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"Post-Anthropocentrism" in Animal Philosophy and Ethics: The Disparity of the Prefix "Post"

1. Introduction. In the wake of Peter Singer's and Tom Regan's famous works on animal ethics, new paradigms are constantly being sought out to redefine the relationship between humans and animals and to enable a better life for those life forms recognized as having moral value. These new paradigms are constituted in continuity with Singer's or Regan's aims to formulate concrete principles on behalf of animals or are meant to create alternatives to speciesist positions in regards to animal rights or welfare. Examples can be found in virtue-ethical (e.g. Nussbaum; Hursthouse), pragmatic (e.g. McReynolds), and contractarian (e.g. Rowlands) approaches, as well as in approaches associated with contemporary Continental philosophy, such as deconstruction and poststructuralism (e.g. Derrida; Haraway).[1] However, while leaving behind *speciesist* prejudices, i.e. the categorical exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral consideration, the issue of *anthropocentrism*, which denominates the concept of the human (or the notion of human subjectivity) and human capacities (e.g. reason) as the benchmarks of moral value, remains unsolved in many aspects. As will be shown, anthropocentrism may not necessarily be considered as a particular form of speciesism, but rather as opposed to it. Additionally, the critique of anthropocentrism may target two different aspects, a moral problem and an epistemic problem. Deconstructive or poststructuralist approaches often diverge from other positions in animal ethics, as their critique of anthropocentrism additionally addresses the epistemic level.

Currently, one of the most discussed critiques of these aspects of anthropocentrism is Jacques Derrida's. He deconstructs[2] epistemic assumptions concerning the clear differentiation between humans and animals, arguing against an anthropocentric hierarchy, which can also be found in supposedly non-anthropocentric lines of thought. This approach has been favorably received by Leonard Lawlor and Cary Wolfe, but has also been subject to widespread critique, such as Gary Steiner's. Steiner argues that, by questioning the ideal of truth, "Derrida fails to articulate any clear moral principles bearing on our relationship to animals" (*Anthropocentrism and its Discontents* 5), which he himself believes are the cornerstones of a better human-animal relationship. As they attempt to alter the anthropocentric perception of animals, Steiner's and the deconstructive approaches, though diametrically opposed, are both ascribed to the field

of *post-anthropocentrism*. This already indicates the complex heterogeneity of the post-anthropocentric field, which can be illustrated by these contrary positions. The heterogeneity is twofold: on the one hand, it is grounded in the disparity of the notions of anthropocentrism, on the other hand in the process of overcoming, i.e. the "post." While the precarious notion of anthropocentrism has been subject to extensive discussion (cf. e.g. Boddice), the various implications of the "post" remain unconsidered. The heterogeneity faced in the post-anthropocentric debate is not only an ambiguity of "anthropocentrism," but an ambiguity of the prefix "post." Illustrated by the positions of Derrida and Steiner, this paper additionally focuses on the process of *how* anthropocentrism is surpassed rather than on what is surpassed, because a discourse that seeks to argue on behalf of animals should not be ignorant of its own methodological preconceptions.

After a short terminological clarification regarding anthropocentrism (section 2), Derrida's approach to the question of *the* animal and the "post" in deconstructivist post-anthropocentrism (respectively: post-humanism) will be illustrated. In doing so, we also refer to Wolfe's work, because his reading of Derrida and his notion of post-humanism can help to make our point clear. It is important to note that we do not intend to identify Derrida's and Wolfe's respective positions, nor do we seek to compare them. The references to Wolfe are rather used in order to illustrate our own understanding of Derrida and the post-humanist "post" (section 3). As a counterpoint, we outline Gary Steiner's analysis of the limits of postmodernism and his own specific "post" in overcoming anthropocentrism, and compare it to Derrida's account (section 4). It will be concluded that these different "posts" are associated with different notions of excess: depending on the approach, excess may be considered as human behavior with negative connotations, which the "post" should overcome, or as a process inherent to each normative or argumentative structure, be it an anthropocentric or a supposedly post-anthropocentric line of thought (section 5).

2. What is Anthropocentrism? To approach the field of the "post," it is paramount to distinguish carefully between the different conceptions of the problems in human-animal relationship which it concerns. One of the primary issues animal ethicists, animal welfarists, and animal rightists strove to overcome was speciesism.[3] In speciesism, belonging to a certain species is the basic criteria for moral consideration and provides the reason to discount members of other species. Being a member of a species is considered to be a sufficient criterion for the recognition of moral standing (cf.

Rippe 47-52). Regarding human-animal relationship, a speciesist perspective is fundamentally sustained by "false notions of what animals are like" (Spiegel 30). It is not only these false ascriptions to animals that are at stake here, but also the supposition that the characteristics possessed by humans entail moral superiority: "It is only an anthropocentric world view which makes the qualities possessed by humans to be those by which all other species are measured" (23). Because, on this view, only humans possess morally relevant characteristics, anthropocentrism may be defined as a form of speciesism, in which being a member of the human species is the particular criterion for moral consideration. It thereby excludes all nonhuman species from moral consideration on the grounds that they are not human is speciesist and anthropocentric.

Considering some crucial aspects of these terms may challenge this differentiation between speciesism and anthropocentrism as its subcategory. "Speciesism" (analogous to "racism") is essentially a term with negative connotations, underpinned by false ascriptions: claiming an exceptional moral status for humans is not based on plausible reasons. If a plausible reason existed, the term "speciesism" would no longer be appropriate for describing the exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral consideration (cf. Rippe 51). In anthropocentrism, the moral prioritization of humans is justified by relying on certain "typical" human characteristics (which by themselves are not necessarily false ascriptions): every anthropocentric argument that prioritizes humans over nonhuman animals already entails a clear differentiation between "us" and "them" on an epistemic level — "us" being defined by certain characteristics — , whereas "speciesism" is a species-neutral term, apparently not necessarily referring to the human or to human characteristics.[4] Thus, the exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral consideration is human-centered and anthropocentric, but not necessarily speciesist.[5] Even if not all nonhuman animals are excluded from moral consideration, this does not entail the overcoming of anthropocentrism, but only the overcoming of speciesism. An ethical argument may seek to include a variety of nonhuman species into the moral community by justifying the argument with the moral relevance of specific characteristics in these species. Therefore, the argument is non-speciesist, but the epistemological process identifying the supposedly morally relevant characteristics is unavoidably anthropocentric. Here, the human is not necessarily the center of moral consideration, but the "epistemological center" determining or acknowledging the moral value of the human and nonhuman species.

