

CSCT 767

Allison Warwick

Tuesday, April 19, 2011

Dr. David Clark

Philosophical Phallogocentrism, Ecofeminism and the Question of the Animal

During one scene in the 2002 documentary *Derrida*, an offscreen interviewer asks the French deconstructionist thinker to name the philosopher who would be his mother. Initially taken aback by the question, Derrida smiles with bemusement and begins to blink furiously. After spending a few moments silently ruminating on the seemingly bizarre question, Derrida arrives at the following response:

A philosopher couldn't be my mother. That's a very important point. Because the figure of the philosopher is, for me, always a masculine figure. This is one of the reasons I undertook the deconstruction of philosophy. All the deconstruction of phallogocentrism is the deconstruction of what one calls philosophy which since its inception, has always been linked to a paternal figure. So, a philosopher is a Father, not a Mother. (*Derrida*)

The phallogocentrist propulsion of Western philosophical thought has been detrimental to the question of the animal, through its focus on utter rationalization and a forcible confinement of nonhumans into recognizable and immovable categories of life. To counter these traditional philosophical narratives, Derrida opens *The Animal That Therefore I Am* with a strange encounter involving his female cat, whose animal eyes fix its gaze upon his vulnerable naked body, filling him with an uncomfortable sense of irreducible shame. He insists that such philosophers as Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, Lacan, and Levinas have disavowed the gaze of the animal because it violates "what is proper to a man;" consequently, these thinkers have rendered nonhumans into "a theorem, something seeing and not seeing" (Derrida 14). Derrida emphasizes that these philosophers have been "males and not females," asserting that "the [gendered] difference is not insignificant" (13-14). He writes that these men have not "been seen naked by someone who, from deep within a life called animal, and not only by means of the gaze, would have obliged

them to recognize, at the moment of address, that this was their affair, their lookout" (14). Given the absence of females voices from the history of traditional Western philosophy, how might ecofeminist theory contribute to what Derrida refers to as the 'question of the animal'? It is crucial to determine how ecofeminist thought can disrupt humanist philosophies—particularly through a strong critique of rationalist animal rights discourse in contemporary moral philosophy—and reconfigure dominant perceptions of the animal(s).

Since I will be employing the term throughout my paper, it is important to begin with a short description of 'ecofeminism'; however, almost any attempt to provide a complete definition will necessarily end in failure, as it is a movement marked by fluid postmodern pluralities configured through constant debate. The main tenet that anchors ecofeminist thought, however, is succinctly defined by Judith Plant:

. . . all oppressions—whether men over women, First World over Third World, north over south, white over black, adults over children, human beings over other species, society over nature—have their roots in common. The basis of power-over, of domination of one over the other, comes from a philosophical belief that has rationalized exploitation on such a massive scale that we now not only have extinguished other species, but have also placed our own species on a trajectory toward self-destruction. (Plant 21)

The domination of humans and nonhumans, ecofeminists argue, is caused by a societal privileging of phallogocentrism within a "hierarchical structure that repeats itself over and over again, in political and economic organizations, in religious institutions, and in our most intimate relationships" (121). Since this hierarchical construction is visible in dominant Western philosophical thought, ecofeminism thus provides a strong counterpoint to the dogmatic assumptions of Heidegger and Descartes, as well as to the right-based discourses of Tom Regan and Peter Singer. Ecofeminism rejects modes of knowledge formation based upon separation of rationality from emotionality; as such, ecofeminism both complements and complicates the continental philosophies of Derrida and Levinas. Though ecofeminism contains certain limitations in its extension to the question of the animal, it nevertheless provides an important

framework for a creative reconception of equitable and moral relations between humans and nonhuman animals.

