake of specific humans nor humanity’s survival, as much as possible. This re-positioning would have to be infinite and aporetic in the senses that we just discussed through **§1.2 Justice as Infinite, Aporetic, To-Come**. That is, throughout this future-to-come, there would be an ongoing engagement with the problems infinite in number, in history, and in structure that arise when we confront the possibilities of pursuing justice for other animals; that is to say, we would recognize that infinitude as constitutive of the pursuit of justice, and therefore not justifiably any objection to the pursuit of justice. In other words, it will not do to say we have not the time or the energy to pursue justice for other animals, wholly or partly because we can point toward problems infinite in number, history, or structure with respect to issues primarily between humans. The infinitude of concerns that call for justice—the breadth of which are treated across ethics and politics, in theory and through feminist, disability, and critical race studies, and under so many other names—can offer no objection to any particular call for justice because infinitude is constitutive of the pursuit of justice. What is called for here is to say

“perhaps” in our pursuit of justice for or with other animals. That is, we will have to do our best while opening the way for unforeseeable arrival and retrospection. We will not be able to say for certain what is or is not possible in the future-to-come in our relations with other animals. In order to pursue this unforeseeable future we would have to strive to let others come to judge us, that is, we would have to try our best to listen to them, to see from their perspectives, to attend to their irreducible differences without simply or finally appropriating them completely, even if some degree of appropriation is inevitable. Crucially, I argue in this thesis that we would also have to earnestly consider the perspectives of other animals—that is, to consider what we so blithely call “animals” as *others* in a robust sense to be treated in **§2.1 Animal Alterity**.

It is worthwhile to note in passing that there have already been other names for the pursuit of justice for and with other animals, namely vegetarianism, veganism, or “animal rights”. While the communities and discourses associated with these terms no doubt have important and unignorable contributions to make to the project I am attempting to explicitly inaugurate here, namely the pursuit of what I am calling “animal justice,” and indeed they have already contributed in an implicit or subterranean way to my thinking and writing, nevertheless I insist that Derrida’s thinking/writing concerning justice shows a rigour and breadth that is unique and illuminating, particularly with respect to the concepts of ex-position, an-economy, infinitude and aporia, as well as the future-to-come, in addition to the concepts to be addressed throughout the rest of my thesis. I maintain that these concepts or terms can clarify the philosophical foundations and wide-ranging implications implied in the pursuit of justice, not only for the sake of other humans and not only for the sake of other non-humans. That is, my work in reading/writing a “Derridean” approach to other animals offers resources for problematizing and engaging vegetarian, vegan, and animal rights discourses, for example. This could help push their limits and temper the severity or impatience of some approaches, insofar as the infinitude of

problems we all face calls for understanding, patience, and continually renewed creativity in trying to rally others to our favoured pursuit of justice. That is, while I have a sense for the infinite depth and urgency of injustices concerning other animals, I will inevitably lack a refined sense for other injustices (racial, gendered, etc.), despite efforts in the direction of intersectionality, just as the opposite may be true of others more attentive to other injustices. That is, since problems concerning justices are infinite in number, no one finite being can be expected to always already understand all injustices, and so we will have to accept the ongoing task of both informing and supporting others as best we can, and otherwise than polemically.

To that end, the concepts I develop here are also constructed with the aim of being communicable and compelling—or at least thought-provoking, and crucially, without being combative—to those who may not readily or even secretly identify with vegetarian, vegan, or animal rights concerns, others to whom these discourses can often be deeply inhospitable. To be concerned with all animals also means all humans, even or especially the very ones with whom it is the most challenging to communicate or agree. All these concerns, however, cannot be explicitly treated in the limited space below, but will be addressed implicitly and would be worth expanding on in the future-to-come.

In order to gain some critical and active purchase on the infinitude of problems confronting the pursuit of justice for or with other animals, it will be helpful to develop a vocabulary to better recognize our ex-position to other animals in an an-economic and infinite or aporetic way. This will be the task of **Chapter 2: Animality**, in which the thinking/reading developed in **Chapter 1: Justice** will be developed with respect to “animality” or what it means to be animal. **Chapter 3: The Call** will then undertake a thinking of the connection between justice and animality, which is also the connection between **Chapter 1** and **Chapter 2**, through the figure of “the call.”

Before we get to such discussions, however, it will be helpful to clarify the stakes and particularity of the future-to-come by differentiating it from other somewhat similar concepts to which it may be tempting to subsume it. In order to understand the particular character of the future-to-come, that is, we must also understand what it is not: the future-to-come is neither horizon, nor regulative idea, nor utopia. What do I mean by this? Here I develop some of Derrida's obscure comments on horizon in *Force of Law* (965-967) and in *Specters of Marx* on the future-to-come by way of democracy to come (81). The future-to-come is not a horizon insofar as it does not simply arrive by some stable, consistent, or predictable means. It is not a regulative idea insofar as it is not a clear representation, concept, or state towards which we strive individually or collectively but never reach. It is not a utopia insofar as it does not name a specific perfect state or time in which all ethical and/or political problems would be solved. The future-to-come does share some similarities with these three concepts, it should be noted: like a horizon, the future-to-come names the arrival of surprising, novel, and non-final events and others; like a regulative idea, it offers a challenging and never-ending pursuit of better and better possibilities; like all three of these concepts, the future-to-come is of course a term that orients us toward the future in a particular way, offering some implicit but non-specific guidance or orientation. If this sounds incomplete and potentially frustrating, that is with good reason: it is and must be so, since our thinking must make space for others—for what we cannot predict, foresee, or know in advance. We will have to let others help inform us and engage us in our struggles to understand and ameliorate our lives and worlds as best we can—and this will be difficult; this will be challenging; this will be frustrating; this will be unending and irresolvable. This is why Derrida is illuminating when he prominently figures “disjuncture” in his thinking of justice undertaken in *Specters of Marx*. While Derrida's discussions in this text widely diverges from my concerns here—closely examining *Hamlet*, Heidegger, Marx, and Stirner—there are

many deep insights to draw from this text that I will fold into my project at hand without digressing into these other sources. The three that I will focus on explicitly can be understood as the dis-juncture of self/other, life/death, and past/future. I will explain these through what Derrida calls “haunting” or “hauntology” (past/future), “the visor effect” (self/other), and “survival” (life/death).

§1.3 Justice as Dis-juncture: Being Haunted by the Other (Specter)

§1.3.0 *Beyond the Living Present: The Figure of the (Other) Specter*

“Without injustices,
the name of justice
would mean what?”

–Heraclitus, *Fragments* (39)

“Is not disjuncture the very possibility of the other? How to distinguish between two disadjustments, between the disjuncture of the unjust and the one that opens up the infinite asymmetry of the relation to the other, that is to say, the place for justice?” (26)

“*There must be* disjunction, interruption, the heterogeneous if at least *there must be*, if *there must be* a chance given to any “there must be” whatsoever, be it beyond duty.” (42)

–Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

Why is it that of Derrida’s two major texts on justice, “Force of Law” and *Specters of Marx*, the latter should be named as it is? It is easy to become constrained by the thought that *Specters of Marx* would be first of all and only a text on Marx, whose name is of course in the title, and whose legacy was the subject of the conference to which Derrida was invited and to which that text is a response: “Whither Marxism?” Indeed, Derrida is unhesitating in invoking Marx as a thinker whose influence still remains in a powerful way. But, perhaps less obviously and much

more strangely, Derrida also shows throughout that text that spectrality—the structure or force of the spectre—can and perhaps must become a figure for addressing politics through thinking, writing, and acting. Accordingly, it is not by accident or mere whimsy that Derrida is preoccupied with the figure of the ghost as it appears in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*—a play in which these very issues are addressed. But the thinking undertaken here by Derrida is not reducible to *Hamlet*, since the latter acts as a kind of magnifying lens, a figure through which we can discern what the spectre lets us think about. As Derrida writes in his *Exordium to Specters of Marx*, “If I am getting ready to speak at length about ghosts . . . which is to say about certain *others* who are not present, nor presently living . . . it is in the name of *justice*” (*xix*). Even in this abbreviated comment we see already knotted together the three threads that we shall follow: time (present / not present), alterity, and life/death.

How do we care for what the spectre lets us think about? By following these three threads of time, alterity, and mortality, we will make the most of the figure of the specter in order to think more profoundly about justice. Derrida foregrounds the necessity of “disjointure” for justice, a name for difference that functions both ontologically and ethically/politically. In order to show the concrete ramifications of Derrida’s thinking/writing here I will focus on three ways of understanding this disjointure through the figure of the specter: the differences of past/future, self/other, and life/death. First, then, is the disjointure of time—that is, the irreducible but disruptive and uncertain connections and differentiations between past and future. Second is the arrival of others: the spectre is an other who is not reducible to the self, and yet who calls on and disrupts the self. Derrida’s writing here on what he calls “the visor effect” will help us address the alterity of the other, whose identity and demands are not certain, even as they necessarily invoke justice. Third, these disjointures of temporality and alterity form a knot with mortality: the spectre is an other who has died, who does not overcome death even by returning as a ghost,

and who speaks to or calls on one who is mortal with respect to others who are also mortal. These disjointures, these disruptive and irreducible differences—between past and future, self and other, life and death—make justice and injustice possible while also calling for justice. In short, Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* will help us better understand the ways in which justice names both a kind of ontological condition and an ethical imperative—two headings that some philosophers try to think in isolation from one another, but which Derrida shows us to be thoroughly entangled.

The specter offers a figure for thinking through these differences just named, and so throughout §1.3 **Justice as Dis-juncture** I will clarify why Derrida has made use of it and how we can mobilize it for our own thinking and our ethical relations. But first and more generally, Derrida explains his focus on the figure of conjuration, of summoning and addressing ghosts: a ghost, as neither fully present nor totally absent, as neither living nor dead, is in this way just like promising, deciding, or taking responsibility (62), because in these ways of committing oneself we name something that is not yet but may be: the precarious perhaps of justice, that perhaps we will have been just to others. The specter, then, evokes what we have already addressed in terms of the temporality of the infinite or aporetic pursuit that stretches into the future-to-come, since “a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back” (123). Disjointure, therefore, is shorthand for the interrelated possibilities of justice and injustice; injustice is always possible, and that is precisely what calls for justice. This is what is at stake in the three examples of disjointure I examine here, namely past/future, self/other, life/death, as we shall now read.

§1.3 Justice as Dis-juncture: Being Haunted by the Other (Specter)

§1.3.1: Dis-juncture of Past/Future: Haunting

“There are several times of the specter.” (123)

“To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. Ontology opposes it only in a movement of exorcism. Ontology is a conjuration.” (202)

–Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

What does the specter let us think about time? Derrida writes that “there are several times of the specter,” explaining that “It is a proper characteristic of the specter, if there is any, that no one can be sure if by returning it testifies to a living past or to a living future” (*Specters of Marx* 123). What does this call us to think about? Derrida is here trying to describe what he calls the “untimeliness and disadjustment of the contemporary,” the way any “present” is split or disjoined between past and future, what I have been calling the disjuncture of past/future. This is also what is at stake in Derrida’s meditations here on Hamlet’s utterance, “The time is out of joint”—not simply a dis-juncture of some particular era or political situation, whether Hamlet’s or anyone else’s, but rather a pervasive dis-juncture of time itself, always split undecidably between past and future. Very well then, we can abstractly assert the disjointure of time, but what does this disjointure let us think more concretely? To say that the appearance of a ghost—that is, the appearance, trace, or reminder of any other whatsoever who is no longer or not yet living—testifies in an uncertain way to either a living past or a living future helps us think about what is at stake in interpreting past and future, and preparing for a future-to-come, the unforeseeable arrival of events and others. How does it do this? Let us consider in passing an example to illustrate this disjointed temporality.

If we are reminded of slavery in North America, for example—whether from a photograph, a memorial, a personal history, or some other text—we find ourselves, just as Derrida says, that we cannot “be sure if by returning it testifies to a living past or a living future”.

That is, does this appearance, this ghost, simply testify to the living past of the brutal and legalized injustice suffered by people of colour in a certain time or place, whether the lived experience of specific persons in a particular place, or the general structure of experience faced by so many people during a more general era? Does it testify to the remaining legacy of slavery, through the displacement of millions of people, the obliteration of cultures and languages and rending of families, or even in the deep historical relation between slavery and revered academic institutions thought to be the bastion of liberal politics, like Harvard for example, as *Ebony & Ivy* attests?¹⁹ Does it testify to a living future in which slavery would return, or indeed already remains by merely having been displaced to other corners of the globe and from which North American people, businesses, and governments still benefit? We need not decide between these interpretations once and for all, since “there are several times of the specter”. This could also be characterized as an “ordeal of the undecidable,” the likes of which we addressed in detail in **§1.2 Justice as Infinite, Aporetic, To-Come**. We could decide on a particular interpretation for a time—say, for the sake of writing a history of some particular experience or kind of experience, some particular or general history—but we would then have to let ourselves be haunted by what we earlier called “the ghost of the undecidable,” that is, the possibilities of deciding otherwise, considering what could be gained or lost by interpreting or responding otherwise. Reminders, traces, and even repetitions of those past situations, past experiences, past injustices can always return. On my reading, this is what is implied when Derrida writes in *Specters of Marx*: “a ghost never dies, it always remains to-come and to come-back” (123). The specter can always return, and could have returned in the future-to-come.

There are many concrete ways in which this disjuncture of past/future appears or reappears. We see this disjuncture at work with an emphasis on the past in memory, in the

¹⁹ Craig Stephen Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy: Race Slavery and the Troubled History of America's Universities*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.

relationships to loss through mourning or melancholia, in memorials and memorialization, in history, in marginalization, in the obscuring or forgetting of injustices and hopes. We see this disjuncture at work with an emphasis on the future in remembrance, in hope, in projects, organization, and action, in interpretation and preparation, in promise or promises, in attempts to awaken ethical thinking in ourselves or in others. The last of these is the emphasis of my project. I cannot say, except perhaps in the most elliptical gestures, what projects or promises, what hopes or histories will be written, what losses will be mourned or what memorials will be built in the pursuit of animal justice. What I say or write here instead is the possibility and necessity of sparking an interest in doing so, of addressing the disjuncture of past/future in any relations with other animals; my aim here is to till the soil just enough for some small sproutlings, which it will be up to others to nourish and help grow. And who is it for the sake of which such justice is pursued? Others, other animals, as we have seen, but as we will see here: other ghosts, the ghosts of others and of other animals, their spectral appearance or re-appearances.

The life or death of another animal, the memory or return of another animal, can haunt us. Whether that animal was a beloved pet dutifully cared for, a stranger or wild animal anonymous to us (but not to itself nor its companions, if it was a social animal), whether it died in a zoo or a forest, a laboratory or a mountaintop, a roadway or a lake, a farm or a cavern, a living room or an ocean, that life/death can haunt us. That is, it can testify either to a living past, a history shared or not, just or unjust, or to a living future, a future to come in which perhaps no other animal will have to face the neglect or mistreatment we can witness in so many relations between humans and other animals. Perhaps the life/death of another animal can testify to a future in which lessons can be learned from more just relations to other animals that we have witnessed, relations that could perhaps be generalized and developed to become more and more just, or pursue justice for more and more others.

What is at stake in the disjuncture of past/future is our relations to *others* and our exposure to them. We have, of course, already discussed this in **§1.1 Justice as An-Economic Ex-Position to Others**. So does the specter lets us think about this exposure? In *Specters of Marx* Derrida gives us a particularly illuminating and powerful figuration of alterity, which he calls “the visor effect.” Like the heavily armoured ghost that addresses Hamlet and who calls him to respond, we cannot be sure who we are seeing. We do not see the specter who sees us. We do not know what it is they see or do not see. And yet we are still called to address them, to be responsible before them—indeed, doubly responsible—as we shall now read.

§1.3 Justice as Dis-juncture: Being Haunted by the Other (Specter)

§1.3.2: The Dis-juncture of Self/Other: The Visor Effect (Or: Spectrality & Alterity: The Other Haunts Me)

“Is not disjuncture the very possibility of the other?” (26)

“This thing that looks at us, that concerns us [*qui nous regarde*], comes to defy semantics as much as ontology, psychoanalysis as much as philosophy.” (5)

“[T]he specter first of all sees *us*. From the other side of the eye, *visor effect*, it looks at us even before we see it or even before we see period. We feel ourselves observed, sometimes under surveillance by it even before any apparition.” (125)

“The subject that haunts is not identifiable, one cannot see, localize, fix any form, one cannot decide between hallucination and perception, there are only displacements; one feels oneself looked at by what one cannot see.” (169-170)

“*The ghost, always, is looking at me.*” (168)

–Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

When a specter returns, reappears, whether testifying to a living past or a living future, who or what appears, and to whom? What is a specter, and what does it mean to encounter one? There

are many possible answers here, given the condensation or poetic economy of the specter, which is useful and illuminating precisely because of its multivalence and associations, as any other worthwhile figure of thought. In thinking “the possibility of the specter,” we have already seen “the specter as possibility” (13) by considering its disjointed temporality with respect to past and future. Among the many other possibilities and uses of this figure of the specter, I emphasize its compelling ability to figure alterity and relations to others. Of particular interest is what Derrida calls its “paradoxical phenomenality, the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible” (6), which is also paradoxically “the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh” (6). This paradox is at stake in alterity or relations to others because the specter is “still the body of someone as someone *other*” (6). Crucially, the specter is “someone *other* that we will not hasten to determine as self, subject, person, consciousness, spirit, and so forth” (6). In this way, the specter can be read as another name for the *arrivant*—that is, whoever arrives—as we read in **§1.2.3 The Future-to-Come**. Derrida’s insistence here on indeterminacy is made in order to address the other as irreducibly other, underscoring the need to be critically aware of predispositions that can obscure our exposure to the other, as we read in **§1.1** under the heading of an-economic ex-position. With the spectral disjunction of past/future (**§1.3.1**), I developed a reiteration of the infinitude or aporia of justice (**§1.2.2**) insofar as the undying or returning nature of the specter is an infinite or aporetic structure: one can never once and for all pass through an encounter with a specter, which remains haunting. What, then, does the specter offer for thinking about alterity?

If we figure the other as a specter, what happens in our encounter with this spectral other? Derrida writes in condensed form: “A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity. It desynchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony” (6). What does it mean to say that specularity, seeing one another, is disrupted by a spectral asymmetry? This, precisely, is the meaning of the “visor

effect: we do not see who looks at us” (6). That is, even when a specter or any other appears to us, even when it clearly appears to look at us, we do not see who it is. Nothing will admit of knowledge of what is seen. The name “visor effect” comes from the opening scenes of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, where a ghost appears and reappears in full armour, the visor of his helmet obscuring his face. It may surprise readers familiar with *Hamlet* that this ghost should be invoked as a figure of invisibility or anonymity, for Horatio judges that the ghost appeared to be King Hamlet “As thou art to thy selfe,” and the ghost itself explicitly declares to Hamlet that he is the father of the latter. But as Derrida subversively claims, “Even though in his ghost the King looks like himself . . . *that does not prevent him from looking without being seen*: his apparition makes him appear still invisible beneath his armor [*sic*]” (6). Moreover, and more troublingly, Derrida argues that “The one who says ‘I am thy Fathers Spirit’ can only be taken at his word” (7), continuing that “It may always be a case of still someone else. Another can always lie, he can disguise himself as a ghost, another ghost may also be passing himself off for this one. It’s always possible” (7). But if we are interested in the specter or spectrality more generally, what is the point of raising the specific example of this ghost in *Hamlet*? Because it shows the irreducible uncertainty of all encounters: even in a familiar and specific case such as *Hamlet*’s, even when the other seems to directly and explicitly declare its identity, the one who listens could always be misled by dishonesty or other means, such as misinformation, misinterpretation, wishful thinking, and so forth. Derrida is unequivocal about the importance of this visor effect: “We will probably not speak of this *visor effect* any more [*sic*], at least not by that name, *but it will be presupposed by everything we advance on the subject of the specter in general*” (6, some emphasis added). If the visor effect is crucial for understanding spectrality, how does it affect my discussion of alterity?

If we are to earnestly address the possibility of pursuing justice for and with other

animals, we will have to reckon with this visor effect: whether armoured by some other name, in fur or scales, in hair or chitin, in tough skin or soft feathers, through eyes like or unlike our own or through some other sense, whether olfactory or auditory, tactile or gustatory, or in some other sense for which we may as yet have no words, we must confront the irreducible uncertainty that we will always have about other animals. Other humans, too—human animals have their visors, their armour. Even if these visor effects differ from species to species, individual to individual, we cannot simply absolve ourselves of responsibility to other animals because of this visor effect, since it also affects our relations to other humans, who also appear spectrally in these ways. A position that absolved responsibility for this reason instead of doubling it would not be worth considering. How can we pursue the possibility of being responsible, then? By doubling our responsibility, precisely: by feeling ourselves being looked at, but also by taking responsibility for the undecidability of the other who faces us from behind the visor effect.

Crucial to the visor effect and any encounter with specters or others is not only that it is “someone other” who looks and who is not seen, but “This spectral *someone other looks at us*, we feel ourselves being looked at by it, outside of any synchrony, even before and beyond any look on our part” (6). This experience of being looked at is characterized by both “absolute anteriority” and “asymmetry” (6-7). The other is always anterior to me, that is, prior to me, existing before me and away from me; even if this other was not yet born when I was born, the other disrupts my presence here and now, doing so even if it arrives from the past or the future. My relation to the other is asymmetrical—“according to an absolutely unmasterable disproportion,” (7) Derrida writes in condensed fashion. We can read this “unmasterable disproportion” as another name for the an-economic character of justice implied by alterity: my responsibility to others is precisely *not* proportionate to me, to my proportions, to their responsibility toward me, or to their generosity toward me, but is excessive out of all proportion,

beyond all limits—infinite in scope, as we read in **§1.1.3 An-Economy** Our relationship to others unmasterable insofar as we cannot master some technique or style of calculation that would guarantee our having acted responsibly; we could therefore read the word “unmasterable” as another name for what we earlier called “aporetic” or “undecidable” in **§1.2.2 Aporia**. The other (specter) remains haunting, troubles our sleep and stays with us even when we think it has left. Here I reiterate my earlier discussion of undecidability or aporia through the more concrete (but irreducibly troubling) figure of the specter, showing that undecidability is borne out in encounters with others, opening the possibility of addressing the haunting presence of other animals.

In discussing the troubling nature of the visor effect, Derrida explains that the protection of this armour, this visor, “is rigorously *problematic* . . . for it prevents perception from deciding on the identity that it wraps so solidly in its carapace” (7). He continues: “The armor [*sic*] may be but the body of a real artifact, a kind of technical prosthesis, a body foreign to the spectral body that it dresses, dissimulates, and protects, masking even its identity” (7). Here we could offer and multiply examples of dress, dissimulation, and protection used by other animals as I did in passing above. If armour prevents us from deciding on the identity of the other, this poses again the problem of undecidability, here shown to pose more concrete problems insofar as it contaminates all encounters with others. The black feathers of any blackbird, the teeth of a great white shark, the trunk of an elephant, the carapace of a turtle, the horn of a rhinoceros: these all conceal the others who see us, and who we must take responsibility for reading. We must go beyond snap judgements or dismissals to ask how it is possible to respond to these ghostly or armoured others, and how we might be able to respond better, that is to say, to be responsible or response-able, to pursue justice, whether they haunt us from near or far. We can think of many others who day to day seem to be invisible behind the armour of a familiar appearance, like the

“mask” of a racoon, the gray feathers of a pigeon, the bushy tail of a squirrel, or other features of some everyday “pest” who may haunt us in a vexing way. But more dire examples could be given—other animals who live and die in captivity, on factory farms, in labs, and so on, to whatever point will have been haunting.