In this sense, moral consideration of nonhuman animals means the overcoming of speciesism, whether one follows pathocentric, biocentric, or other lines of argumentation. But even if speciesism has been overcome, anthropocentrism surfaces in

an epistemic form. In contrast to speciesism, this epistemic anthropocentrism simply describes the inevitability of a human perspective, without implying human superiority: "The fact that all values are seen or acknowledged from a human perspective does not tell us what we have reason to value, or what is valuable" (Samuelsson 638). But even if that is true, as soon as specific characteristics in different species are actually recognized as being morally relevant, the question arises, how exactly did these characteristics happen to be recognized in this way? For example, as Herwig Grimm illustrates, Peter Singer's appeal to consider certain animals morally depends on the recognition of *humanlike* characteristics in those animals (Grimm 285-288). Recognizing a certain characteristic as being morally relevant is not based on some "perspective-neutral" or objective insight, but requires a specific human perspective, human categories, or epistemological differentiations between the human (whatever notion of the human this may be) and other animals. Grimm points out that in Singer's argument the ability to suffer (or the interest not to suffer) is not only an accidental characteristic humans happen to have in addition to many other nonhuman animals. Realizing that *humans* can suffer and therefore are not to be harmed is not just a consequence of realizing that *all animals* capable of suffering have to be morally considered (and thus be equally considered). Here, on an epistemic level, humans must already have an idea of what it is like to suffer before they can formulate ethical arguments seeking to include all animals capable of suffering into the moral community. So, in this case, the recognition of a morally relevant characteristic in humans precedes the appeal to moral consideration for all animals capable of suffering. Thus, Singer overcomes speciesism in human-animal relations, but not epistemic anthropocentrism. Hence, Singer's line of argumentation can be described as *non-speciesist (epistemic) anthropocentrism* (ibid.). To a certain degree, such a position may be ascribed to what Paula Cavalieri *de*scribes as "perfectionism," i.e. the assumption that conscious beings "deserve different consideration according to their level of possession of certain characteristics" (3). If humans, or a certain notion of the human or human characteristics, are the "perfectionistic" measure of moral value or the epistemological starting point for ethical arguments, then moral consideration of other animals is a question of similarity: the closer nonhuman animals supposedly are to us (for example in terms of consciousness or the interest not to suffer), the more we feel obliged to protect them from harm. But, on the other hand, if a human perspective is inevitable for us, do we have an alternative, epistemologically non-anthropocentric way of problematizing the suffering of animals?

To address this epistemic problem, for Cary Wolfe the main reference point in criticizing anthropocentrism is the humanist notion of subjectivity, that is, referring to the autonomous subject characterized by rationality and agency (*What is Posthumanism?* xiii, 99; *Animal Rites* 1-17). Wolfe's argument is primarily based on Derrida's critique of logocentrism. This logocentric notion of the subject identifies humans as being humans, in contrast to animals, and therefore, it effectively avoids seeing human beings as human *animals*. As long as this notion of the "human" is accepted as a "fact" we reproduce — on an epistemic level — what we attempt to overcome: anthropocentrism (cf. e.g. Boddice 3; Grimm). Thus, explicitly or implicitly attributing humanlike characteristics to animals (or acknowledging these characteristics in them) is not only searching for "*the* human" in animals (cf. Grimm), but is also reproducing a humanist notion of subjectivity. It becomes obvious that placing the *anthropos* in the "center" is not just an issue of explicit political orientation, but also of implicit structures within normative concepts. According to this perspective, it may be doubted that supposedly morally relevant characteristics are defined generically (from a neutral or objective point of view) without any implicit "human bias" preceding this definition.

Thus, the definitions of anthropocentrism vary depending on the argumentative approaches. This is also due to the fact that anybody who works in the field of normative relations to animals needs to address this vital issue in some way, which results in a great number of positions and viewpoints. Actually, two different forms of anthropocentrism are distinguished in animal ethics, philosophy, and related disciplines: moral anthropocentrism and epistemic anthropocentrism. The former is a normative concept (viewing the human and "specific" human characteristics as indicators for moral superiority) and the latter is the way humans perceive and understand things (cf. Sandkühler 125; Chimaira Arbeitskreis 414; Rippe 94-95; Ach 39-41). Another attempt at defining anthropocentrism is Rob Boddice's. Boddice states that anthropocentrism can be related to a political orientation or to an ontological fact (7). Anthropocentrism as a political orientation refers to a supposed superiority of humans over animals (in analogy to moral anthropocentrism); anthropocentrism as an ontological fact describes the concept that humans are only able to structure or perceive the world from a human point of view. However, the latter could be more accurately described as an *epistemic* problem rather than an ontological one, because Boddice's concept derives the notion of being from the notions of perception and experience. Therefore, a differentiation between ethical-political (or "moral") and epistemic anthropocentrism seems more appropriate in this case. As a fact that unavoidably defines human experience, epistemic anthropocentrism may be alternatively designated "anthropocentricity."

Stimulated by the awareness of this "multi-levelled" anthropocentrism, two questions arise: first, which of these aspects of anthropocentrism can be subject to critique? And second, how can anthropocentrism be criticized by post-anthropocentric positions? This "how" refers to the terminology used to form ethical arguments: do authors seek out an argumentative clarity and transparency, which means not using equivocal terms or potentially confusing and unclear expressions, but instead striving towards a concrete applicability of their arguments, or are their arguments (supposedly) missing such a clarity, thus making it much more difficult to formulate concrete principles on behalf of nonhuman animals? Of course, the form of the language in an ethical argument is based on the theoretical background of the author and is related to his or her political agenda. But in addition to the theoretical justification of ethical arguments within different post-anthropocentric approaches, the "how" of argumentation also evokes a different concept of the "post" on a performative level. Some approaches to post-anthropocentrism are defined by a clear argumentative structure, presenting the argument as a step-by-step guideline in describing, understanding, and overcoming moral anthropocentrism. Jacques Derrida performatively undermines what these positions present as a solution to the problems in human-animal relationship. Not just Derrida's "theories," but also his argumentative style opposes the idea of the "post" as a simple overcoming of these problems.

3. The "Post" in Post-Humanism. Jacques Derrida points out that the clear distinction between humans and animals, or even the concept of such a distinction in the first place, must be approached with extreme caution regarding its consequences in practical terms (cf. *The Animal that Therefore I am*). He suggests that every clear pattern of distinction produces *inclusion* and *exclusion* and therefore a hierarchy (binary hierarchical oppositions). The problem, as set out by the deconstructive approach, is not the act of distinction itself, but rather the static pattern, which these distinctions tend to follow. Derrida not only expounds the problem of declaring human abilities such as rationality and language the ultimate criterion for moral value, but he distrusts the epistemic notion which implies that the human is separated from *the* animal by rationality and language. In his view, the core of "logocentrism" lies in the assumption of a specific distinction between *the human* and *the animal*. Derrida proposes to deconstruct the basic concept of the human itself by "asking whether what calls itself human has the right rigorously to attribute to man, which means therefore to attribute

to himself, what he refuses the animal, and whether he can ever possess the *pure, rigorous, indivisible* concept, as such, of that attribution" (135).