Modern ecofeminist philosophies, while frequently circumventing the issue of animality for broader discussions on patriarchal power over nature and women, have strongly critiqued the dualism within ontological language. Carol Adams, an academic who argues that ecofeminist thought needs to further honour the unique place of animal life in the world, writes that "[c]entral to a logic of domination is [the] language that normalizes this domination":

Dualisms reduce diversity to two categories: A or Not A. They convey the impression that everything can then be appropriately categorized: either it is A *or* Not A. These dualisms represent dichotomy rather than continuity, enacting exclusion rather than inclusion. . . This phenomenon is especially true in the ontological assumptions concerning human and the other animals. We structure this ontology by saying we are *this*, not *that*; humans, not animals. (Adams 183)

This relationship to knowledge mirrors a rigid Cartesian duality that separates higher cognitive functioning from corporeal materiality—and thus humans from nonhumans. As the fictional Elizabeth Costello puts forward in *The Lives of Animals*, Descartes' famous utterance of "Cogito ergo sum" necessarily "implies that a living being that does not do what we call thinking is somehow second class" (Coetzee 33). This relegates most nonhuman animals to a perpetual state of lesser life—a category of "embodied-being" that is automatically denied any privileges or rights in the public sphere (34). How can we construct a different view of animals without codifying a hierarchical structure that places humans at the top of the chain of Being—or indeed, dogmatically precludes the possibility of animal Being altogether? In his effort to avoid anthropomorphization, Heidegger seeks to demarcate the differences that separate man from animal, thus working within the rigid binary of thought that ecofeminism seeks to deconstruct. Heidegger's inability to transcend the boundaries of phallogocentric philosophy prevents him from moving past unfounded epistemological assumptions. In his seminal work *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, Heidegger follows a Cartesian line of

thought, arguing that "[s]ince the animal is ceaselessly driven in its manifold instinctual activities on the basis of its captivation and of the totality of its capacities, the animal fundamentally lacks the possibility of entering into relation either with the being that it itself is or with beings other than itself" (Heidegger qtd. in Agamben 54). He assumes that while men reflect upon and mindfully respond to the external stimuli of their environment, animals merely react with unmediated instinct. Positing the animal as "poor in world" and defining captivation as "the condition of possibility for the fact that, in accordance to its essence, the animal behaves within an environment but never within a world," Heidegger establishes a dangerous justification of patriarchal domination over nonhuman life. With animals situated as machines whose bodies are entirely driven by instinctual needs, how can ethical relationships between humans and nonhumans ever be formed?

Although an ecofeminist deconstruction of this hierarchical duality can forcefully rupture normative forms of knowledge production and subsequently reconfigure our relationship to nonhuman life, it can also lead to an anthropomorphization via simplified equivalencies between women and animals. Carol Adams, for instance, quotes an ecofeminist whose parallelisms are questionable:

Feminists realize what it's like to be exploited. Women as sex objects, animals as food
 Women turned into patriarchal mothers, cows turned to milk machines. It's the same
 thing. I think that innately women aren't cannibals. I don't eat flesh for the same reason
 that I don't eat steel. It's not in my consciousness anymore that it could be eaten. For the
 same reason that when I'm hungry I don't start chomping on my own hand. (Adams 91).

While it is clear that both women and animals are routinely subject to exploitative objectification in Western phallogocentrist societies, does the above individual mystify specific socio-historical locations of domination in favour of an essentialized sameness? Echoing a similar logic of equivalencies, Adams quotes another ecofeminist from the Cambridge-Boston area, who argues that "[a]nimals and the earth and women have all been objectified and treated in the same way" (91). Is this chain of parallels akin to narcissistic incorporation of animal Others? In his

response to J.M Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, Peter Singer defends Elizabeth Costello's controversial connections between the Holocaust and the modern industrial mistreatment of animals. He argues that "comparison is not necessarily an equation;" rather, these parallels might reveal which abusive acts or actions are consequences of the same system of domination and power (Singer 86). Singer writes that the condemnation of these comparisons "[say] something about the way in which so many people prefer not to think too much about what is being done to those outside the sphere of the favored group" (86). Although strong parallels can be made between the patriarchal tendency to name and tame animals and the societal institutions that systemically subjugate women, Carol Adams' feminist interviews reveal gendered essentializations which only further concretize a duality that requires abolishment. Much like patriarchally-informed descriptions of women as natural caregivers or mothers, the assumption that females are inherently vegetarians does a disservice to all. Consider Colette Audry's ambivalent relationship with her pet dog, Douchka, as recounted in her 1962 memoir *Behind the Bath tub*. The French feminist and social activist responds to her pet with open hostility and abuse, thereby diminishing the veracity of any essentialized claim in an inherent mode of care within feminist activism. Audry admits that she "tended to confuse, hopelessly, the real Douchka and [her] imagined projection" (Audry qtd. in Kuzniar 155). Through this imagined projection, Audry chains her dog to the phallogocentric bonds of domination; it is not until writing her memoir that she finally "renounc[es]. . .control over the other" (155). Rather than incorporating animal Others into ecofeminist subjectivities—which often reiterate essentializations of femininity and animality—it is crucial to realize that women cannot speak definitively for nonhuman animals. Ecofeminist thought opens a space for investigating what Karen Warren describes as "the connections—historical, empirical, conceptual, theoretical, symbolic, and experiential—between the domination of women and the domination of nature" (Warren qtd. in Seeber 223). However, as many academics within ecofeminism have argued, the movement has