Crucially, this visor effect or undecidability also fundamentally informs the injunction, command, law, or desire that comes from the other. Derrida writes,

To feel ourselves seen by a look which it will always be impossible to cross, that is the visor effect on the basis of which we inherit from the law. Since we do not see the one who sees us, and who makes the law, who delivers the injunction (which is, moreover, a contradictory injunction), since we do not see the one who orders “swear,” we cannot identify it in all its certainty, we must fall back on its voice,²⁰ since the other “can only be taken at his word” (7).

That word, however, is itself contradictory, differentiated, or heterogeneous insofar as any word or injunction offers many possible interpretations, not all of which will be compatible, “call[ing] for and at the same time defy[ing] interpretation” (18). The identity of the other and the injunction will therefore have to be decided to some extent by the one (the self) who sees (and does not see) the other (specter). This kind of decision, however, must not be final; it must face the ordeal of the undecidable, and even after making a decision, must let itself be haunted by the ghost of the undecidable, as we read in §1.2.2. That is to say, the spectral disjuncture of self/other underscores and doubles our responsibility to the other, insofar as we must take responsibility for deciding who we have seen and what they have asked us to do. That is, our responsibility is doubled because not only must we take responsibility for our own decisions, we must also take responsibility for our reading of who we are faced with behind their visor, their armour. Anyone who would be tempted to dismiss the pursuit of justice for other animals by way of the claim that they are “just animals”—that they are more mechanical, less rational, less free, or on the basis of

²⁰ We will return to the question of asymmetry and the voice in **Chapter 3: The Call**, reiterating justice through a figure that will lend itself more readily to addressing other animals.

any other claim—would have to take responsibility for such a reading. Likewise for any converse position that would claim once and for all to know the true desires of other animals, whether for good or ill. In the face of this undecidability we must attempt to do our best, saying “perhaps this will have been just,” allowing ourselves to continue to be exposed to others and to their haunting presence/absence.

It is worth noting that Derrida repeatedly describes encounters with specters in the same structure that he describes our encounters with other animals: the specter *regards* us [*“nous regarde,”* 5]. In French, this means both that they *look* at us but also that they *concern* us, that they affect us and engage us. This similarity authorizes and encourages my discussion of ghosts in a project about other animals, especially because as we have seen Derrida is concerned with ghosts “in the name of *justice*.” We will return to this structure of regard, of looking and concerning, in **§2.1 Animal Alterity**. But for now it will be illuminating to consider in passing the problems raised in encounters with other animals in light of this undecidable or spectral disjuncture we have been considering. I may decide that the other who appears to me is a simple housecat, asking of me only food and shelter. But I will have to remain vigilant about my exposure to this other, wondering what other forms of care (closeness or distance, say in the form of touch or space, stimulation or relaxation, and so on) that may be desired by this other differently at different times. The problems are clearer with the simple example of a familiar domestic animal, even in the seemingly simple decision to pet or to pass by a household companion pet, but such a situation would still be worth differentiating. These problems would multiply and become less familiar in the case of other animals kept in zoos, like giraffes, pandas, tigers, and so many others (do they, in fact, give an injunction to be kept there, “protected” or “conserved”? Even in crassly artificial and stressful conditions?), other animals kept in farms, factory or otherwise, such as hens but so few roosters, cows and heifers but so few bulls, and so

many others (do they, in fact, give no injunction on behalf of their life, through their evident will to survive?), or more favourably on “wildlife reserves” or in sanctuaries such as elephants, donkeys, and buffalo, and comparatively few others (what, precisely, do they want or need, how much space, what other species, how much stimulation, what kind of companionship? And so on). As we will see in **§2.2 Multiplicity**, however, it will be necessary to consider the “infinite spaces” that separate all these species, and the unique singularity that separates each one within a plurality to which it is variously related—including members of its own species and others. This multiplicity will also be related to the disjunction of life/death, to which I now turn.

In trying to tarry with the ordeal of the undecidable, we can defer to the disjunction of life/death, which will not be able to easily settle any decision for us²¹ but will offer important and unavoidable resources for thinking through the others who appear to us and testify to a living past/future. That is, the others who appear to us are, were, or will have been mortal: they live and die with us, like and unlike us. This mortality or relation between life and death offers a clue for understanding what Derrida wrote above of the visor effect, which “de-synchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony” (6). This happens by way of the disjunction of past/future and the “absolute anteriority,” as we read above. As we will read, Derrida thinks about the relations between life and death under the heading of “sur-vival” or “living-on,” which offers a way of thinking life as living beyond the present, which I proposed above (**§1.3.0**) to be the aim and benefit of thinking through the figure of the specter.

§1.3 Justice as Dis-juncture: Being Haunted by the Other (Specter)

§1.3.3: Spectrality & Mortality: The Dying Return to the Living/Dying

²¹ We read in **§1.2.2** that the undecidable cannot be decided by any calculation, knowledge, information, or the like, but requires precisely an ungrounded decision, which also underscored the necessity of allowing the decision to remain haunting as “the ghost of the undecidable.”

“The revenant keeps watch
over the dead and living.”

–Heraclitus, *Fragments* (123)

“[J]ustice carries life beyond present life or its actual being-there, its empirical or ontological actuality: not toward death but toward a *living-on* [sur-vie], namely, a trace of which life and death would themselves be but traces and traces of traces, a survival whose possibility in advance comes to dis-join or dis-adjust the identity to itself of the living present as well as of any effectivity.” (xx)

“If death weighs on the living brain of the living . . . it must then have some spectral density. To weigh (*lasten*) is also to charge, tax, impose, indebt, accuse, assign, enjoin. And the more life there is, the graver the specter of the other becomes, the heavier its imposition. And the more the living have to answer for it. *To answer for the dead, to respond to the dead.* To correspond and have it out with [*s’expliquer avec*] obsessive haunting, *in the absence of any certainty or symmetry* [emphasis added]. Nothing is more serious and nothing is more true, nothing is more exact [*juste*] than this phantasmagoria.

The specter weighs [*pèse*], it thinks [*pense*], it intensifies and condenses itself *within the very inside of life, within the most living life, the most singular (or, if one prefers, individual) life* [emphasis added]. The latter therefore no longer has and must no longer have, insofar as it is living, a pure identity to itself or any assured inside: this is what all philosophies of life, or even philosophies of the living and real individual, would have to weigh carefully.” (125-126)

–Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

The figure of the spectre is indissociable from death. The spectre is one who was mortal, one who has died, and one who improbably returns to the living in order to call for justice from the living for the sake of both the living and the dead. This trace, this return, this haunting is what is peculiar to the spectre; in other words, this is why it is necessary or at least illuminating to invoke the spectre rather than simply naming death. The spectre helps us understand the messiness of death; death is not complete obliteration, for death leaves *remains*, both as corpse and as legacy—even, of course, when it is a legacy of injustice. This remainder and relation to death is why Derrida describes life in terms of sur-vival or living-on: life is always lived over and against the possibility of death, which circumscribes and orients life in advance—and

afterwards. And if the spectre is *the other*, the other whose identity is not guaranteed, the spectre could be any one at all who lives and dies; the spectre can be any mortal. The spectre is not necessarily, exclusively, or wholly human, then—the spectre disrupts self-identity, closure, even philosophy, as we have just read above. Why? Because philosophy, for Derrida, also names ontology, a reliance on being, on assured and self-identical being, on ways of being that constitute beings as existing in definite times and places, in definite categories with definite thoughts and borders. As a name for the unforeseeable, for the disruptive, for messiness, all of which are caught up with death (given that we ourselves are mortal), spectrality disrupts being. This both leads to and follows from the disjointedness of time and the alterity of the spectre that returns. Spectrality portends death: what is living will die. But why, then, does spectrality call for justice? Because the one that has died could have died otherwise, and those who live could die otherwise, too. Living-on is always living-on amidst a range of possibilities, some better and worse. That is, even though all mortals will die eventually, we must attend to the possibilities of dying differently: we are called to protect others from unjust death, from murder, from starvation, from disease, from torture, from other injustices of living and dying. The spectre reminds us that even those who have died unjustly have left remainders: bad and haunting memories, shattered dreams, foreclosed possibilities, impoverished conversations and communities. And if mortality conjures spectrality, if the mortal can appear as spectre, then other mortal beings will also appear to us as ghosts and call for justice: other mortal beings we often call “animals,” other mortal beings who Derrida will soon have reminded us are mortal, too—like us who live and die with them.

It will not do to dismiss the pursuit of animal justice with some quick and easy claim that “nature is red in tooth and claw,” that all animals must die, that it would therefore be futile to dream of less cruelty or injustice. On the contrary, mortality—the possibility of dying but also

the undeniable possibilities of dying differently—calls us to respond, to care, to hope, to protect as many lives as possible as much as possible for as long as possible. This is what will haunt us if we return to the infinite demand of justice, as we read in §1.2, given this thinking of the specter. The infinite ghost of infinite others would perhaps even call us to do the impossible, to disrupt and shift the bounds of what is possible, of what seems incontestably real but remains haunted, however secretly or invisibly, by other possibilities.

Those other possibilities are precisely what are opened by the dis-junctures or differences that dis-join and disrupt our lives: the dis-junctures of past and future, of self and other, of life and death. These dis-junctures expose us to others and call us to respond, to reposition ourselves, to address aporetic problems infinite in number, infinite in history, infinite in structure that cannot be passed through once and for all. And so let us turn to those others that surround us, those others that will remain haunting, those others with whom we live and die: other animals.

Chapter 2

Animality (Or: Animal Alterity)

§2.0: Alterity as Axiomatic

“If we wish to speak of injustice, of violence or of a lack of respect toward what we still so confusedly call animals—the question is more topical than ever . . .—we must reconsider in its totality the metaphysico-anthropocentric axiomatic that dominates, in the West, the thought of just and unjust.” (“Force of Law” 953)

“(And provisionally, but with regret, we must leave aside here the nevertheless indissociable question of what is becoming of so-called ‘animal’ life, the life and existence of ‘animals’ in this history. This question has always been a serious one, but it will become massively unavoidable.)” (*Specters of Marx* 106)

–Jacques Derrida

As we read in **Chapter 1**, consideration of the infinite and aporetic character of justice lead us to the necessity of considering the plight of other animals and what it would mean to do justice to them: our mutual exposure to other animals an-economically calls for an infinite or ongoing response, even if such a response would be variously dis-jointed. This call for justice leads us to a certain problematic limit that Derrida expresses in passing in in “Force of Law,” where he explains that if we wish to speak of injustice towards what we often so blithely call “animals” or “the Animal,” then “we must rethink in its totality the metaphysico-anthropocentric axiomatic that dominates, in the West, thought of just and unjust” (953). In *Specters of Marx*, we can also read that Derrida thought it necessary to draw a relation between the global injustices faced by human beings in our time and those faced by other animals, even if he also had to leave that relation to the side after raising it. When underscoring the pervasiveness of the historically unprecedented suffering, starvation, and exploitation of human beings around the world, Derrida notes that we also ought to think carefully about the “indissociable” though not identical problem

“of what is becoming of so-called ‘animal’ life, the life and existence of ‘animals’” (106). That is, we are also surrounded by the unprecedented scale of suffering, killing, and exploitation of other animals around the world, lives and deaths that haunt us no less than those of other others, even if differently. Where Derrida had to “provisionally” sideline this issue, however, I aim to address it at length. I aim to take up this problem in what might seem to be an oblique fashion. Here I do not undertake the project of trying to establish the pervasiveness of such exploitation, suffering, and injustice, of which there are mountains of evidence available in a variety of media—photography, video, print—much of which is readily available online (although I must also caution that it is not for the faint of heart). Instead, I wish to intervene in the “metaphysico-anthropocentric axiomatic” that “dominates” our way of thinking about justice. To this end, I wish to gather conceptual resources for pursuing justice, beginning with a line of questioning like the following: who or what *are* these beings to whom we are called to do justice? What is peculiar to being an animal? In other words, analogous to the way “humanity” is a word for what is peculiar to being a human, what is the meaning of the word “animality”?

Such a line of inquiry is admittedly circular, but not for that reason illegitimate. We are here beginning from justice, which calls us to read the law of its possibilities and who is included or excluded, and therefore we must ask who or what other animals *are*; but as I will in turn show, who or what other animals are in turn calls us to do justice to them simply by virtue of their being—or rather, by virtue of their differences. Here I have at least two aims or audiences. I dream of addressing those who have been hitherto unmoved by concrete injustices or philosophical discourses, with the hope that they will begin to listen for the call to do justice to other animals, which I argue is already sounding out in our midst, however faint it might initially seem. I would also like to address whoever may have heard the call of other animals and wishes

to respond to any other animal or group of animals whatsoever, whoever would try to do justice to any animal whatsoever, offering them resources to attempt many ways of thinking about that animal or those animals in their particularity. My dream here is that these varieties of thinking would be oriented in such a way that doing justice would become possible, or possible in a more robust and expansive way—a way that would perhaps call out for support in an audible or even an understandable way. But I also have a third, secret audience: the eyes of all the animals that see me wherever I go—through the city, in parks, in the homes of others, even in film and television. I dream of being able to look at them, to withstand their point of view, their judgement and hold my stature proud as a parrot or a pigeon to say: “Yes, you! I meant you too, when I wrote of justice,” and I would be able to say, in all innocence, “and I want you to know that I am doing the best I can.” I write this here to emphasize that although this document is of course addressed to human readers, its deferred aim is to better address other non-human animals as well.

In order to address all these others as best as possible, the central task I want to undertake in this chapter is to offer an original reading of Derrida’s text *The Animal That Therefore I Am* with two main threads. First, I read this text as a substantial intervention that happens with respect to two philosophical or theoretical concepts simultaneously: on the one hand, alterity or “otherness,” and on the other hand, animality or what it means to be animal. This intervention could be read in either direction—as putting animality into alterity or alterity into animality—but the end result is the same, namely the intertwining of these two concepts. I argue that this intervention must be taken into account to understand what is at stake in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, and what sort of response it calls for: namely, an attempt to do justice to it and to other animals themselves. Accordingly, as the second thread of my reading, given the status of

this text as an intervention into thinking about alterity, I read *The Animal That Therefore I Am* as therefore containing implicit resources for ways of thinking about or rethinking justice, answering Derrida's earlier call to "reconsider in its totality the metaphysico-anthropocentric axiomatic that dominates, in the West, thought of just and unjust" ("Force of Law" 953). That is, thinking differently about alterity calls us to think differently about justice and how to attempt to do justice because, as we read in **Chapter 1**, justice is intertwined with alterity insofar as justice names the exposure to the other and the call to respond or reposition oneself with respect to the other as best as possible. Insofar as justice begins by reading closely, and insofar as justice always addresses itself to singularity even when it pretends to universality, I here attempt to read the intertwining of alterity and animality as closely and as productively as possible, making use of Derrida's text as I develop and clarify several concepts that follow from alterity and animality (§2.1), which I name multiplicity (§2.2), following (§2.3), and passivity (§2.4). My subsection on passivity culminates in a discussion of what I call com-passion, which functions as both a condensation of all of these concepts and a thread that leads us back to the call for justice.

My intervention here—to read Derrida's project in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* as a development of the concept of alterity with regard to other animals and as therefore relevant to justice—is necessary or called for in part because of the winding complexity of Derrida's text. If he sometimes refers to his text as "chimerical" or as a "chimerical experiment," it is also in part due to this complexity. In a text monstrosly formed from radically different parts—from close readings of poets, philosophers, and religious texts to autobiographical anecdotes, scenes of encounter with other animals and rhapsodic evocations of dreams—the broader implications of Derrida's most radical insights here generally remain underappreciated or entirely unnoticed, or, most distressingly, they are sometimes even read as their opposite. My aim here is to make those

insights as clear and as useful as possible. But rather than laying it all out in an overly dry manner, as if having killed the Chimera I would then proceed to dissect it, I instead hope to offer a series of close-ups, as if in the manner of macro photographs or short films, that would show the richness of its textures, colours, and possibilities, while taking care not to disturb it and especially not to kill it. In looking or reading closely, may we learn to read ever more closely still, even when our gaze returns to meet other animals before us.

My reading of *The Animal That Therefore I Am* as a significant intervention into philosophical thinking of alterity finds its justification in the way that Derrida inhabits Levinas' concepts and terms—"alterity," the "absolute other," the "wholly other"—while subtly introducing transformative variations into them, widening their usage and implications to include non-human animals into their scope, even though, as Derrida discusses at length, Levinas resisted such moves (see especially *Animal* 105-119). However, my project is not merely an obvious repetition of words that Derrida himself readily uses, since he uses them in passing without explicitly unfolding their significance in the way that I undertake here. My intervention aims to explicitly and transformatively emphasize alterity as of crucial importance, deep complication, and carrying wide-ranging implications for our understanding of other animals as fundamentally related to the pursuit of justice—in Derrida's work but also beyond it in our own lives once we are equipped with the concepts or tools for thinking that I develop here. This first subsection on alterity therefore acts as a kind of ground for developing the rest of my subsections and concepts, which require and build on this thinking of difference or alterity. But before complicating the philosophical implications or lineage of "alterity," it is necessary to closely read the term itself.

§2.1: Animal Alterity (Or: Animalterity)

“What animal? The other.”

–Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (3)

Who or what is an other? What characterizes the otherness or *alterity* of the other? Alterity comes from the Latin *alter*, which simply means other—a variation introduced to invoke the precision of a technical term or the intensity of a poetic figure. “Other” can refer to any term or entity across a difference, for the sake of not presupposing anything about that to which it refers: in referring to someone as an “other,” one is not committed to presupposing an understanding of the humanity of a human being, the life of a living thing, the essence of a soul, the being of an entity, or whatever else. At the same time, an ethics based on the word “other” can be much less exclusive than one based on the above terms. For Levinas the word “other” seems to mean something like another human being; for my part, it means another living being.^{22 23} But why use the word “other” at all, instead of a more specific word like “human” or “animal”? The word “other” does more than simply refer; it aims to open ethical possibilities. Orienting our thinking and behavior by way of the word “other” helps us begin from a place of respect for those whom we encounter. This word can remind us that differences between oneself and others (and among

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As we read above, here I take my cue in part from Derrida in “Violence & Metaphysics,” when he writes: “The other cannot be what it is, infinitely other, except in finitude and mortality (mine *and* its)” (114-115). I am also thinking of an interview in *Paper Machine*, “Others are Secret Because They Are Other,” in which Derrida writes the following: “The trace is always the trace of a finite being. So it can itself disappear. An ineradicable trace is not a trace. The trace inscribes itself in its own precariousness, its vulnerability of ashes, its *mortality*. I have tried to draw out all the consequences of this *axiom* which is basically very simple. And to do so beyond or before an anthropology and even an ontology or an existential analytic. *What I say about the trace and death goes for any ‘living thing,’ for ‘animals’ and ‘people.’*” *Paper Machine*, translated by Rachel Bowlby. Stanford University Press, 2005. 159, emphasis mine.

²³ It can also sometimes be used to describe a second term of a pair, often marginalized by dominant discourses, that is required by the one being referenced: the unconscious is the other of consciousness, writing is the other of speech, “animal” is often thought to be the other of “man”. But for the sake of simplicity and given the needs of my project, I will not be using it in this way.

others themselves) cannot be explained away or done away with once and for all—an absolute difference always remains. Because others *differ* from us, we must always in one way or another *defer* to them without ever being able to bridge that gap, without ever being able to grasp them in their entirety, without ever being able to be completely certain or fully informed as to what is felt by the other, thought by the other, or what motivates whatever comes from the other. In short, when we address others *as other*, we open a space for them, a space to call ourselves into question, in our behaviour, judgement, and thoughts. We evoke the necessity of doing so.

While Derrida unhesitatingly inhabits these terms inherited from Levinas, he also inhabits them differently, changing their usage and implications.²⁴ These transformative variations on Levinas' thinking happen through Derrida's reinterpretation of two ethical formulas on alterity. The first of these is the following: "*tout autre est tout autre*," variously translated into English as either "every other is wholly other" or "every other is every (bit) other," the former being a little more readily understandable, the latter more visibly attempting to copy the repetition seen in the French. This formula hinges on two meanings of "*tout*": as "every" and as "wholly" or "every (bit)". *Every* other whom we face is characterized by absolute alterity or otherness, not just *some* others. This formula means we cannot simply be selective of who would count as an other to us, as if only members of our political, geographical, philosophical, religious, ethnic, linguistic or other group would be others, while anyone not in this group could simply be ignored. If every

²⁴ For the sake of my project here, I will set aside any detailed discussion of Levinas' own usage and justification, instead commenting on where and how Derrida's usage is importantly novel. Effectively, I ask: what would it mean to interpret the meaning of these words in Derrida's text, rather than Levinas'? (I also set to the side the problem of clearly delineating the bounds of a text, a problem which Derrida was often keen to insist on.) Levinas' thinking and texts certainly reward close readings, but if Derrida is indeed revealing when he says that it is an anthropocentric *axiomatic* that dominates our thinking of justice, then discussion of the inner workings or minute implications of such an axiomatic is of little relevance to my strictly bounded project here. Instead, I begin from another axiom—animals are others—and seek its implications and justifications from there. (This axiom could perhaps also begin to open up the possibility of redeeming "the animal" as other animals in Levinas' work, allowing the possibility of drawing more directly on Levinas' rich texts. But this is not my project here.)

other is *wholly* other, entirely other, then all others fundamentally cannot be grasped, fully understood, captured by our concepts, our thinking, or our terms, even when they seem to speak the same language, practice the same traditions, or share the same values as us. We can make contact with others, of course, but we can never know once and for all what others are thinking or feeling, where they have come from or where they are going, what their motivations, desires, or dreams are. We can never know once and for all, and this “once and for all” is crucial: we can try, we can interpret, we can address the other, but the other always eludes us in some way, remains concealed to some extent, as wholly or utterly different in a way that cannot be reduced, explained away, or ignored.

For reasons too varied and complicated to analyze here but which Derrida discusses in detail, Levinas withholds this dimension of alterity from other animals. Derrida repeatedly pushes beyond Levinas’ hesitance throughout *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. He explicitly suggests the necessity of going beyond Levinas’ work when he writes:

Would an ethics like that Levinas attempts be sufficient to recall the subject to its being-subject, its being-host or -hostage, that is to say, its being-subjected-to-the-other, to the Wholly Other or to every single other?

I don’t think so. More than that is required to break with the Cartesian tradition of the animal-machine without language and without response. (119)

Much earlier in this text, Derrida gives an indication as to how we may begin thinking in this way. He writes: “[The animal] can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other” (11). He continues below with affirmative insistence: “Yes, the wholly other, more other than any other, which *they* call animal, for example, a cat” (11, Derrida’s emphasis). Much is packed into these two brief quotations, each significant part worth commentary: “the *absolute* other,” the “*wholly* other,” “more other than any other,” “who *they* call animal,” and who has a point of view “regarding” me.

Why absolute? Because the difference cannot be erased, it is undissolvable or insoluble, which is readable in the very form of the word: ab-solute. Neither coercion nor death entirely erase the difference of the other, for these are only possible if there is first of all an *other* to suffer them. To that extent, they confirm the absoluteness of alterity. Derrida even goes so far as to say that “*nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity of the neighbour . . . than these moments*” of encounter with other animals (*Animal 11*, my emphasis). It is not the case that *only* humans offer a gaze that confronts us with absolute alterity, and it is not the case that only humans are our neighbours who live near us and implicate us: other animals do too, and this is a non-finite task for thinking and trying to do justice to others. There will never be a point of saturation with respect to thinking about others: there is always more thinking to be done, there are always more complications, there are always new developments, there are always secrets, and there are always other others. Just as we can invoke no shortage of examples of complications and relations with respect to other humans—from political orders to personal relationships, births and deaths, growth and illness, rights and responsibilities, inspiration and indignation, inheritance and generosity, sharing and privacy, and so on endlessly—we must also push ourselves to respect the depth and endlessness of complications with regards to other animals, including all the above examples and more—including domestication, captivity, conservation, exploitation, use for food, entertainment, clothing, companionship, experimentation, research, biology, medicine, symbolism, and so on again endlessly. Nothing could close off or solve these problems once and for all, and what problems they are! But even all these are secondary to the absolute difference, the fundamental encounter: other animals confront us, they surround us, and we cannot avoid being related to them in some way or another. No other, human or otherwise, is privileged over the others once and for all—or rather, all others

call on us endlessly, which is to say they call for justice, for a more just future to come.