Although Derrida rejects the clear distinction between humans and animals, this rejection does not imply any kind of biological continuity between animals and humans (30). For Derrida, animals represent otherness at its purest (107). This is important because the confrontation with the *other* enables subjectivity and discursive reality — even if "we never have any access to the other *as such*" ("Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility" 71). Being confronted with the *other*, the subject is not able to respond as a clearly identifiable "I" as well. In other words, our relatedness to the other entails a fundamental passivity. This abyssal situation is repeated when we are confronted with the animal's gaze (*The Animal that Therefore I am* 12). This illustrates that for Derrida the ethical question of the human-animal relationship is always a question of our own subjectivity: who or what is this "I"? And, who is this subject, which the other confronts with its gaze? Thus, Derrida's critique of anthropocentrism focuses on the notion of an autonomous subject and the clear distinction between *the human* and *the animal* rather than on formulating concrete moral principles that are based on an unquestioned notion of moral agency.

Following Derrida in his critique of anthropocentrism (respectively, logocentrism), Cary Wolfe focuses on the problematic aspects of humanism and proposes a new notion of the term "post-humanism" (*What is Posthumanism?*). Post-humanistic thinking does not simply refer to the unmasking of a nonhuman core in the human, but to the recognition of the existence of nonhuman subjectivity in the sphere of living beings (ibid. 47). Wolfe wants us "to rethink our taken-for granted modes of human experience" (ibid. xxv). He criticizes humanism not for its values, but for its conception of human subjectivity, which is itself grounded on a discrimination against nonhuman animals (of course, this raises the question whether it is really possible to criticize the humanist conception of subjectivity without criticizing humanist values) (ibid. xvi-xvii). Therefore, Wolfe's notion of post-humanism is a form of post-anthropocentrism that refers to the epistemic aspect of anthropocentrism. Even if Wolfe's and Derrida's positions are not identical, Wolfe's definition of post-humanism explicates important aspects of Derrida's approach to the question of the animal. We do not seek to identify or compare Wolfe's and Derrida's respective positions. Instead, we focus on a Derridaean perspective on post-humanism that questions what Wolfe calls "taken-for-granted modes of human experience." Subsequently, we refer to the "post" of post-humanism as excess inherent in epistemic processes and normative and argumentative structures.

Here, it is important to proceed carefully. Post-humanism does not criticize the (supposed) fact of an unavoidable human viewpoint or the reliance on humanistic values per se, but two other aspects. First, it criticizes the epistemic process behind the attempt to protect nonhuman animals that implicitly regards human characteristics (and only these) as paradigmatic for the moral consideration of these animals. As stated above, recognizing certain characteristics to be morally relevant is not independent from recognizing these characteristics as being morally relevant to humans. Second, and even more importantly, post-humanism also critically addresses a viewpoint that conceptualizes the human as an identifiable "center of thinking or recognition" that would be opposed to a recognizable world (or to the animal) in a dualistic manner. On this level of critique, the clear differentiation between the human and other animals (respectively *the* animal) is radically undermined.

The structure of the "post" in Derrida's post-humanism follows the deconstructive conception of the "post" as an incalculability within each "act of (a never fully achievable) overcoming," while usually the term "post" is employed to refer to a temporal or conceptual "after." The post-humanist "post" is located in the conception of demarcation as a multiplicity of borders in the differentiation between humans and animals. The purpose is not the complete annulment of borders, but the acknowledgement of heterogeneous borders and the permeability of borders per se (cf. *The Animal that Therefore I am* 48) instead of one clearly defined separation. Thus, the use of "post" refers to the issue that overcoming (political and moral) anthropocentrism does not lead to certainty, but to yet another contingency. The envisaged era after anthropocentrism can never be fully achieved. Post-humanism is the depiction of the contingency of every notion of a "post-anthropocentric era," e.g. as visualized in animal rights discourse. As a consequence, the post-humanist "post" abandons the ideal of a homogeneous worldview or a universal ethical system. It conceives of an ethical or just act as not per se determined by referring to a fixed measure, like a morally normative system, which could guarantee justice. Nevertheless, the deconstructive perspective does not consider itself in terms of an ethical nihilism. Derrida's deconstruction rejects the idea of justice as being calculable for the long term by installing a fixed set of rules or rights. Instead, justice itself is "excessive" and incalculable, and thus each "just decision" we make has to be verified in each singular situation. Also, this verification, although necessary, is always at risk of failing. We always have to consider that we may be producing new injustices when relying on (pre-) established modes of thinking and static conceptions of "right" or "wrong."

With regard to animal ethics, this entails that a more just relationship between humans and animals cannot be achieved simply by formulating a set of principles: can we, for example, ever be sure that our criteria for including certain beings into the moral community are fully just toward beings (singular others) not meeting the requirements for inclusion? Derrida's style of writing reflects this question in a performative way, by being evocative, questioning, indefinite, ambiguous, and non-linear (at least when measured against the standard of analytic philosophy). Derrida confronts us with an incalculable "post," which refutes definite decisions while at the same time urging us to take a close look at possible inconsistencies in supposedly consistent arguments, or at possible injustices behind supposedly just actions. Quite paradoxically, the experience of "undecidability" that precedes every clear decision is the very condition for justice (cf. Derrida, "Force of Law" 963-967). Nevertheless, even if the application of concrete laws violates this idea of justice, laws actually need to be applied; law and justice are interlinked. As Derrida states, "justice requires the law. You can't simply call for justice without trying to embody justice in the law" ("Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility" 72). We are obliged to decide and to apply laws, but this decision may only be potentially just as a "free decision" without relying on established rules. As soon as a decision has taken place and new "potentially just" rules or laws are established, however, these rules can no longer be considered as just (except in a legal sense). No decision we make can ever be affirmed as fully just (cf. "Force of Law" 965); justice, though a matter of urgency, is always "post," always "to come" (cf. ibid. 969-71). It may be argued that this Derridean "undecidability" gives rise to a critical and rather cynical objection: if we can never be sure to fully attain justice, why try anyway? How can we decide responsibly, if we don't know what is right? As a matter of fact, Derrida addresses exactly these questions without any cynical undertone:

> Many of those who have written about deconstruction understand undecidability as paralysis in face of the power to decide. That is not what I would understand by "undecidability." Far from opposing undecidability to decision, I would argue that there would be no decision, in the strong sense of the word, in ethics, in politics, no decisions, and thus no responsibility, without the experience of some undecidability. […] So when I say "I don't know what to do," this is not the negative condition of decision. It is rather the possibility of a decision. Not knowing what to do does not mean that we have to rely on ignorance and to give up knowledge and consciousness. A decision, of course, must be prepared as far as possible by knowledge, by information, by infinite analysis. At some

point, however, for a decision to be made you have to go beyond knowledge, to do something that you don't know, something which does not belong to, or is beyond, the sphere of knowledge. ("Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility" 66)

Post-humanist deconstruction takes into account this relation between undecidability and our search for just decisions regarding our dealings with animals. As will be outlined more thoroughly in section 5, the "post" of post-humanism highlights that the excessive element within epistemic processes and normative structures is no negative condition for justice, but is inscribed into justice itself.