also "frequently marginalize[d] the lives of individual nature in [its] concern for nature and species preservation" as well as through questionable assumptions that relegate the animals to an imagined pure space of 'nature.' Many ecofeminists too easily subscribe to romanticized visions of women as 'noble savages,' which neglects to address differences between other women and other animals. How can we reaffirm our responsibility to animals without effacing and dominating these Others through unintentional acts of overidentification?

In her book *The Good Natured Feminist*, Catriona Sandilands analyzes problems that arise from ecofeminist responses to nature and animals. Sandilands considers the impossibility of avoiding some level of anthropomorphization or incorporation of nonhumans within ecological movements:

It is important to note. . . that all environmental discourse contains a moment of filtration, some point where nature is made knowable and meaningful; these discourses are not merely convenient descriptive fictions, but carry important implications for the prescribed relations between humans and nonhuman nature. (Sandilands 77-8)

Although she discerns the impact of human language on the lives of animals, from reading Sandilands' response, it quickly becomes apparent that she employs the terms "nonhuman nature" and "animals" interchangeably to name or describe that which is not human. While this allows ecofeminist philosophies to more comfortably extend to discussions of human moral responsibility to animals, it also problematically prevents a recognition of animal singularity. When describing the odd interaction with his cat in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida maintains that he is speaking of a singular creature—an "irreplaceable being" that "doesn't [appear] as the exemplar of a species called 'cat' [and] even less so of an 'animal' genus or kingdom" (Derrida 7). Ecofeminism calls for a radical democratization of relations between humans, animals, and nature. However, in contrast to Derrida's lecture, the movement often disregards the complexity of individualized relations between singular subjects. Perhaps most problematic within ecofeminist discourse is the disunity between its privileging of "relation[s] in

which democratic norms of listening are in operation" and the established binary that situates humans as 'speaking animals' and animals as 'non-speaking nature' (Sandilands 78). Is it possible to uphold an ethos of 'listening' when it is presumed that animals do *not* possess the capacity to speak, and that humans necessarily *do*? According to Matthew Calarco, Agamben's most recent work focuses upon the observation "that there is in fact an 'inner solidarity' between democracy and totalitarianism, not at an empirical level but at a historical and philosophical level" (Calarco 95). Agamben argues that these seemingly dissimilar political systems are actually "united in their investment . . . in seeking to separate bare (animal) life from properly political (human) life" (95). Although it has largely dismissed liberal rationalism as a form of phallogocentric politics, the ecofeminist movement has also sought to bring animal life and nature into the fold of democracy. With its focus on how best to represent animal voices within this political system, has the ecofeminist movement unwittingly perpetuated the cultural conditions that lead to exploitation and oppression?

Assumptions regarding animals' inability to speak ultimately echo Heideggerian presumptions regarding human/nonhuman capacities. What does it mean to listen to an animal that is presumed not to speak? How does one prevent ecofeminists from speaking *for* animal Others? Sandilands grapples with the difficulty of these tasks:

The forms of speech that are given legitimacy in political discourse . . . always require some form of translation, problems of objectification, of affirmative action, of construction, and of appropriation. . . In terms of argument cast by contemporary politics of identity, speaking nature is impossible: there cannot be an authentic voice of nature without profound revision of either the notion of speech or the notion of the speaking subject. (Sandiland 80)

