

## Animal Pedagogy: The Origin of ‘Man’ in Rousseau and Herder

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**Abstract** *Animal metaphors and examples in texts of Rousseau and Herder appear as either ideal or abject ancestors and are thereby assimilated into the history of man. In spite of their differences, for both Rousseau and Herder, men become civilised by eating animals. And, their use of animal metaphors and illustrations belie the very distinction between man and animal that their invocation seeks to establish.*

After years of performing in the Vegas show *Siegfried & Roy*, Montecore, a white tiger, attacked Roy Horn and nearly killed him (on October 3, 2003). The attack sparked a debate about why the tiger bit Roy and dragged him off stage by the neck: some claimed that the tiger was trying to protect Roy who tripped and fell; others speculated that the tiger sensed that Roy was going to have a stroke (which he did in the hospital after the attack); some blamed a ‘big-haired’ woman in the front row; others suggested a thyroid disorder; while some insisted that a tiger is an unpredictable wild predator who will attack without reason or warning. Late-night television was full of jokes about the big cat. Later, Roy would maintain that the tiger was trying to protect him, possibly sensing his impending stroke; he would suggest that the tiger was acting on a benevolent instinct, perhaps a sixth sense unavailable to humans, and intended no harm. Some said the attack was inevitable and others said it was a freak accident.

These speculations on Roy’s accident suggest that the question of ‘the animal’ and animals remains open for man. Indeed, we could say that Roy performs our conflicted relationship with the animal/animals, not only insofar as animals and animality are constitutive of humanity, but perhaps more pressingly the ways that notions of ‘the animal’ and ‘animality’ efface animals. Roy’s accident reveals that the illusionist’s most profound illusion is that he can master the animal/animals. This *accident* can be seen as a symptom of the illusion of human mastery, control, and necessity over not only animality but also over the animals themselves. It is important to note that ‘symptom’ also means fall, chance, or accident; from *symptoma* meaning accident. The accident then is a *symptom* that signals the animal accidents at the heart of human necessity. Montecore and Roy, trained tiger and circus

trainer, set the stage for a discussion of the way that animals have performed in the texts of philosophers.

In the history of philosophy, the necessity of human existence has been justified with appeals to an eternal realm of Forms or of reason, divine providence or design, Nature or natural laws, including perhaps the most influential alternative to the hand of God, the hand of Nature through the law of natural selection. What these religious and secular accounts of the origin of man share is their insistence on necessity over chance, providence over accident, *prónoia* over *tyché*: man's existence is preordained by God or by Nature; it is not an accident. Turning to a moment in the history of philosophy in which the obsession with nature's providence is perhaps most dramatic, I explore animal accidents at the heart of human necessity in the pre-Darwinian Romantic myths of origin of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder with an eye to how animals in these texts 'bite back'. Animals appear in these texts as either ideal or abject ancestors, and as such are corralled into a past belonging to man. I diagnose slips in the philosopher's attempts to 'train' his animals in the texts as symptoms/accidents that reveal both the ways in which the notion of human necessity is dependent upon animal accidents and the ways in which that dependence is absorbed into myths of origin as sacrifice. For, ultimately, it is not only *the animal* that is sacrificed for man, but more brutally *animals* who are sacrificed for the sake of men. Indeed, as we will see, in spite of their differences, for both Rousseau and for Herder, men become civilised, become man, in relation to *eating* animals. In crucial passages where they delineate what distinguishes man from animals, both Rousseau and Herder turn to animals to illuminate their arguments. But, their animals do not merely serve as examples against which they define man; rather these animals belie the very distinction between man and animal that their invocation seeks to establish. For, on close reading of particular texts, language, along with other characteristics unique to man including spirit, reason, understanding, recollecting, recognising, free will and even fire, are *responses* to animals whom men ape or imitate. The examples of animals and animal metaphors that inhabit these texts ape or mock assertions of any uniquely human characteristics. Like the circus trainer, the philosopher cannot domesticate his metaphorical animals. Rather, men learn to become man only by virtue of animal pedagogy. Human language is a *response* to animal speech; *homologos* is a response to *zoölogos*.

### Rousseau's cat

In both *A Discourse on Inequality* (1984 [1755]) and 'On the Origin of Languages' (exact date unknown; Catherine Kintzler puts it between 1756 and 1761. See Kintzler 1993), Jean-Jacques Rousseau describes 'civilized man' as the result of the evolution from savage hunter, through barbaric herdsman, to civilised farmer. Roy Horn – who in his memoir defines himself in terms of his animals, and who makes his living using them – could be just the latest stage in the development of man described by Rousseau: savage hunter, barbaric herdsman, civilised farmer, Vegas entertainer. The different social organisations described by Rousseau correspond to 'man's' livelihood, and more specifically, to his relation to animals: 'The savage man is a hunter

(*chasseur*), the barbarian is a herdsman (shepherd/*berger*), and civil man is a tiller of the soil (ploughman/*laboureur*)' (Rousseau 1966: 38; 1993: 89). Rousseau (a vegetarian) describes the savage men as 'terrible meat eaters' (*terribles dévoreurs de viande*) who hunt and kill animals (1966: 35; 1993: 86); while barbaric herdsman are a step forward because they cultivate and domesticate animals for food; civilised men have learned to use animals both directly and indirectly for food through harvesting crops using animals to till the soil. The movement from spontaneity to convention, from savage to civilised, is a movement away from chance and toward necessity. It is a movement away from the accidental nature of man to nature's determination of man as the dominant animal. Rousseau imagines animals in the state of nature as man's own animal ancestors before his Fall into civilisation.

Rousseau says that with savage men 'human associations are largely due to accidents of nature', which 'Providence uses to reunite people' (my emphasis, 1966: 40). It is worth noting here that 'providence' not only means foresight, providing for, or preparation, but also disastrous accident. Within Rousseau's scenario, the necessity of providence is the result of disastrous accidents that bring people together. As Jacques Derrida argues in his reading of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*, 'If societies are born in catastrophe, it means that they are born by accident' (1974: 260). The role of nature in Rousseau's account plays between providence and accident. It is from nature that man becomes civilised; nature provides for his cultivation. But in doing so, nature also assures that man can go beyond nature and become free from animal instincts. Unlike other animals, man can transcend the realm of needs and enter the realm of love and art (along with hate and crime). Man's step beyond animal need is necessary because it is grounded in animal need and thereby ordained by the providence of nature; that is to say that the necessity of man, which is defined in terms of transcending need, is demonstrated by grounding this transcendence in need itself. Providence, then, gains its necessity against and through need. Because of this ambivalence toward animal need, whenever Rousseau describes man's step beyond, he slips and falls back into need and animal instincts. The animals – the monkeys, crows, cattle, horses, pigeons, dogs and cats – that populate Rousseau's texts, can be seen as symptoms/accidents that haunt the necessity of man and his dominion over all others.

As we know, Rousseau argues that 'the first tongues, [are] children [more literally daughters] of pleasure rather than need' [*filles du plaisir et non du besoin*] (1966: 46; 1993: 97); language is born from passion and not from natural instinct. Rousseau maintains that we don't need language to feed ourselves: 'One can take nourishment without speaking. One stalks in silence the prey on which one would feast. But for moving a young heart, or repelling an unjust aggressor, nature dictates accents, cries, lamentations. There we have the invention of the most ancient words; and that is why the first languages were singable and passionate before they became simple and methodical' (1966: 12). We may not need language to eat, but we do need to eat to learn language. Yet, at every turn when describing how man becomes civilised, acquires language, and distinguishes himself from animals, Rousseau relies on animals. He repeatedly illustrates and substantiates his claims about the distinctiveness of man with examples of animals. Moreover,

these animals are flies in the ointment of Rousseau's arguments that civilised speaking man develops from passion rather than need, and that man is distinct from other animals. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida reads the tension between need and accident in Rousseau in order to identify writing as the 'need before need' (1974: 238); but as we will see, Derrida's reading effaces the variety of animals and their various 'functions' in Rousseau's texts in favour of 'the concept of animality' only in terms of its 'function' as mythical presence for man (cf. Derrida 1974: 242).