4. Gary Steiner and the "Post" in Humanist Post-Anthropocentrism. In contrast to the deconstructive approach, Gary Steiner does not locate the problem of anthropocentrism in the general distinction between humans and animals, but in the conclusion that the lack of certain ("human") capacities entails a reduced moral worth (these frequently stressed abilities are, amongst others, language and abstract reason) (cf. "Tierrecht und die Grenzen des Postmodernismus: Der Fall Derrida" 10). What Steiner discusses is the problem of an anthropocentric evaluation of the moral value of animals as it arises when human capacities are the sole reference. Steiner seeks to abolish neither the distinction between humans and animals in all aspects, nor the humanist categories of moral and political rights. He strongly emphasizes that humans are fully rational agents and as such "able to perform the dialectical operations involved in generating a sphere of right not only for themselves but for these others [animals] as well. […] The resulting community is thus not restricted to fully rational beings but it is instead broad enough to embrace all beings that share in our subjective struggle for life and well-being" (*Animals and the Moral Community* 162). Steiner invokes a moral community for all sentient individuals, whether they are human or not. Furthermore, he claims equal moral consideration for all members of this community. In Steiner's opinion this leads to immediate political consequences, such as veganism (163). Steiner characterizes his own approach as a cosmic holism which integrates liberal individualism (*Anthropocentrism and its Discontents* 251), focusing on the notion of the "individual" and claiming that

> many animals possess sufficient cognitive equipment to qualify as individuals even if they do not qualify as rational individuals; the immediate moral question with regard to animals is how to do justice to

them as individuals. (Among other things, I leave aside the question whether duties of cosmic justice are owed to non-sentient living beings.) (*Animals and the Moral Community* 154-155)

Furthermore, Steiner assumes that "human beings are part of a larger cosmic whole and have a fundamental kinship relation to animals" (*Anthropocentrism and its Discontents* 18). Therefore, the sphere of human social rights has to be supplemented by reference to a cosmic justice which demands nonviolence toward animals, and consequently, veganism (*Animals and the Moral Community* 163). With these concrete claims, Steiner seeks to demonstrate why and how in the specific field of the animal rights debate the deconstructive approach (for Steiner, postmodernism in general) falls short. Accordingly, by "entering this poppy field [of postmodernism], we abandon the ideal of truth, and we render obscure if not entirely incoherent the idea of a basis for making ethical determinations that can be discussed and defended" (*Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism* 8). Therefore, postmodernism is unable to formulate any clear principles on behalf of animals. For Steiner, this shortcoming originates in the assumption that universal rationales are contingent and therefore no longer universal. Steiner himself adheres to the universal rationale of cosmic holism, which replaces the rationale of human superiority over animals. In contrast to Wolfe's (and Derrida's) post-humanism in human-animal relations, Steiner's post-anthropocentrism is the overcoming of one universal rationale by another.

Steiner's "post" does not suggest an era after epistemic anthropocentrism, but an era after political (respectively: moral) anthropocentrism. Thus, his "post" does not entail the abandonment of humanist concepts of subjectivity. Steiner rather argues that humanism can be divested of its anthropocentric prejudice (5) by leaving behind the "bad aspects" of humanism (moral predominance of humans) and keeping the "good aspects" (individualism, liberty, etc.). Steiner thus diverges from post-humanism regarding the *what* of the "post." But additionally, Steiner's ethical concept and political agenda demonstrate a clear argumentative structure and writing style, which delivers a clear problem description followed by a well-defined solution to the problem (as many positions in animal ethics do): the description of an anthropocentric status quo is counteracted by the illustration of a post-anthropocentric solution in a normative manner. This example shows that the *what* in overcoming anthropocentrism can be contrasted to the formal *how* of problematizing anthropocentrism within a normative domain. The terminology Steiner's arguments are based on performatively supports the idea of "post" as the overcoming of a concrete problem and therefore a temporal "after."

Steiner's approach follows a structure analogous to other current theories in the field of animal ethics. They understand the inherent value or inherent worth of animals, or living beings in general, as something independent of human interpretation. Inherent moral value is not *attributed* to animals, it can only be acknowledged. In Steiner's approach, rationality and "dialectical operations" (*Animals and the Moral Community* 162) are the conditions of possibility for this acknowledgement of inherent value and therefore the moral consideration of animals. However, because ethics is confronted with practical issues (such as the suffering of animals), this acknowledgement is also determined by the recognition of the presence or absence of certain attributes or characteristics, such as sentience. The example of Gary Steiner's ethics shows how it is possible to emphasize the worth of all living beings in a post-anthropocentric manner, but that we, at the same time, need to formulate specific criteria for inclusion into the "moral community." Steiner does not explicitly exclude non-sentient ("non-individual") beings from moral consideration, but he cannot include them effectively as "fully-fledged members" in the moral community (154-155). It seems as if the basis of Steiner's political position, i.e. veganism (163), is different from his ethical position. Whereas for the moral community *sentience* is the most important criterion, this cannot be the case for veganism. A perfect example of the difficulties that present themselves for this form of post-anthropocentric ethics is the case of the oyster. Steiner describes this issue as follows: "Oysters possess no central nervous system and thus are not even capable of sensations of pain; they are so lacking in sentience that it seems absurd to accord them any moral status, let alone a status on a par with human beings. Nevertheless, my working hypothesis leaves open this possibility" (*Anthropocentrism and its Discontents* 6). The issue here seems to be that although oysters may be included in a general appeal for veganism, their inclusion in the moral community remains problematic because of their lack of sentience and, thus, their lack of inherent value. As a consequence, there is an important difference between the acknowledgement of a moral community of all sentient beings and the political claim for veganism.