Given the boundaries of "legitimacy" in Western political discourse, and the manner in which many voices—both human and nonhuman—have been silenced through these limitations, perhaps discussions on how best to represent animals through human speech are severely misguided. As Sandilands suggests, ecofeminist action requires a transformation of language

within the democratic sphere. Agamben more radically argues that we must imagine and create a new political life rather than expand democracy or attempt to reform the system (95). Sandilands provides a strong analysis of ecofeminism in her article, yet it becomes apparent that given its inner paradoxes, ecofeminist theory itself might need to evolve in order to prevent a symbolic consumption of animal Others. While ecofeminist discourses aim to "locate human existence within complex esopheric interactions," they also rely upon "equivalenc[ies] between the speech of oppressed humans and the speech of an oppressed nature" that need to be problematized to avoid oversimplifications (Sandilands 78). The movement also concerns itself with "finding speech for nonspeaking nature," which perhaps ignores the alterity of the animal Others through their incorporation into human modes of communication (78). Are the strategies of ecofeminism somewhat mistaken in approach? At the conclusion of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida comments upon the tactics used by environmentalists and philosophers. He contends that a comprehensive "strategy in question would consist of pluralizing and varying . . . instead of simply giving speech back to the animal, or giving to the animal what the human deprives it of" (Derrida 160). He suggests that we must recognize that the human is "similarly deprived" in a manner that requires a "radical reinterpretation of what is living" (160). Although ecofeminism successfully recognizes the shared deprivation of oppressed people and nonhumans, the movement's apparent privileging of human speech appears to undermine its stated aims.

Feminist Jessica Benjamin specializes in psychoanalytic theories of recognition, intersubjectivity and differentiation, and thus offers some solutions to ecofeminist domination over animal Others. According to Benjamin, through the process of *recognition*, we automatically "recognize ourselves in the Other;" as a result, "the search for recognition can become a power struggle" in which "assertion becomes aggression" (Benjamin 21). It can lead to an "obliteration of the intrusive other," through which the Other is presumed to "share [the Self's] feelings" (28). The intersubjective experience is present within both traditional ontological

philosophies and ecofeminist renderings of the animal. The solution, Benjamin asserts, is to embrace a "being with" that relies upon continual realizations and negotiations of difference and separateness between Self and Other (47). She promotes a paradoxical relationship of simultaneous aloneness and togetherness, which ensures that individualization is maintained. Benjamin argues that "this being with" in fact "forms the basis of compassion," and serves to "counteract[] the tendency to objectify. . . those weaker or different" (48). Her interventions might help to alleviate over-identification within the ecofeminist community. Might a compassionate solidarity between the plight of women and animals prove a more tenable position to maintain? Since Jessica Benjamin is discussing the relationship between two *persons*, she defines compassion as "the ability to share feelings and intentions without demanding control" (48). If compassion privileges mutuality and reciprocity through "share[d] feeling," is it still possible to employ her feminist psychoanalytic conceptions without once again subsuming the animal Other? In *The Companion Species Manifesto*, Donna Haraway critiques relationships with animals predicated on an imagined mutuality or companionship. In writing specifically on human relations with canines, Haraway warns that "[dogs] are not a projection, nor the realization of an intention, nor the telos of anything" (Haraway 11). Instead, she contends that they are "a species in obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with humans" (12). How can feminists recognize the animal Others—which includes a solidarity with their struggles—while mindfully heeding the specificities of their plights, as well as embracing a respectful relationship of proximate distance and unfamiliarity? In *Melancholia's Dog: Reflections on our Animal Kinship*, Alice Kuzniar questions whether it is possible for humans to "so totally. . . share an animal's experience" (Kuzniar 173). She writes that "there must be impasses to knowing a radical other, especially given the disempowering nonequivalencies between man and beast that would need to be overcome" (173-4). Kuzniar's interesting use of the phrase "disempowering nonequivalencies" provides a partial response to problems within feminist ecological movements.

It recognizes an element of shared powerlessness within phallogocentric society; as well, it emphasizes the unsustainability of a human-animal ethics based primarily upon claims of equivalency, which can diminish the singularity of animals.