What does it mean to say “more other than any other”? Were we to hierarchize in terms of who is more and less different, we would be forced to concede that the desires, motivations, and inner world of a cat, for example, are less certain, less understandable, less reducible and therefore more other than our differences from other humans, with whom we at least share many capacities, functional similarities, and possibilities of translation that would diverge less than moving between species. While I still maintain that it would be best to stay with the equalizing formula “*tout autre est tout autre*,” understanding that other animals could perhaps rightly be considered “more other” should be enough to give us pause, to face them, to consider them carefully—as carefully as possible.

But why does Derrida say “the other *they* call cat”? We can read this in connection with Heidegger, whom Derrida read closely, given the importance attributed to “the They” or “the One” in *Being & Time*, depending on the translation. This word or concept offers a way of referring to ways of thinking or acting that are generally taken for granted: “they” say you should get married and have kids, for example—“that’s just what one does.” These ways of thinking, speaking or behaving according to what “they” say are extremely difficult to overcome, concealing and suppressing other possibilities, even fundamental truths. What we can read Derrida as writing here, then, is that while we take for granted that it is proper and justifiable without further ado to call these others “cats” or “animals,” we should take care to wonder what kind of other possibilities or even fundamental truths might be obscured and suppressed by our everyday certainty about and indifference to these terms. Insisting on addressing this cat as “other” offers the possibility of disrupting our everyday certainty and indifference to the living beings to which we refer and whom we encounter. Derrida calls us to question our certainty

even in how we name or refer to these others, no matter what “they” say. To take the absolute alterity of others seriously means not taking for granted that our names or words could ever fully grasp them or once and for all overcome their difference from us.

But what is it that fundamentally characterizes that difference? What is it that we should be hesitant to think we can grasp fully? Derrida is unequivocal here—one of those rare moments that Derrida is simple and declarative, moments that we should scrutinize carefully and take to heart, much like that strikingly succinct formulation we read in **Chapter 1**, “deconstruction is justice”—and his answer is at once simple and profound. Other animals can allow themselves to be looked at, of course, and philosophers and other humans often do look at other animals. But Derrida emphasizes something that he says philosophy seems to forget, and may even be fundamentally structured in such a way as to forget this fundamental point: “[the animal] has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other” (11).

Why would he suggest philosophy is constituted by this? A cursory look at Kant’s fundamental questions of philosophy is illustrative as an example: What can I know? What ought I to do? What can I hope for?²⁵ Important and productive though they may be, these are fundamentally self-involved questions, displacing “the other,” obscuring questions such as: “who or what is the other? How am I implicated in the existence of others, and what do I owe to the other? What are my limits with respect to the other? What is entailed by the fact that I can affect others, and others will judge me?” These are the kind of questions that are opened up and shown as necessary when we think through alterity as axiomatic. But Derrida goes farther than insisting that alterity is forgotten by philosophers, for here he specifically insists that the alterity of other

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge University Press, 1997, A805/B833.

animals is forgotten—that even though philosophers think and write about other animals and analyze their existence, everything proceeds as if they could not be looked at, seen, or addressed by other animals. We will return to this point in **§2.3.2 Following: as Ethical Disruption**.

We have already seen what work the word “absolute” does with respect to alterity as with “the absolute other”. But what does it mean to say that “[the animal] has its point of view regarding me”? This brings out an important dual meaning of another phrase Derrida uses in French to frame the problem: “*Les animaux me regardent*” (*L’animal* 58). The ordinary meaning of this for philosophical inquiry would be to translate as, “Animals are my concern,” which would be to say that the one who writes it is thinking about animals. But, crucially, since “*regarder*” means “to look at” just as much as it means “to concern,” this phrase can also mean “Animals look at me.” Here it is necessary to understand how these two meanings call on one another or contaminate one another. That is, when I think about other animals, they also look at me, are concerned with me; and when they look at me, I am forced to consider them; they become my concern even if my consideration ends up amounting only to indifference.

So the other animal has its own point of view, its own autonomous perspective; it has its own body, its own desires, its own needs and concerns, and these are always at work whenever we encounter other animals. In looking at us it becomes *our* concern, but the same is also true from the other side: other animals not only look at us, they are also concerned with us! Do we offer the chance of hospitality, or the threat of violence? Are we a protective friend, a mere obstacle or object of indifference, or a mortal enemy? Both poles of this relation must be held together without reducing either one to the other: they look at us, they are concerned with us, yes, but not only that—they have their own concerns, desires, relations, habitats, environments, worlds. And while they cannot be reduced to us, we play a role in their lives—in symbiotic

relations, in domestication, as hunters, as destroyers of habitat, and more—and we *can* play a different role, changing what other animals will see (or smell, or hear...) when they regard us. This is a thread I will pick up again under the heading of “following” in §2.3.

Derrida’s implicit reliance on the formula “*tout autre est tout autre*” also explains and motivates an earlier comment, one which also justifies my prioritization of alterity before any other analysis of animals in their animality or in terms of their species, sex, or other particularities. While writing about a face-to-face encounter with his companion cat, Derrida explains that while he does identify her as a member of a certain species and of a certain sex, “even before that identification, it comes to me as *this* irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, into this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked” (*Animal* 9). This is why he can say later that it is “the wholly other they call ‘animal,’ for example, ‘cat’” (11). In short, then, as an irreplaceable and disruptive presence, this animal is *first of all* other, an absolute and wholly other that “they” call cat. Derrida also notes that while he lives with this cat, she is not “his” insofar as a cat is never owned, “never belongs” (7). While Derrida does not specifically explain this comment, we can see it as an expression of absolute alterity, a consequence of the axiom that “every other is wholly other,” who cannot be enveloped by me or grasped in their entirety. Other animals, “pets” included, are *wholly* other; we cannot grasp them in their entirety even if we can touch them, we cannot control them fully even if we can train them, in short we cannot reduce or eliminate their difference, even if we have legal provisions that treat them as if we fully owned them, and even if these legal provisions might in some ways help us do justice to them—that is, help us do the best we can by them for now. It is necessary to understand here not only what goes beyond law—namely justice, as we read in **Chapter 1**—but what is more fundamental than law as what orients justice, namely alterity: to do justice is to

pursue justice for others as other.

But why does Derrida insist that this cat is *first of all* an absolute other? While this turn of phrase opens the possibility of reading alterity as an axiom that can displace the dominant metaphysico-anthropocentric thinking of justice, as I am trying to do here, this phrase also helps to both explain and justify such a move. In order to address the other *as* other—in order to avoid losing the very thing one seeks to find—it is necessary to consider the other as axiomatically or *first of all* irreducibly other to avoid two dangers. One of these dangers is a reduction to the self: the other would be considered only in one's own terms, for one's own gain, or for the sake of one's own desire, and is therefore obscured or enveloped by the self and effaced as other. This is what would happen if one considered the other merely in terms of ownership, as property. A second danger would be a reduction to particular differences or features, for example by considering this cat as merely a member of a certain species, of a certain sex or age, without addressing it in its unsubstitutable singularity or as a whole irreducible to a handful of poorly differentiated traits.

Because I offer alterity as an axiom or starting point that is necessary at every moment one wishes to address other animals, throughout this thesis I continually make use of the phrase “other animals” instead of merely “animals.” I also suggest that instead of the undifferentiated and inappropriately singular word “animality,” it may be better and more just to write “animal alterity” or even “animal alterities” in order to foreground differences. If we were to risk a slightly more poetic intervention, we could even combine the two words to form “animalterity,” a word that would reflect the necessity of addressing other animals as other while underscoring the way in which animality is characterized by difference. But, following Derrida, let us never allow the novelty of neologisms—or any feeling of self-satisfied cleverness that might attend

their usage—to distract us from the task of thinking²⁶ or the pursuit of justice.²⁷

While it is indeed necessary to multiply differences—that is, to find, understand, and respect differences—to better understand others, as we shall now see under the heading of *multiplicity*, such an understanding requires alterity as its axiom in order to be ethically or justly oriented. That is, although I will show that multiplicity is crucially important for understanding other animals, it was necessary to begin with alterity rather than multiplicity, the latter of which can only succeed in understanding the other to whom those traits belong if it understands that other as irreducible to any of them. Multiplicity will also help us better understand Derrida’s claim that other animals are “more other than any other.”

§2.2 Multiplicity

²⁶ A footnote on Heidegger, whose phrase “the task of thinking” imposed itself on me here. I caution the reader against the temptation of smashing my text to pieces by trying to cram a Heideggerian concept of animality into the much more delicate framework I am building here. While Heidegger’s thinking of animality in his lecture series *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* certainly haunts my work here, it is unnecessary for me to directly address his work at length here for at least two reasons. My use of justice and “alterity” as axiomatic sets a project of guarding against any possible ethical indifference of Heideggerian thinking, while “multiplicity” guards against the homogenization of all animals as “world-poor” [*Weltarm*]. Alterity forces us to go deeper and to begin by finding ways to respect others, rather than merely instrumentalizing them to clarify some contrasting excellence of human beings. I take these dangers of ethical indifference toward, homogenization of, and instrumentalization of other animals to be endemic to Heidegger’s thinking concerning animals, although these three dangers are also pervasive, urgent, and deeply problematic elsewhere. My various subsections in **Chapter 2** can be read as a kind of response or alternative to these dangers. **§2.1 Alterity** guards against ethical indifference, while **§2.2 Multiplicity** guards against homogenization. My later subsection **§2.3 Following** shows our own intertwining with other animals against any notion that humans are independent from other animals, while my subsection **§2.4 Passivity** attempts to show that the possibility of instrumentalizing other animals ought to recall us to our own ability to respond otherwise—that is, passivity recalls responsibility. All of these moves take a radically different point of departure than Heidegger does, and may be seen to create an abyss of difference between my framework and his, even if I am deeply indebted to his thinking insofar as I have aspired to the slowness, precision, and breadth of his work—all of which I take to be invaluable to my own thinking and writing.

²⁷ I therefore invite you, the reader, to supplement my writing here with the poetic attentiveness and associative power of neologisms, if you feel you could do both of these justice. One can silently substitute “*l’animot*” for “animal” or “animals,” “animalterity” for “alterity,” “differance” for “difference” as one sees fit for the sake of precision and justice; but for the sake of a clear and communicative project—my own attempt to do justice to other animals through contact with other readers—I have tended towards *using* terms that are more readily understood while *explaining* the insights of more complicated terms. I attempt to think in the space opened up by such terms without feeling the need to constantly rely on them in my prose.

§2.2.1 *A Heterogeneous Multiplicity of the Living*

We have to envisage the existence of “living creatures,” whose plurality *cannot be assembled* within the *single* figure of an animality that is *simply opposed* to humanity. This does not, of course, mean ignoring or effacing everything that separates humankind from the other animals. (*Animal* 47, my emphasis)

Beyond the edge of the so-called human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing side, rather than “The Animal” or “Animal Life” there is already a *heterogeneous multiplicity* of the living, or more precisely (since to say “the living” is already to say too much or not enough), a *multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead*, relations of organization or lack of organization among realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of the figures of the organic and inorganic, of life and/or death. (31)

–Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

Now that we have posited animal alterity as axiomatic—that is, we have promised to begin thinking about other animals by emphasizing their status as *others* in the robust sense—we are now faced with a seemingly simple question: who or what are these “animals” that we ought to treat as others to whom we are responsible? That is, analogously to the way we might ask about the “humanity” of other humans in order to better respect them, how can we think about the “animality” of other animals? In a brief series of notes called “On Reading Heidegger,” Derrida foreshadows the thinking he will later develop in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. In this earlier text he already cautions us against relying on a concept of “animality,” which he argues is too simple and effaces the differences between so many forms of life. There he writes, “There is no such thing as Animality, but only a regime of differences without opposition. The concept of animality . . . [is a] human artifact . . . and [its] effect is to *efface* differences, to homogenize.”²⁸

The key question I raise in this section is this: would it be possible to make use of the word

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, “On Reading Heidegger: An Outline of Remarks to the Essex Colloquium. *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1), 1987, 171-185, 173.

“animality” in such a way that would precisely address such a “regime of differences without opposition”? I will address and build on some of Derrida’s later writings in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* to attempt precisely this. With Derrida’s concise articulation of the problem in “On Reading Heidegger,” we will also have an attentive appreciation of the dangers and limitations of a concept of animality. Instead of effacing differences, then, it would be necessary to develop a concept or a thinking of animality that would allow us to appreciate or even *multiply* differences, to perhaps “heterogenize” rather than homogenize other animals. Oriented by “alterity” and under the heading of “multiplicity”—a word that can continually remind us of these dangers and limitations while giving us resources to push beyond them—I attempt to develop a concept of animality that would be differential and heterogeneous in order to better do justice to other animals in their singular complexity and their plural diversity. I also suggest, as I have already done in **§2.1 Animal Alterity**, that perhaps it would be better and more precise to write “animal alterity” or even “animal alterities”.

Derrida raises the stakes when this problem arises again in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. He powerfully and emphatically suggests that this is not merely a matter of clear thinking, for it concerns our relations to other animals—or rather, more fundamentally still, it concerns *other animals*:

The confusion of all nonhuman living creatures within the general and common category of the animal is not simply a sin against rigorous thinking, vigilance, lucidity, or empirical authority, it is also a crime. *Not a crime against animality, precisely, but a crime of the first order against the animals, against animals.* Do we consent to presume that every murder, every transgression of the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” concerns only man (a question to come), and that, in sum, there are crimes only “against humanity”? (*Animal* 48, my emphasis)

Just as we can easily understand that a mishandling of the word “humanity” is more than a

linguistic concern—for whether we give too tight or too loose, too quick or too slow a definition, we can imperil, constrict, or obscure the very lives of living humans, as in discourses, denials, and violations of human rights, for example—we must also learn to understand that a mishandling of the word “animality” has consequences beyond linguistic, academic, or intellectual concerns, insofar as a mishandling of this word too can imperil, constrict, or obscure the lives (and, indeed, deaths) of the living that we call animals. In short, no matter what we say about animality, no matter how finely we differentiate multiplicities, we must never forget that we are trying as best as possible to address other living beings, to do justice to other living beings—others who are absolutely and wholly other, as we have read.

How can we attempt to avoid this confusion of all nonhuman animals, this crime against animality and other animals? Derrida offers a helpful indication when he writes,

We have to envisage the existence of “living creatures,” whose plurality *cannot be assembled* within the *single* figure of an animality that is *simply opposed* to humanity. This does not, of course, mean ignoring or effacing everything that separates humankind from the other animals. (47, my emphasis)

What we need, then, is a concept that is not a “single” figure but a *multiple* one, a differentiated figure that is neither simple nor in opposition to humanity, but rather overlaps with it, forming a multiple and “repeatedly folded frontier” (30) rather than a single and homogeneous one.

Derrida’s clearest definition comes in the form of his third “thesis” on the limit or difference between what are called “Man” and “the Animal”. He writes, “Beyond the edge of the *so-called* human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing side, rather than ‘The Animal’ or ‘Animal Life’ there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living” (31). By implication here, if there is no single opposition between human and animal, there would be multiple differences and multiple areas of overlap. Derrida continues by offering a slightly more precise

definition: rather than “The Animal” or “Animal Life” there is a heterogeneous “multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead” (31). Crucially here, these organizations of relations are “at once intertwined and abyssal,” and “they do not leave room for any simple exteriority of one term with respect to another” (31). The strangeness of this seeming contradiction between “intertwining” relations and “abyssal” ones is easy to miss because it happens so quickly in passing, but what could this mean if we read it closely? It means that if we are to think the “multiplicity” or differentiation of animal alterity, we must be able to hold together two details. On the one hand, animals (including humans) are related to each other in deeply intertwined and interrelated ways, sharing similar ways of being—being social, being omnivorous, being mammals, dwelling on land, and so on—as well as depending on one another for food, shelter, support, indirect protection, and other relations perhaps generally called ecological or biological, and which I will later treat under the heading of “plurality”. And on the other hand, there are abysses of difference that separate predators from prey, land-dwellers from ocean-dwellers, those that rely primarily on sight from those that rely primarily on smell, and so on—differences that I will also treat under the heading of **§2.2.3 Multiplicity as Plurality** through what Derrida calls the “infinite spaces” that separate species.

But first, I would like to address an ambiguity that arises in Derrida’s definition of animal difference that I quoted above: “a heterogeneous . . . multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead”. Does “multiplicity” refer to the plurality of animals that organize various relations between each other across borders of life and death? Or does “multiplicity” refer to the singularity of each animal who is itself (or her- or himself) differentiated in multiple ways and constituted by many organizations of relations among the living and between living and dead? While it may turn out that the more probable interpretation would be more along the

lines of plurality, I will gather textual evidence in favour of interpreting multiplicity both as a kind of “singularity” and as a kind of “plurality”. In doing so, I shall propose a definition of multiplicity that is itself multiple—as a gathering of plural-singularity and singular-plurality—and therefore guards against the danger Derrida raised of relying on a “single figure” of animality “simply opposed” to humanity. In other words, both interpretations of multiplicity have something important and insightful to offer to our understanding of animality or animal alterity, and so I shall treat both interpretations in turn. In interpreting multiplicity as singularity, I shall focus primarily on Derrida’s use of the French neologism “*l’animot*” and in particular his evocation of the figure of the Chimera to describe this new word. In interpreting multiplicity as plurality, I shall focus primarily on what Derrida calls the “infinite spaces” that separate species from one another, taking care not to forget Derrida’s earlier comment that relations among animals are both abyssal *and* intertwined. What, then, is this word “*l’animot*,” and what is gained by describing it as a kind of Chimera? The Chimera, as a single animal composed of multiple parts, will give us a way of reading multiplicity as singularity, as we shall now read.

§2.2 Multiplicity

§2.2.2 *Multiplicity as Singularity (Or: Multiple-Singularity)*

“The animal—what a word!

The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have insituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other.” (23)

“*Ecce animot*. Neither a species nor a gender nor an individual, it is an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals, and rather than a double clone or a portmanteau word, a sort of monstrous hybrid, a chimera . . .” (41)

“Is it an animal, this chimera, an animal that can be defined as one, and only one? Is it more than or other than an animal? Or, as one often says of the chimera, more

than one animal in one?” (23)

–Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

What can we learn about other animals under the heading of the “singularity” of multiplicity that we have not already learned from alterity? These two terms certainly overlap, relating to one another through intertwining similarities and abyssal differences. But while under the heading of “alterity” we emphasized irreducible differences between every other, with singularity we emphasize internal differentiation and irreducible interrelation implied by that interiority.

I suggest that the point of entry to this interpretation of multiplicity as singularity can be found through two key comments Derrida makes about the French word “*l’animot*” that he devises in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Of his motivations in crafting this word, he writes that “[he] would like to have the plural *animals* heard in the singular” (41). Perhaps somewhat strangely, he goes on to describe *l’animot* as “a chimerical word that sound[s] as though it contravene[s] the laws of the French language” (41). I offer both of these comments as a kind of key to help interpret multiplicity as a way of describing singularity. First, however, let us read about the term itself.

What is this word *l’animot*? It comprises three French words: *le*, *animaux*, and *mot*. *Le* is a definite article—like “the” in English—that is given in French to masculine singular nouns, and is abbreviated as *l’* when its noun begins with a vowel. *Animaux* is the plural form of the French *animal*, like the word “animals” in English. *Mot* simply means “word.” These three French words are combined in Derrida’s word *l’animot*, but something much stranger is going on here that anglophones must do extra work to understand. The French definite article *le* or *l’* is strictly to be used for singular nouns, like *animal*, and could be used to write *l’animal*—“the

animal” as in the animal who is an individual being referred to in a sentence, or else the animal in general, following the convention of more philosophical French writing. This is somewhat strange for English eyes and ears, since in English we would usually ask about “language” in general rather than “*le langue*,” “being” in general rather than “*l’être*,” “politics” in general rather than “*le politique*” or “the political,” and so on, though forms like “the political” do make their way into translations of French texts into English or traditions of thought following from such texts. Why is this important for Derrida’s term *l’animot*? Here we can see the monstrous hybridity Derrida described in passing: *l’animot* awkwardly crams together the form of “the animal” and the word “animals.” Because the word “*mot*” sounds identical to the second syllable of “*animaux*,” *animot* becomes audibly indistinguishable from the French plural word for “animals”. Adding the strictly singular definite article to make *l’animot* sounds roughly as awkward as a phrase like “an animals” in English, where the article and the noun are mismatched as singular and plural, rather than having a singular article match a singular noun as in “an animal.” It is this awkwardness, the visceral feeling of incorrectness, that leads Derrida to describe his coined word as one that “sound[s] as if it contravene[s] the laws of the French language,” and as a word that is “a sort of monstrous hybrid, a chimera”. Chimera is the proper name of a beast in Greek mythology that is also made of three parts, as we shall soon read. But given all this explanation of the word *l’animot*, what does it mean for Derrida to declare, “I would like to hear the plural *animals* heard in the singular”? Of course we already know that the beginning of the word, “*l’anim..*” leads the French listener to expect the word “*l’animal*,” since the definite article “*l*” can only suggest that singular form, while the sound of the end of the word, “*-maux*” or “*mot*” suggests plurality. But are we supposed to hear a plurality of animals when we read about “the animal” in general? Or are we supposed to hear a plurality of animals

when we refer to “the animal” that we encounter, any single animal whatsoever? This is precisely the ambiguity of “multiplicity” that I have already announced as an ambiguity between singularity and plurality, and so I now turn to Derrida’s comments on the “chimerical” character of *l’animot* to explore my interpretation of multiplicity as a way of reading singularity.

Why does Derrida repeatedly suggest that *l’animot* is “a monstrous hybrid, a chimera,” or more precisely, “a chimerical word”? As we have just read, the way it is jarring for French ears can be used to justify its status as “monstrous,” and its use of many words allows it to be described as a “hybrid.” The fact that it has three parts—*le*, *animaux*, and *mot*—combined into a unique new whole is what inspires Derrida to call it “chimerical”. Chimera, as Derrida explains, is the proper name of a beast from Greek mythology that is itself composed of three parts: a head and chest of a lion, the midsection of a goat, and the tail of a serpent (41). What he does not say but will be familiar to French readers of philosophy is that this proper name has a legacy in the more general adjective “*chimerique*” or “chimerical,” and is used to describe something impossible or fantastical. Derrida writes that Chimera’s “monstrousness” is “derived precisely from the multiplicity of animals, of *l’animot* in it” (41).²⁹ Much earlier in the text and separated from his later introduction and use of the word *l’animot*, Derrida poses some unanswered questions about Chimera. He writes, “Is it an animal, this chimera, an animal that can be defined as one, and only one? Is it more than or other than an animal? Or, as one often says of the chimera, more than one animal in one?” (23) Taking my cue from these questions, I ask: can

²⁹ Translation slightly modified. I have rendered Wills’ translation “the *animot*” as simply “*l’animot*,” preserving the multiplicity of all three French words in translation. I insist on this in order to preserve the jarring sound of the word, the strangeness of which is often forgotten in discussion of Derrida’s text. This awkward sound serves an important role in drawing our attention to the word as one that does not fit its referent, being a singular word referring to a differentiated multiplicity. Being reminded of its status as a word also opens up the opportunity to recognize that the word and our relationship to it can be changed. I emphasize that this also means that the way we address other animals can also be changed.

animals, can each animal, be defined as one and only one? Or is each animal more than one in one? If I ask such an awkward set of questions, it is in order to show that the word “multiplicity” can help us understand something crucial about singularity that is somewhat obscured in alterity and is easily forgotten, especially with regard to other animals.