Even Rousseau's most romantic description of the birth of love, and thereby of nations, is related to animal needs: the girls come to the watering hole to fetch water and the boys to water their herds. 'Feet skipped with joy, earnest gestures no longer sufficed, being accompanied by an impassioned voice; pleasure and desire mingled and were felt together. There at last was the true cradle of nations [or peoples, *des peuples*]: from the pure crystal of the fountains flow the first fires of love' (Rousseau 1966: 45; 1993: 96). Language is not only from, but also for, passion; 'stirring the heart and inflaming the passions takes words' (Rousseau 1966: 8). Language, then, becomes part of a mating ritual that gives birth to love. But, as we will see, the fire of love is not far from the fire necessary to cook the cattle that the boys are herding; and the stirring of hearts is born from the stirring of pots into which the girls have poured their bounty. Where there is love, there are animals, especially those boiling in stews.

On Rousseau's account, human society is organised according to providence in accordance with its provisions. In other words, we are what we eat. Savages eat wild animals and they are wild. Herdsmen eat domestic animals, so even if they are still barbaric and their manners crude, they have been domesticated. Civilised men eat cultivated grain and through their cultivation of the soil, *they* become cultivated: 'Concerning agriculture, which is slower to come into being: it is connected to all the arts; it leads to property, government, and laws, and gradually to the misery and crime that are inseparable for our species from the knowledge of good and evil' (Rousseau 1966: 37). For Rousseau, civilisation is both the highest development of man and the fall of man into misery, crime and evil. Civilisation, then, is a symptom, an accident waiting to happen.

For Rousseau, not only are the human and humanity constituted in relation to the animal and animality, but also and more specifically, men constitute themselves as humans by using animals directly and indirectly for food, by eating animals. At one point Rousseau suggests that humans are separated from animals through their ability to make and use fire, but it turns out that fire is motivated by the need to cook meat. Again the ability to cook other animals and eat them becomes a sign of our distinctiveness and intelligence. In a footnote, Rousseau remarks:

[N]o one would say that any beast, wild or domestic, has acquired the skill to make a fire in the same way that we do. Thus these rational beings who are said to have formed a short-lived society before man, still did not reach a level of intelligence at which they were able to strike a few sparks from a flint to make a fire, or even to preserve whatever random fires they might come across. (1966: 41)

Here, the ability to make fire is seen as a sign of intelligence and of man's capacity for reason. Yet, in the paragraph to which this footnote is appended, Rousseau claims that the stomach and intestines of man are not made to digest raw meat and that 'with the possible single exception of the Eskimos ... even savages cook their meat' (1966: 41). So, fire is not a sign of intelligence as much as a natural necessity given the constitution of man's gut. Rousseau goes on to say that people gather around fire because the flames are useful and pleasing 'and on this simple hearth burns the sacred fire that provokes in the depths of the heart the first feeling of humanity' (1966: 41). Humanity, then, is born out of man's *need* to cook and eat animals (even while for Rousseau civilisation is born out of man overcoming the need to eat animals). In this passage, man's intellectual superiority over animals appears as a consequence of man's *need* to cook his meat. Again, the providence of nature gives man a necessary advantage over animals when it comes to fire, and the proof of this advantage is that men can kill, cook and eat animals.

Man also has the advantage that, unlike animals, he is not a picky eater. Because men will eat anything, they are more adept at survival than other animals. Again Rousseau links man's distinctiveness to his digestive track and eating habits, which, it turns out, he appropriates from other animals:

Man dispersed among the beasts, would observe and imitate their activities and so assimilate their instincts, with this added advantage that while every other species has only its own instinct, man, having perhaps none which is peculiar to himself, appropriates every instinct, and by nourishing himself equally well on most of the various foods the other animals divide among themselves, he finds his sustenance more easily than do any of the others. (Rousseau 1984: 81–82; 1983: 92–93)

Men *learn what and how* to eat from animals; through this animal pedagogy, they are able to imitate animals and assimilate animal instincts. And, while each animal eats only what is natural to it, by imitating all of them, men eat everything. In fact, Rousseau's argument for man's freedom against animal instinct hinges on his observation that men will eat everything while animals have more restrictive diets. It is noteworthy that it is not animal in general or animality that teaches men what is edible; rather the assortment of animals in their midst teach them about different food stuffs that may be eaten. It is only by learning lessons from various animals that men develop the multifarious diet that gives them the edge, through which men become man. Men eat/assimilate animals both literally as food and figuratively insofar as men ape animals' eating habits. In his *Discourse on Inequality*, this argument takes many forms involving diet and food, including the fact that unlike other animals, man does not serve as food for another (Rousseau 1984: 83); he is distinctive in that he eats but is not eaten by other animals (the tiger mauls but does not eat Roy?). Rousseau also cites differences in human and animal infancies and maternal feeding practices as reasons for human sociality – human mothers are able to carry their young to feed them at all times while other animals cannot (1984: 84). Ultimately, though, man is distinguished from animals through his 'free will', which is based on the freedom to eat anything while 'a

pigeon would die of hunger beside a dish filled with choice meats and a cat beside a pile of fruits or grain, even though either could very well nourish itself with the foods it disdains, if only it were informed by nature to try them' (Rousseau 1984: 87). Man's resistance to 'the call of nature' is the result of his ability to appropriate instincts from a variety of other animals that allows him to eat indiscriminately among their food stuffs. So, it is man's assimilation of animal instinct that enables him to transcend instinct, which amounts to the freedom to eat as he will, which he learns from animals (Rousseau 1984: 87).

Rousseau maintains that 'the first cake to be eaten was the communion of the human race' (1966: 35). It is cake that brings men together; cake is the basis of human society. No other animal can make a cake, which for Rousseau is the result of the cultivation of fields, the beginning of all art and artistry (never mind that Rousseau doesn't talk about the making, but the eating, of cake, ignoring the fact that other animals can eat cake; and ignoring the fact that even cavemen painted pictures). Sowing for harvest requires ownership of land, tools, foresight and community, all of which are lacking in hunters or shepherds (Rousseau 1966: 33–34). Although animals are used for farming and many of the early tools for tilling the soil required oxen and horses, Rousseau imagines the civilised man as a grain eater who begins to separate himself from the animals that he consumes, which are raised and slaughtered elsewhere and for which he trades his harvest. In this regard, distance between man and his animal-eating is a sign of civilisation. He no longer hunts wild animals or slaughters his domestic animals, now he uses animals to produce crops that he can exchange for animals once they have become meat and other commodities. This is the beginning of property, which Rousseau identifies with the beginning of dependence, bondage, servitude and the inequality of men (e.g., Rousseau 1984: 105–06). We could say that for Rousseau as man disavows his dependence upon animals and his diet of animals by shielding himself from their production for food, by turning them into commodities – meat instead of animals – he becomes more civilised (and more corrupt). Human society, then, is based on the double sacrifice of animals: first the killing of animals for food and then the concealing of that killing so that man can continue to eat animals without guilt. Rousseau's text seems to suggest that vegetarianism might be a sign of higher development.

Rousseau also identifies the inequality of men in society with differences between foods that didn't exist with natural or primitive man:

Now if we compare the prodigious diversity of upbringings and of ways of life which prevail among the different classes in the civil state with the simplicity and uniformity of animal and savage life, *where everyone eats the same foods*, lives in the same style and does exactly the same things, it will be understood how much less the difference between man and man must be in the state of nature than it is in society. (my emphasis, Rousseau 1984: 105)

Eating the same foods is the first characteristic of the equality amongst animals, including savage men. Like the differences between animals and man, differences between men are evidenced in the differences between what they eat. Again, freedom is described as the freedom to eat what one will, to

eat freely from a variety of foods, while servitude (whether it is to instincts in the case of animals or to other men in the case of humans) is evidenced in not having a choice about what one eats.