Levinasian ethics also identify the danger in reducing the Other's alterity through unequal intersubjective relations. For instance, Levinas condemns Western philosophy's attitude towards knowledge, which can also function as an effective critique of dominant ecofeminist thought:

The achievement of knowledge consists of grasping the object. Its strangeness is then conquered. Its newness, the opening up of its otherness, is reduced to the 'same' to what has already been seen, already known. In the ethical relation, the other man remains other to me. Despite our exchanges, he remains that which I—closed up in myself—am not (Levinas and Robbins 191).

Levinas defines an ethical relationship as one in which the border between Self and Other is not breached. Although he writes of an altruism through which one voluntarily "dies for another" because "the being of the other is dearer to him than his own," Levinas insists that it is "only possible within the order of the human, and is found nowhere else" (191). Animals are excluded from making such sacrifices; thus, even whilst criticizing them, Levinas reiterates the central dualisms that often exist within traditional rationalist arguments. For example, Levinas renders Bobby—the real dog that warmly greeted Jewish prisoners in the work camp on a daily basis—an ironic representation of the 'last Kantian in Nazi Germany.' On the surface, Bobby functions within Levinas' story to confirm the humanity of the Jewish prisoners—a humanity not recognized by the surrounding German townspeople, who refused to lift their eyes to meet the abject suffering of the Jewish people. Although Levinasian ethics have clear limits that prevent a call for moral responsibility to animal Others, how can ecofeminist philosophy extend these ethics in a manner that does not dogmatically preclude the possibility of moral responsibility to animals?

Although liberal rationalism may seem a strong alternative, through which human rights may extend to animals, ecofeminists are decidedly wary of the approaches most closely

associated with Tom Regan and Peter Singer. Karen Warren, one of the strongest voices within ecofeminism, criticizes their anthropomorphically-inflected philosophies; she argues that both men merely "base the moral considerability of nonhuman animals on traits they share with humans" (125). When morals are based upon predetermined similarities, individuals of radical Otherness are at risk of exclusion from human protection. Since the history of the Western world is filled with instances in which women have been constituted as Others with few political rights, ecofeminism rejects such utilitarianism. The limits of humanist philosophy become clear through a close reading of Peter Singer's response to *The Lives of Animals*. In the following fictionalized conversation with his daughter, Singer appears to cavalierly demarcate the animal and place hierarchical value judgements on the lives of these Others:

. . . when I say that all animals—all sentient creatures—are equal, I mean that they are entitled to equal considerations of their interests, whatever those interests may be. Pain is pain, no matter what the species of the being that feels it. But I don't say that all animals have the same interests. Species membership may point to things that are morally significant. When it comes to the wrongness of taking life, for example, I've always said that different capacities are relevant to the wrongness of killing. (Singer 87)

While his fictionalized daughter Naomi considers this capacity-based decision "a relief" (and as a projection of Singer's mind, she has little choice in the matter but to be persuaded by his questionable ethics), the dominant branches of ecofeminism critique this calculating approach. With his insistence on recognizing pain as pain, Singer initially appears to employ a Bentham-influenced Derridian framework regarding the question of the animal. Derrida argues that the "*first and decisive* question would be. . . to know whether animals *can suffer*" (Derrida 27). However, Singer also clearly subscribes to notions of definitively "know[ing] whether the animal can think, reason, or speak;" he assumes that animality is determined by 'sentience,' and that intellectual capacities may hierarchically determine the worth of one's life and death (27). Just as Levinas refuses to acknowledge the animal's possession of a face—with his pre-determined bias toward *human* conceptions of the face—Singer automatically works within a framework of

his own perception of *human* sentience. Tom Regan attributes rights based upon the idea that animals are "autonomous individuals with an intelligence that is similar to human reason" (*Tikkun* online). Since feminist discourses have been shaped by a patriarchal history that has denied the assignation of mental and physical capacities to certain subaltern groups, ecofeminism aims to avoid argumentation based upon such overdetermined philosophies.