What does it mean to suggest that perhaps each animal is “more than one in one”? We can clarify and complicate this condensed and somewhat obscure comment by returning to the ambiguous definition glossed above: that animality or animal alterity would already be composed of a heterogeneous multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead. This may initially appear to be needlessly complicated, but it can be shown to be an economical condensation that productively has a lot to offer us if we use it as a guide for interpreting other animals as complex and differentiated.

We can clarify this definition by way of an example. If, instead of “The Animal” or “Animal Life” in general, we think of a specific cat, we could consider this one cat as “a heterogeneous . . . multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead.” What would this mean? We would look for multiplicity, for differentiations, in this one cat—differentiations which are necessary for it to be the singular and irreplaceable being that it is. For example, differences between the living cat and the living prey that become dead to sustain the life of the cat; the living cat and the death and replacement not only of its own cells but also the millions of bacteria living in its digestive tract (which, it should be added, is also the case for many other animals, including humans), which must be maintained in a delicate balance for the survival or living-on of the cat; as a domestic animal, the life of other living beings, namely humans, or in semi-feral state, the lives of other cats. We could also add to this the relationship to the life of parasites, viruses, harmful bacteria, and so on, and the necessary death of these for the

continued life of the cat. We would have to understand that the specificity of these other entities and their relations—the specific other cats, humans, bacteria, and so on that this singular cat lives with—would also inform its singularity. These relationships are heterogeneous: there are irreducible differences between bacteria and cats. They have different inclinations or interests, motivations or threats, and indeed they need to maintain their difference in order to continue to live. We could think of various “organizations” of these relations—a digestive tract, a nervous system, a household or other group—and this cat would therefore be a “multiplicity” of these organizations. This is how we would interpret multiplicity as singularity, allowing us to consider each single or singular living being as a multiplicity of heterogeneous organizations of relations between living and dead. The brief attempt I have made here to interpret or differentiate an imaginary cat as a multiplicity could be done in any encounter with any other animal, even if that animal was a human being. Such an interpretation could also be done with recourse to a more finely tuned sensitivity to biology, ecology, ethology, psychology, or aesthetics; I offer this simplified interpretation above as a kind of instructional example or model that could be repeated and made more complicated in other contexts.

What do we gain by reading this multiple-singularity that was not already legible by way of “alterity” or considering other animals as others? Alterity offered us a way of understanding irreducible difference: every animal is different from every other animal, every animal is wholly different from every other animal. Multiplicity as singularity offers us a way of reading each other animal as infinitely differentiated. Where alterity helped us establish difference as a starting point, multiplicity as singularity helps us continue to notice or interpret differences in each animal. In a structurally similar way, multiplicity as plurality will help us continue to notice or interpret differences—but it will be among groups and species of animals.

§2.2 Multiplicity

§2.2.3 Multiplicity as Plurality (Or: Multiple-Plurality)

“*Ecce animot*. Neither a species nor a gender nor an individual, it is an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals . . .” (41)

“I would like to have the plural *animals* heard in the singular. *There is no Animal in the general singular* We have to envisage the existence of “living creatures,” whose *plurality* cannot be assembled within the single figure of an animality that is simply opposed to humanity.” (47, emphasis added)

–Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

Let us return to Derrida’s remark about *l’animot* when he writes that he “would like to have the plural *animals* heard in the singular.” Throughout this thesis I have deliberately avoided using “The Animal” in the singular to refer to other animals, who I insist on recognizing as irreducibly plural. Nevertheless, it is still relevant and important to ask: what would it mean to “hear” or read plurality in any case—in the word “animal,” in the phrase “other animals,” or in other animals themselves? Where above I used Derrida’s comments about the “chimerical” character of the word *l’animot* to guide my interpretation of multiplicity as singularity, here I defer to Derrida’s remarks about the “infinite spaces” that separate species in order to guide my interpretation of multiplicity as plurality. In doing so I also emphasize how important it is to avoid homogenizing all members of a species, just as we have seen that it is important not to homogenize all animals in an oversimplified category. Finally, with both definitions of multiplicity in hand—as singularity and as plurality—we will better be able to address the question of “limits” that Derrida raises when addressing the issue of differences between humans and other animals, showing what insight multiplicity can give to those kinds of differences.

A particularly powerful and evocative passage illustrates what is at stake in what I am

calling multiplicity, and what is in danger of being effaced if we have no words or tools for thinking with which to address it. The repetitiveness of the passage illustrates an important point, so it is well worth quoting in full. Derrida laments the unhesitating confinement of all other animals in the “catch-all concept” of “the Animal” in the general singular, “within this vast encampment of the animal,” including “*all the living things*³⁰ that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbours, or his brothers” (34). Derrida continues, addressing what is missed:

And this is so in spite of the infinite spaces³¹ that separate the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee, the camel from the eagle, the squirrel from the tiger, the elephant from the cat, the ant from the silkworm, or the hedgehog from the echidna. I interrupt my nomenclature and call Noah to help insure that no one gets left on the ark. (34)

What is at stake in these repetitions? Here we read eighteen names for certain other animals, given at various scales—lizard is broader than chimpanzee, for example, and echidna is much more specific than cat. But even with so many names in a relatively short sentence, we can easily imagine that such a brief list is quite far short of naming all the kinds of animals who are radically different from one another. Derrida uses the phrase “the infinite spaces,” and by reading closely we can see that this phrase—and even the self-interruption of the above passage—underscores its own insufficiency. If these spaces or differences between animals are infinite, then they cannot be sufficiently understood with a finite turn of phrase or a finite mode of address such as a book, even one that names the infinite. Here we return to a concern raised in **Chapter 1** with regard to justice as infinite (§1.2), and so we should not be surprised or

³⁰ This is not strictly the case, insofar as plants are living but excluded from the category of animal. The immense questions of how to address plant life would require their own specific treatment, including new concepts that would arise as necessary, even if at least some of the concepts I develop here could be relevant. These questions are now generating increasing philosophical interest, but I cannot address them at length here.

³¹ Translation modified: where Wills has “the infinite space that separates . . .” I pluralize it as “the infinite spaces that separate . . .” following Derrida’s French, which on page 56 of *L’animal que donc je suis* has “*les espaces infinis*.” Because my writing here is especially sensitive to plurality, I take this subtle difference to be important.

distressed that an inquiry regarding other animals would be infinite and ongoing because such an inquiry would be coextensive with the pursuit of justice for other animals.

We should also note that even if the differences between other animal species seem to be structurally the same insofar as they can all be described as “infinite spaces,” this phrase itself calls us for an interminable and ongoing investigation of or deferral to these absolute differences. It is instructive to note that we cannot even have all the names. Derrida shows us that the nomenclature has to be interrupted, performing a kind of understanding of the fact that we simply cannot possibly keep track of all species. But rather than deferring to Christian mythological figure Noah, I defer to contemporary popular evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins to help us understand this necessity. In his book *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution*,³² addressing the fossil record showing the gradual emergence of so many forms of life in the history of evolution, Dawkins discusses problems inherent in the professional struggle in various fields to accurately name the species of newly discovered fossils. Dawkins writes:

the conferring of discrete names should actually become impossible if only the fossil record were more complete. In one way, it is fortunate that fossils are so rare. If we had a continuous and unbroken fossil record, the granting of distinct names to species and genera would become impossible, or at least very problematical. (194)

While Dawkins is here discussing long-dead animals that have made fossils, a fossil is a trace of the living and the insight holds true of living animals as well: given a complete enough historical record, it might very well be impossible to have proper names for all the different species around us today. Of course, there are still good reasons to give and use such names, for they can make deeper understanding possible. But this insight reminds us that differences between animals are

³² Richard Dawkins, *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution*. New York: Free Press, 2010.

much more numerous than we ordinarily suspect, and that even species distinctions are less stable than we tend to think. In short, animality or animal alterity is characterized by an irreducible multiplicity, an uncertain and shifting configuration of many differences. While this interruption of animal species nomenclature is decidedly different than Derrida's, it in no way diminishes the fact that tremendous differences or "infinite spaces" do emerge over time and are a very real part of the great plurality of living animals. It may well be more just to use species names, at least in certain contexts, but we ought not to forget the irreducible multiplicity that gives rise to those names.

How can we get a better understanding of these infinite spaces, these abyssal differences? By looking at Derrida's above list, we can categorize some of these differences: between predator and prey, between those that walk, swim, or fly, between the enormous and the miniscule, between the cold-blooded and warm-blooded, between the carnivorous, omnivorous, and herbivorous, and so on. These spaces can describe the differences in experience or perspective between animals but also the asymmetrical relations between them: they evaluate one another differently, see, hear, smell, or sense each other differently, notice or ignore, pursue or avoid each other differently. Throughout *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida names many such differences separating and relating many species: relations between life and death,³³

³³ Life/death: "rather than 'The Animal' or 'Animal Life' there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living, or more precisely (since to say 'the living' is already to say too much or not enough) a multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead" (*Animal* 31). As of writing I cannot find specific examples.

mirroring,³⁴ sexual difference,³⁵ seeing,³⁶ dreaming,³⁷ and eating.³⁸ But here I raise a complication that Derrida does not make clear. In addressing any abyssal difference or infinite space between two species, we also show the intertwining similarity between those respective species and many others. That is, among the plural multiplicity of all animals, an abyssal difference also reveals two smaller pluralities. A shark and a lamb may be infinitely separated as predator and prey, carnivore and herbivore, one who swims and one who walks, and more, but each of these differences gathers these respective animals among other groups: a shark is thereby similar to all other predators in some ways, and a lamb similar to all other prey, and so on. This shows us the importance on insisting on a somewhat fuzzy word or concept like “multiplicity”: under this heading, multiple pluralities can be assembled with borders—relations and differences—that shift based on the perspective or details at issue.

Whatever categories we use to distinguish the plural multiplicity of other animals—whether by species names or by structural differences—I insist on the importance of continuing

³⁴ Mirroring: “For one of the structural differences among animals is drawn there, between those who have some experience of the mirror and those who don’t have any at all.” (*Animal* 59) But it is complicated: “Does not the mirror effect also begin wherever a living creature, whatever it be, identifies another living creature of its own species as its neighbour or fellow? [To say nothing of species who easily co-operate or co-habit with other species!—A.W.] And therefore at least wherever there is sexuality properly speaking, wherever reproduction relies on sexual coupling?” (*Animal* 59) And: “One would . . . have to accept the additional but essential complication of extending this effect . . . beyond the field of the properly visual image.” (*Animal* 59)

³⁵ Sexual coupling: “Wherever reproduction functions by means of sexual coupling (and that marks one of the important frontiers, subfrontiers, between so many animals or different species)” (*Animal* 60) But also: “they are not all sexed mammals—which is a distinction that few philosophers have taken into account . . . and they don’t all have a face that faces me” (*Animal* 57-58).

³⁶ Seeing: “I also love to watch what they call an animal sleep, when such a living creature breathes with its eyes closed, for not all animals are seeing animals.” (*Animal* 62) We might also add: not all animals sleep! We might also ask: can other animals see in the way Merleau-Ponty thinks is proper of the human—that is, by varying one’s perspective? What about animals that try to get a good view on something? On themselves? And so on.

³⁷ Dreaming: “Since it indeed seems . . . that certain animals dream . . . what sense is there in using this noun in the singular (the animal), and what right do we have to do so wherever an experience as essential as dreaming, and hence a relation among consciousness, subconscious, and unconscious, as well as representation and desire, separates so many animal species one from the other and at the same time brings together certain animals and what is called man?” (*Animal* 62, emphasis mine)

³⁸ Eating: “Of course, the animal doesn’t eat like us [according to Heidegger], but neither does any one person eat in the same way; there are structural differences, even when one eats from the same plate!” (*Animal* 159) We can imagine related differentiations here: between those that eat other animals, eat the dead, eat in groups, and so on.

to differentiate other animals within those categories. Here I make another point that Derrida himself does not directly, though I read it as a kind of extension of his thinking, a translation of the lessons of multiple-singularity to the word or concept of multiple-plurality. We have read that we ought not to homogenize all animals within a singular category of “the animal,” since there are many other animals of many different kinds. Similarly but at a slightly smaller scale, we ought not to homogenize all animals of a species, since there will be differences within any given species: differences in inclination or personality, such as aggressiveness or timidity, in personal histories, in age and lifespan, differences between social groups and within them. Throughout *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida is keen to repeatedly mention sexual difference as a pervasive kind of difference that is also almost completely neglected among philosophers, and so I take it to be crucial to mention here, and regrettable to set aside. For the purpose of my project here of forming a more general framework for addressing other animals in their differences, rather than treating sexual difference specifically I only have the space to see sexual differences as one among many forms of differentiation within a species—that is to say, one form of multiplicity, though no less important for that reason. I mention sexual difference here to emphasize the necessity of addressing it at length in some project to come, which may well be transformative. In setting it aside here I take my cue from Derrida’s comment that before identifying another animal as a member of a certain sex, “it comes to me as *this* irreplaceable living being” (*Animal* 9), as we read above in **§2.1 Animal Alterity**.

What then, in sum, does multiple-plurality or multiplicity as plurality entail? It means not only that “animals” or “other animals” are names for a heterogeneous multiplicity of different species or structures of life, it also means that there are many pluralities or groups of animals, and each of these groups overlaps with and differs from various groups, and further that each

group can be subdivided into variously differentiated groups. As we read under the heading of multiple-singularity, each single animal is itself differentiated within itself and among others, but given all these kinds of difference that can gather or divide other animals I have tried to show that singularity and plurality can be read as different scales or perspectives on multiplicity.

In light of these two differentiated interpretations of “multiplicity”—as singularity and as plurality—I suggest affirming multiplicity *as* differentiated or differentiating, precisely, instead of the perhaps more familiar philosophical suggestion of resolving differences by way of a unifying concept. That is, if the word “multiplicity” can be used to refer to whatever is indeed *multiple*, more than one, then it would be a performative contradiction to reduce multiplicity to a single meaning, even if it seems to form a single word.³⁹ Multiplicity *multiplies*, we might say, perhaps similarly to the way Derrida’s earlier word *differance* (with an “a”) names a movement of differentiation and deferral across differences. Once we begin to ask about multiplicity, we will have to ask about the singular and the plural implied by it, and we will always find more and more differences among these multiplicities.

What is gained by this? Addressing multiplicity is not the same as simply affirming that all differences are “good” or “just” of their own accord; rather, I propose that addressing multiplicity is *necessary* for pursuing justice for other animals. Given that justice is an infinite or aporetic pursuit (as we read in §1.2), we need not be surprised to see that addressing multiplicity shares this unending structure. Gathering more than one kind of multiplicity under the heading of multiplicity will help do justice to animality insofar as it pushes us to ask more and more questions about the complexity of the innumerable living beings we encounter, and therefore

³⁹ As Derrida is fond of reminding us in many of his texts, even a singular word has meaning only among what I here venture to call a multiplicity of other words—that is, a sentence or larger text.

enriches our ability to respond to and protect these differences and complicated interrelations. Derrida notes that he has never seen a philosopher *as philosopher* protest in principle against the inclusion of animals in a single category (40). Derrida's emphasis on multiplicity goes beyond such a protest to offer resources for addressing the problem, and even if he uses apparently single categories—multiplicity, plurality, infinite spaces—these categories call for resistance to their apparent univocity, calling for their own unpacking, unravelling, differentiation, or deconstruction.

§2.3 Following: Animalterity as Ontologically and Ethically Disruptive

§2.3.1 Following: From Axiom to Ontological Disruption

To follow and *to be after* will not only be the question, and the question of what we call the animal. We shall discover in the follow-through the question of the question, that which begins by wondering what *to respond* means and whether an animal (but which one?) ever replies in its own name. And by wondering whether one can answer for what “I am (following)” means when that seems to necessitate an “I am inasmuch as I am *after* the animal” or “I am inasmuch as I am *alongside* the animal.” (10)

In all cases, if I am (following) *after* it, the animal therefore comes before me, earlier than me. . . . The animal is there before me, there next to me, there in front of me—I who am (following) after it. And also, therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me. It surrounds me. And from the vantage of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also—something that philosophy perhaps forgets, perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself—it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other. (10-11)

What is at stake in these questions? One doesn't need to be an expert to foresee that they involve thinking about what is meant by living, speaking, dying, being, and world as in being-in-the-world or being-within-the-world, or being-with, being-before, being-behind, being-after, being and following, being followed or being following, there where *I am*, in one way or another, but unimpeachably, *near* what they call the animal. It is too late to deny it, it will have been there before me who is (following)

after it. *After* and *near* what they call the animal and *with* it—whether we want it or not, and whatever we do about this thing. (11)

—Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

While the positing of animal alterity as axiomatic may have initially appeared arbitrary, here under the heading of “Following” we see that axiom justify itself through its disruptive character. That is, once we experiment in earnest with considering animals as others, their alterity disrupts not only our way of thinking, but our being and our relations to all others—and this disruption, I argue, forecloses any possibility of returning to an instrumentalization of other animals as somehow “not other”. In short, while we may begin by venturing animal alterity as an experimental axiom, the implications of this axiom demonstrate its necessity.

By positing animal alterity as axiomatic—that is, by reconsidering our relations with other animals beginning with the consideration that they are robustly “other”—we begin to see that we are inextricably bound up with other animals. In **Chapter 1**, I called this kind of relation “ex-position,” which named exposure to others, began to reveal our positions and (pre)dispositions toward others, and called for better and better re-positioning, that is, for the pursuit of justice. But how can this relation or ex-position be understood more specifically with regard to animality or animal alterity? And how can we understand ex-position in a way that can address multiplicity (§2.2)? While Derrida does not explicitly make the connection between his writings on justice in “Force of Law” and *Specters of Marx* on the one hand and his later writings on other animals, I argue that his use of the word “following” (*suivre* in French) in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* can be used as a figure through which to develop an understanding of ex-position that offers insight into the specific relation between humans and other animals—and its complications. What is most complicated or complicating here is the way that “following” names

both an ontological disruption and an ethical disruption, as I will soon show. But first we should simply ask: what does it mean to follow?

“Following” is crucial to Derrida’s work in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, as even a close look at the title reveals. The work’s French title, *L’animal que donc je suis*, could also be rendered as *The Animal That Therefore I Follow*, because the first-person conjugations of the French words for being and following are identical: *être* and *suivre* both make *suis*, and Derrida has much to say about this strange convergence. He begins by noting its potential to disrupt the seemingly simple question, “Who am I?” This is only one of two possible renderings of the French “*Qui suis-je?*”, the other of which would be “Whom do I follow?” This second rendering would of course defy the conventions of French idiom, for it is not a meaning that would be suspected in everyday contexts. Nevertheless, this second possible meaning cannot be completely excised, and most importantly, following this set of traces raises important questions that call to be thought through. For these reasons, the set of problems raised here are also relevant in English or any other language, even though it is a unique contingency of French that allows “following” to be offered for thinking in this way. In order to try to do justice to this ambiguity in the French, translator David Wills renders phrases like “*Qui suis-je?*” with the alternate meaning in parenthesis, as in: “Who am I (following)?” This offers both meanings to be read in English, though it seems to make “following” secondary in a way that Derrida’s French does not.

What does this “following” look like beyond the convergence of these French words for being and following? How can we understand following more concretely? We can interpret it in terms of specific phenomena: hunting and chasing, for example, but also caring, touching, simply watching, domesticating, trapping, holding captive, or any other way of relating to other

animals, such as being descended from other animals by way of evolution—even though the individuals and species in existence in our time are of course not the same as our other animal ancestors. But whatever specific ways of following we address, it must be understood that what I am calling following is not reducible to any one of these, and instead names a structure that is shared or reiterated in all of these cases. To put it another way according to one of Derrida’s more well-known words, following can be seen as another name for differance (with an a)—differentiation with deferral, that is, spatial differentiation with a kind of temporal referentiality and directive force. However, unlike “differance,” which seems to evoke spatial and temporal associations, “following” evokes different associations that help us better think through and redevelop our relations with other animals.

But Derrida goes even further with this line of thinking, extending the implications of “following”. This development will allow us to become clearer on the range and stakes of this convergence or coincidence of meaning between “being” and “following”. With an evocative proposal that could easily threaten to detain us for many pages, and though one has to follow its zig-zagging movements through dependent clauses, parentheses, dashes, and references to Heidegger, Derrida writes audaciously that “before the question of . . . *being* . . . there is the question of following” (*Animal* 65). Before I am, before I exist, whoever I am, I always already follow others—and other animals, who surround me, whose kinds existed before me, whose form of life sustains me, including what I eat and wear to survive and what I am. Whoever “I” am, I follow others. Whoever “I” am, I follow other animals. My being is disrupted by alterity, by “animalterity.” We can call this disruption “following,” the precedence or anteriority of other animals.

The first-person pronoun “I” should not unduly distract us here, for although it provides

the occasion for the convergence in meaning between *être* and *suivre*, being and following, the word “I” can mean nearly any being at all, similar to the way that “animal” can be substituted to refer to any one of a great number of heterogeneous beings. Derrida goes even further to argue that an “I” does not require the use of language—an “I” can be constituted by auto-affection, which is to say that any animal, by relating to itself in some way in differentiation from others, “*is able to be or able to do ‘I’*” (92, Derrida’s emphasis). This being or doing “I” would necessarily precede but also obviate the need for language or an explicit declaration of “I”. This point offers us added justification for positing animal alterity as axiomatic: it is not merely “our” language but *their* self-referentiality that makes them others, even as that alterity irreducibly withdraws from us.

Pronouns aside, why is this a radical point? That is, of what importance is it to say that I follow other animals? And how does it go to the root of our inquiry into justice and its necessary implication in the lives of other animals? In short, because we cannot think of or relate to ourselves as human beings (or by any other name—Heidegger’s word *Dasein* or whatever else) without already implying a dependency on the lives and existences of other animals. To be is already to follow, to follow the other—to follow other animals. As profound or perhaps even necessary as Heidegger’s analyses may be with respect to “the beings that we ourselves are,” as one of his favoured general articulations has it, this formulation is unjustly narrow, for our own existence presupposes the existence of others—and other animals. We can therefore no longer relate to ourselves in any way without already implicating other animals. This would even mean that any relation between human beings also already implicates other animals. The ontological disruption of animalterity—that is, the way other animals disrupt our being—necessarily implies an ethical disruption, since any disruption of who or what we are will necessarily disrupt how we

relate to others.

§2.3 Following: Animalterity as Ontologically and Ethically Disruptive

§2.3.2 Following as Ethical Disruption

The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there. (29)

And in these moments of nakedness, as regards the animal, *everything can happen to me*, I am like a child ready for the apocalypse, *I am (following) the apocalypse itself*, that is to say, the ultimate and first event of the end, the unveiling and the verdict. I am (following) it, the apocalypse, I identify with it by running behind it, after it, after its whole zoo-logy. *When the instant of extreme passion passes, and I find peace again, then I can speak calmly* of the beasts of the Apocalypse, visit them in the museum, see them in a painting (but for the Greeks “zoography” referred to the portraiture of the living in general and not just the painting of animals); I can visit them at the zoo, read about them in the Bible, *or speak about them as in a book*. (12, my emphasis)

–Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the other, ethics.

–Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality & Infinity* (43)

If I am myself inasmuch as I follow others, and other animals, what follows from this? In order to better draw out the stakes and implications of following, I make use of the word “disruption.” This word articulates the “calling into question of my spontaneity” that happens when faced with other animals, and does so in a way that does not presuppose any certainty about what will have happened after that disruption. Disruption, or the disruptivity of other animals, their disruptiveness with regards to other others, is ethical insofar as it affects relations between

whoever we are and others, between others and other others. Given the breadth of this way of thinking ethics, we would have to say that thinking itself is always already ethical: it involves relating to others, wondering about others, questioning ourselves in the face of others, questioning others about themselves and with regard to ourselves, and crucially, being questioned or “called into question” by others. And so even if what I have written of “following” above is a disruption of our thinking, I can say that the disruption of thinking is an ethical disruption. We will return to this thread below, for thinking is at stake for Derrida in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, perhaps in a contradictory but productive way, as I will show. What does this ethical disruption mean for the concerns of my project, namely the pursuit of justice in our relations to other animals? What will it mean to say that “anything can happen” to us in an encounter with other animals? We will follow up on this too. Three points to follow up on here, then: the meaning of ethics as being called into question, the possibility of thinking about other animals, and the total exposure of encounters with other animals where “everything can happen to me,” as Derrida writes. I will follow through on this as much as possible, to be sure, with the hope that the attentive reader will find a way of following some thread of all this even after reading what I have written here.