It would seem that men enslaved by other men have been denied a fundamental human freedom, the freedom to eat everything, and thereby live more like animals. Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* suggests as much when it repeatedly invokes metaphors of animals to conjure images of the inequality among men. The enslavement of men is compared to the domestication of animals, who are more robust in nature: 'one might say that all our efforts to care for and feed these animals have only succeeded in making them degenerate. The same is true even of man himself; in becoming sociable and a slave, he grows feeble, timid, servile; and his soft and effeminate way of life completes the enervation both of his strength and his courage' (Rousseau 1984: 86). Suggesting that our 'animal ancestors' are more powerful in nature than after they have been domesticated, Rousseau continually uses animals to make his claims about men. For example, to show that slavery is not natural but a result of socialisation, Rousseau gives the example of a horse who 'rears impetuously at the very approach of the bit, while a trained horse suffers patiently even the whip and spur' (1984: 125), so too 'savage man will not bend his neck to the yoke which civilized man wears without a murmur' (1983: 157). Men and horses both can be domesticated, trained to endure the whip. Rousseau compares the accumulation of slaves as property to the collection of cattle. And, he says that the rich are like 'ravenous wolves, which, having once tasted human flesh, refuse all other nourishment and desire thenceforth only to devour men' (Rousseau 1984: 120). Even as he sets out man's distinguishing characteristics – capacity for free will, spirituality of soul, faculty of self-improvement – Rousseau's repeated use of animal metaphors belies the distinction between man and animal. Men are compared to horses, cattle, wolves, monkeys, crows, and these animals are put in the service of his argument that civilised men are different from these same animals. Although Rousseau gives us a continuum of animals in relation to a continuum of humans in progress or degeneration, and even while he idealises animal nature as man's potential for co-existence, his animals still serve as romantic and ideal ancestors for man, man's better half, rather than co-existing companions. And, when animals do co-exist with men, then they are killed, cooked, and eaten.

It is also striking that for Rousseau man's relation with animals sets the stage for his relation with humans – we mistreat each other because we mistreat animals. For example, collecting and owning cattle prepares man to collect and own human slaves (Rousseau 1984: 131). And, from hunting and killing animals man learns war and conquest; 'war and its conquests is just a kind of manhunt' (Rousseau 1966: 36). Herding cattle teaches men to herd men; hunting wild animals teaches men to hunt men. Man's cruelty to other men echoes his cruelty to animals. The rich can be 'like wolves' and 'devour' men only because men first prey on wolves. We could say that inequality among men is a symptom of man's relation to animals. And, conversely, we can take a lesson on human relations from our relations with animals. Rousseau uses animals in his attempts to distinguish natural man from civilised man in order to make the case that inequalities among men are not natural.

He bases his argument that inequalities among men are not natural on what appears to be a natural division between man and animal. Man, once an animal himself, becomes man by dominating other animals. This inequality between man and animals becomes the basis for Rousseau's arguments from nature that ground his claim that inequalities are not from natural but from cultural differences. We can see those differences between men as cultural only because we see the differences between man and animals as natural. We can see that inequalities among men are accidental because inequalities among animals are preordained. But his animals – those creatures from whom man learns all he knows, lessons that facilitate his development from natural to civilised – refuse to be domesticated in the service of an argument for man's natural dominion over them. Rousseau's metaphors and illustrations of animals bite back and cause these texts to chase their own tails when they are employed in the service of performing the necessity of man over animal. They are the animal accidents at the heart of human providence, the accidental origin of humanity, the animal pedagogy to which humanity is beholden.

The origin of language and thereby humanity or civilisation is the main focus of Rousseau's essay 'On the Origin of Languages', where he claims that 'conventional language is characteristic of man alone. That is why man makes progress, whether for good or ill, and animals do not' (1966: 10). While animals may have some form of communication or natural language ('the speech of beavers and ants'), they do not (and cannot) have conventional language (10). Here again, however, there are signs in Rousseau's text that conventional language is a *response* to animals. Beginning, as Rousseau does, with the assumption that human language was acquired, then presumably originally man's encounters with other savage or primitive men must have been animal encounters. As Rousseau describes it, man's language, like the 'speech of beavers and ants' or the language of 'crows or monkeys' was originally gestural and only later became speech proper, beginning with figurative utterances motivated by passion (6–7, 111–12). If, as Rousseau maintains, the first language was figurative, then given his analysis, those primitive figures must have been animals (along with the plants and trees in the midst of humans).

In his essay on looking at animals, citing Rousseau, John Berger claims that

the first subject matter for painting was animal. Probably the first paint was animal blood. Prior to that, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the first metaphor was animal ... If the first metaphor was animal, it was because the essential relation between man and animal was metaphoric. Within that relation, what the two terms – man and animal – shared in common revealed what differentiated them. And vice versa. (Berger 1980: 5)

He continues: 'What distinguished man from animals was the human capacity for symbolic thought, the capacity which was inseparable from the development of language in which words were not mere signals, but signifiers of something other than themselves. Yet the first symbols were animals. What distinguished men from animals was born of their relationship with them'

(Berger 1980: 6). The acquisition of language, which supposedly sets man apart from animals, is the result of man's relation with animals, both in the sense of the significance of animal proximity to the lives of primitive men and in the sense of providing species against which man can identify himself as man. Claude Lévi-Strauss comments that 'It is because man originally felt himself identical to all those like him (among which, as Rousseau explicitly says, we must include animals) that he came to acquire the capacity to distinguish *himself* as he distinguishes *them* i.e., to use the diversity of species as conceptual support for social differentiation' (1962: 101). On Lévi-Strauss's reading, man can distinguish himself from animals only because he first learns to distinguish animals from one another. It is precisely this *difference between* animals that the philosopher buries in the concept of 'the animal' or 'animality'.

As we have seen, much of Rousseau's discussion of the difference between man and animal revolves around food; men literally assimilate animals by eating them and thereby establish their dominance over animals. Moreover, men secure their ability to eat all things by imitating and assimilating animal instincts; men watch animals and eat what they eat (Rousseau 1984: 81–82). And, it is as if the assimilation of animal flesh becomes the assimilation of animal sounds. Man's assimilation of the animal/animals takes place on the level of the figurative as well as the physical; man assimilates and imitates animal sounds and cries, animal 'speech', and eventually develops conventional language, which is born from the 'voice of nature' (cf. Rousseau 1984: 70, 93; 1966: 58). Man's ability to figure, to figure animals, comes through his imitation of animals; man substitutes words for animal speech (both his own gestural language and the sounds he assimilates from other animals). The logic of substitutability, the logic of metaphor itself, begins in this substitution of sounds for animals. Metaphoricity also is a response to the animals. The logic of metaphor that makes men human is a response to the animals in their midst. These animals *show* or demonstrate the process of assimilation that men ape by substituting human symbols for animal signs, *homologos* for *zoölogos*. This logic is taken to its extreme when, like a cat digging in sand, man covers up the animal sign that fertilises his imagination and teaches him the capacity for metaphor, which is to say what he imagines distinguishes him from the animal. In this sense, man's disavowal of animal pedagogy and of those animals that gave him words and thereby a world – even if accidentally – is engendered by animals. Within Rousseau's account of the origin of languages, however, it is not simply the case that what men and animals shared in common revealed their differences and thereby allowed man to name himself (and the animals). It is also not simply that the relation between man and animal is metaphorical such that the first metaphors were of animals. In addition, the very possibility of metaphor, which is to say the very possibility of language, depends on the substitution of man for animal: that is say that language itself operates through the assimilation/imitation of animals and the subsequent disavowal of that animal pedagogy. This mimetic logic is itself metaphorical in the sense that it substitutes one thing for another and thereby confounds identity and difference. In order to become human, men act like animals, eat what animals eat, and say what animals say only now with words.