Furthermore, Steiner prioritizes life forms, that is sentient individuals, which are presumed by humans to somehow value their lives in a similar way as humans do. As stated above with regard to Singer, it may also be doubted that this is simply an accidental part of Steiner's argument. Within Steiner's style of argumentation this may be less "obvious" than in Singer's "similar-minds approach" (Francione 130).[6] Insofar as a being is not able to "value its life" (expressed through its struggle for life and well-

being), it may fall short of demanding moral consideration by ethical systems such as Steiner's. Consequently, our ethical duty is towards life forms that can "experience life as (a meaningful) life," which implicitly evokes the concept of the humanist *anthropos*. Even if Steiner does not claim as much directly, his arguments nevertheless leave this impression, which is demonstrated by the following quote: "The better we understand the nature of animal experience and recognize the ways in which it is like our own, the more we will appreciate the sense in which we truncate the notion of justice by restricting it to the human sphere" (*Animals and the Moral Community* 163). Expanding the sphere of rights (and thus justice) to other animals requires two things: first, a clear, liberal, definition of the human (a notion of how it is to be human), and the recognition of universal human rights; and second, a comparison between our experiences and the experiences of other (sentient, individual) animals, because "liberal theory" needs a "holistic sense of kinship with animals" (154). Understanding animals, or at least a certain "animal experience," has to be carried out against the background of our own experience. Although Steiner wants "to let animals beings be in such a way that we no longer project upon them a diminished reflection of our own image," we effectively should "value their mortality as we value our own." He ultimately states: "We must learn to identify with animals, to see ourselves in them and them in ourselves" (137). Therefore, we owe justice to animals as individual beings quite similar to us: "What is at stake is not love of the native soil or a totalizing concern for nature in the abstract but rather moral concern for sentient individuals whose lives matter to them just as much as our lives matter to us" (155). To conclude, "doing avoidable violence to one's kin is fundamentally wrong" (*Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism* 203). For Steiner, there is a "fundamental sameness of all sentient beings" because "the basic terms of life and death are essentially the same for all sentient beings. Humans and animals are, existentially, in exactly the same predicament: both must survive and give life meaning [...] in the face of the constant yet indeterminate threat of death" (198). Because sentient animals "have an interest in not suffering," we must therefore "treat them legally as persons" (*Animals and the Moral Community* 102).

Even though Steiner stresses the moral value of sentient individuals, he wants to overcome the "seeming contradiction between cosmic holism and liberal individualism" (157). According to him, we have to acknowledge a "larger world context" (*Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism* 194) or a certain natural or cosmic order within which sentient beings can (or rather: should) "realize their natural potential" (195). This is to say that sentient beings give their life meaning by realizing their natural potential. Therefore, to prevent these beings from realizing their natural potential is to leave them with a meaningless life — or to the ultimate meaninglessness

of death. Steiner's moral claim is that sentient beings "for whom life is meaningful" should not be "harmed or impeded in their conscious endeavours to make sense of the world" (203). Sentient nonhuman animals matter as much as humans "in the cosmic scheme of things" (205). Moral values, therefore, are not construed but something "given" within the cosmic whole, and we humans ought to acknowledge this. Steiner does not intend to evoke the naïve image of a harmonious world deprived of any destruction and violence, but he nevertheless opts for limiting ourselves only to necessary acts of violence against animals (for example in case of self-defence) in order "to minimize the destruction that we cause" (ibid. 209). It seems that in Steiner's opinion only human violence and licentiousness are to be considered unnecessary, because in contrast to other animals we are not only more destructive, but we also are able to restrict our (natural?) destructive potential. Only a life in an era after anthropocentrism supposedly would be worth living, and thus reducing unnecessary violence is an effort "to make sense of the world." Therefore, the ultimate meaning of life would be in terms of being able to realize one's natural potential. In this regard, the "post" in Steiner's post-anthropocentrism literally "makes sense" (in contrast to the "post" in post-humanism, which does not refer to a concrete temporal "after").

According to Steiner, his political agenda can be derived from and justified by his ethical system, but as we saw above in the oyster example, this is not the case. His political claim for veganism does not necessarily result from his ethical system (cosmic holism, cosmic justice for sentient beings). Even if this objection possibly overstates the oyster counterexample — as Steiner himself concedes, "the vegan imperative provides no guarantee that we will not encounter some irreducible conflicts" (ibid.) —, it raises a question that must be addressed by many advocates of animal rights: it is not clear whether the political agenda is based on or supported by an ethical system or vice versa, that is, can ethics be used to justify a political agenda? In the latter approach, the obvious contingency of political claims is covered by furnishing an ethical system after the fact. Regarding Steiner's position, it does not seem as if the principles of a cosmic order and liberal individualism (or a liberalist political agenda) are "recognized simultaneously," but the acknowledgement of liberal individualism — as well as the recognition of its shortcomings — precedes the recourse to a larger cosmic context. Here, referring to a cosmic whole as a (potential) "guarantee for universal justness" supposedly saves liberal individualism and humanism from failing.[7] Moreover, once "liberal theory" recognizes the moral value of all sentient beings, the notion of a cosmic order itself supposedly becomes freed from a contingent anthropocentric perspective.

Even if Steiner would deny this, it seems as if here the existence of some cosmic order depends on humans acting in its name. By acknowledging that justice is to be seen "in terms of natural entitlements that sentient beings have" (226), the reliance on nature and cosmos would then somehow potentially "guarantee" the justness of the vegan lifestyle. Even if Steiner admits that there is no ultimate guarantee for justness, humans would nonetheless act justly "by seeking to reduce violence in the world" (227).

Through Steiner's line of reasoning, new hierarchies and exclusions are produced (sentient life forms vs. others), which is exactly what deconstructive approaches criticize. As a "humanist post-anthropocentrist," Steiner is well aware of this issue; there are many "very difficult questions that await resolution, and some of them may never ultimately be resolved with mathematical precision. […] Moral reflection is not a recursive procedure that a computer could be programmed to perform" (202). Regarding his vegan imperative, Steiner even seems to recognize a certain degree of "undecidability" in a vague Derridean sense, because "veganism presents itself as an infinite task, one that the terms of existence make ultimately unfulfillable and that must therefore be seen as a regulative ideal for our conduct. Living in accordance with the vegan imperative is not like turning on a light switch. It is like delving ever deeper into uncharted territory" (ibid. 208). But in order to ensure animal welfare and rights for at least sentient beings, he opts for remaining humanist a little longer ("Tierrecht und die Grenzen des Postmodernismus: Der Fall Derrida" 10; *Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism* 5). Therefore, in contrast to deconstruction, this "post" of anthropocentrism remains firmly rooted in the awareness of the notion of the human. The "post" in Steiner's position refers to the "post" of a political or moral anthropocentrism that considers all too obvious human characteristics as a measure of moral value (but even in Steiner's position there is a certain "human bias"). His "post" does not refer to a humanist concept of the human and thus his position is not post-humanist. Moreover, by overcoming speciesism and politically relevant anthropocentrism, Steiner's "post" envisions an era after the "unquestioned" moral predominance of the human. His humanist "post" adapts a universal rationale to expand the moral community for an abolitionist *telos*. In this sense, Steiner's humanist post-anthropocentrism opposes Derrida's post-humanism in which the usage of "post" refers to the contingency of every "post-order" yet to come. As stated above, Steiner's "post" literally "makes sense" by avoiding "the unnecessary," and enabling a meaningful life worth of living, whereas a Derridean notion of "post" instead targets the limits of meaning.