First, a word on “ethics,” its breadth, and its relation to my project here. Rather than suggesting a simple or explicit code of rules, the word ethics should recall what I have written in **Chapter 1** under the heading of “ex-position,” which named the relation to others in mutual exposure and the call of unending responsibility. If ethics has a fundamental principle, it would be one of calling oneself into question, of infinitely striving to do better by others and to bring other others into the fold, where this calling into question begins from and returns to others, for the sake of others. Crucially, however, ethics would not be reducible to a limited sense of rules or

laws—in this sense, ethics is perhaps another name for justice. What does it mean to write of an ethical “disruption,” then? An ethical disruption would be a moment where ethical considerations break open, where one is called into question by the presence of the other, or where one begins to call oneself into question in the face of the other. This is the aim of my project, then, which I take to be both modest and ambitious: to open the possibility of such an ethical disruption in the reader, even if just by a barely perceptible crack. I argue that the ethical disruption from the presence of other animals follows from the ontological disruption of who “I” am in following other animals. When who I am is changed, how I must relate to others also changes. We can therefore come full circle and return to the axiom with which this chapter began: animal alterity or “animalterity”. Animal alterity and ethical disruption follow from one another and lead back into one another. That is, while the positing of animal alterity as axiomatic might initially seem arbitrary, the ethical disruption or calling into question that follows from it in turn justifies the axiom.

What is it that follows from this ethical disruption, then? How do we respond to it, beyond naming it or recognizing it as an aporetic an-economic ex-position (as we read in **Chapter 1**)? Derrida offers an evocative indication in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* when he writes, “The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there” (29). Every word of these two sentences would deserve extensive commentary. We will return to what it means to be “naked” before other animals below when we follow Derrida’s comment that “everything can happen to me” in the encounter with other animals. For now I shall focus on each of the four words of the second sentence here: “Thinking perhaps begins there.” We have already treated the word “perhaps” as an uncertain opening to the unforeseeable future, discussed in §1.2.3, emphasized as a temporal structure crucial to the infinite and aporetic pursuit of

justice. To say that thinking perhaps “begins” there would be to suggest that thinking has perhaps not yet occurred and will remain unfinished: it is aporetic or infinite in the sense discussed above in §1.2. To say that thinking begins “there”: where? Here in some multiple-singular place, amidst a confluence of forces and differences, with a variety of motivations and concerns, in the encounter between many others living and dead, as we read in §2.2 **Multiplicity**. But what, after all, is called “thinking”?

Three brief points should suffice to illustrate the role of “thinking” in Derrida’s *The Animal That Therefore I Am* and its continued relevance in my project here: the importance of poetry in thinking about other animals; the difference between philosophical and poetic thinking as Derrida understands it here; and most of all, the relation between thinking and alterity.

It might seem odd to give so much credit to poetry in a philosophical treatise, but here it is crucial to understand that for Derrida poetry names a broad style of thinking, rather than what we narrowly understand as a genre of writing easily recognized as “poetry” on library and bookstore shelves. This poetic thinking is made all the more urgent and relevant given Derrida’s cryptic declaration in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* that “Thinking concerning the animal, if such a thing exists, derives⁴⁰ from poetry” (7).⁴¹ If I had to be as quick and clear as possible, even

⁴⁰ Derrida’s French is even more cryptic, particularly where Wills renders “derives from”: “la pensée de l’animal, s’il y en a, revient à la poésie” (*L’animal* 23, my emphasis). *Revenir à* can mean to return to, to amount to, or even simply to come to (a more idiomatic use). (For Derrida, it also recalls the *revenant*, a word that appears in both the French and English languages, meaning a ghost or spectre that has returned, a structure we read as relevant to justice in §1.3 with respect to *Specters of Marx*.) Other possible translations might go as follows, then: thinking about animals comes to poetry, amounts to poetry, returns to poetry; or even, more surprisingly, the thinking of the animal, the *animal’s* thinking, could come, amount, or return to poetry. Such a translation would be authorized by the text of *L’animal que donc je suis*, particularly given Derrida’s suggestion in “What is Poetry?” that a poem is “a certain passion of the singular mark,” even if it would be impermissible to traditional philosophy. For the sake of my project, however, I will limit myself to the more readily digestible and less figural interpretations, asking: what could it mean to claim that thinking of other animals amounts to or derives from poetry? In short, why or how is poetry crucial for thinking of or about other animals?

⁴¹ Derrida continues, making the stakes of this claim more severe: “There you have a thesis: it is what philosophy has, essentially, had to deprive itself of. It is the difference between philosophical knowledge and poetic thinking.” (*Animal* 7) If philosophy has essentially or traditionally deprived itself of a thinking of other animals, then it will be necessary to have some recourse to poetry or poetic experience in order to develop a philosophical

while running the risk of being dangerously reductive, I would say that for Derrida poetry has at least two utterly important meanings here, which we could call wonder and incompleteness.

Poetry describes a way of relating to others as if for the first time—in wonder, respect, and attentive care—and it never presumes to say everything or to understand some one and only true meaning. This is necessary for both reading and writing poetry in order to not destroy it. If we claim with Derrida that thinking concerning other animals, if such a thing exists, derives from poetry, then we would have to think about other animals with a similar sense of wonder and incompleteness.

Derrida goes even further with this line of thinking, however, marking a difference between “philosophical knowledge and poetic thinking” with respect to other animals (7). This difference turns out to be a difference between “two types of discourse, two positions of knowledge, two grand forms of theoretical or philosophical treatise regarding the animal”—that is, ways of thinking about or approaching other animals. On the one hand, Derrida proposes, philosophers do not hesitate to analyze “the animal,” to look at other animals and interpret their existences. But for Derrida these philosophers proceed “as if they themselves had never been looked at, and especially not naked, by an animal that addressed them” (13). Derrida suggests that this position might secretly or unconsciously unite all philosophers (12). Curiously, the second “philosophical” style is one he identifies with poets rather than philosophers in the ordinary sense. Poets, for Derrida, “admit to taking upon themselves the address that an animal addresses to them” (13), or in short have no trouble admitting or showing themselves being seen by other animals, though Derrida laments that he has not found any clear “representative” of this

framework in which thinking of other animals becomes possible. While an explicit treatment of such poetic experience is beyond the scope of this thesis, I take to some performative exploration of this point in **Chapter 3: The Call**.

position. Though Derrida's claims here seem to be broadly true, I set aside the empirical question of whether philosophers generally deny the perspective of other animals while poets generally admit it. Instead I use this moment here to clarify the stakes of Derrida's own work and my own interpretation of it. I suggest that Derrida's thinking participates in both the philosophical and poetic style that he articulates, striving for the thoroughgoing rigour and the extreme precision that is the ambition of every philosopher, while also being unafraid of making poetic interventions to open up or reinvigorate our ways of thinking by way of new words or new uses of old words. Since we have already discussed the wonder and incompleteness at work in poetry, let us get clearer on what is at stake in philosophy here for Derrida. As we just read, Derrida suggests that philosophers remain unaware of their mutual exposure with other animals. Crucially, for Derrida, they fail to draw any wide-ranging or systematic consequence from that exposure. Of these philosophers, Derrida writes:

They neither wanted nor had the capacity to draw any systematic consequence from the fact that an animal could, facing them, look at them, clothed or naked, and in a word, without a word, *address them*. They have taken no account of the fact that what they call "animal" could *look at* them, and *address* them from down there, from a wholly other origin. (12)

In short, my thesis project is an attempt to begin drawing such systematic consequences from the fact that other animals address us, and this is why it was necessary to start from questions of exposure and alterity, which I call justice, following Derrida. If I take my work to be "systematic" it is because the terms I have developed here lead into one another and feed off of each other, as I have repeatedly tried to show—but this work does not form some eternal or immutable system. Rather, my work would be deconstructible for the sake of justice, and it may well turn out that other terms are called for to better articulate related concerns—namely, our exposure to other animals, for the sake of other animals. Let us also not neglect the ways in

which poetic writing disrupts systematic thinking and opens it up to other possibilities.

Whatever we say about thinking and whatever philosophical or poetic form it may take, however, Derrida offers a kind of intimation of his own experience that also acts as a kind of imperative to us when he writes, “nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity of the neighbour or of the next(-door) than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat” (11), who looks at us from “the point of view of the absolute other” (11). While we have already read this above in proposing that other animals be considered others in the robust sense, here it redoubles its significance for my project here insofar as we see that other animals call for *thinking*, precisely, and are as worthy of thought as any other subject. We began this short digression on thinking with the suggestion that “thinking perhaps begins there” in the face of other animals, but how is this statement troubled by contact with absolute alterity? What limitations or dangers appear in trying to begin thinking about others?

While Derrida makes this evocative suggestion that thinking perhaps begins in an exposure to other animals, another declaration in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* offers an interesting and perhaps contradictory take. Of an encounter with his companion cat Derrida writes, “Nothing will ever rob me of the certainty that what I have before me is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized [*rebelle à tout concepts*]” (9). How ought we to hold these two thoughts together? If thinking perhaps begins in our disruptive exposure to other animals who in turn refuse to be conceptualized, how is it possible to continue thinking? I suggest that this refusal to be conceptualized means that other animals, as living beings, resist being reduced to conceptual playthings. Their lives matter to them and are richly differentiated; they are not simply there as a tool for human self-reflection. Whatever we think about other animals, our

thinking will always be exceeded by their lives that cannot be fully grasped. We could call this tension an *aporia*, an unpassable tension between the possible beginning of thinking and the refusal to be conceptualized. Put in the terms I have been developing here in this thesis, thinking about other animals should be *aporetic* or infinite (that is, it should be ongoing and unfinishable in the sense described in §1.2), and it should begin with and return to animals as *others* in the robust sense (as worthy of attention and not fully knowable, as discussed in §2.1), as irreducibly multiple and singular (§2.2), and as ontologically and ethically disruptive (as we have seen here in §2.3).

But even beyond any way of thinking or writing about other animals, it is crucial to insist on how intense a moment of encounter with other animals can be. We need a more vivid way of characterizing this ethical disruption, which is broad in disrupting ethics generally but also apparent in moments of encounter with other animals. For Derrida, as I quoted in the epigraph above (§2.3.2), an exposed encounter with another animal as other is one in which “everything can happen to me” (12). What does it mean to say that “everything can happen to me”? Let us be philosophically precise in interpreting this poetic utterance, which is designed to instil unending wonder. Derrida characterizes these encounters with other animals as a “moment of extreme passion” (12). He contrasts this with the peace and calm with which one can speak of these beasts, look at them in a museum or a zoo, see them in a painting, read about them in the Bible or write about them in a book (12). More evocatively, he writes that “in these moments of nakedness, as regards the animal, everything can happen to me, I am like a child ready for the apocalypse, *I am (following) the apocalypse itself*, that is to say, the ultimate and first event of the end, the unveiling and the verdict” (12). We will see in §2.4 **Passivity** what this moment of “passion” entails, and why mortality is the key to thinking it through. For now, the last words of

this quotation are the key to its puzzle: the unveiling and the verdict.

To say that “I am the apocalypse” or that “I am following the apocalypse” would be to say that my encounter with another animal is a moment of unveiling or revealing, a moment in which two beings are shown or exposed to one another, a moment in which a tangle of relations are revealed—and that it is a moment of a verdict, a judgement or decision, a cut or divide between many options. It is not a stretch to say that this “ultimate and first event of the end” could also mean the end of the life of one of the two animals in the encounter, human or otherwise. This is so even in an encounter in which “my” life, the life of the one encountering the other, is not obviously in danger—as in Derrida’s encounter with his cat. While this cat almost certainly does not threaten Derrida’s life, mortality is surely at stake here: the life of this cat is in danger or exposed, to be sure, even simply insofar as it relies on Derrida to feed it—that is, insofar as Derrida would be responsible for it, able to respond to its needs or desires. But even less obviously, our lives are indeed at stake in encounters with others, and other animals: our ways of life, our desires and needs to protect and nourish ourselves, our ways of expending excess energies to relate to others meaningfully, to love them, to entertain ourselves, all these are a part of a life and are at stake in an encounter with an other, including the power to intervene on that other’s relations between life and death, however just or unjust such an intervention may be. All this can be unveiled and decided on. A moment of unveiling and verdict can change the meaning of the past and the possibilities of the future. This is why “everything can happen to me” in the moment of extreme passion of an encounter with another animal—and indeed, everything can happen to the other, too.

While in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* Derrida writes of a specific encounter he has with his companion cat, and he does well to assure us that this cat is “a real cat” and not a figure

or allegory of a cat in general, I implore the reader to resist the urge to reduce Derrida's insights to this one encounter or its specific and necessarily limited characterization in this one particular text. What I propose instead is the development of a kind of generalization with a view to specificity or difference. That is, the thinking that begins with regard to other animals can, does, and must happen before "real" other animals—but these other animals would also have to be considered in their specific differences, which I addressed above under the more general heading of "multiplicity" (§2.2). That is, other animals like a cat, for example, can address us in our own homes, day to day, suddenly and unexpectedly. Other animals like a cat, for example, walk on land, are semi-domesticated and adjusted to being around other humans, have eyes to see us and ears to hear us from their perspective. This would not be so in an encounter with many other other animals, birds or whales for example, whose differences from us in size, location of dwelling, and their senses all pose considerable difficulties worthy of consideration. Issues faced by birds from light pollution in the air at night, and issues faced by whales from sound pollution in the ocean at all times—to take only two quick examples—suggest that the scope of encounters with other real animals can be wider, more subtle, and perhaps more challenging than a brief face-to-face encounter, but the former are as real and as consequential as the latter. Our challenge is to read and feel both distant and close encounters as equally disruptive.

The takeaway point here is the following: given that other animals have a point of view, this point of view resists being perfectly grasped by any concept, and this resistance is disruptive for any way of being, thinking, and relating to others. This follows once we ascribe any difference, any interiority, secrecy, unconscious, alterity, or structure of incompleteness by any other name. I maintain that one cannot avoid such an ascription without entirely missing other animals and much of ourselves. But if other animals rebel "*à tout concepts*"—against *all*

concepts, but perhaps also against *whole* concepts, against unitary, homogenizing, universal concepts—then we must be suspicious even of the concepts that I am developing here, which if used clumsily can appear to suggest that all other animals are characterized in the “same” way by alterity, difference, following, and so on. This is why we have to continually return to the moments in which “everything can happen to me.” In light of all this, what I have tried to call for here is perhaps the development of a *practice* (or theorizing practice) that can stay with this troubling insufficiency of concepts. The name for this practice or disposition is what I have been calling the pursuit of justice: an infinite or aporetic project of addressing our exposure to other animals, for the sake of other animals.

§2.4 Passivity

“The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?”

—Jeremy Bentham⁴²

“The question is disturbed by a certain *passivity*. It bears witness, manifesting already, as question, the response that testifies to a sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able. The word *can* [*pouvoir*] changes sense and sign here once one asks, ‘Can they suffer?’ Henceforth it wavers.”

—Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (27)

What else can or must be said about those whom we follow, apart from the ways in which we follow them? As we have seen, following is the name of a structure of relation through which we are preceded by and oriented toward other animals. This includes an enormous range of possible relations from hunting, chasing, or eating to protecting, preserving, caring, representing, and

⁴² Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907 [1789]. Chapter 17, Footnote 122. Accessed online: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Bentham/bnthPML18.html>

more. All of these modes of relation under the heading of following, however, privilege only one side of any difference between self and other—namely, the self or the one who follows. But because I propose a thinking of other animals that takes alterity as axiomatic and urgent, this relationality of following must also be thought from the opposite pole. These relations all share something in common from the side of the other: a degree of passivity, of receptivity, of a capacity to be affected. We follow other animals insofar as they are passive.⁴³ As we will see, while philosophical questions about other animals usually ask about their activity or whether they have certain abilities or capacities, if instead we ask about their suffering or passivity, we will open a critical distance on such questions of activity while thoroughly transforming our own thinking—and our ability to relate to other animals. This passivity can be named and thought according to many different registers—as impotence, vulnerability, or mortality, for example—each of which would lend itself to a different course of thinking by emphasizing a different set of associations and possibilities fundamental to the alterity or “point of view” embodied by other animals. Of these, the most urgent seem to be the possibilities of violence and death opened up by vulnerability and mortality, but instead of discussing these specific ways of understanding passivity, here I aim to do something at once more modest and perhaps more consequential by opening the question of passivity in general (§2.4.1). Inasmuch as opening the question of passivity is what allows a consideration of specific forms of passivity like vulnerability and mortality, I here risk the hypothesis that passivity is the more urgent question. This question is

⁴³ It does not follow from this claim that other animals are in no way active; even less would it put humans in the position of total and exclusive activity without passivity. Rather, my claim undermines or displaces the primacy of questions about activity in order to simultaneously consider other other animals *as* other, precisely, and to more readily allow the possibility of asking about our responsibility and the pursuit of justice for other animals—beginning with their passivity. These questions are revisited in detail in with regard to what I call com-passion (§2.4.3 below). Differance (and therefore multiplicity, animal multiplicity) precedes and sets up the distinction between activity and passivity, as Derrida writes in “Differance” (Speech & Phenomena 130 [NB: Excised in *Margins*. See **Bibliography**]). Nevertheless, this strategy of emphasizing passivity has important consequences, both for addressing this difference and trying to do justice to it.

given weight and urgency by what Derrida calls “the undeniable,” through which the necessity of asking about passivity is made urgent and forceful, as I will argue (§2.4.2). This undeniability of passivity then opens the possibility of an experience of shared passivity or com-passion (§2.4.3), which has its root in mortality, and which we will strive to understand as compatible with multiplicity and the infinite spaces between species. This possibility of compassion calls for justice while offering a concrete figure through which to pursue it. But how do we even begin to ask about passivity, and what is the status of such questioning with respect to dominant philosophical traditions insofar as they ask about other animals?

§2.4 Passivity

§2.4.1 *Opening the Question of Passivity in General*

Derrida identifies—and attempts to think beyond—a widespread and longstanding tendency among philosophers to ask only about the abilities or capacities of other animals. When asking about other animals, the philosopher’s question *par excellence* would be: “What is an animal able to do?” This structure appears according to various philosophical traditions in terms of key concepts or behaviours: Can they think or reason? Can they speak? Can they mourn? Can they access beings *as* beings? Can they liberate themselves or transform their ways of being or behaving? Here I need not call into question the philosophical precision of these discourses, which variously explore the possibilities implied by the fact that one supposes human beings to be in control of such a form of activity, and which precisely outline how some single animal or species lacks such activity, underscoring the special excellence of human ability by contrast. Rather than resisting these discourses head-on, my strategy is oblique, from the side or outside: I argue that however thorough or precise a philosophical undertaking of this structure of

questioning might be, the scope of these questions is extremely narrow in a problematic way, insofar as they obscure their own limits, and more seriously, insofar as they foreclose or indifferently defer ethical questions. Derrida's reading of Jeremy Bentham offers us a way of broadening our perspectives and discourses with regards to other animals by asking a self-deconstructing question about the activity of other animals: "Can they suffer?" While Derrida is rather brief in his commentary on this question, I aim to do justice to the intensity of his claims by offering a condensation of their insights while elaborating their implications more clearly. I argue that Derrida's insights about passivity are transformative for our thinking about other animals, insofar as passivity offers us a kind of starting-point for asking about other animals—one which can be used in any situation, with respect to any species. I therefore offer a condensed formulation of passivity as an indispensable tool for pursuing justice for and with other animals.

A short question guides Derrida's reading of Bentham, the implications of which are unambiguous for Derrida: its "form and protocol changes everything," (*Animal* 27) he declares. Derrida tells us that the "first and most decisive question" with respect to other animals "is not, 'Can they reason?' or 'Can they speak?' but 'Can they suffer?'" (*Animal* 27). Despite his explicit nod to Bentham, we should be careful to ask about Derrida's unique contribution here: what does it mean for this question to appear in Derrida's text and context, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* and amidst his body of work? Crucially, Derrida reads Bentham's question in a radical way—he goes to a deeper philosophical "radix" or root—when he reiterates and transposes "Can they suffer?" as "Can they *not be able*?" (*Animal* 27) Instead of interpreting suffering as pain, here Derrida renders suffering as inability, and in doing so I argue that he implicitly interprets the verb "to suffer" in its older and broader sense of "to bear," "to tolerate," or "to undergo,"⁴⁴ which

⁴⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary has its origin as follows: "Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French *suffrir*,

we might gloss as “to be unable to prevent,” if we wanted to stay with the language of inability. The difference between these uses of “suffering” may seem slight, but it will force us to transform our thinking as we unfold it, even though Derrida is nearly silent about the novelty and profundity of this move.⁴⁵ Here Derrida opens a deconstructive moment for questions of ability: that is, he drives the logic of such questions to a point where they reveal both their grounds and their limits, calling for a new way of thinking. Derrida’s variation—“Can they not be able?”—reads somewhat awkwardly and perhaps obscurely, so we can clarify it by considering other variations of the same dissonant form: “Are they capable of being incapable?” or “Are they able to be unable?” The dissonant or paradoxical form of the question serves an important purpose: in an extremely condensed form, it shows us that if we ask enough questions about ability or about what other animals are able to do, we will be forced to reach the limits of those questions. We would be lead to ask: what exceptions are there to these general abilities? How can these abilities fail? How do they develop and eventually degenerate? In what way are these abilities nonetheless beyond our control, and in what way do these abilities fail to control what happens to their subject? Derrida calls this inability by various names: “impotence,” “vulnerability,” “impower” [*impuissance*, a non-standard formation in French as well], and even “nudity,” a

from Latin *sufferre*, from *sub-* 'from below' + *ferre* 'to bear'." Accessed online:
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/suffer>

⁴⁵ On my reading, passivity will show us the philosophical breadth, vitality, and strategic usefulness by comparison to the tools employed by philosopher Peter Singer, for example, whose framework rests on pleasure and pain. In his now classic 1975 text *Animal Liberation*, Singer writes: “If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. . . . [T]he limit of sentience (using the term for a convenient if not strictly accurate shorthand for the capacity to suffer and/or experience enjoyment) is the only defensible boundary of concern for the interests of others.” (8-9) Reading “sentience” or “interests” as “the capacity to suffer and/or experience enjoyment,” in other words pain and pleasure, this leaves Singer’s concept of animality susceptible to a denial of animal pain and pleasure in order to deny responsibility. If, as I posit, animals are *others* in the robust sense and every other is *wholly* other, this potentially poses a problem: if others are radically unknowable, can we know whether others are in pain, especially if they have an inexpressive face or even no face at all? Could this even absolve us of any responsibility whatsoever to those others? My Derridean framework sidesteps such problems by showing that passivity—that is, a kind of receptivity, sensibility, permeability, exposure, or “ex-position”—is sufficient for the possibility of com-passion and therefore the possibility of responsibility and the pursuit of justice, as I argue below.

recurring theme in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.⁴⁶ The variety of these terms testifies to the breadth of passivity, and each term poetically evokes a different intensity or response, allowing the possibility of a different course of thought or action. Throughout this chapter I will consistently prefer “activity” and “passivity” as poles of this difference, doing so for the sake of conceptual breadth and ease of reading. By passivity, I mean a kind of receptivity, a sensibility, a permeability, a nudity or an exposure, a possibility that anything might impinge on, pass through, or otherwise affect one who is passive.⁴⁷

I focus on this moment at such length because of the way Derrida generalizes the effect of this deconstructive move through activity to passivity. The question is not merely one more question we are lead to among the rest of the history of questions of activity; once we open up the question of passivity, all questions of activity become troubled, complicated, limited. Derrida describes the effect as follows:

The question is disturbed by a certain *passivity*. It bears witness, manifesting already, as question, the response that testifies to a sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able. The word *can* [*pouvoir*] changes sense and sign here once one asks, “Can they suffer?” Henceforth it wavers. (27)

Asking this question in any of these forms reveals the ground and limit of activity to be *passivity*. By giving added attention to this broadening of “suffering” from its usual meaning as “pain” to a

⁴⁶ I read Derrida’s theme of “nudity” as another name for ex-position or exposure, and while it would take me too far afield here to engage in such a close reading, I maintain that this would be a track well worth following. In lieu of such a reading, I offer one quotation as evidence: “Before even wanting it or knowing it myself, *I am passively presented to it* as naked, I am seen and seen naked, before even seeing *myself* seen by a cat. Before even seeing myself or knowing myself seen naked. I am presented to it before even introducing myself. *Nudity is nothing other than that passivity, the involuntary exhibition of the self*. Nudity gets stripped to bare necessity only in that frontal exhibition, in that face-to-face.” (Animal 11, most emphasis added)

⁴⁷ If I make use of a concept of “passivity” that seems simply *opposed* to “activity,” it is only to complicate matters further, to disrupt this opposition, to think a kind of difference without opposition, as we tried to think in **§2.2 Multiplicity** above. Derrida explains that “deconstruction involves an indispensable phase of *reversal*” (Dissemination, 6), privileging a marginal term, but always in the process of a kind of “double mark” (5), one mark inside the system it is trying to deconstruct or move beyond (here the simple opposition of active and passive, privileging the passive), and one mark outside that system (passivity as passion and com-passion, passivity as differential (with an a) and as otherwise than simple inactivity).

wider concept of “passivity,” we can begin to understand Derrida’s claim that to ask about suffering is the “first and most decisive” question that also “changes everything”. In short, this question is primary and transformative because it is *undeniable*: this is what Derrida means by saying that the question “already” manifests the response (“yes”) that “testifies to a sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able”—that is to say, to passivity, as we shall now read.