In *Of Grammatology* (*De la grammatologie*, 1967), Derrida argues that on Rousseau's account, language and humanity are the products of both instantaneous substitution, on the one hand, and gradual development on the other (presumably evidenced in the animal sounds that turn into words when aped by man). Derrida works this tension in Rousseau's texts to reach the conclusion that the origin is 'always already' a supplement, which is to say that the correction comes before the defect. He says 'substitution has always already begun' (Derrida 1974: 215). Although Derrida seemingly turns Rousseau's text upside down and shakes every last dust mite from even the tiniest pockets, ultimately what catches his attention from the resulting pile of plants, animals, and humans are concepts. He opens the interval between nature and culture, animal and man, by demonstrating that as concepts one is implied in the other: 'Everything in language is substitute, and this *concept* of substitute precedes the opposition of nature and culture: the supplement can equally well be natural (gesture) as artificial (speech)' (my emphasis, Derrida 1974: 235). There is a sense in which the concept – not just the concept of substitute, but the concept itself – becomes 'originary' for Derrida. Perhaps this is why he can thoroughly dissect Rousseau's zoontology without seeing the trees for the forest (or the animals for the animal in this case). He tracks 'the animal' in Rousseau's writing not only without stopping to distinguish the cats from the beavers but also without even acknowledging their presence. In his search for the absence at the heart of Rousseau's notion of presence, he absents the veritable menagerie of animals that appear in Rousseau's texts. *The animal* in Derrida stands in for everything he wants to describe:

Animal language – and animality in general – represents here the still living myth of fixity, of symbolic incapacity, of nonsupplementarity. If we consider the concept of animality not in its content of understanding or misunderstanding but in its specific function, we shall see that it must locate a moment of life which knows nothing of symbol, substitution, lack and supplementary addition, etc. – everything, in fact whose appearance and play I wish to describe here ... a life without difference and without articulation. (1974: 242)

Even while criticising the function of the concept of animality in the history of philosophy in general and in Rousseau's writing in particular, where animality functions as the imaginary other out of and against which humanity is constituted, Derrida does not attend to the difference between animals and their various function in Rousseau's texts. And even as he attempts to discount the quest for origins by doggedly insisting on the 'always already' of supplementarity, his text puts origin and supplement into a 'which came first the chicken or the egg' relationship. In *Blindness and Insight* (1971), Paul de Man suggests as much when he claims that Derrida's use of the vocabulary of origin leaves him, like Rousseau, looking for ever 'deeper' origins, evidenced by phrases like 'need before need' (De Man 1971: 122). While changing the conjunction from *or* to *and* as Derrida does – before *and* after, more *and* less – throws a wrench into Rousseau's sometimes teleological account of the progress (or degeneration) from animal to man, as well as into the logics of noncontradiction (which motivates Herder's notion of the

opposition of man to animal), it also does away with animals. For their own good, animals are again sacrificed to the concept of animality to show how they have been used and even abused in our own account of our origins as human. If the human is always already within the animal and the animal is therefore always already within the human as its other, then where are animals in themselves or even in our midst. The relationship between humans and animals is nothing more than a conceptual one that remains haunted by the romantic notion of the animal ancestor. Only now that ancestor from our past is actually from our present/presence but it is no more a cohabitant or companion than it was before.

I say more about Derrida's reading of Rousseau elsewhere; given the limitations of this context, however, I will now turn to Derrida's reading of just two passages central to my analysis (Oliver forthcoming). To make the point that for Rousseau's text (here working against what it explicitly says) the 'faculty of supplementarity' 'is the true "origin" – or nonorigin – of languages', Derrida quotes a long passage from the *Essay on the Origins of Languages* in which Rousseau says, and Derrida emphasises with italics, '*That those animals which live and work in common, such as beavers, ants, bees, have some natural language for communicating among themselves, I would not question*' (Derrida 1974: 241–42). Although he highlights the individual animals or species mentioned by Rousseau, Derrida concludes from this passage that 'animal language – and animality in general [*l'animalité en general*] – represents' plentitude; he thereby substitutes the concept of animal [*le concept d'animalité*] – animality in general – for Rousseau's beavers, ants and bees (my emphasis, Derrida 1974: 242; 1967: 344).

To make the point that there is a tension in Rousseau's text between an irruption of language and a gradual acquisition of language, Derrida uses a passage in which Rousseau mentions a barking dog and describes an encounter with his cat as an example of how moral sentiments are already present in animals (Derrida 1974: 207). Again, Derrida never mentions the dog or the cat – or even animals for that matter – but rather replaces them with 'the animal': 'one must admit that "moral impressions" through signs and a system of differences can always be already discerned, although confusedly, in *the animal*. [Derrida quoting Rousseau:] "Something of this moral effect is perceivable even in *animals*"' (my emphasis, 1974: 207). Derrida replaces Rousseau's 'animals' with 'the animal'. It is striking that Derrida not only does not see the animals in Rousseau's text but also effaces them by substituting the animal, disregarding the ways in which Rousseau delineates differences between species in relation to language and humanity; man learns different things from different animals, and for Rousseau men become human only by virtue of a multitude of animal guides.

Decades later, Derrida attempts to redress animals with his essays on animal autobiography, wherein he questions 'the philosopher's' use of the animal:

It follows from that that one will never have the right to take animals to be the species of a kind that would be named the Animal, or animal in general. Whenever 'one' says, 'the Animal', each time a philosopher or anyone else says 'the Animal' in the singular without

further ado, claiming to designate every living thing that is held not to be man ... each time the subject of that statement, this 'one' this 'I' does that he utters an *asinanity* [*bêtise*]. He avows without avowing it, he declares, just as a disease is declared by means of a symptom, he offers up for diagnosis the statement 'I am uttering an *asinanity*.' And this 'I am uttering an *asinanity*' should confirm not only the animality that he is disavowing but his complicit, continued and organized involvement in a veritable war of the species. (2004: 124)

This 'I am uttering an *asinanity*' within Derrida's lectures on animal autobiography reads almost like a confession to the blindness of his earlier work. He argues that we use the word *animal* to 'corral a large number of living beings within a single concept', justifying this conceptual lasso by characterising *animals in general* as those without the word, without language (Derrida 2004: 124–25). The philosophers ride their high-horse in relation to animals because, according to Derrida, they assume that animals are 'unable to respond, to respond with a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction' (2004: 125). Much of the essay is concerned with what it would mean for the animal or an animal to respond (in its own name). In his analysis of Lacan's animal entitled 'And say the animal responded?' Derrida asks how we can be so certain that we can tell the difference between responding and reacting such that we can be sure that as human beings we respond rather than merely react (2003: especially 137–38). Following Derrida, yet straying too, I would propose 'And say the human responded?'

In 'The animal that therefore I am (more to follow)', Derrida (2004) introduces his own cat. He insists that he is talking about 'a real cat [*un chat réel*], truly, believe me, a little cat [*un petit chat*]. It isn't the *figure* of a cat' (Derrida 2004: 115). Later he teases his reader by suggesting that perhaps he is only quoting from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* while pointing out that one French translation gives us 'pussy' (*chatte*) for cat. Just before he has quoted Montaigne 'playing' with his pussy cat (*chatte*) in the context of describing a feeling of shame in front of his female cat looking at his 'sex ... without touching yet, and without biting, although that threat [*menace*] remains on its lips [*des lèvres*] or on the tip of the tongue [*de la langue*]' (Derrida 2004: 114; 1999: 254). Here, he stops himself, saying that he 'wanted to bite his tongue' (*j'avais voulu me mordre la langue*) because it seems as if he was about to admit what the symptom cannot admit, namely that it is an accident (symptom).

Even while continuing the word play with *à suivre* (more to follow, to be continued), Derrida is explicit that we 'follow' or 'come after' the animal. Derrida writes: 'being-after-it in the sense of the hunt, training, or taming, or being-after-it in the sense of a succession or inheritance? In all cases, if I am (following) after it, the animal comes before me, earlier than me ... The animal is there before me' (2004: 117). Derrida suggests that the 'I' in the cogito follows the animal, that self-reflection is conjured in the look of the animal, specially in his case the look of his female cat before whom he is recalled to himself in the shame of his nakedness. He describes chasing himself out of the room, biting himself, in the presence of his cat. He becomes an animal captured by the look of another animal. And by recalling him to his

animality, the look of the cat also recalls his humanity, which follows, comes after, the animal, here his cat. He concludes by asking whether his cat can be his 'primary mirror' (*mon premier miroir*) (Derrida 2004: 128).