5. The "'Post' of the Excess" and the "Excess of the 'Post.'" In negating the moral predominance of the human, Steiner's "post" evokes an era without unnecessary violence against animals (cf. *Animals and the Moral Community* 131).[8] The aim of humanist post-anthropocentrism in the abolitionist discourse is the recognition that treating animals as means to an end is considered to be excessive, i.e. unnecessary for mere survival (cf. Singer 154-155).[9] Thus, abolitionist humanist post-anthropocentrism calls for the "post" of this excess: it envisages an order in which humans no longer exploit animals for their egoistic pleasures (cf. Steiner, *Animals and the Moral Community* 131). Carrie Packwood-Freeman goes so far as to characterize the human *in general* in contrast to the animal by this notion of excess, which in turn makes a system of ethical principles necessary (20).[10] She states: "If humans are characterized by excess, which can lead to both comfort and poverty, charity and harm, then an ethical system becomes socially and ecologically necessary for purposes of restraint" (21). The reasoning behind this claim for temperance is that humans should consider themselves as part of a living world (or cosmos) under the paradigms of equal consideration and justice. Therefore, as Gary Steiner and Gary Francione would agree, excess, as the unnecessary instrumentalization of animals, is identified as an antagonism to a fixed structure of ethically necessary actions (cf. Francione 36-37).[11] Steiner's approach is quite similar to Francione's position in animal rights theory: the necessity of veganism and abolitionism is not just based on the sheer fact of sentience, but also on the recognition of a certain "natural potential" within sentient beings. As Francione states: "Sentience is what evolution has produced in order to ensure the survival of certain complex organisms" (55). Sentience as an indicator for the "interest in remaining alive" is part of a larger evolutionary (Francione) or cosmic (Steiner) context. Therefore, it is supposedly necessary to acknowledge the preference of sentient beings not to experience pain or distress (56). Reducing violence in the world and thus leaving behind unnecessary excess and anthropocentrism is considered a meaningful and necessary "cosmic task" (even if Steiner recognizes destruction, suffering and death in the world). As stated repeatedly in regard to Steiner's position, here the notion of "post" as an indicator for meaningfulness and necessity quite literally seeks to "make sense" and leave unnecessary excess behind. According to Steiner, this is due to the fact that the "imperative of cosmic justice" requires us to view the "larger cosmic whole" not just as a "product of human discourses" (*Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism* 194).

But is it legitimate to associate meaning and necessity with nature or cosmos by focusing solely on sentient individuals? Why would the cosmos prefer sentient beings,

and not, say, ecosystems? However, even apart from human influence, it is certainly not possible for each single sentient individual to develop its natural potential and thus "to make sense of the world." But then, why refer to "cosmic justice" for these individuals at all — or, why refer to it without at the same time also speaking of "cosmic injustice?" As Steiner concedes in reference to Schopenhauer, suffering and destruction in the world are inevitable (cf. 208-209, 225). Admitting that nature or "the world" itself is not always meaningful and just, but often unpredictable and unjust to sentient individuals (as Steiner indirectly does by referring to an inevitable suffering in the world), contradicts Steiner's view of nature or cosmos as a prefiguration of the vegan "regulative ideal" (209). At least some of Steiner's terminology seems to be misleading. The point here is that without an implicit reference to the human or to the injustices humans produce, talking of a cosmic justice for sentient individuals loses its relevance for Steiner's arguments. Referring to cosmic justice necessarily means referring to human injustice here, or, in other words, humans can only "grant cosmic justice" to animals if the injustices at stake are human-made, because there is no chance of reducing "cosmic injustice." But then, again, why would humans be obliged to protect sentient individuals in the name of (a non-discursive but natural) cosmos, when the cosmos "itself" doesn't seem to care for each sentient individuals natural potential? Quite paradoxically, it seems here as if reducing human excess also is implicitly supposed to save the cosmos from failing as a potential "guarantee" for justice; here, the existence of cosmic justice (or a cosmic order) depends on us acting in its name — a consequence which Steiner would likely deny.

However, it is the excessive violence that humans themselves inflict on animals, which Steiner wants to reduce, and this normative claim is underpinned by an extended humanist notion of subjectivity. Of course, Steiner primarily uses the term "cosmic" to bring forth the recognition of a fundamental kinship between all sentient beings. It is an effort to include other animals in the moral community by overcoming an anthropocentric notion of rights and justice. But, it is not the formulation of principles and political goals per se that is the problem with Steiner's position, it is the way he justifies them. For Steiner, referring to nature or cosmos (or a kind of "cosmic moral community") as a measure for justice is a necessary means of "filling the gaps" within liberal individualism. But in fact, it is quite contingent.

An example of another approach to the "post" of excess is Cathy B. Glenn's. Glenn differs from Steiner by rethinking the notion of "person" in terms of relational structures, not in terms of having "an interest in not suffering" (*Animals and the Moral Community* 102). As she states in reference to John Durham Peters[12] and to Erazim

Kohák, "it does not matter whether we can know other animals, or whether we can communicate with them, or whether we might discover an interiority to which we can connect" (Glenn 500). "Person" cannot be conceptualized by referring to certain traits or capacities. According to Glenn, "judgements, norms, and ethics are intersubjectival and radically relational. Persons, in relation with one another, constitute the basic relations of value and meaning in the universe and, in so doing, intersubjectively discover the moral and ethical result of that process *in situ*" (504). Glenn's statement is based on Kohák's theory of personalism, according to which persons (which exercise "free agency") are modes of beings "constitutive of value and meaning" (506):

> The radically relational notion of intersubjectivity and the articulation of freedom as the ground of ethics that personalism offers can help guide concerned critics. When all beings, human and nonhuman alike, are acknowledged as persons who are metaphysically free and dignified, humans' agency ought to be limited by that freedom. (505)

Therefore, our ethical duty would be to practice restraint. Limiting our freedom to act violently against other human or nonhuman persons is supposed to be necessary in terms of a primary metaphysical freedom. This metaphysical "freedom-for others" defines the "community of persons," where "the exercise of agency is always constituted in relation to others who exercise theirs" (505). Despite the differences between Glenn's and Steiner's positions, they share a basic aim, namely, to overcome excess and unnecessary violence by evoking the concept of meaningfulness within a certain "whole."

In contrast to Steiner's humanist post-anthropocentrism (or to other approaches to the "post" of excess), in Derrida's post-humanism excess is not only conceived as behavior with negative connotation, but also as an incalculable "process" inherent to each (normative) structure or order.[13] It is an aspect which by definition eludes the intended clarity or definiteness of each definition, norm, or differentiation. Thus, it always entails an excessive element or aspect, which presents itself as immoderate, decentralized, and deferred. For example, each act of signification exceeds the intended meaning; there is always a "surplus" or a "lack" within every structure, text, philosophical argumentation or line of reasoning. This "surplus" or "lack" can be described as an incalculability that prevents such a structure or an argumentation from being completely consistent. This incalculable facet allows other readings of intended

meanings or even confronts us with the limits of meaning itself. Deconstruction allows no full "presence" of meaning, truth, identity, or justice. In contrast to the "presence" of rights (law), justice is always to come, always "post" — nevertheless justice and law cannot be strictly separated because both refer to each other (Derrida, "Force of Law" 959-961).