§2.4 Passivity

§2.4.2 *Suffering and Passivity as “Undeniable”*

I have said that the ground and limit of the concept of “activity” is “passivity”. This is why the ground of our “problematic” shifts; there is a change in orientation for our set of problems, for the track or line of inquiry that we are following. This ground of passivity, in turn, gives rise to a structure that can be built—namely, com-passion, as we shall read. Derrida claims that passivity is not merely interesting, and it is not a matter of indifference whether one asks about it or not: he claims that not only is it “undeniable,” it also “changes everything.” Derrida explains in passing what he means by “the undeniable,”⁴⁸ and at the same time he offers an architectural figure that helps indicate how the question “changes everything.” He writes:

Before the *undeniability* of this response (yes, they suffer, like us who suffer for them and with them), before this response that precedes all other questions, *both ground and cornerstone of this problematic shift* [my emphasis added]. Perhaps it loses all security, but in any case it no longer rests on the old, supposedly natural [ground] or historic and *artifactual* foundation [i.e., cornerstone]. (28, Derrida’s emphasis, except where indicated)

⁴⁸ David Wills translates Derrida as follows: “But from another perspective altogether we are putting our trust in an instance that is just as radical [as the indubitable], although altogether different: namely, what is undeniable.” (28) In Derrida’s French, the end of the sentence after the colon reads simply: “...: *l’indéniable*.” (*L’animal* 49) Wills’ translation is certainly clear and excellent for at least that reason, but Derrida’s French here is slightly more forceful: “*the undeniable*”. In order to try to translate some of this forcefulness, I shall occasionally make recourse to “the undeniable” in English or “undeniability” to translate the generality implied by the French use of the definite article “the” [*l’*].

What is “undeniable” here for Derrida is an affirmative response, a “yes” in response to the question, “Can they suffer?” However, Derrida is unclear as to how this undeniability functions. I take this suffering to be undeniable because simply by posing the question, we already bear witness to the suffering or passivity of other animals. To be able to ask about them already means we exercise a kind of activity against a degree of their passivity, insofar as we “actively” ask a question to which other animals are “passively” subjected. But asking the question also raises the spectre of a history of having rendered other animals passive: by eating, exploiting, displacing, exterminating, and so on, a wide variety of modes of relationality we read above as “following,” here understood as a reduction of the other to following, to the one who follows with no regard for the alterity of the other followed. Alongside this rendering-passive or reduction to passivity, and as Derrida points out, we see and indeed hear responses from other animals as undeniable expressions of fear, panic, or repulsion by any other name that we see in an animal inflicted with violence or who senses the threat of violence—responses which themselves require or defer to death, to which life is ultimately passive. This undeniability of passivity is thus threefold: as the possibility of questioning, as the history of rendering-passive, and as the spectre of death expressed through fear and other responses in threatening or violent encounters. The problem that unites these is a forceful reduction to passivity coupled with a refusal or neglect to ask about passivity and possible responses to it. Here, then, I recapitulate the move from exposure to re-positioning that I described as “ex-position” above in **Chapter 1**. By emphasizing the “undeniability” of passivity and the way it “changes everything,” I aim to illustrate the urgent importance of asking about passivity and the possibilities of responding otherwise.

Why does Derrida write that “the ground and cornerstone” of the multiplicity or group of

problems shifts when we ask about passivity? What is illustrative about this architectural figure? The “ground,” as the base on which a structure is built, would be the conceptual basis of further inquiry. The “cornerstone,” then, would be a key piece of the structure that is transformative for the whole of it, insofar as a cornerstone makes for the building of an arch—a structure used in the construction of a doorway, a bridge, or the framework of a building because of its great effectiveness in bearing weight. The ground shifts, then, insofar as further inquiry about other animals ought to be based on questions of passivity instead of activity, the concept that usually forms the ground of philosophical inquiry. What motivates this shift is what Derrida calls “the undeniable.” Now that we have seen what, specifically, is undeniable, how does this shift work? In short, it is a parallel shift in thinking and responding to other animals by beginning from passivity.

Here Derrida reiterates the move from activity to passivity by reframing it in the terms of a familiar philosophical tradition. Derrida offers Cartesian “indubitability” as a contrast to the claim that the suffering of other animals is “undeniable”. Derrida does not need to deny the Cartesian hypothesis that the declaration “I think, therefore I exist” is indubitably certain—Derrida does not resist this hypothesis directly, but rather obliquely or indirectly. Descartes’ thinking would take activity or ability as its ground, showing that humanity as “*res cogitans*,” a thinking thing, undertakes an activity or has a certain ability to think, fundamental to who or what we are, that would be denied of “the animal.” Instead of asking about activity, Derrida sidesteps such a discussion by beginning from passivity and the question, “Can they suffer?” Derrida writes: “*No one can deny* the suffering, fear, or panic, the terror or fright that can seize certain animals and that we humans can witness” (Animal 28, my emphasis). He continues by observing that “Some will still try . . . to contest the right to call that *suffering* or *anguish*, words

or concepts that would still have to be reserved for man” (28). Derrida’s point here is that no matter what we decide to call this suffering, or however we wish to differentiate kinds of suffering between human beings and other animals, we can witness some kind of suffering that at least “certain animals” undergo, and that this is undeniable. That is, even if we conceded that human beings held a unique relation to their own death (as Heidegger claims, for example, according to the structure that he calls “being-toward-death”), it would still be *undeniable* that at least some other animals feel fear and relate to their vulnerability, their end, their death in some way. To put the matter much more vividly, if disturbingly: while a Heideggerian kind of thinking might withhold the word *Angst* or anxiety from describing the experience of distress that an Angus cow,⁴⁹ for example, might have in responding to its conditions while being lead to be slaughtered, Derrida’s modest claim is that it is undeniable *that* this distress, this suffering happens, whatever we call it. Furthermore, as we shall soon see, an experience of compassion is always possible here. My simple claim extending Derrida’s claim: responsibility begins there, the pursuit of justice begins there, as exposure to undeniable passivity.

But here I take Derrida’s point to be even more radical than he himself makes it here. In his discussion of “the undeniable,” he slips back to Bentham’s formulation of the question, using the word “suffer” and deferring to experiences of fear and panic. While terms like fear, panic,

⁴⁹ A note on cows or “cattle” in the United States and the particular example of the Angus variety. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that 3,180,500 “beef cows” were killed in 2013 in the US. This figure does not include steers, heifers, dairy cows, bulls, or calves. The number of “cattle” killed generally, not for beef, was ten times higher—that is, more than 30 million per year. See: http://www.ers.usda.gov/datafiles/Livestock_Meat_Domestic_Data/Meat_statistics/Livestock_and_poultry_slaughter/SlaughterCountsFull.pdf from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/livestock-meat-domestic-data.aspx> In an attempt to ground the experience of death as specifically as possible with regard to what I have called singular and plural multiplicity, I have chosen a specific breed that allegedly forms the majority of *The American Angus Association*, an organization maintaining a registry of American breeders of Angus cows, claims that “Angus and Angus-cross cattle represent the majority of the total U.S. cow herd, with more than 60% of commercial cattle producers reporting their herds as Angus.” (<http://www.angus.org/Pub/FAQs.aspx>) Given that the association registers more than 300,000 other animals (“head”) per year, this experience is—to say only the very least—a common one.

and pain are certainly evocative and emotionally affecting—and therefore of an experience of passivity or rather compassion as shared passivity, to which we will soon return—this has the unfortunate effect of limiting our consideration of other animals in terms of those particular kinds of suffering. For example, Derrida is led to concede that only “certain animals” would be “seized” by fear or panic in a way that we can witness. But if we supplement this discussion with Derrida’s earlier variation, “Can they not be able?” and consider passivity broadly, the resulting consequences are much broader and deeper. We would be forced to concede that *all* animals are passive, even those who do not appear to us to be fearful.⁵⁰

When we radicalize suffering as passivity—a move that calls for a thinking of animal alterity and our responsibility as deeply and as rigorously as possible in all our relations with other animals—it becomes clear that the fundamental problem with discourses on ability or activity that compare humans with other animals is that they stop short of asking about our responsibility to other animals. For example, Heidegger’s discussion of death in *Being & Time* makes brief use of other animals in order to illustrate that their “perishing” or coming to an end is much simpler and less robust than the anxiety or *Angst* of our own temporally extended and richly differentiated experience of death (as being-towards-death), but the only consequence of such a discussion is that we ourselves should take seriously our relation to our own death—our own activity or ability. No question is asked here about other animals in their own right, for their own sake, or with regard to our relations to them. I have shown with Derrida under the heading of **§2.3 Following** as ontological and ethical disruption that such questioning is necessary.

⁵⁰ This may at first glance sound contradictory to my earlier call in **§2.2 Multiplicity** for attention to the “infinite spaces” between species and the irreducible singularity of each living being. But the generality of life/death was already included in the broad definition of animality and is therefore already shared as a form of passivity. Crucially, while all animals die and are passive, each species (and even each singular being) dies differently, and here we can ask about those differences, including the kind of infinite spaces and multiple overlapping structures delineated in **§2.2 Multiplicity**.

Derrida's shift from activity to passivity allows us to begin asking these questions by asking about what undeniably happens to other animals, what they undeniably undergo. We might not recognize or witness fear in a lobster or other non-mammal, for example, but through my framework here we would still be called to ask about their passivity, about what happens to them—and the possibility of sharing that passivity, as we shall soon see, implicating us as responsible, calling us to ask not only about what happens to them but also what we can do about it.

Who could deny that other animals have things happen to them, that they are inevitably passive to factors beyond their control, that there is always a kind of vulnerability at stake even if it seems we cannot witness a kind of fear?⁵¹ We must resist the temptation to dismiss this as a crashing truism, as if it were secondary to their abilities or lack thereof, and therefore of little to no interest or consequence. On the contrary, if we understand this passivity as ground and limit of activity and hence primary, using it as our starting-point for thought and action, we are forced to ask about the lived experience of these animals, what can happen to them, what good or bad can befall them, and crucially, what it is that *we* do or can do to them, how they are affected—directly or not—by *our* actions, lives, and practices. What I take to be radical about this point is that it goes to the root of our responsibilities toward other animals, which would no longer be contingent on their ability to feel pain or to react visibly to such a feeling; the mere receptivity to being affected would be sufficient to require us to take responsibility for our actions. Questions about whether lobsters, insects, or fish (to take some more popular examples of denial) could feel

⁵¹ A note for strict philosophers or “devil’s advocates.” What could “the undeniable” mean if in fact someone wanted to deny even this general passivity to animals? Would this undeniability crumble in the face of someone who claimed, however sincerely or insincerely, that “the Animal or animals not only do not suffer pain or fear, they are not even passive”? Even supposing for a moment that this were somehow manageable even in light of all I have written above, the passivity of other animals would still be undeniable. In “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials,” Derrida argues that what is undeniable can *only* or *merely* be denied; one can try to make a claim, to articulate a denial, but such a denial would fall flat in the face of the undeniable. Here it would mean denial only by refusing to defer to “passivity” or the other animals in their passivity—that is, one who tried to deny passivity would offer merely a denial of engagement with other animals rather than a denial of passivity itself.

pain become secondary to our responsibilities; objections that would attempt to absolve our responsibilities by denying capacities for fear or pain would have no effect. Beyond pain, passivity would be the beginning of responsibility.

How would we return to Derrida's architectural figure to explain the consequences of inquiring about passivity? What can be built upon such a shifted ground, or what cornerstone will be used in the building of an arch, upon which much else besides can be built? In other words, where will the starting point of passivity lead our inquiries about other animals? When we ask about the passivity of other animals, we ask about their lives, their experience, their relations among others, and we also ask about our own relation to them: not just our own activity, but all the ways (intentional or accidental, active or passive) that we affect them and they are affected by other others in their passivity. If passivity matters, alterity matters. Written otherwise, alterity and passivity are co-constitutive or defer to one another. Passivity leads us to ask about other animals *as others*, about what we share or can share with them, and about how to *respond*—and among many possible responses we are then lead to ask which is the best possible response. The name for this structure, this arch, is responsibility, whose cornerstone is com-*passion*—and atop this, justice stretches infinitely outward, into the sky, into the depths, watering the earth. From the ground of activity, upon which was built exactitude, ontology, and exclusionary humanism, we shift weight onto the ground of passivity, upon which we may build a kind of interconnected messiness of animals (human and non-human) following one another, passing through com-*passion* and the archway of responsibility, supporting justice and the pursuit of justice. What of this cornerstone, then? In other words, how does com-*passion* work?

§2.4 Passivity

§2.4.3 *From Undeniable Passivity to the Undeniable Possibility of Com-compassion*

“But for the moment let us note the following: the response to the question ‘Can they suffer?’ leaves no room for doubt. In fact, it has never left any room for doubt; that is why the experience that we have of it is not even indubitable; it precedes the indubitable, it is older than it. No doubt either, then, of there being within us the possibility of giving vent to a surge of compassion, even if it is then misunderstood, repressed, or denied, held at bay.” (28)

“I have just attributed passivity to nudity. We could nickname this denuded passivity with a term that will come back more than once, from different places and in different registers, namely, *the passion of the animal*, *my passion of the animal*, *my passion of the animal other*: seeing oneself seen naked under a gaze behind which there remains a bottomlessness . . .” (11-12)

“Being able to suffer is no longer a power; it is a possibility without power, a possibility of the impossible. *Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals*, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of *sharing the possibility* of this nonpower, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish. (28, my emphasis)

—Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

What is this “possibility of giving vent to a surge of compassion”? An understanding of compassion—or perhaps rather an attempt to do justice to it—retreads two paths already followed in this thesis on the way to a third. How are we to understand this “possibility” and this “giving vent to a surge” on the way to an understanding of “compassion”? While Derrida does not offer any more suggestions in the immediately surrounding text, I offer a robust interpretation of this passage by way of resources I developed in **Chapter 1**: I suggest that the “possibility” of compassion can be understood as another name for “ex-position” (treated in §1.1), while “giving vent to a surge” is an evocative way of formulating the “aporetic” or

“infinite” experience of justice (treated in §1.2). Compassion, which I suggest hyphenating as com-passion for reasons I detail below, then offers a figure by which the pursuit of justice is condensed and evoked in a way that calls our attention to both our differences from and affinities with other animals while offering a way to avoid exclusively focusing on either differences or affinities.

I already suggested above (in §2.4.1) that passivity could be another name for exposure: to be exposed to forces beyond one’s control to any extent is also to be passive to them. While this formulation is helpful, we should not neglect the double meaning of ex-position as revealing not only an exposure but also a set of positions, dispositions, or predispositions, some held and others possible. I suggest that this other meaning is invoked as the “possibility” of compassion here.

Why, then, does Derrida articulate this possibility as one of “*giving vent to a surge of compassion*”? We should resist the temptation to dismiss this as some superficial poetic flourish and instead ask: what work does this figure do with more precision or intensity than simply saying “the possibility of compassion”? I argue that it articulates precisely the aporetic or infinite structure we read in §1.2, albeit in a condensed or evocative way. To “give vent” implies the ongoing building of tension that precedes the “surge” of compassion. This precedence can evoke the precedence of the other, who is there before us, the other to whom we are exposed and who is exposed to us, the other who calls on us and fills us with tension that may one day burst out or “give vent” to a surge of compassion. Why a “surge,” then? Perhaps this indicates what is unpredictable in the unconscious accumulation of experiences, relations, moments of witnessing the joy or suffering of other animals that build up and give rise to unforeseen intense responses. Whether this surge arises from the death of a beloved companion animal, the face of a dog at the

park or the pound, the film screen flickering in some tragedy both real and imagined, the wingspan of an eagle floating on high, or any other imaginable or unimaginable encounter, we will never have seen it coming, whether from without or within us. This is what we called the “arrival” of the other or the future-to-come (§1.3). What form this surge will take or what mess it will make in forcing us to reconsider our priorities or relations with other animals will have been unforeseeable, too. But it is not the aim of my project here to catalogue future possibilities; rather, I aim to shift the ground of other readers’ encounters, expectations, emotions and thoughts, to make a spark or get something started. Whether we call it a “surge,” an “arrival,” an “experience,” whether it is thought as finite or infinite, material or spectral, welling up from the past or entering from the future, what is crucial here is for those words to evoke the *intensity* of these moments of exposure to others, whatever words may be used.

What would it mean, then, to give the name “com-passion” to this surge, this experience? I mark the word com-passion with a hyphen to mark a difference from the everyday use of this word, to renew its intensity and to evoke several specific differences, which I call passion, gathering, and affinity. To write com-passion is to evoke the word “passion” with the sense of passivity I explored above: what overtakes one, what one cannot resist or prevent, what happens in spite of intervention. When we ask about passion and passivity we “change everything” in our relations with other animals because we come to see ourselves as mutually exposed, gathered together, in multiple relations, in affinity and difference. We witness an “exposition” or revealing of our mutual exposure, and of our positions, dispositions, predispositions toward others. Asking about passion, about passivity lets us ask about others without effacing their irreducible alterity. While holding on to this axiomatic importance of others, passion also allows us to ask about our own passivity, the otherness within ourselves, what Derrida calls “*my passion of the animal, my*

passion of the animal other” (*Animal* 12). We too are passive, then, passive to the gaze of, the touch of, the exposure to other animals, and passive to the surge of com-passion that can arrive from within us at any time and carry us along in unforeseen ways.

How can we begin to make this experience of com-passion concrete and livable? As we read in the epigraph to this chapter, Derrida suggests that mortality is “the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals” (*Animal* 28), that is, with *other* animals. Moreover, and crucial to what I am here calling com-passion, “mortality . . . belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of *sharing the possibility* of this nonpower” (28). While the word “animal” names a heterogeneous multiplicity of others who relate to life and death variously, as we read in **§2.2 Multiplicity**, we nevertheless share in that relation, that structure of living on the threshold of death. A call for com-passion, then, calls us to address the lives and deaths of others—to think about how we can help them live better and let them die with grace and without misery, as much as possible or even more than seems possible, with all the multiplicities of attentive differentiation that this would require. This project would be infinite and ongoing, unfinished and disjointed, a response to a call that can haunt us, as we read in **§1.3**, and testify to a more just future-to-come.

Along with passion, the “com-” of com-passion serves to indicate a gathering-in-common, a bringing together, a sharing of experience or the space of encounter, a charge that leaps across a gap between others. The “com-” of com-passion can name the seemingly unlikely contact, overlap, or encounter that nonetheless compels us in a way that remains irreducibly other, uncertain. This is where we see that com-passion, much like “following” (**§2.3**) and “ex-position” (**§1.1**) also does a doubled work of ontology and ethics—com-passion would be both a condition in which we find ourselves and something we can seek to develop, something we are

called to address, even if the precise character of that call and that address remains irreducibly other, uncertain and unforeseeable. Gathering would be a name for the strange contradiction of closeness and distance we find in encounters with others and especially other animals: not only a distance no matter how close, but a closeness no matter how distant. We find ourselves in encounters with other animals passively at the intersection of a multiplicity of singularities and pluralities, following histories of multiple relations, and yet in noticing this we are also called to multiply those differences, to notice more details and to do so more carefully, to relate otherwise and better, to expose our way of being to being re-positioned.

But my project takes alterity as axiomatic and urgent: what is the character of this gathering-in-common in light of this, and how can one be com-passionate and gather-in-common with others in the robust sense, without effacing their alterity? In other words, how can we address this apparent contradiction between difference and commonality? While my exposition of the aporetic or infinite character of justice means this tension cannot be resolved simply once and for all, we can try to experience this tension or pursue justice for it by way of the word “affinity”. Here I take a cue from Donna Haraway in her classic text *A Cyborg Manifesto*,⁵² where she distinguishes affinity from identity, as a kind of similarity- or rather association-with-differences. For Haraway, the word affinity at once emphasizes both similarity or commonality *and* differences, rather than exclusively attending to one or the other, where exclusively

⁵² Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books, 1991, 149–182. See especially 155ff. But insofar as Haraway emphasizes affinity as “relation not by blood but by choice,” I may deviate somewhat from her usage by putting less emphasis on choice, since I maintain that ex-position to others precedes any choices we might make. As Derrida writes in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, we are “*After* and *near* what they call the animal and *with* it—whether we want it or not, and whatever we do about this thing” (11), as we read above in §2.3 Following. But insofar as I argue that we ought to respond to that ex-position, perhaps the pursuit of justice could be read as making a kind of choice or decision, a kind of ethical response to the ethical call given by our ontological condition of being related to other animals.

attending to similarity would lead to a simplified politics of identity or homogeneity, risking great injustice by ignoring important differences, and where exclusively attending to difference can lead to a brutal divisiveness, involving an unapologetic explicit or implicit hierarchy between “us” and “them,” one which forecloses the possibility of exposure.

What, then, would it mean to gather affinities between ourselves and other animals? What would it mean to experience the possibility of exposure with compassion? We would have to ask about and attend to the multiple forms of passivity of other animals, ourselves included, according to their multiplicity of differences, doing so in both thought and action. How could this work? If we begin by asking about the passivity of other animals, we can discover a more finely differentiated and specific understanding of the conditions to which they are subjected and indeed to which we ourselves subject them directly and indirectly. By asking about the passivity of other animals, we can ask about their plight without effacing their irreducible alterity—attending to specific passivities like mortality, disease, pain, immobility, desire, flight, play, companionship, and more (even if these passivities also give rise to a burst of activity), without ever being assured that we have somehow once and for all exhaustively understood other animals in their entirety. We would ask: what do these others live with that they cannot escape, and how can we respond to it? We would also come to ask about our own passivities as other animals—as mortal, desiring, limited, land-dwelling, and so on. We would ask: what do we live with that we cannot escape, how can we respond to it, and how do we thereby share an affinity with others? Even our understanding would make a kind of affinity, a kind of contact across differences. And indeed, whatever our passivities are, we are passive in many ways, and this would be irreducibly shared with others and other animals. We would come to see our passivities as sharing an affinity with other animals—an affinity with differences rather than simple identity. That is, we would

not discard the specificity of any forms of humanity nor the specificities of other animals, but neither would we deny that differences relate or defer to one another. This would be the meaning of com-passion for other animals: addressing the passivities of other animals, gathering differences and affinities by bringing them together in thinking and encounters, and pursuing justice for other animals by way of those differentiations.