In what almost seems like a stray paragraph in a text that revolves around the 'to follow' or 'comes after', Derrida does interrogate the 'to follow' and multiplies it in 'being alongside', 'being near', 'being with', 'being huddled-together' (2004: 117). In spite of this gesture toward being-with, his invocation of the mirror at the end of the essay – not to mention his sexual fantasies of his cat – suggests that we are back where we started with his analysis of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* wherein all contact with the other, including conversation, is auto-affection (e.g., Derrida 1974: 165–66). Derrida's perverse pussy, a voyeur threatening castration, seems a far cry from Rousseau's clever cat who isn't fooled by her 'master's' attempts at 'cat-language'. While Rousseau sees the cat as a potential interlocutor, Derrida sees himself captured by the menacing look of the cat after his sex.

Rousseau introduces his cat toward the end of 'On the Origin of Languages' to make the argument that our most lively sensations are produced by moral impressions, which distinguish civilised man from uncivilised man, if not man from animals. If not as threatening as Derrida's cat, Rousseau's cat is another spot where the text begins to chase its own tail on the question of the distinction between man and animal, and not just because, as Derrida points out, Rousseau allows for moral sentiment in 'the animal', but, stranger still, because he is attempting to talk to his cat in its own language, by meowing. Rousseau argues that in uncivilised men sensation does not have moral meaning, while in civilised men the intellect and moral reasoning give sensations their meaning. He criticises the view that sensations have meaning in themselves and insists that their meaning comes from emotions and feelings familiar from culture. More than the influence of culture, it seems that the most refined and cultured sensations – fine music – pull at the heart of the most cultured men in ways that they do not in the uncultured. Rousseau says that 'the ear does not so much convey pleasure to the heart as the heart conveys it to the ear' (1966: 61). His argument leading up to this conclusion is that familiar sounds and sensations will have meaning while unfamiliar ones will not. He gives the example of the healing sounds used to cure tarantula bites, which he maintains cannot be particular sounds but must be sounds familiar to the inflicted: 'Italian tunes are needed for Italians; for Turks, Turkish tunes. Each is affected only by *accents* (*des accents*) familiar to him' (my emphasis, Rousseau 1966: 60; 1993: 112).

Rousseau begins his argument about the importance of feeling or moral sentiment by describing his own attempt to imitate his cat's voice. At first his attempt appears successful when his cat perks up its ears to listen; but soon the cat recognises Rousseau's accent and goes back to sleep:

When my cat hears me imitate a mewling, I see it become immediately attentive, alert, agitated. When it discovers that I am just counterfeiting [*contrefais*] the voice of its species, it relaxes and resumes its rest. Since there is nothing at all different in the stimulation of the sense organ, and the cat had initially been deceived [*trompé*], what accounts for the difference? Unless the influence of

sensations upon us is due mainly to moral causes, why are we so sensitive to impressions that mean nothing to the uncivilized [*des barbares*]? (1966: 59; 1993: 111)

This passage is remarkable in several respects. First, Rousseau imitates his cat. Next, the cat realises after initially being deceived that the meowing is not another cat. Then Rousseau takes up the question of what accounts for the difference in the cat between deception and recognition. Finally he concludes that recognition gives meaning to sensations that mean nothing to the uncivilised. All of this suggests, however, that either Rousseau's cat occupies the place of the civilised man insofar as it can distinguish a fake from a real meow, or Rousseau's meowing is itself the language of the civilised man that his cat cannot appreciate because it is not familiar with the sound of a 'civilized' meow. So, either the cat is civilised, or civilised language is one that imitates the sounds of animals, which, as we have seen, resonates with what we might call Rousseau's animal pedagogy. (For a discussion of the relationship of animal pedagogy to Rousseau's theory of pedagogy, see Oliver forthcoming.) In either case, much of Rousseau's discussion of the importance of familiarity to meaning rests on his cat and its ability to discern a familiar meow from Rousseau's uncanny imitation. The cat is put into the service of Rousseau's argument that human meaning cannot be reduced to animal sensation.

Yet, Rousseau's deceived yet discerning listening cat may be a different breed of cat than Derrida's nasty looking cat insofar as she shows up to illustrate the significance of accent rather than of language itself. Accent is missing from Derrida's discussion. With Rousseau's cat it is not just a question of speaking cat language (or any language) but of speaking with a credible accent. For Derrida, it seems that response is tied up with (in)credible translation of the name – he asks what would it mean for an animal to respond in its own name, which could suggest that this animal gives itself a name in its own tongue or responds in the name that humans have given it, that is to say in our tongue; or to be truly its own, it would have to be its proper name. This focus on the name of the animal is revealing because the proper name of each singular animal would remain the same within every language, except in terms of its accent. In 'The Animal that I am, more to follow', Derrida points out a translatory supplement, the insertion of the word 'response' (*répondre*) into French translations of Lewis Carroll's Alice complaining about kittens: 'whatever you say to them, they always purr' and 'But how can you talk with a person if they always say the same thing' (Derrida 1999: 259). If translation is the substitution/supplementation of one language for another (that may also work to domesticate wild or stray phrases), accent, on the other hand, is not a matter of substitution but of inflection, such that always 'saying the same thing' can in fact say different things and to different people, including cats. This tone of voice or accent seems to be suggested in Alice's debate with the Cheshire cat over purring versus growling.

Rousseau's cat, along with menagerie of other animals that appear in his texts, serve to create the illusion of arguments grounded in experience, in natural facts. Yet, these animal examples and metaphors are not as domesticated or well trained as his arguments make them out to be. Like Roy Horn's

domesticated wild cat, Montecore, Rousseau's cat is unpredictable. It doesn't always perform as its human would like; and sometimes its effects demonstrate that human mastery is the illusion at the heart of man's relation with animals. As we have seen, in his account of how man becomes civilised by moving beyond animal need or instinct, Rousseau continually slips 'back' into animal need to make his case, specifically the need to eat. And what we eat is definitive of what we are: wild, domesticated or cultivated. Man's gut becomes the guiding principle behind the providence of human destiny. Even language with all of its attendant capacities that make man uniquely human turns out to be assimilations of animal language, man acting like an animal (like an ass, as in asinity). Just as men assimilate animals by eating everything animals eat and then by eating them, and thereby forming human societies, they assimilate animal sounds and thereby form human language. Society and language are responses to animals with whom men share the world and from whom men learn to be human. The wild and domesticated animals in Rousseau's texts leave signs of the accident playing possum at the origins of human necessity.

### **Herder's sheep**

If Rousseau treks through the animal kingdom trying to identify man's distinguishing features because ultimately he denies any definitive border between man and animal, his German contemporary, Johann Gottfried Herder avoids animals because he is certain of the abyss between man and animals, a border that is not only definitive but also dangerous. Crossing the boundary between man and animal puts man on uncertain footing; here man all too easily slips 'back' into the animal. And once that happens, the necessity of the human, civilisation, and man's dominion over nature falls into the abyss. Rousseau's analysis of the origins of man prefigures Darwin's theory of evolution and gives a glorious idealised animal ancestor, while Herder's categorically denies evolution even while imagining with horror the ape as man's abject alter-ego. If Rousseau flirts with danger in engaging with various wild and domestic animals, Herder (like early Derrida) prefers the animal in general and resorts to particular animals only when cornered, and even then he prefers only the most domestic, servile and harmless of animals, the lamb or sheep. But, the few appearances of Herder's sheep are telling. Indeed, Herder's sheep threatens to unravel his entire argument that man is by nature human and therefore independent of 'the animal' and of animals in general.