Regarding animal rights discourse, this indicates that by acknowledging the rights of sentient animals — fundamentally, the basic right "not to be treated as the property of others" (Francione 49) —, the "presence" of the sought-out definite post-anthropocentric "era of justice" will still be deferred: every justness that is based on normative rules (rights) following specific criteria of inclusion (e.g. sentient beings) possibly entails injustice through "promoting new hierarchies and new exclusions" (Calarco 138) (e.g. the exclusion of non-sentient beings from moral consideration). It's not only that there is always an incalculable "post" regarding sought-out definite decisions, but there will never be a (present) moment to conclude: "yes, now I've acted fully justly" (cf. Derrida, "Force of Law" 961-963). Even if not all hierarchies or exclusions seem to be cases of injustice (e.g. excluding single rocks and stones from moral consideration), it is already the sheer fact of following rules or principles per se that contradicts Derrida's notion of justice. On the other hand, justice requires decisions in order to establish rules; justice is always "before the law" and "for the law." Thus, the concept of an excessive aspect is not unfamiliar in the deconstructive approach. Moreover, the excess can even be related to justice itself because justice is not achievable by relying on a static set of rules; justice and the excessive, incalculable "post" are intertwined. This incalculability is based on the idea of justice as being irreducible and infinite (965).

But this gives rise to a critical objection stated by Slavoj Žižek: "Derrida's notion of 'deconstruction as justice' seems to rely on a utopian hope which sustains the specter of 'infinite justice'" (*Less than Nothing* 127). In Derrida, the "perspective of the Last Judgement" persists, "even if as a thoroughly virtual reference point" — a reference point containing a "standard which would allow us to take the measure of our acts and pronounce on their 'true meaning,' their true ethical status." As Žižek states, in deconstruction justice is "forever postponed, always to come but nonetheless here as the ultimate horizon of our activity." This, in turn, raises the question of whether Derrida's notion of justice functions as a regulative idea for present decisions. Derrida himself hesitated to associate justice with a Kantian regulative idea (Derrida, "Force of Law" 965). According to him, a potentially unjust situation always requires us to decide immediately in order to (potentially) attain justice. Therefore, this immediacy would

contradict the horizon of expectation within a regulative idea or a messianic promise: justice must not wait (967). Justice is unpredictable and not based on preceding knowledge, information, or rules, and thus it (seemingly) does not wait for "approval." So, even if justice is always and only "to come," this does not entail ethical nihilism, as the responsibility for the other (be it another human or an animal) exceeds every singular act of dependence on predefined rules, and therefore faces the singularity of the responsibility for the other. Each confrontation with a potentially unjust situation requires giving immediately what later might be considered a just response. But exactly this implicit "utopian hope" for approval gives rise to the question whether the deconstructive notion of incalculability and excess functions as a kind of red herring for a hoped-for "infinite justice." In this case, the denial of "fully achievable justice" actually affirms (infinite) justice as being the "measure of our acts," to use Žižek's words. By being denied as a "full presence" justice is revealed as an infinite and irreducible measure of our acts — a "measureless measure" against which every concrete attempt to attain full justice fails. This may be conceived of as a kind of regulative idea in the face of our contingent acts, although this regulative idea is not to be conceived in terms of a "unified programmatic ideal" or a "generic rule." As Derrida himself concedes, the idea of an infinite and irreducible justice actually is the basis for deconstructing the notion of "justice as presence" (cf. 965).

As we have seen with respect to Steiner's and Derrida's positions, they may not necessarily be opposed in all important respects. Whereas Steiner admits that the regulative ideal of veganism as a "post" of anthropocentrism ultimately is a non-programmable "infinite task" (*Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism* 208), Derrida's "post" as an incalculable excess within justice can be seen as implicitly entailing the ultimate ("measureless") standard of "infinite justice." In Steiner's conception, justice derives from a cosmic necessity, thus implying the existence of something "bigger" than humans. Even if Derrida's position seems to contradict the assumption of universal rationales by emphasizing the contingency of every standard, his notion of justice still relies on the implicit reference to the standard of a virtual "Big Other," judging our actions in a future "to come" (cf. Žižek 127). From this point of view, Steiner and Derrida both associate justice with a certain reference point that is beyond human control or construction (be it a supposedly non-discursive larger world context or an infinite and irreducible justice).

In addition, both positions have a certain notion of responsibility for the other. But whereas Steiner opts for morally considering other sentient individuals (our nonhuman kin) by formulating concrete principles, Derrida's notion of otherness avoids concrete "positive" definitions or clear inclusions and exclusions. According to Derrida, the "other" is not just an identifiable empirical being next to me (for example, a sentient individual with certain characteristics similar to mine), but something that is outside of calculability: the gaze of the other (animal) puts me into question and confronts me with a fundamental passivity — an experience of "not being able" (cf. Wolfe, "Humanist and Posthumanist Antispeciesism" 56). Thus, our responsibility for animals is not based on a projection of certain "positive" human experiences or characteristics onto them (as our supposed "kin"), because the experience we share with animals is that of finitude, vulnerability, and passivity. Every clear definition of the human tends to disavow this passivity and relatedness to the other: we humans "are always radically other, already in- or ahuman in our very being" (57). Drawing definite lines by including sentient individuals and excluding non-sentient beings from moral consideration (in a defined community) is based on a certain dichotomy between "us" (morally considerable individuals) and "them" (those excluded from moral consideration) — an extended "us," which reproduces what we already hold ourselves to "know" about the moral value of humans or the human community. Positions such as Steiner's or Francione's seek to avoid projecting upon animals "a diminished reflection of our own image" (Steiner, *Animals and the Moral Community* 163), but it does not seem as if they really avoid doing so in every respect. The question here is: are sentient animals really morally considered for being "other," or rather for being fundamentally the "same?" And what about life forms that really are "other" by lacking these traits we recognize as being morally relevant? Even if sentient animals are not required to be "fully rational beings" in order to be morally considered, they are somehow required to be similar to humans in terms of valuing their lives (being "interested" in not suffering and in staying alive) and making sense of the world. As already stated, it may be doubted whether this similarity is accidental.