Moving away from human rights discourse, Josephine Donovan integrates feminist ethics of care into ecofeminist philosophy. In trying to provide a partial solution for the linguistic differences between human and animal, she urges humans to listen to animals by actively learning their communication systems. She argues that "body language, eye movement, facial expression, and tone of voice all are important signs" that need to be investigated (*Tikkun* online). Although Donovan admits that this constitutes an "imperfect" method that may lead to interspecies miscommunication, she emphasizes the importance of fostering a careful dialogue between human and individual animals in this manner (*Tikkun* online). To achieve this foundational level of communication, Donovan advocates building relationships upon sympathetic identification with the animal:

One of the principal ways by which one understands animal "language" sympathetically is by analogy to one's own experience. Say I saw a dog yelping, whining, leaping about, and licking an open cut. Because under similar circumstances I know I would likewise feel like crying and moving about anxiously because of the pain, I therefore conclude that the animal is experiencing the same kind of pain as I would. Knowing that one would wish one's own pain to be alleviated, one is moved to do the same for the animal...[E]ven insects, fish, reptiles, and birds react in ways we can relate to: avoiding pain and threats of death, and seeking that which enhances their life. (*Tikkun* online)

Does Donovan's suggestion merely represent a sentimental and anthropocentrized view of the animal? I would argue, rather, that this sympathetic identification is an affectively-driven form of witnessing that surpasses the imposed species boundary of Levinas' theorization. Witnessing is posited as an interruption of the ego, a call to care for a vulnerable and foreign Other that can

neither be ignored nor "tossed aside" (Calarco 67). Calarco identifies a Levinasian assumption that "nonhuman entities have no *presence* outside of a human context" and that "they take on sense only in reference to a specific human task or concept" (67). Levinas cannot recognize himself in the nonhuman Other, which might be explained by a lack of shared communication between human and animal. Since he has not learned to read animal expressions, he cannot recognize that animals even have faces. Levinas cannot see their pain as pain, or their suffering as suffering. Thus, while Levinas argues that "the absolute foreign alone can instruct [him]" in ethics, it is the absolute Otherness that prevents him from including animals in his theorizations. As Donovan's example attests—with its focus on the individual human's memory of pain and suffering in response to witnessing the pain or suffering of another animal—the recognition of shared vulnerability is key to constituting a moral responsibility to nonhuman life. To be sure, Calarco argues that Levinas, rather than completely excluding the animal from having a face that can compel us to respond ethically, instead promotes an *agnostic* approach to the animal, which Calarco considers "a more promising avenue for ethical thought as it seeks to move beyond the limits imposed by an anthropocentric approach" (68). However, Donovan's idea also carries an uncertainty that more fully recognizes the importance of the animal in rupturing the dominant and rational discourses that often form hierarchical exclusions. To avoid phallogocentric incorporation of the Other into the subjective self, or narcissistic projection unto the Other, Donovan recognizes that knowledge is inherently inconclusive, relationships with nonhumans require constant care and negotiation to minimize miscommunication, and humans and other animals share a precarious vulnerability through their interconnected fate as finite beings.

What would an ethical response to the animal Other actually look like? Barbara Smuts' relationship with her dog Safi transcends the normative boundaries of a human-pet relationship, which can often inadvertently slip into a master-slave dynamic. Although her assignation of the label 'personhood' to Safi might be considered problematic—as it appears to place the dog within

the rights-based discourse that ecofeminism attempts to avoid—Smuts remains adamant that 'personhood' is a way of living with the Other, rather than an exclusionary categorization based upon a hierarchical attribution of rights or status. She defines 'personhood' as a "way of being in relation to others," which "no one other than the subject can give" or "take away" (Smuts 118). Insisting that she and Safi act as equals, Smuts contends that an animal relationship founded on personhood "will bring out the best" in each animal, and requires that we "give up control over [others] and how they relate to us" (118). Moreover, personhood does not involve anthropomorphization, but rather "has to do . . . with recognizing that [animals] are social subjects, like us, whose indiosyncratic, subjective experience of us plays the same role in their relations with us that our subjective experience of them plays in our relations with them" (118). An avoidance of the overidentification that ecofeminism can occasionally fall into, Smuts' work as a primatologist has allowed her to cultivate an extraordinary ability to live with animals while also keeping a respectful distance from them. This distanced togetherness informs her relationship with Safi, ultimately providing a template for the practical application of Josephine Donovan's ecofeminist theories. Barbara Smuts writes on the reciprocal nature of her relationship with Safi, in which both subjects—human and animal—enjoy an autonomy that is paradoxically based upon mutual dependence. Recognizing that she and her dog are "very different," Smuts heeds the communicative methods employed by Safi, and subsequently responds in her own language; this both surpasses and upholds the language barrier but also leads to negotiation between the two subjects. Smuts surpasses the limitations of Levinasian witnessing; she embraces an uncertain openness, encompassing what Derrida might consider an "account of the fact that what [we] call 'animal' [can] *look at* . . . and *address* [us] from down there, from a wholly other origin" (Derrida 13). This openness, which extends the agnosticism of Levinas, allows for the possibility of more equitable relations with animals. The question remains, however, whether this level of reciprocity is possible outside the realm of domestic