Here again, the question of the origin of man turns on the question of the relation between man and animals. In 'Essay on the Origin of Language' (1966 [1772]) Herder maintains that both Condillac and Rousseau give erroneous accounts of the origin of language because they have confused the relation between man and animals: 'Condillac and Rousseau had to err in regard to the origin of language because they erred, in so well known a way and yet so differently, in regard to this difference (between animals and men): in that the former turned animals into men and the latter men into animals' (1966: 103). Against these theories that Herder thinks confuse the question of the distinction between man and animal, he argues that 'every animal has its sphere to which it belongs from birth, into which it is born, in which it stays throughout

its life, and in which it dies' (104). Unlike other animals, man is born a rational and linguistic being and remains in the sphere of human language all of his life. This goes for individual men as well as the whole species. Yet, unlike other animals, man is not born with the instinctive use of language; while other animals speak by nature, by instinct – 'the bee hums as it sucks; the bird sings as it nests' – man 'does little or nothing entirely by instinct, entirely as an animal' (107). Rather, the entire human species 'stands above the animals not by stages of more or less but in kind' (108). Even if animals have some form of language, theirs is different not in degree but in kind from man's. Man's reason and language are not higher forms of animal reason or animal speech, but altogether different forms of reason and language.

Herder bases his argument on the fact that animal activities and lives have a narrow scope while man's are broad and far reaching; man's activities and lives can be improved forever while animals' cannot (1966: 109). So, even if man cannot build honey cells as well as bees or cobwebs as well as spiders, he has powers of conception that he uses and upon which he relies precisely because unlike the bee or the spider he doesn't build or spin by instinct but through reflection (109). If an animal does have the capacity for reflection, then it is a man. Conversely, if a man did build or spin like a bee or a spider, even if for only an instant, 'he is *ipso facto* no longer a man in any thing, no longer capable of any human act' (111). It seems that you won't catch Herder's civilised man meowing like a cat or devouring other men like a wolf. And, if Herder had a cat, it wouldn't be clever enough to discern accents based on rudimentary moral sentiments (or to serve as a mirror for his humanity by staring at his sex). Indeed, for Herder there are no essential distinctions between savage and civilised men; whether considered as individuals or as a species, men are men from birth to death: 'For if reason is not a separate and singly acting power but an orientation of all powers and as such a thing peculiar to his species, then man must have it in the first state in which he is man. In the first thought of the child this reflection must be apparent, just as it is apparent in the insect that it is an insect' (112). And ultimately there is no essential continuity between man and animal: 'The difference is not one of degree nor of a supplementary endowment with powers; it lies in a totally distinct orientation and evolution of all powers' (110). What for Rousseau is a matter of degree, for Herder is a difference in kind.

But *man* and *animal* are not just essentially different, they are opposites, mutually exclusive beings. To be a man is not to be an animal and vice versa. What for Rousseau was a matter of the logic of mimesis or metaphor, for Herder is a matter of the logic of noncontradiction. For Herder, reason and instinct cannot exist together in the same being, for one cancels out the other. This opposition is the basis of Herder's argument for the distinctiveness of man. Herder begins with the premise that man is man and animal is animal, which within his logic of noncontradiction leads him to the conclusion that man is not animal and animal is not man. Thus he can conclude that 'if man was not to be an instinctual animal, he had to be – by virtue of the more freely working positive power of his soul – a creature of reflection' (Herder 1966: 112). This conclusion is based on his claim that 'if man had the drives of the animals, he could not have what we now call reason in him ... if man had the senses of animals, he would have no reason; for the keen alertness of his

senses and the mass of perceptions flooding him through them would smother all cool reflection' (111). Man must compensate with reason for what he lacks in drives and sensations. Herder's presumption that animal drives and sensation are all-consuming and therefore opposed to reason is possible only because he deals with an abstract generalised animal and an abstract generalised man (another can of worms, which I barely touch in this context). For if he considered individual animals or individual humans and compared them, he would have to allow for more variations and continuity *between* them. Herder chastises philosophers for dividing the soul and man's capacities into categories or chapters, 'metaphysical abstractions' convenient to 'feeble minds' unable to conceive of the whole undivided activity of the soul, yet he employs abstract metaphysical notions of man and animal in order to stake his claim that man does nothing like an animal (110–11). Animals in general and the abstract animal function in Herder's texts to efface individual animals and the difference between animal species so prominent in Rousseau's texts.

Like Rousseau, Herder wavers on the significance and possibility of animal language and animal influence on human evolution. And while they share romantic notions of Nature, Herder's struggle to distinguish man from animal seems motivated by an abhorrence of 'the animal' precisely because of its closeness to man. For Herder, any ambiguity between man and animal, any mixture of the two, is a disgusting abomination of nature. Herder maintains that we must 'arraign Providence' 'for suffering man to border so nearly on the brute' (1800 [1784]: 124). While Rousseau idealises the 'primitive', including both savage men and animals, Herder prefers the beauty of trees and plants and frequently uses floral metaphors when describing man's difference from animals. For Herder the primary difference between man and animals is that men are beautiful and animals are grotesque; and the closer they are to men, the grosser they are; these gross approximations of man only highlight the refinement or 'fineness' of man. The ape in particular, with its powers of imitation and similarity to man, has an uncanny effect on Herder, which prompts him to sketch man with a fine point while painting apes with slobbering rhetoric to draw a bold line between them:

Why has the father of human speech done this? Why would he not permit the all-imitative ape to imitate precisely this criterion of human kind, inexorably closing the way to it by peculiar obstacles. Visit an hospital of lunatics, and attend to their discourse, listen to the jabbering of monsters and idiots; and you need not be told the cause. How painful to us is the utterance of these? How do we lament to hear that gift of language so profaned by those? And how much more would it be profaned in the mouth of the gross, lascivious, brutal ape, could he imitate human words with the half-human understanding, which I have no doubt he possesses? Disgusting tissue of sounds resembling those of man combined with the thoughts of an ape – no: the divine faculty of speech was not to be thus debased, and therefore the ape is dumb; more dumb than his fellow-brutes, each of which, down to the frog and the lizard, has his own peculiar voice. (1800: 88)

Those gross, lascivious, brutal, disgusting apes mock man with their powers of imitation; they reflect back to man his animality in ways that threaten the neat border between them. The extreme rhetoric of abjection in Herder's text suggests that his description of the apes is over-determined by the threat that these creatures so similar to man pose to his theory. The ape recalls man's own animality and therefore must be abjected and expelled from the human world in no uncertain terms; the ape, man's alter-ego, is the disgusting side of man's own nature, the side Herder turns his back on in his romantic picture of beautiful man versus ugly ape. Describing the physical differences between man and ape in great detail, Herder locates the 'base, disgraceful aspect' of the ape in the fact that it cannot stand erect like man can. In man, the baseness of the ape becomes 'the beautiful free formation of the head for the upright posture of man':

Let this point be otherwise disposed, beautiful and noble will be the whole form. The forehead will advance forward big with thought, and the skull swell into an arch with calm exalted dignity. The broad brutal nose will contract, and assume a higher and more delicate figure: the retreating mouth will be more beautifully covered, and thus will be formed the lips of man, which are wanting to the most cunning of apes. The chin will sink to round the fine perpendicular oval: the cheeks softly swell: and the eyes look out from beneath the projecting forehead, as from the sacred temple of mind. (Herder 1800: 74)

Herder's description of the head of man is as lofty as his description of the head of apes is base. Everything disgusting in apes becomes dignified in man.