But here neither difference nor affinity gets the last word: com-passion and the pursuit of justice keep the conversation or the encounter going and call for continually renewed attentive efforts. Com-passion, according to my reading and writing, would gather under its heading the passivity of other animals, humans included, following and followed, in their multiplicity as singular and plural others, who are irreducibly and axiomatically other. This gathering would testify to an undeniable possibility of exposure, of ex-position, of the inauguration of an infinite and aporetic pursuit of justice with and for other animals, however dis-jointed it may seem. But what is this call for com-passion? What calls—and what calls for justice? I suggest that “the call” offers an invaluable and perhaps unavoidable figure for thinking about, addressing, or pursuing justice—a figure on which Derrida and others repeatedly rely, but about which little has been written. The call calls me; it is this figure to which I now turn.

Chapter 3

The Call: of Justice, for Justice (and of Other Animals)

§3.0: Who or What Calls?

Who or what calls—and what calls for justice? Let us re-read this question I posed in my **Preface: Calling...** I bring together two seemingly separate questions—“who or what calls?” and “what calls for justice?”—to suggest that they are characterized by the same structure, which I name “the call.” In doing so, I explore a strange chance occurrence in the English language: the multiplicity of meanings of the word “call” that includes both the “appeal” that others make to us, the call for responsibility or justice, just as much as it includes “animal calls”—such as bird calls, whale song, barking, yipping, squawking, or any other manner of crying out to or addressing others witnessed among other animals. What alerted me to this strangeness was the English translation from the French word *appel*, translated variously as “appeal” or as “call,” words that appear frequently in Derrida’s texts. More salient still, Derrida seems to defer to this word “call” at crucial moments in his texts, especially when he writes about justice, ethics, hospitality, and others. In particular, we will address what he might mean when he evokes “the call of justice, for justice” in “Force of Law.” While this convergence of different meanings under the word “the call” might initially seem like a simple trick or merely an irrelevant fact of the English language, I argue that bringing these texts on justice together with texts about other animals allows the possibility of interpreting “the call” or calls of justice and of other animals as interrelated and mutually illuminating.

The calls of other animals are studied under headings as diverse as bioacoustics, zoomusicology, acoustic ecology, and ethology, as well as under more specific areas of study like ornithology (the study of birds) and cetology (the study of whales and other cetaceans, such as

porpoises and dolphins). Many technical terms arise to refer to the sounds or signals made by other animals, such as vocalization, communication, signalling, and more. In contexts where these terms are used, “call” usually means a relatively simple vocalization, where “song” would be used to refer to a relatively complex kind of vocalization, perhaps with repeating structures. While in many contexts the word “call” does not appear to be developed as a technical term, it appears widely and often seems to be used as a casual synonym for vocalization. Instead of addressing these more technical definitions that might focus more on the specific anatomy of vocal animals or on the specific structure or timing of calls made, here I use “call” as an umbrella term to include all sounds and songs expressed by any other animal that have any possibility of a response by another animal (humans included).

In pondering the call, I take a cue from evolutionary theorist and naturalist Charles Darwin. In his 1872 volume *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*,⁵³ in his fourth chapter “The Means of Expression in Animals,” Darwin writes, “With many kinds of animals, man included, the vocal organs are efficient in the highest degree as a means of expression” (88). This question of expression and whether we can be certain about what is expressed will become salient for us below, but for now it is sufficient to note Darwin’s observation that vocalization is effective as a means of expression. He continues by explaining that when an animal’s senses are strongly stimulated, “the muscles of the body are generally thrown into violent action; and as a consequence, loud sounds are uttered,” noting that this can be the case “however silent the animal may generally be, and although the sounds may be of no use” (88). This last observation is particularly noteworthy: the sounds, the call, may be of no use, it may fail to elicit a response—and also, I might add, it may be responded to in an entirely

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Charles Darwin, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, 3rd edition, edited by Paul Ekman. London: Harper Collins, 1988 [1872].

unintended or unforeseen way, as when a naturalist or biologist studies it, or a writer takes it upon himself to pen an ethical or theoretical treatise about it. The call may be of no use, but perhaps others may yet find a way of responding. Darwin later explains that sounds produced otherwise than by vocal chords are “likewise expressive” and “serve equally well the same purpose” (98). In an attempt to radically extend this line of thought, I suggest that the structure of “the call” that I develop here may be understood as operative even without sound, and still expresses the singularity of the animal who calls, even if perhaps we will have to listen ever more closely for such expressions.

According to my development of it, the call functions to inaugurate or open up the ways of addressing justice and animality (or animal alterity) that I have developed throughout this thesis. The call names exposure or ex-position to others, others who call on us an-economically, beyond contract, beyond exchange. The question of *what* others call for, precisely, or what they “mean” is secondary here, for here I address the minimal structure of exposure, namely expression, attraction, and uncertainty. We become exposed to others no matter what the call might seem to mean. A human song, a bird calling for a mate, a cry of pain, a yelp of joy, a plaintive look, even the driest academic talk would be a call. The call raises infinite problems—infinite in number, in scope, in history—that cannot be passed through or solved once and for all, and thus open onto the unforeseeable future-to-come. Beyond the living present, between past and future, self and other, life and death, the call resounds and calls to us—among a multiplicity of others whom we follow, whose passivity undeniable, like the possibility of us sharing in that passivity as com-passion. All this can open up before us in any moment we catch ourselves listening to a call.

Why do I insist on this use of the call as a kind of umbrella term or fundamental structure? I do this for at least three reasons. First, in order to show that “the call” involves the

possibility of interrelations between us and other animals—possibilities that I have treated above under the names *ex-position*, *following*, or *exposure*. Second, at the same time, I use this structure of “the call” to emphasize the alterity of the other expressing the call while also emphasizing the directionality of that call of the other. That is, where “following” might risk obscuring others by emphasizing our *own* relations to the other animals by whom we are surrounded, “the call” begins from the place of the other. Third, “the call” offers a set of productive associations and possibilities for appearing constantly in unexpected places to remind us of our constant exposure to other animals. I take this productivity and associative power to be crucial to any concept worth developing. Specifically, the call can direct us to think of the call of justice, the call for justice, the exposure, *aporia*, and an-economy at stake in justice, as well as the alterity of the absolute other who calls, the multiplicity of others calling among so many others, the disruptive character of those calls that draw us in as we follow them, and the passivity of all others, for no one actively chooses their voice, their desire, their call. Amidst all these calls, the possibility of *com-passion* can call us, too, as we listen in precarity for precarious others.

According to my definition of “the call,” a robin’s song would be a call just as much as the roar of a grizzly bear, the croaking of a frog just as much as the chirp of a prairie dog, the bellowing of a rhinoceros just as much as the barking of a dog—to say nothing so far of those other animals we call humans. I suggest that what is at stake in the call is *expression*, but what is expressed here turns out to be both simpler and stranger, more curious and more uncertain, than we usually think. But the call offers even more than a set of associations and tools for thinking about the structure of relating to others. The call offers the possibility of reframing and transforming our lived encounters with other animals—affecting their lives and ours. That transformation would allow us to hear the call of justice, for justice, in any call whatsoever.

As we read in **Chapter 1**, justice named “the relation to the other,” or more precisely for

Derrida, the “an-economic ex-position to others” (§1.1). The specifically “an-economic” dimension of this ex-position called for a relation to others “beyond contract” of any kind, beyond any pre-determined group, including any species difference separating humans from other animals. In order to open the possibility of addressing other animals in a way that would attempt to take account of these differences, we were lead to a more specific analysis. In **Chapter 2**, therefore, I developed a set of concepts specific to our exposure to other animals, and we read that non-human animals are deserving of being called “others” in the robust sense for several reasons—their irreducible (singular and plural) multiple differences (§2.2 **Multiplicity**), our inescapable relations to them (§2.3 **Following**), their undeniable passivity and the undeniable possibility of our shared passivity or com-passion (§2.4 **Passivity**).

Following this, I develop a way of thinking about or listening for “the call.” I suggest that this structure is a form of expression of the other, which may attract our attention in some way—but this evocation is fundamentally uncertain, both in terms of what it may mean and what it may call on us to do. Incorporating this uncertainty into our encounters or mode of address to other animals will lead the way to a carefulness in *listening* and an appreciation of the responsibility we must take on not only for our response but for the call of the other itself, insofar as we have to bear responsibility for listening to and interpreting these calls, much like we read of “the visor effect” in §1.3.2: **Dis-junction of Self/Other**. The figure of the call and of listening thus gesture toward the pursuit of justice. This interplay of calling, listening, and responding will allow us to understand the poetic economy of “the call,” including its animalistic expressions and associations, while also pointing the way to the necessity of developing other figures for different times and different situations in the future. Given the subtle but frequent reliance on this figure of “the call” implicit in discussions of justice in the word of Derrida and others, my discussion here will more finely differentiate what is at stake in this figure and how it

functions, showing that even at the level of figure or structure, justice is, must be, and will have been related to animality.

Before moving on to a discussion of the call, however, another necessity arises, one which some readers may find strange since it goes against certain conventions of philosophical or theoretical writing. I propose that merely describing the call would be insufficient; I take it to be necessary to also perform it in some way, to make a call of my own, so as to better show what is at stake here. I therefore make recourse to a mode of address sometimes called “the second person,” which is to say I will now begin to directly address you, the reader. As we will read, the call ex-presses something of the other who calls, pressing up against the one who can listen to or read it; the call may attract the curiosity or attention of the listener, who may just as easily ignore it or simply not notice it in the first place; but in any case, the call remains uncertain in its meaning, its origin, its consequence. How will ex-pression, attraction, and uncertainty be at stake in my mode of direct address to you, the reader? Such an address surely ex-presses something about me, a student of philosophy or theory and criticism, a writer, one who is undertaking to complete the requirements of a Master’s thesis at a particular time and a particular university, though none of those important details would exhaust the source of, the motivation behind, or the consequences of, this document, modest though they may be. This ex-pression might attract the interest, the curiosity, the time and attention of you, the reader, even some transformation of your way of thinking, however slight—just as much as it may go unnoticed or even unread by you or many others. But whatever the case may be, its original or final meaning will remain uncertain. One could interpret this “you” to mean my supervisor, the committee who has agreed to read this document. One could interpret this “you” to mean some specific person, kept secret by the author, maybe even secret to himself—some friend or lover. Or perhaps one could interpret “you” to be anyone whatsoever—whoever happens by, whoever downloads this document or

perhaps finds it on a shelf in print and picks it up. All of these may be true, perhaps this last one especially—whatever I ex-press here, whether it attracts attention or not, and whatever it may mean. Whoever reads this already understands “the call” and participates in it—and perhaps whoever does so could begin to listen ever more carefully to the calls of other animals.

§3.1 The Call of the Other (or, The Calls of Other Animals)

When others call out to us for help, when others call on us to do something, or when we hear others call out to others still, what do we hear in those calls? Who or what calls? And what kind of response is called for? For those of us inundated with questions calling for a response—phone calls, calls for papers, and even bird calls when walking around campus—this structure of “the call” is far from trivial or rare. On the contrary, the call is pervasive and unavoidable. What might we learn if we think carefully about the call as a commonly repeated structure or figure? What might we need to consider when addressing and being addressed by others who call? What might we learn about listening, responding, and relating to others, no matter who or what they may be? With these as our guiding threads, we will call on our powers of thinking, listening, and reading to respond to these questions and others.

I want to start out by thinking about something that might very well seem too obvious to mention: the fact that you are here, reading. If you are here, reading, then you seem to already understand exactly what I want to write! And so I want us to try to stay with that. If you are here, reading, following, you are already listening for the call of the other. Here I will make use of a kind of cross-pollination between reading and listening. Listening, read as a form of straining toward the sense of the other, as a form of entering into a relation of tension or offering oneself as a place of resonance, would not be restricted to the sense of hearing or of sound, even if it

refers or defers to sound. If this writing makes a mark, you the reader will perhaps listen differently—to whatever comes, “whether it is written down or not, and when it is written, from its composition all the way to its execution,” as Jean-Luc Nancy writes of music⁵⁴ (*Listening* 27). Reading well or listening well would mean listening “according to the different possible inflections of expression”, not simply to what is written on the page, but to what could be done or heard or thought after reading (*Listening* 27).

If you are here, then, you are already listening. If you are here, reading, following, you are already listening for the call of the other *and you are already trying to respond* in whatever way that you can. I will explain in more detail what I mean by each of the key components of these claims—namely *the call, the response, the other*—but first I want to insist on this structure of *listening*. I have selected this last word very deliberately because it suggests a valuable disposition that may even be necessary for thinking about or addressing what is at stake in these words (the call, the response, the other). If we are going to think about the *call*, or rather if we are going to *listen* for it, we will first have to address what it means to listen.

I want to insist that it is important to *listen* for the call of the other rather than feel certain that we *know* the call of the other, or that we *understand* it, whatever it is—certainly it is important to *listen* before we *object* to it or *dismiss* it. Saying that we are *listening* might even be better than saying we are *thinking* about the call of the other—because we have to listen carefully before we can think. I invite anyone who disagrees with this claim to consider what they were doing before having an impulse of disagreement.

Can we ever be certain that we have listened long enough—or that we have listened *carefully* enough? Who or what would be justified in assuring us of this? I pose these questions because questioning has something in common with listening: in the structures of questioning

⁵⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007, 27.

and listening, we have to be very careful with what we send out, while we also have to strive to retain an openness or receptivity to unforeseen responses, perhaps even unintelligible responses! Deferring an answer to these two questions, I am trying to offer a clue as to what listening might feel like: that is, like listening to a question for which we have no answer, and for which perhaps there *is* no answer—or no *one* answer.

I also want to emphasize how important it is to recognize how necessary listening is for what it is we are trying to do in philosophy, theory, literature and so on. Like you, no doubt, I have spent a lifetime practicing an art of listening—but despite spending all this time trying to listen I still cannot be completely certain that I ever listen carefully enough.

So: in order to try to prepare us to think, in order to *attune* ourselves to thinking, let us practice listening together, even if we don't know in advance exactly what we are going to hear—or rather, let us listen *especially* because we cannot be sure in advance what we are going to hear.

Before we continue, I want to insist on the word “listening” by making a helpful distinction here, borrowing from the work of Jean-Luc Nancy. In a short essay called “On Listening,”⁵⁵ Nancy emphasizes the difference between two French words for listening: *écouter* and *entendre* (5-6 and throughout). *Entendre* can mean hearing or listening, but also means *understanding* or comprehension (*comprendre*). This is often how we use our ears, especially with what we do in philosophy or theory: we hear what a person or a text is saying to us, but we hear it *in order to understand* something broader, deeper, or more abstract. We hear-in-order-to-understand the way their utterance fits a concept, or we hear its grammatical infelicities, or we hear that they have understood us properly (or improperly, as it were). But *listening*, Nancy

⁵⁵ The title in French is “*À l'écoute*”—and so perhaps “for listening” or even “to listening,” would be salient alternate translations, especially given Nancy's declaration that forms a kind of epigraph after the title: “This is at the same time a title, an address, and a dedication” (*Listening* v).

teaches us, is something more hesitant and less certain: in listening, one becomes a “place of resonance, of its infinite tension and rebound” (22). In listening, one becomes “an echo-chamber” (17). By listening we let a sound *resound* within us. “We strain or lend an ear” (22) to a voice, letting its sound resound in us by letting it repeat, by allowing its complications to emerge, by attending to its differentiations, its multiplicities, its strangenesses. While we listen together, I urge you to try to listen in this way, rather than eagerly or anxiously trying to hear-in-order-to-understand, especially because we will take our time in thinking about these sounds afterwards and what they might mean for us.

Given this distinction from understanding, this sense of “listening” could also be broadened to refer to a way of being carefully receptive—something that’s possible in seeing, reading, touching, and more. To take just one brief example, Nietzsche says that the dancer “wears his ears . . . in his toes”: that’s the sort of listening that I mean, too.⁵⁶ Something broader or deeper than sound hitting an eardrum, though it can and perhaps must include that as well. But we will have to leave that to the side for now.

Let us listen together, even though we are separated by space and time. If this request seems strange to you, perhaps it should, and perhaps this attitude will allow you to engage more deeply. Even if you seem to recognize these sounds, try to resist the urge to quickly hear-in-order-to-understand, and instead perhaps you can make an echo-chamber of yourself. Perhaps wherever I am, I am straining myself to listen—to what is around me and to what may be around you, too.

⁵⁶ “My heels raised themselves, my toes listened for what you should propose: for the dancer wears his ears—in his toes!” Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Other Dance Song,” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 2003.

Before turning the page, please listen to the following audio recording for at least three minutes, and as long as you can bear—while doing as little else as possible besides listening, resisting as best you can the urge to have done with it and understand “the point” I am trying to make here, as if there were only one.

Please enter the following URL into your internet browser:

<http://goo.gl/xA4AkQ>

All of the sounds you heard are from a single source—*Megaptera novaeangliae*, a Humpback whale. They're from a record published by Capitol in 1970 simply called *Songs of the Humpback Whale*. Curiously, despite the continued and attentive work over 45 years in bioacoustics and cetology—the study of *cetaceans*, a biological “order” or category including whales, porpoises, and dolphins—we still cannot be sure what these calls mean. We know that only male Humpbacks sing like this, and they're called songs because they repeat long sections, sometimes as long as 10-20 minutes, but they can continue to sing for hours at a time. Despite initial hypotheses that these songs were for sexual purposes, done in order to attract a mate, the evidence here is vexing—while sometimes they sing while travelling with a female, they often approach other males when singing, sometimes simply making contact before moving along, sometimes forming a group quietly or while one or both continue to sing, or else they sing while swimming on their own. Some scientists hypothesize that they might serve the purpose of echolocation, but experimental data is still needed to test this. Interestingly, Humpbacks are also well-known to generate a wide variety of other sounds, variously named: barks, snorts, grunts, groans, thwops. Additionally, they are also very active near the water's surface, slapping the water with their pectoral fins, “breaching” or leaping out of the water to come crashing down on their back or side, sometimes dozens of times in a row and often to the delight of whale-watchers near Hawaii, South America, New Zealand, Australia, the United States (California and especially New England), and yes, even Canada (Newfoundland and Labrador). There is something strangely haunting about the curvature of their whines, the rumbling of their trills slowly rolling along, the sublimity of a song spreading across an ocean basin, their fidelity to a style and their gradual variations over a lifetime, the enormity of their vocal range from highs that tap as gently as calligraphic pen points before being dipped back into the inky depths of their lower register, a gift given freely like so many letters written repeatedly and indecipherably and

arriving almost by mistake at the doorstep of human hearing, their envelopes barely small enough to fit.

Why Humpback whales? I wanted to follow a fortuitous association between “the call of the other” and *animal* calls specifically, like bird calls, for example. I might have picked something closer to home—like robins, cardinals, or chickadees, for example—but I thought this would be perhaps too difficult a starting point for those of us who close our ears to them, who hear them only in order to understand them as so much background noise, or merely as an indicator of the season or time of day. There is something about the fundamental strangeness, intensity, and length of the songs of Humpback whales that is helpful for illustrating and awakening us to “the call” and to “the other”—to what exposes us and to what is irreducibly different. There is also something fascinating and amazing about the intensity, the majesty of these whales in all their peculiarity, and for whatever reason that fascination and intensity seems to lend itself easily to being communicated to others. Dr. Roger S. Payne, who helped produce the recording to which we listened, says in the liner notes that “the songs seem to have universal appeal,” and from American college students to international diplomats, from public concert halls to the living rooms of performance artists, he has found many deeply affected listeners. Perhaps they allowed themselves to become places of resonance—that is, they allowed themselves to listen.

Despite all these interesting details, we still do not know what these calls are for, what they might mean, or how they are used or received by the ones who sing them. You might already be wondering: *why* did we listen to these Humpback whale calls if we do not even know what they *could* mean? Why have I not cited biologists, ethologists, and other scientists to let the experts tell us, precisely and reductively? Why am I talking at such length about these sounds if we are inevitably going to end up in a condition of uncertainty? I want you to notice that feeling

of uncertainty, of strangeness, of wonder—I want you to notice it and hold onto it, to remember it well and to keep it with you—because I want to suggest that this is precisely the condition we find ourselves in with respect to the calls of others generally. Even if we cover over it, ignore it, breeze by it, or push it aside on most days, at most times. Other animals in particular, yes, like Humpback whales for example, but let’s not forget that humans are animals, too, and that there are innumerable other animals with structures in common and structures in irreconcilable difference. This is true even of ordinary or “domesticated” animals, urban animals, so-called “trash” animals, just as much as of the sublimity of Humpback whales. Other calls in all their great diversity, the minute variations in each call and caller, the brevity or length, the musicality or noisiness, the volume or near-silence of these calls of other animals close to home can still expose us—to these others in their alterity, their multiplicity, their passivity as we follow along, listening. But why say that other animals “call,” specifically? What does this mean and what possibilities does it afford us, what specificities does it offer us?

What is the call, then? The call is a way of naming the way we relate to others, a way of naming difference. The call is a name for the *structure* of how we encounter others. The call is a relation to the other. I resist writing *the* relation, because there are so many relations and ways of relating, and of course so many others. “The call” might be another way of deferring to what Derrida sometimes calls “the trace,” which we can gloss as “a passage across a difference”. Derrida articulates differences under the name “the trace” but also many others, several of which we have seen: “differance (with an a),” “veils,” “text,” “spectrality,” “following,” “aporia,” and more. But it is not helpful to reductively say that these all refer to “the same thing.” All of these names offer different possibilities, different associations, different emphases and different points of obscurity—even if it is helpful to relate them to one another. These differences are also borne out by the texts in which these words appear. And so I want to emphasize a certain reserve of

possibilities, associations, emphases, and obscurities that are called up or recalled by what I am calling “*the call*,” the call of the other, the many calls of so many other animals.

Very well then: what specific possibilities and emphases am I drawn to in “the call”? What associations can be made, or what obscurities remain hidden? There are at least three aspects of the call that I want to differentiate and emphasize here: I call them *expression*, *attraction*, and *uncertainty*. I will later suggest that these three, especially or perhaps necessarily taken together, might offer the possibility of a greater sensitivity, the possibility of less violence, or to use a more familiar term, the possibility of a more *ethical* way of relating to others. But all three of these points aim to explore what Nancy calls the *evocative* character of sound and music. At the risk of simplifying, Nancy suggests that phenomenology, which is a thinking of what *appears*—that is, *phenomena*—has an orientation more related to the *manifestation* of what is *seen*. The word “phenomena” does, for example, have its roots in the Greek word for light: *phos*. But Nancy suggests that this risks missing something crucial to sound and music, and he differentiates this manifestation from *evocation*. More simply put, sound and music, as well as what I am calling *the call*, do not simply *appear* as something to be seen—rather, they *evoke* through being heard. The three aspects of the call that I differentiate in what follows are each an attempt to do justice to the specifically *evocative* character of the call.

Expression is a way of naming what emerges from the other, whether we call it a “call,” a “song,” a “cry,” a “sound,” a “noise,” or something else still. Expression is always doubled insofar as it expresses the particularity of the one expressing while at the same time it expresses toward others. The song of a cardinal, for example, expresses various particularities of the singular cardinal singing: its particular anatomy that allows for certain pitches, volumes, and variations; its location, which will be within a certain range of places hospitable to the bodies of cardinals, for nutrition, temperature, and protection; its sex, for males and females sing

sometimes for different reasons. At the same time, these aspects of the singing cardinal also express *towards others*: its various songs, calls, variations must also be audible by others. In other words, the call expresses the throat of the singer as well as the ear of the listener. The cardinal announcing its location can also be modulated with a warning to other males, for example, or an invitation to interested females. And so the song is also expressive of the sex of the cardinal—as when a male aims to repel other males or when a female sings back and forth with a male to express her own interest, and males and females tend to sing at slightly different volumes. In short, the call *expresses* many differences specific to the singular one who calls.