animals, and whether ecofeminism can wield this method of responsible ethics in order to affect lasting change.

Do debates within ecofeminism regarding the divide between speaking women and non-speaking animals prevent a mobilization of activist solidarity? In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida addresses those that critique his effort to "problematize. . .the purity and indivisibility of a line between reaction and response"—among both humans and nonhumans—for its potential to cast a paralyzing "doubt on all ethics, every decision, etc" (Derrida 126). In response, Derrida writes that

. . . it is a matter, on the contrary, of taking that difference into account within the whole field of experience and of a world of life forms, and of doing that without reducing this differentiated and multiple difference, in a conversely massive and homogenizing manner, to one between the human subject, on the one hand, and the nonsubject that is the animal in general, on the other, where the latter comes to be, in another sense, the nonsubject that is subjected to the human subject. (126)

Although ecofeminism is defined by pluralities and marked by uncertainties, the movement provides an important alternative to phallogocentric arguments through a critical restructuring of the dominant power relations that lead to systems of oppression. Though it can inadvertently mirror patriarchal domination through its use of liberal political discourses—particularly in regards to the attribution of speech to humans and non-speech to animals, the movement provides a radical framework for reconfiguring relations with animals. Josephine Donovan's method of responding to the animal Others' needs without incorporating them into a human-based discourse provides a path for living with and for animal differences. In recognizing the potential for suffering and pain that all animals share, ecofeminism calls for equality with an acute awareness that human-animal relations will always be marked by alterity and difference. Consequently, feminist thought is crucial to questions regarding animality and nonhuman nature, which Western philosophical thought has too quickly dismissed or automatically sought to subsume within a dogmatically hierarchical ontology.

Works Cited

- Adams, Carol J. *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals*. New York: Continuum, 1994. Print.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open Man and Animal*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004. Print.
- Benjamin, Jessica. *The Bonds of Love Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination*. London: Virago, 1990. Print.
- Calarco, Matthew. *Zoographies: the Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.
- Coetzee, J. M. *The Lives of Animals*. Ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.
- Derrida*. Dir. Amy Ziering and Kirby Dick. Perf. Jacques Derrida, Marguerite Derrida, Rene Major, Chantal Major, Avital Ronell. Zeitgeist Films, 2002. Film.
- Singer, Peter. "Peter Singer." *The Lives of Animals*. Ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.
- Smuts, Barbara. "Barbara Smuts." *The Lives of Animals*. Ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques, Marie-Louise Mallet, and David Wills. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. New York: Fordham UP, 2008. Print.
- Donovan, Josephine. "Caring for Animals: A Feminist Approach." *Tikkun.org*. Tikkun Magazine, Jan. 2009. Web. 09 Apr. 2011.
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003. Print.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. "In the Name of the Other." *Is It Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*. Ed. Jill Robbins. Trans. Maureen V. Gedney. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2001. 188-99. Print.
- _____. "The Name of a Dog; or, Natural Rights." *Dr. David L. Clark-Courses*. Web. 01 April, 2011. <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~dclark/courses.html>
- Plant, Judith. "Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community." Ed. Karen Warren. *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 120-39. Print.
- Kuzniar, Alice A. *Melancholia's Dog*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006. Print.
- Sandilands, Catriona. *The Good-natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999. Print.

Seeber, Barbara K. "'I Sympathize in Their Pains and Pleasures: Women and Animals in Mary Wollstonecraft.'" *Animal Subjects: an Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World*. Ed. Carla Jodey Castricano. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 223-40. Print.

Warren, Karen. *Ecofeminist Philosophy: a Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. Print.