In 'Essay On the Origin of Language', criticising Rousseau, Herder argues that 'the ape may forever be aping, but never did he emulate' because mimicry in man is the result of reflection and therefore becomes emulation while in apes it is merely organic (1966: 125; cf. 1800: 232). Similarly, in *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (1800), Herder maintains that man's power of imitation is the result of the 'exquisite' organisation of the human body which allows, even necessitates, that imitation-cum-emulation become speech (232). He concludes that 'man did not attain the artificial characteristic of his species, reason, by all this mimicry: he arrived at it by speech alone ... Speech alone has rendered man human' (232–33). The ape does not have the bodily organisation or organs for speech. And while some animals, parrots for example, can imitate human speech, Herder insists that these animals are further from the possibility of human thought than apes, which is why Nature allows them voice and song. Herder suggests that these lower animals, so far from human understanding, are no threat to man's dominion over all other species. He says 'the tongue of some is so formed, as even to be capable of pronouncing human words, the signification of which they do not understand ... But here the door is shut, and the manlike ape is visibly and forcibly deprived of speech by the pouches Nature has placed at the sides of the windpipe' (88). The more similar to man a species is, the greater the necessity that it is mute. Given that for Herder speech is definitive of humanity, it is imperative – a necessity of

divine Providence – that animals capable of thought are not capable of speech and vice versa. Herder is repulsed by the idea of a speaking ape; nature would not insult man by allowing such a coarse and grotesque creature to speak. On his account, if apes could speak, then they would be men; and that mixing of the human and animal is unacceptable, even abject. It would threaten Herder's entire philosophy of the divine uniqueness of man and man's legitimate dominion over the Earth. Yet, claiming that each species has its own voice intended for itself alone, Herder is haunted by the liminal ambiguous mixtures of humans and animals that his texts explicitly argue against: 'As little, then, as the nightingale sings – as some imagine – to entertain man, so little can man ever be minded to invent for himself a language by trilling the trills of the nightingale. And what a monstrosity: A human nightingale in a cave or out in the forest with the hunt!' (1966: 136). (*'Und was ist doch für ein Ungeheuer, eine menschliche Nachtigall in einer Höhle oder im Walde der Jagd?'* (1772: 52); note that the translator replaced Herder's question mark with an exclamation point, making the passage seem even more passionate). His dogged insistence on a categorical segregation between man and animals is repeatedly belied in his texts by the fantasies with which he patrols the borders, human nightingales, speaking ape-men, budding souls and other 'abominations'. In these places, Herder's own 'monstrous' illustrations ape or mock his attempt to protect man from the threat of animals.

For Herder, the distinction between man and animals is a distinction between pure and abject that repeatedly appears in his texts as the distinction between the fine and the coarse. Herder says that 'man is organized for finer Instincts, and in consequence to Freedom of Action' (1800: 89). Reason, language, freedom are the result of man's fineness, while the lack of these are the result of the ape's coarseness. The coarse animal, however, is not abject in itself so much as it is abject in relation to man, abject as the spectre of man's own animality, abject insofar as it conjures the 'monstrosity' of the in-between, ambiguity, or mixture of human and animal. It is not the coarse in itself then, but mixing the fine and the coarse, that is abhorrent to Herder. Apparently both fascinated and repelled, he cannot resist conjuring images of monstrous fine-coarse human-animals. Within this phobic logic motivated by the threat of ambiguity, it should be no surprise that Herder prefers plants, especially flowers, to animals. Plants are far enough from the human not to threaten the borders between human and nonhuman (or in this case vegetable). Yet, mixing floral and human is precisely what he does repeatedly in order to shore up the distinction between man and animal. In a sense, the monstrosity of a speaking ape or a human nightingale is forestalled by human plants, metaphors of the soul and human reason and understanding as beautiful, divine flowers budding and blossoming under the glorious sun. Herder describes the movement from 'inferior' forms of life, 'the brute', to the superior human form as 'the bud of humanity, benumbed by cold, and parched by heat, will expand in its true form, in its proper and full beauty ... Nature had similar purposes in all earthly wants: each was to be matrix of some germe of humanity. Happy is it when the germe buds: it will blossom beneath the beams of a more glorious sun. Truth, beauty, and love are the objects' (1800: 124). The hybrid human

flower defends against the greater threat of the monstrous human animal; opposed to the realm of coarse and grotesque animals, humanity blossoms like a flower, fine and beautiful.

Remarkably, the distinction between fine and coarse comes back to food: to eat coarse food is to be coarse; to eat fine food is to be fine and vice versa. As with Rousseau, with Herder, we are what we eat (and we eat what we are). Like Rousseau, Herder talks of assimilation of both animal sounds and animal flesh in conjunction with the origin of language. But unlike Rousseau, he figures this assimilation as the conversion of matter into higher forms and ultimately into the highest form, the soul. For Rousseau assimilation is based on imitation, a form of animal pedagogy, while for Herder it is a matter of digestion and transformation, even purification, of lower life forms. Herder uses the caterpillar's metamorphosis into butterfly to suggest that the death of the coarse body frees the beautiful soul for a different form of life: 'Behold, there crawls the despicable caterpillar, obeying the gross appetite of eating ... His whole structure is altered: instead of the coarse leaves, on which he was at first formed to feed, he drinks the nectarous juice of flowers from their golden cups. Even his destination is changed: instead of obeying the gross appetite of hunger, he is moved by the more refined passion of love' (Herder 1800: 126). This passage is noteworthy in several respects. First, the distinction between forms is characterised as a distinction between coarse and fine, which is defined in terms of eating; coarse leaves give way to refined passions through flower nectar. Sipping is in itself more refined than chewing. Next, the butterfly's beauty – 'adorned with all the splendid hues, that can be produced beneath the sun: that waft the creature as it were on the breath of zephyr' – corresponds to the beauty of its sup, 'nectarous juice of flowers from their golden cups' (126). And, this beauty in and of itself gives birth to love beyond appetite. The distinction between coarse and fine, then, is aesthetic. And Herder prefers the aesthetics of 'beautiful' butterflies and flowers to 'ugly' apes and parrots. Again, we see that his rhetoric is full of romantic images of fine beauty opposed to abject images of disgustingly coarse appetites.

For Herder, like Rousseau, one of man's advantages over other animals is that he can eat almost anything. But for Herder, by so doing man transforms what he eats/assimilates into a higher form (lest he be contaminated by ingesting abject animal forms). In an interesting turn of phrase, Herder suggests that by eating plants, animals 'animalize' them:

The animal stands above the plant, and subsists on its juices. The single elephant is the grave of millions of plants; but he is a living, operative grave; he animalizes them into parts of himself: the inferior powers ascend to the more subtle form of vitality. It is the same with all carnivorous beasts: Nature has made the transition short, as if she feared a lingering death above all things. She has accordingly abridged it, and accelerated the mode of transformation into superior vital forms. The greatest murderer among all animals is man, the creature that possesses the finest organs. He can assimilate to his nature almost every thing, unless it sink too far beneath him in living organization. (1800: 115)

Nature operates according to the principle of 'active improvement' through which animals 'animalize' plants and presumably humans 'humanize' animals by eating them. This assimilation of lower forms into 'superior' forms guarantees that although man is the 'greatest murderer' among all animals that he remains uncontaminated by ingesting all other animals. The fact that Herder mentions animals that might be too far beneath man to eat raises the spectre of contamination by inferior species. Rousseau's man can eat everything and still be a man (although he may be a more uncivilised man depending on what he eats); whereas the humanity and not just the civility of Herder's man is threatened if he eats something too coarse, base or abject. For example, while the juices of plants can be transformed into higher powers in animals who make use of 'vegetable powers' to 'enliven parts of a vegetable nature' now serving animal purposes, the juices of animals – blood – 'enliven rapaciousness, beastliness, and barbarousness' in both animals and man, which is why Herder says that 'the establishment of nations has made it one of the first laws of human feeling, not to desire for food a living animal with its blood' (Herder 1800: 116). Sheepishly, Herder concludes from this analysis that spiritual powers do not come from the corporeal sources of animal juices even if animal powers come from vegetable juices as 'the scale of improvement ascends through the inferior ranks of nature' (116). The prohibition against ingesting blood or living animals is a sign/symptom of a spiritual power, among carnivores, unique to man. Although for Herder man is not a vegetarian by nature, he can abstain from eating living flesh and blood. As Rousseau points out, man prefers, nay needs, to cook his meat.