An *expression* might not even be directed toward a *specific* other, but perhaps to a type of other, to many others. At the same time, however, in some sense it is directed simply outward, towards all others generally, to whoever might hear it, whatever the consequences. Perhaps we can add that Nancy suggests that a sound is on the *edge* of meaning, or perhaps *is* this edge (7)—and, I might add, that edge is also exposed to others.

The second aspect of the call is what I call *attraction*. By this I mean a possibility or movement of fascination, interest, or intrigue that happens from the one who hears and becomes directed in some way to the other, to the expression of the other. Attraction is a name for the relation at work when one perks up one's ears to listen. This movement of the other may be unintentional by the one who calls, as when a predator, like a cat for example, might hear a cardinal calling. This movement, however, might also of course be intended, as when two cardinals attract one another in reciprocal song and continue to sing to each other all day. Or when a human cries out in pain, and another rushes to his or her aid. But there can also be a mysterious and more open-ended, ongoing kind of attraction, as when one pauses under a tree to listen to the song of a cardinal, or when one is bewildered and intrigued by the pulsating song of a Humpback whale. To what end are we attracted? To what end do we listen? Perhaps to no end,

precisely.

One could perhaps add what Derrida calls “following” to what I am calling “attraction”. As we read in **§2.3 Following**, the title of his text *The Animal That Therefore I Am, L’animal que donc je suis*, could also be rendered as *The Animal That Therefore I Follow* because the first-person conjugations of the French words for being and following are identical: *être* and *suivre* both make *suis*. This strange convergence lead Derrida to suggest that “before the question of . . . being . . . there is the question of following” (*Animal* 65). Before I am, before I exist, I always already follow others—and other animals, who surround me, whose kinds existed before me, whose forms of life sustain me, as well as what I eat and what I am. Even when we do not eat other animals, let us not forget that we still rely on other animals for our food—like honeybees, for example, who pollinate much of what we eat.

But we followed those tracks earlier, so here we will follow others. These two aspects of the call, *expression* and *attraction*, should be intermingled with a third aspect that I call *uncertainty*. That is, in both expression and attraction there is already an indeterminate and irreducible measure of uncertainty. Nancy explains why uncertainty is necessary when he says, “If ‘to hear’ is to understand the sense . . . to listen is to be straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible” (6). That is, listening is possible and necessary precisely because the other who calls is different from the one who listens, because what is expressed in the call is uncertain, and because our attraction is of uncertain motivation and uncertain consequence. This word or aspect of uncertainty should recall us to hiddenness, to secrecy, to interiority, which is to say to the inaccessible inner life of the other who calls us. Uncertainty should also call us to hesitancy and carefulness, because we can no longer rest completely self-assured in how to act on our attraction. Perhaps we should even be called to repulsion or to a respect of resistance by the other who calls, who is distant and withdrawn from

us even in expressing a call that may fall on our ears. Is a closeness of intimacy or a distance of respect called for? The call is uncertain.

These three aspects of the call—expression, attraction, uncertainty—can easily become effaced or forgotten when we hear-in-order-to-understand, but perhaps these can be brought out carefully when we listen, when we make ourselves a place of resonance for the calls of others. In differentiating these various aspects of the call, I am of course not yet talking about a *response* to the call; rather, I am trying to talk about something like the conditions of possibility for any response whatsoever to any call whatsoever. What will “response” have meant? How will we respond to other animals? These are questions to come, questions of the future-to-come; they are questions about the future and to be answered in the future, precisely, following after the call.⁵⁷

Who or what calls, then? Why call them “others”? The word “other” is used to both *allow the possibility of* difference and to *emphasize* differences. The word “other” can allow the possibility of not presupposing we already know or understand whomever we are talking about, addressing, or listening to. The word “other” can allow us to relate to others in a way that does not presuppose that they have to be the same as us in some way to be worthy of respect, of attention, or of their own autonomy.

How can we take into account the enormous differences between a human and a Humpback whale? Or a cardinal? Or a cat? As we read in **§2.1 Alterity**, Derrida provokes us in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* to take the alterity or otherness of other animals seriously:

The animal is there before me, there next to me, there in front of me . . . it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view *of the absolute other, and nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity . . .* than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat. (Animal 11, my emphasis)

This “point of view” could be emphasized differently by considering a source of sound, as I am

⁵⁷ For more on the “to-come” or the “future-to-come,” see **Chapter 1, §1.3 Dis-juncture**.

trying to do here. From the gaze of the other, the face of the other, to the *call* of the other. That is, the call offers a way to begin listening, a way in to being attentive to and thinking about other animals—and, I hope, a way leading to eventually responding to them. I suggest that any call whatsoever would be sufficient to call us to pursue justice and to address others. In this way, the call is another name for the exposure or ex-position we read about in **Chapter 1**. The call would be a name or form of “the an-economic ex-position to others,” that is to say, justice—prior to any contract and beyond economic exchange. Our exposure to the call is enough to open the possibility of responding to it, and from there we must answer for our response, even if it seems to come in the form of a non-response. The expression of the other, however uncertain, would be enough to evoke our responsibilities, whoever or whatever expressed it. Here we can understand why “the call” is a helpful intervention here: it would be less strict or exclusive than certain readings of “the face” or “the other.” Perhaps any other animal whatsoever can call, even silently.

Here Nancy’s distinction between manifestation and evocation at the heart of sound and listening can be helpful: when we encounter the other, not everything is shown or manifested. The source of sound remains hidden, even literally to some extent in the throat of other animals who vocalize their calls. But that hiddenness, those others can *evoke* something in us, from us: a curiosity, perhaps, and a respect in the face of this irreducible difference. This would be a way of reiterating differently what Derrida called “the visor affect” in *Specters of Marx*, as we read in **§1.3 Dis-jointure**: “we do not see who looks at us” (*Specters* 6). We do not hear who calls us, even when we hear the call—even when we are listening for the call.

Once we tune our ears to listen to *the other* in this way—and to listen for *alterity* broadly—we can start to complicate our thinking of the other or of others generally by problematizing our *relation* to others more broadly. That is to say, apart from the possibility of *hearing* or *listening to* others, what does it mean *to be related to others*? How can we think this relation in

general? And how is it at stake in the call?

Here I recall two crucial moments at the limits of Derrida's thinking on justice—limits that he also offers resources to push on (and perhaps even push through). These limits come in the form of a danger and a figure. We treated these at length in **§1.1 Justice as An-Economic Ex-Position** and **§2.1 Animal Alterity**, so I will not belabour them here, but a brief recapitulation will make the stakes and use of the call as clear as possible.

First, the danger: we have followed it already and its threat lies at the heart of this thesis. It is the danger of what Derrida calls “the metaphysico-anthropocentric axiomatic that dominates, in the West, the thought of just and unjust” (“Force of Law” 953). It is a danger that attends any wish “to speak about what we still so confusedly call ‘animals,’” which is precisely my task here. Without repeating the detailed work undertaken in **§2.1 Alterity**, it will suffice to say that in order to think and address the differences among other animals and our relations to them, we will have to disrupt this anthropocentric axiomatic. Justice as exposure, on the one hand, and alterity as irreducible, uncertain, and unforeseeable on the other, will help us do this.

But the second limit is the figure of “the call” itself, which I argue is a figure by which justice and alterity, justice and animality, can be strongly associated. This is a construction, it must be said, the likes of which we discussed in **§2.4 Passivity** in trying to understand the ground and limit of thinking about other animals, which we read to be contingent and artificial. What I propose here is an alternate strategy, one worth pursuing because this strategy itself pursues justice—that is, pursues more meticulous, attentive, and thorough responses to others with the aporetic aim of improving their lives and deaths. This figure appears in many texts by Derrida and others in their treatments of justice, for it often translates the French word *appel*. It can also be translated as the perhaps more vague “appeal,” giving it more legalistic associations. But as I showed in **Chapter 1**, there is much more at stake in Derrida's writings on justice than

simply a relation to law in the ordinary juridical sense, since justice also articulates exposure to difference and the call to respond to and respect difference.

There are two uses in “Force of Law” that I will follow closely—first, the call as fundamental, and second, the call as forceful or motivational. Derrida identifies a *call* for justice as more fundamental than a will, a desire, or a demand. He writes: “A will, a desire, a demand for justice whose structure wouldn’t be an experience of aporia would have no chance to be what it is, namely, *a call for justice*” (947, my emphasis). That is, a *call* for justice or of justice is more fundamental to justice than willing justice, wanting justice, or demanding justice—all three of which seem to be *evoked* by a call, perhaps. A call, considered as an acoustic phenomenon or structure, requires *distance* or difference—and so the structure of the call can lend itself to what Derrida here calls “an experience of aporia,” which is to say an experience of *non-passage*, as we read at length in **§1.2 Justice as Aporetic or Infinite**. One can never fully close that distance; one never passes over *into* the one who calls, one can never pass through the call to *listen*, and one can never pass through the call to pursue *justice* and to take responsibility for one’s attempts to do justice. Of course the call to do justice is not reducible to an acoustic phenomenon, but nonetheless thinking of the call as a *figure* or a *structure* can offer us resources for thinking through how justice appears or evokes us, as I am trying to show.

There is a second moment where Derrida relies on the figure of the call in “Force of Law,” and his claim there is perhaps even stronger, though it is even easier to miss in the English translation. Derrida writes: “For in the end, where will deconstruction find its force, its movement or its motivation if not in this always unsatisfied appeal [*appel*], beyond the given determinations of what we call, in determined contexts, justice, the possibility of justice?” (“Force of Law” 957) But I insist on considering this *appel* according to what I am describing as “the call.”

What would it mean to take this figure of the call seriously? What happens when we no longer read “the call” as an accidental or superficial word that somehow transparently communicates something abstract, and instead we read “the call” as expressing something deeply insightful about justice and alterity? Could the inclusion of this figure also be deeply troubling, requiring us to fundamentally change the way we think about justice, trying to do justice, and trying to do justice to *others*? The call allows me to return to the insights and concepts discussed in **Chapter 1** on justice in order to set them in relation to those discussed in **Chapter 2** with regard to other animals or animal alterity.

How can the call be set in relation to the concepts discussed in **Chapter 1**? That is, how can the call be used as a way into thinking ex-position, an-economy, infinitude or aporia, as well as the disjunctions of haunting and the visor effect? The call is a mark of exposure: calls surround us and impinge on us, and may even be intended for us, to entice or frighten us, to direct us closer or further. The call is an-economic. It itself is not given in exchange for anything, but as an affirmation of the form of life from which it comes. It calls on us infinitely or without limit; we can respond more or less generously, but without any clear contract or specific limited demand. The call is aporetic: we cannot pass into the interiority of the other who calls, and out of this irreducible distance, we can never be sure whether we can be done with the call. The call comes from one who perhaps sees us but whom we do not see, the one “who delivers the injunction” from behind the visor effect. The call can haunt us: whether the cry of another in distress and pain or the wavering beauty of an intense song, it can stay with us; we can remember it long after the other dies, we can hear the other expressing itself from the future even before it is born. It can call us to respond in uncertain terms, from uncertain sources, at uncertain times.

How can the call be set in relation to the concepts in **Chapter 2**? This is made easier or more intuitive in part because this English word “call” allows me to exploit or insert a set of

associations with animal calls—bird calls, whale calls, and so on, though my use of “the call” is dramatically broader than any of those examples would ordinarily cover (recalling that the call is a structure of expression, attraction, and uncertainty). Is there a way to justify this, to elaborate on and even do justice to these associations? If justice calls us to think according to others, according to differences, it would be unthinkable to ignore the infinite wealth of differences generated and generative among other animals all over the planet over millions upon millions of years. If we are committed to thinking difference and differentiation, we must take into account the processes of differentiation called evolution, and the “heterogeneous organizations of relations between living and dead” to which those processes give rise, as we followed in detail in **§2.2 Multiplicity**.

I call on each concept from **Chapter 2**—alterity, multiplicity, following, passivity—to follow or listen for its associations with the call. The call comes from the other, who remains irreducibly other. The call comes from multiply differentiated others, who are irreplaceably singular and one among a plurality of others. The call attracts us, we are drawn in by it, we follow it; we are interrupted, surrounded, overwhelmed by it, or else we constantly repress it. The call expresses the passivity, the passion, of those calling, and we too are passive to it and perhaps impassioned by it; we can share in those passivities through com-passion, by gathering forms of passivity and staying with the trouble they may bring us. The call, too, is precarious, mortal—passively or inescapably part of a configuration of relations between living and dead. Calling for safety or protection, attention or distance, other animals call. Perhaps we will have listened to them, and felt the force of the call to respond.

The possibility of justice is always inescapably paired with the possibility of violence, which is in part what gives justice its urgency and force. Because justice is infinite and aporetic, because we can never pass into the other or make them transparent, because it is never finished

or guaranteed, trying to do justice is an inherently risky venture. It therefore behooves us to try to identify or differentiate some of these risks or dangers of injustice in order to try to avoid them, and we can try to remind ourselves of these dangers and try to push past them when we are listening to the call of the other and think we might understand. Recall that the three aspects of the call that I differentiated were called *expression*, *attraction*, and *uncertainty*. Trying not to repeat myself too much, I would also like to also differentiate three corresponding dangers that attend each of these aspects: *oversimplification*, *invasiveness*, and *indifference*, respectively.

When an other *expresses* itself, or him- or herself, we run the risk of becoming so certain about the other or so knowledgeable that we *oversimplify* its expression and close off our responsibility. When we hear the call of the Humpback whale, for example, we might feel compelled—as many scientists have!—to develop a body of research and knowledge that can help us interpret and understand what is being expressed, what might be meant by certain sounds at certain times, what needs or desires are being announced, what variations are possible. Even if, for example, it turned out that Humpback whales or any other animal call seemed only to call for a mate, for food, or for other seemingly basic biological necessities, we should caution ourselves in two ways. First, this interpretation of the call could always be wrong, or perhaps only one superficial part of a much more richly differentiated whole. It could always turn out that the inner life of a Humpback whale could be much more complicated than previously thought, as has often been the case in the history of humans relating to other animals, the latter of whom have often been widely regarded to be simply brute machines, but who are increasingly recognized as complicated, desiring, suffering others. Second, even supposing we somehow had absolutely perfect and complete knowledge about the meaning of these calls, no justification of violence or indifference would follow from this. No one could be justified in saying: “This call is only a call of biological necessity, therefore I can violate or kill with impunity”. Violence does

not simply follow from the call, for the possibility of justice opens there also.

The danger that attends *attraction* is what I will call *invasiveness*. The expressiveness of a call can indeed be attractive, it can be magnetic and intriguing, it can hold one still in fascination, it can change the rhythm of one's heart through calmness or excitement. But we must be clear on the limits of these feelings or changes in attitude or attunement: they again do not permit simply any response whatsoever. One may be inclined to respond to a call by learning as much as one can in order to continue to respond as best as possible, but one runs the risk of unjustly disrupting the way of life or even the safety of the other if one pursues this course without caution. The treatment of other animals is rife with examples like these throughout history and continuing into the foreseeable future: not only did ornithologists, for example, routinely kill and bag birds in order to amass collections of them for their own edification, Japanese whaling fleets continue to slaughter whales en masse for "research" purposes (their word) despite global moratoriums on killing whales, slowed only by the tirelessly disruptive but non-violent tactics of groups like the Sea Shepherd Society (whose logo, I might add, you can now find emblazoned on the side of a Government of Canada building in an enormous mural in the heart of downtown London here on Dundas Street!). In other words, while attraction is a powerful force it requires an indefinite amount of cautiousness or *tact*—we must ask, without assurance, how it might be possible to get close without violation, and we will have to accept responsibility for the possibility that we could get *too* close.

The third danger attending this structure of the call is paired with what I have called *uncertainty*. I call this danger *indifference*. It is tempting to try to confront inescapable or irreducible *uncertainty* and take it as completely defeating. In the face of infinite other responsibilities, one can understandably be tempted to think: "I don't know what this call means, therefore I have no responsibility and am justified in my indifference." But this simply does not

follow. One is responsible for how one responds to the other, and uncertainty does not *absolve* our responsibilities—on the contrary, uncertainty *doubles* our responsibility. Not only are we responsible for what we do, we are responsible for the limits of our awareness and understanding—we can always push ourselves to understand better, more robustly, more carefully. We can always push ourselves to *listen* better and prepare ourselves to be surprised by what we hear.

Before parting, I would like to recall us to *listen* and to be uncertain about what it means *to listen well*. Who or what can we listen to, who or what calls? How will we know when we have listened carefully enough—how will we know when the other precisely admits of no final knowledge? How will we offer ourselves as echo-chambers to the calls of others? What will it have meant for us to try to do justice to these calls by doing justice to the others who call? Beyond exchange, beyond contractual obligation, in what kind of exposure? How will we take justice to heart? How will we take *the call* to do justice to heart?⁵⁸

To you I pose another challenge. Listen for other animals. Listen closely, listen without the assurance of understanding, to other animals very close to home. If it is the daytime in the spring or summer, perhaps you can hear the robins singing, chickadees chattering, cardinals calling, blackbirds buzzing, Canada geese honking; if it is winter or night time, perhaps you have already been listening the silence left in their absence. Are you listening to cars sailing by quietly, or the annoyance of their false alarms or grating honks? Perhaps a squirrel or a skunk or a racoon or a deer dashed across the road just now, or recoiled from its edge. Perhaps a dog hangs her head out the window of one of these cars, its panting a whisper against the wind. Do you hear the wind in the trees? What manner of birds nesting and beehives buzzing, tree hollows

⁵⁸ Perhaps we will need to rest unsatisfied with this auditory figure, to outgrow it eventually, since it leads us more easily to animals who vocalize, as Derrida's interest in sight and being seen by other animals lent itself more easily to animals with eyes and a face. Perhaps this could happen by way of scent, so important to Friedrich Nietzsche, or touch, Jean-Christophe Bailly's favoured figure in *The Animal Side*. Otherwise still, perhaps it could find form in some other multiplicity.

and hiding places full or empty might there be? What burrows, dens, or other dwellings snake between their roots? Is it the wind between skyscrapers, instead, that accompanies you? Perhaps pigeons or other doves roost quietly in your proximity, the size and scale of the building nicely suiting these otherwise cliff-dwelling birds. Perhaps a cat purrs on your lap, a dog whines at your door, or cicadas buzz in your ears in the day, mosquitoes at night. Perhaps none of these; perhaps it is the silence of other animals displaced to which you are listening. What has lived on this terrain, right here, in all the millions of years past, before the excavation, the bulldozing, the construction, the pavement? If you strain your ears enough, perhaps you can listen to its call, a simulation of it or an analogy to it—in each case returning as if a ghost. Listen for other animals—for their appearance and disappearance, their evocations and withdrawal, but also for their sake.

With the addition of emphasis and care for this figure of “the call,” what I am trying to do here—in my own way and yet according to other animals—is to offer a tool with at least two uses. It is a tool with which to recall, reframe, and reread Derrida’s writings on justice and animality, a condensation and expansion of which I have offered throughout this text. But it is also a tool for the sake of enriching our encounters with other animals—humans included—and we might ask ourselves these questions in any encounter: who is this other calling? What kind of life do they live? How is that life expressed in this call? What calls on me, and how can I listen better—should it be more closely or more distantly? How can I tarry with the disruption of not knowing once and for all what this other means or how to respond as best as possible? Wherever I am, perhaps I am listening. Wherever you are, perhaps you are listening also.

Justice calls for us to address other animals as others, as other animals call for justice. The call of justice, for justice—of other animals for other animals: it will have been necessary to follow the multiplicity of these other terms and questions with passion, with com-*passion*. If we

listen carefully, perhaps we will have heard that we are being called.

Conclusion

A Call to Come . . . in Multiple Voices

“The call of the other is a call to come, and that happens only in multiple voices.”

–Jacques Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other” (47)

Where did this come from and where is it going? Asking this question, we can wonder about this epigraph, this thesis, this project, and this conclusion, however inconclusive it may be. This epigraph came to me as a surprise and a delight, well after I had written about “the call of the other” as it appears in Derrida’s work and all around us. But it imposed itself just in time before we part ways, and we can ask: in what way is a call “to-come”? And whose multiple voices? And furthermore, where is all this coming from in the context of my project?

My project here came to me from a desire to listen to others around me, and a fundamental uncertainty as to how to proceed, an uncertainty that will have remained in spite of any increased clarity. The call of the other is a call to come because it is never clear what it will have meant in the future-to-come. What will it have meant? How will we have responded? How will we listen for more and more calls to come? The call of the other happens only in multiple voices because it never happens in isolation, it never happens with a clearly discernible origin: calls ring out among many others who call, among many other calls, and each call opens so many differences. Here in this document we already have an immense multiplicity of voices to which even a run-on sentence would struggle to keep up with: my voice, as I imagine it; your voice, as I imagine it; my voice, as you imagine it; your voice, as you imagine it; my voice in dictation, for editing; Derrida’s voice in quotation, from various sources; the voice of good grammar, good sense, good philosophy or theory, and politeness in writing; the voice of poetic flight and other strange inventions; the voices of so many ambient sounds resounding in the

spaces in which these are read; the voices we may have heard, in person or from a recording, of innumerable birds, dogs, whales, rats, insects, apes, cats, and so on endlessly, all these other animals and more in all their singular and plural differences.

From that desire to listen and that uncertainty about how to do so, I began by asking a series of questions about our relations with others. How are we related to others and what characterizes those relations? What is possible and what is called for in those relations? The name for this mixing of ontology and ethics is “justice,” and we read our relation to others as exposition—as mutual exposure and positioning, with the possibility and call for re-positioning embedded in it. We read our relations to others as an-economic, as not primarily based on exchange or debt but on the generosity of the gift, through an unending or infinite set of possibilities. We read that even through multiple dis-jointures and differences, between past and future, self and other, life and death, we are still called to pursue justice.

In asking these questions, I was careful to follow the trail back to other animals as often as possible, also taking care to clear a path as much as I could. The desire to listen and the uncertainty about how to do so came with a desire to make these issues as clear as possible, both to myself and to any others whatsoever who might ask about them, or who might wonder about other animals. Throughout all this it was vital for me to avoid established categories and concepts like “vegetarian,” “vegan,” or “animal rights,” where readers have already decided in advance how to respond. It was also impossible to develop a concrete political project while attending in careful detail to the philosophical or theoretical foundations I wanted to examine, so I opted for the latter, hoping for the promise of the former in some future-to-come. Instead of developing some overarching political or historical project that I would then impose on my readers, I have tried something much smaller, quieter, and more modest: to inspire some small desire to pause, to wonder, to listen for other animals. I hope only to have sparked some small

something for which the reader may as yet have no name.

I have taken care as much as possible to develop a clear set of tools for thinking about and addressing other animals. These tools serve two purposes simultaneously: one, to show the great importance of thinking about other animals rigorously, indeed the necessity of doing so if we are not to obscure the others by whom we are surrounded and whom we are trying to address; and two, to give my readers and myself a series of accessible terms with which to begin addressing other animals. In the face of other animals, or in the wake of any encounter with other animals, however intense or banal, however recent, distantly past, or even imagined, we can ask about their alterity, their multiplicity, their singularity and plurality, their disruptive traces in our lives as we follow them, their passivity—and we can ask about our possibilities of com-passion.

This may well be a lot to consider all at once, and so I offered a condensation of all these aspects in the figure of “the call.” Who or what calls? Who or what expresses themselves, attracts us, and remains uncertain? In all our uncertainty, and in all the uncertainty that will have remained, let us take care to listen closely, to read closely. But for now we must part.

It is never easy to part ways; so much remains to be said, to be thought, to be written. So much remains to be heard, listened to, responded to—for others and for a more just future. What traces will remain is a matter of the future-to-come.

A call to come, in the future and for the future, a call to come listen: may we have listened well—to each other and to as many others as possible!

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