The problem here is not only the drawing of lines between morally considered and other beings, but also the reliance on these lines without (re-) considering the possible contingency or perspectival "bias" of one's own position. Or, stated otherwise, assuming that one's own position is based on some observer-neutral or self-transparent perspective enabling him or her to recognize non-discursive "objective truths" in the world (and thus, supposedly mandating him or her to speak in the name of the cosmos). Singer, for example, puts forward this position and argues for taking the point of view of the universe in ethics (cf. Lazari-Radek & Singer, The Point of View of the

Universe). But as Žižek rightly points out, a "universal truth can only be articulated from a thoroughly partisan position" ("The Prospects of Radical Politics Today"). Ethical problems are a matter of "risky decisions" exactly for the reason that there is no access to an observer-neutral perspective and truth. There is no external guarantee that our actions are just. It is true, regarding an envisaged "post" of human excesses and violence, that we actually need ethical principles and political claims, but it's wrong to assume that these principles derive from recognizing some pre-established "good." Here, Alenka Zupančič correctly states that ethics may not only be conceived as a mere means of fulfilling some underlying ultimate aim (by supposedly recognizing a pre-established "good") but that such an aim rather is "produced" by ethical considerations (13-20). This raises the question, whether abolitionists or animal rightists recognize the reduction of excess and violence in the world as a consequence of their ethical "reflections," or vice versa, if they implicitly hold that ethics justifies what they already consider (politically) "necessary" (reducing excess). Basing ethics on a certain notion of the "good" either seeks to avoid this question or falsely identifies political claims with a pre-established (ethical) necessity.

6. Conclusion. Humanist post-anthropocentrism in animal rights discourse aims to establish or to acknowledge an order which is deprived of human excess or excessive behavior. As illustrated by the example of Gary Steiner, this order may be conceived of in terms of cosmic justice or a kinship relation to animals. But here the cost of possible self-contradiction is unwittingly paid for the ability to commit oneself to specific claims on behalf of sentient individual animals. On the one hand, these political claims are supposed to be grounded in the universal rationale of cosmic justice. On the other hand, the existence of cosmic justice seems to depend on humans acting in its name. "Derridean" post-humanism in human-animal relationship questions such a notion of order in the first place on the grounds that excess will always be inscribed into the order itself. Moreover, justice itself depends on an excessive incalculable "post," for according to post-humanism it is not the supposed certainty of a universal rationale that ensures justice. Where humanist post-anthropocentrism in human-animal relationship seeks the *"post" of the excess*, post-humanism (Derrida's deconstruction) rather emphasizes the *excess of the "post."* Despite the incalculability stressed by Derrida, the risk of "drawing lines" between "morally considerable" and other beings has to be undertaken in order potentially to achieve justice, even if possible injustices are produced elsewhere. Because ethical problems require us to take the "risk" of deciding, the "post" of excess cannot be theorized about without at the same time evoking its own excessive aspect.

There is no ultimate "guarantee" for our decisions to be fully just — not because we humans fail to recognize some "given" cosmic truth or values, but because justice produces its own excess. The problem with Derrida's "concept" of infinite justice and his "indefinite" writing style is not that they make it impossible to formulate concrete moral commitments. The problem is that problematizing exclusion and inclusion by denying the "presence" of justice is still based on the adherence to a "standard" — even if the standard of infinite justice is purely virtual, incalculable, and always "to come." Measured against this virtual standard — or regulative idea — no decision concerning exclusion or inclusion can be conceived as being fully just. Contrary to this, it may be argued that excluding some beings (or systems etc.) from moral consideration while including others is not objectionable per se, but is the very condition for justice or ethical decisions. But this question will be left open here.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. There are some difficulties with categorizing Derrida and Haraway that cannot be discussed in detail at this point. Although Derrida's approach, for example, is doubtless deconstructivist, he denies that deconstruction can be conceived as a philosophical category or method ("Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility" 65). Regarding his work, Derrida even avoids speaking of a philosophy at all (cf. 76). Furthermore, to associate Derrida with poststructuralism, phenomenology, or postmodernism may not be wrong per se, but in order to avoid a reductionist stance, the difficulty of clear categorizations has to be acknowledged.

2. As already indicated in note 1, Derrida himself does not consider Deconstruction to be a kind of philosophy or method (cf. "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility" 65). Rather, deconstruction "is something which is constantly at work" and thus has "no end, no beginning, and no after."

3. The notion of "speciesism" was characterized by Richard Ryder in analogy to racism ("Experiments on Animals" 82).

4. Against this view, it may be doubted that speciesism can be "set out in terms that are species-neutral. That is to say, in terms of a fault that could belong to any creature" (Milligan 223). Though an important objection, this point cannot be discussed here.

5. This argument may be challenged by the differentiation between an unqualified and a qualified speciesism (cf. Rachels 181–194).

6. Gary Steiner agrees with Gary Francione in stating that "Peter Singer end[s] up arguing that animals may be treated as replaceable ressources rather than as genuine individuals on the grounds that animals lack the cognitive sophistication to be self aware" (Steiner, *Animals and the Moral Community* 90).

7. According to Steiner, overcoming anthropocentrism is not achievable by "dispensing with humanism altogether but instead by divesting humanism of its anthropocentric prejudice" (*Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism* 5).

8. The relevant passage in Steiner's book reads as follows: "To take the principle of equal consideration of interests seriously is to see that death is no less a harm to animals than to humans, and that we quite unnecessarily violate the prerogatives of animals to life and flourishing when we kill and eat them. […] We use and eat animals because it makes our lives easier and more pleasurable" (*Animals and the Moral Community* 131).

9. Peter Singer points out the following: "There can be no defence of eating flesh in terms of satisfying nutritional needs, since it has been established beyond doubt that we could satisfy our need for protein and other essential nutrients far more efficiently with a diet that replaced animal flesh by soy beans, or products derived from soy beans, and other high-protein vegetable products" (Singer, "All Animals are Equal" 154-155).

10. Packwood-Freeman in the relevant quote: "In fact, at the risk of essentializing, I argue that the one relevant trait that does distinguish the human species from most other animal species is its ability to do most things (both good and bad, productive and destructive) to excess of what is necessary for survival" (Freeman, "Embracing Humanimality. Deconstructing the Human/Animal Dichotomy" 20).

11. Quite similarly, Tom Regan is arguing against the unnecessary ("excessive") killing of animals, but not against killing per se. According to Regan, it may be considered acceptable to kill or to sacrifice an animal when faced with a life-endangering situation. He believes in a moral "principle of proportionality," according to which "we are entitled to use force, but not excessive force, to defend ourselves, while allowing for the

difficulty, in conditions of stress and emergency, of determining what force is excessive" (*The Case for Animal Rights* 289). Violence is allowed, as long as it is not unnecessary or excessive.

12. Peters critically investigates "the twentieth-century project of communicating with animals" (244). According to Peters, "Empathy with the inhuman is the moral and aesthetic lesson that might replace our urgent longing for communication" (246).

13. With his notion of *différance*, Derrida argues against the "metaphysics of presence" and the notions of identity and origin (cf. "Différance" 1-27).

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