Within Herder's logic of natural accession from inferior to superior powers and forms through assimilation, cannibals pose an interesting problem. The cannibal eats other people and therefore could be seen as engaging in the highest form of assimilation, the assimilation of humanity into greater spirituality – the cannibal humanises the human just as the animal animalises the vegetable. Indeed, in trying to account for how we get from the carnal to the spiritual in this dog-eat-grass chain of being, almost in spite of himself, Herder cannot help but lead us to the cannibal. He says, 'the cannibal, thirsting for revenge, strives, though in a horrible mode, for a *spiritual* enjoyment' (Herder 1800: 120). In this same chapter of *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, even while he insists that ideas in the mind are 'altogether spiritual, and not corporeal', Herder compares food for the body to ideas for the mind and concludes that the 'same laws of assimilation, growth, and production', only now in a spiritual rather than corporeal manner, obtain in the soul as in the body (119). But he struggles to describe how man crosses the canyon between the corporeal and spiritual, sides which stand opposed to one another. His solution is to propose that although they are opposed and one does not generate the other, still they operate according to the same logic of assimilation, through eating and digesting nutriment; they share the same logic and the same processes of growth and production only on different levels. Like the body, so too the mind can 'overgorge itself with food, which it is incapable of appropriating and converting into nutriment' (119). According to Herder, however, if the transition from corporeal to spiritual is not organic, then it must be mimetic: The mind must imitate the body in its operations of assimilation to produce food for thought; and 'devouring' ideas with the

passion and appetite equal to that of the rapacious beasts, we become human, eventually able to pick the bones of the most delicate argument morsel by morsel along with Herder. Despite his 'bitter' judgment, mimicry becomes emulation, appetites of the body become appetites of the mind, and animals become human.

In Herder's account, the transformation from corporeal to spiritual in man is coexistent with the transition from assimilation to appropriation. Through his assimilation of animal food, behaviour, and most importantly animal sounds, man becomes 'lord of every thing in nature' (Herder 1800: 240). Within Herder's account, it turns out that the invention or acquisition of language that separates man from beast depends upon both assimilation and appropriation of animals. Language, of course, is man's crowning glory and by naming the animals he lords over them: 'for in every one of his appropriations he does nothing in reality but mark the characters of a tameable, useful being, to be employed for his own convenience, and designate it by language or pattern. In the gentle sheep, for instance, he remarked the milk sucked by the lamb, and the wool that warmed his hand, and endeavored to appropriate each to his own use' (240). By naming the animals insofar as they are useful to him, man not only secures his dominion over them but also justifies it. The sheep is named in conjunction with men's appropriation of it for their own purposes: It is reduced to milk and wool. For Herder, naming is the assimilation of animal sounds in the service of the appropriation of the animals themselves.

The animals introduce themselves to man through their own tongues, figured as the tongues of vassals and servants deferring to the divine superiority of man: 'Each one has its name on its tongue [*jedes trägt seinen Namen auf der Zunge*] and introduces itself to this concealed yet visible god as a vassal and servant. It delivers to him its distinguishing word to be entered, like a tribute, into the book of his dominion [*seiner Herrschaft*] so that he may, by virtue of its name, remember it, call it in future, and enjoy it' (Herder 1966: 130; 1772: 46). Unlike Rousseau's noble animals from whom man learns to be human, Herder's present themselves as servants before the god-man. The distinguishing mark through which man comes to know the animals is the voice of the animals themselves whose 'language' is translated into 'the natural scale of the human voice' (Herder 1966: 137). Just as the assimilation of 'inferior' forms of life into the body through eating transformed them into higher forms, here too inferior forms of language are transformed into the highest form, the human form, through the mouth of man. Man 'humanizes' animal language simply by speaking it with his beautiful, finely formed mouth, which is beautiful as a result of his beautiful finely formed soul. This transformation or translation is automatic. For Herder, human language is not a different inflection of the voice of nature as it was for Rousseau; rather it is an appropriation, even exploitation, that transforms it into something else, an altogether different kettle of fish.

Yet, at the heart of Herder's theory that language is natural and necessary to the human soul, is a bleating sheep in *response* to whom man learns to invent language. Indeed, as Herder describes it, man himself begins to 'bleat' (*blöken*) out with his lips what his soul had bleated within when he heard and responded to the sheep's bleating: 'The sound of bleating perceived by a

human soul as the distinguishing mark of the sheep became, by virtue of this reflection, the name of the sheep' and he began to

bleat out with his lips [*mit den Lippen vorblöken*] this distinguishing mark of reflection for another, his soul – as it were – bleated within [*seine Seele hat gleichsam in ihrem Inwendigen geblökt*] when it selected this sound as a sign of recollection, and it bleated again as it recognized the sound by its sign. Language has been invented? Invented as naturally and to man as necessarily as man was man [*die Sprache ist erfunden? ebenso natürlich und dem Menschen notwendig erfunden, als der Mensch ein Mensch war*]. (Herder 1966: 118; 1772: 33–34)

The sheep's bleating becomes the founding metaphor for Herder's theory of the uniqueness of man and his distinctiveness from the animal kingdom through the invention of language. Like the sheep from his *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, this sheep assures Herder of the necessity of human naming as the beginning of man's dominion over animals. There the 'gentle sheep' demonstrates that man appropriates the sheep for his own convenience and use by designating it (Herder 1800: 240). In his *Outline*, Herder defines the sheep in terms of its gentleness and passivity; but in 'Essay On the Origin of Language', the sheep actively speaks so that man can *respond in kind*. In his *Essay*, quite against Herder's bullish insistence on the origin of language from man's soul itself, the sheep *teaches* man to speak. It is noteworthy that in his course on Herder's essay, in a section entitled 'The Sheep Bleats', Martin Heidegger focuses on the ear as the teacher and the sheep becomes 'merely' an exemplar of being (e.g. 1999 [1939]: 120, 174).

The sheep at the heart of Herder's text acts up and belies man's relation not only to his own animality but also his relation to his own dependence on animals. Man learns to speak, and thereby becomes human, in response to animals. The sheep bleats and man responds with his own bleating. ... And say the human responded? Looking carefully at Herder's description of man's relation with this sheep, it becomes clear that man's unique capacity for understanding, knowing, reason, transcending instinct, emulation, speech, differentiation, observation, recognition, recollection, and ownership – everything that defines man as man, as human – comes through an encounter with the sheep (Herder 1966: 116–18; cf. 129, 132, 138). Man is man by virtue of the lamb (think of the metaphors of Christianity, which I explore elsewhere in relation to Herder's sheep; see Oliver forthcoming).

As we have seen, as different as their conclusions about the origin of language may be, both Rousseau and Herder rely on animals to make their cases for the uniqueness of man as either degenerate or godly, respectively. While Rousseau suggests that only from a multitude of different animals can man learn to become human, Herder prefers the sheep because it is easily domesticated in the service of not only feeding and clothing man, but also because its innocent bleating initiates in man – in spite of himself – man's own bleating. If Rousseau idealises animals in the state of nature, Herder abhors them. Yet, in a crucial sense for both Rousseau and Herder, man becomes human as a response to animal pedagogy.

Even while Herder's discourse assimilates and appropriates animals as examples, illustrations, facts, and metaphors to demonstrate and justify the necessity of man's dominion over animals, the animal and animality, his discourse and justifications are belied by that one innocent sheep in response to whom man bleats. And, in Rousseau's less dogmatic account of the origin of languages, even with its attention to the plurality of languages and accents, his menagerie speaks up to interrupt his attempts to present a coherent account of the origin and development of human civilisation. The necessity of man is premised on their various animals – apes, nightingales, butterflies, sheep, horse, cattle, beavers, ants, pigeons, bees, dogs, cats. These animals are made to serve the argument that man is essentially distinct from the animal. Like Siegfried and Roy's trained tigers, these animals step in on cue to domesticate wild arguments and round up stray thoughts. Yet, we catch a glimpse of these animals when the philosopher, like the circus trainer, slips and falls back on man's animal instincts to make his case that man is man by virtue of transcending them. Man's soul, reason, language, self-reflection appear in these texts as *responses* to the animals (for a discussion of the ethical consequences of animal pedagogy, see Oliver forthcoming). In this regard, the animals do not so much bite back as teach man to be himself. Like the illusionist, the philosopher calls forth the animals on cue, names them, as if to demonstrate his mastery over them, only to conjure, by accident, the symptom of man's illegitimate birth. Everything he takes for his own is not preordained by nature but is contingent upon animal pedagogy. As if within the animal kingdom, man is not king but merely an accident waiting to happen.

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