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**Author:** Vugts, Berrie  
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1. Introduction

In the previous chapters I established that the expansive model we are faced with today relies on what ultimately must be qualified as the fiction of the Human-Animal opposition to account for its expansion. Effectively, if the juridical model in place prior to the recent debate on expanding it to essentially nonhuman animals was already centred on the Human-Animal opposition, whereby the first were considered as subjects of rights and the latter not, an expansion by way of an uncritical transfer of personhood to animals, whilst seemingly opening up to nonhuman animals by generating a legal community of equals, does not so much upset, but, paradoxically, presents us with a continuity of the Human-Animal opposition itself. As long as the general singular person is upheld as the prevailing legal category, the animal rights debate remains caught up in an irresolvable and insistent polemic on demarcation, which hinges on the invocation of this very opposition.

On the one hand, this led me to touch upon, and call into question, the scientific, legal and philosophical underpinnings of the Human-Animal opposition. On the other hand, I concluded that the Human-Animal opposition not only functions as a – however fragile and, therefore, at times somewhat concealed – basis for legitimating the expansive model itself, but at the same time hinders thinking through animal subjectivity in terms other than defined by an expansive model. What has become clear in the process, then, is that any attempt at thinking through animal subjectivity by questioning the limits that today’s expansive model poses, cannot be achieved without readdressing the Human-Animal opposition itself and how it has managed to maintain its competitive stance overtime, especially within an expansive model that would seemingly open up to nonhuman animals by transferring to some of those the notion of personhood.

One way to explore this complex issue would be to trace and reflect on the long history of the Human-Animal opposition as a philosophical tool for teasing out the uniqueness of the human condition, of establishing that what is
proper to the human comes at the expense of the animal.\textsuperscript{117} However, to establish and problematize that animals, or to paraphrase Derrida, “those creatures we have given ourselves the right to call animal” have forever been put in opposition to the human in order to define ourselves as human is one thing.\textsuperscript{118} Quite another is to infer – and this is a suggestion, we will see, that I find implied within Derrida’s \textit{The Animal That Therefore I Am} – that if the Human-Animal opposition must be recognized from a theoretical standpoint as an \textit{ untenable} fiction, it only needs to be analysed from within the terms of the opposition itself.\textsuperscript{119} Indeed, following up on the suggestion that the Human-Animal opposition, because of its status as ultimately fictional, only needs to be deconstructed and can then, somehow, be left unaddressed once we attempt to imagine other, essentially nonhuman forms of subjectivity, as much as it might seem the correct way to move forward, is both too much and not enough. It is not enough, because it would not do justice to the way in which the Human-Animal opposition impinges itself upon the historical, political, legal, philosophical and scientific context we are living in today. It is too much, because this would imply taking the Human-Animal opposition as a historical given without exploring the other ways of carving up the world with which it has had and continues to compete. Hence, it would seriously impede rethinking our complex relations with animals in the modern context.

This state of affairs leaves us with two options for further exploring imaginative identifications with other, essentially nonhuman forms of subjectivity. First, we can try to work out alternatives to the notion of personhood. Although I would surely like to point in that direction, this would be an immense interdisciplinary task as it would require introducing a wide range of specialists from the field of law. The main reason for not wanting to develop alternatives to the notion of personhood here, however, is that I wish to continue exploring the Human-Animal opposition from a literary point of view by looking at it as, primarily, a language construct. Second, and consequently, since the Human-Animal opposition has, at this point of my research, acquired

\begin{footnotes}
\item[117] For an instructive overview and critical analysis of this historical dynamic see: Kelly Oliver: \textit{Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
\item[118] “The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other,” Jacques Derrida, \textit{The Animal That Therefore I Am}, ibid. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 23.
\end{footnotes}
the status of a kernel fiction, we might start to question its status as fiction by looking at it as something not other than reality but as a performative language construct that impinges itself upon reality; or, better, as something that is a piece of the real itself. This latter view offers us the prospect that the Human-Animal opposition cannot yet be deemed irrelevant, but suggests that it will continue to haunt the animal rights debate for at least as long as no alternative categorizations are taken into consideration.

In this chapter, then, I will take the Human-Animal opposition back to the heart of the debate. I will do so by booking a return passage to the initial framework that Heidegger devised for carving up the world and from which his particular outlook on the Human-Animal opposition evolved. Briefly, in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger set up the tri-partition Man-Animal-Stone, attributed those categories a different order of reality, of being in the world, and then set the human apart from the animal by positing language as the decisive marker for distinguishing absolutely between the human and the animal. The reason I bring Heidegger into focus at this early stage, while only starting to explore his tri-partition at the end of this chapter, is that ever since Heidegger introduced his famous tri-partition theorists have left his stone unturned. This has allowed for this third element to shift into the background, giving way to an unwarranted reduction of focus on the Human-Animal opposition, a dynamic I first wish to retrace in order to provide myself with an adequate theoretical preparation for analysing Heidegger’s tri-partition. This effort is informed by my basic premise that the Human-Animal opposition, because of its status as ultimately fictional, must be thought of in terms of relation, not to either of its poles, but to something else. As I have concluded in the previous chapters and maintain here, there is nothing – and here I principally disagree with Heidegger – not even language, that on a scientifically or philosophically sound academic basis can be identified as essentially human, and, for that matter, animal.

A good case in point of what I consider to be a valuable but nevertheless reductive focus on the Human-Animal opposition since Heidegger would be the work of Derrida, who, in the fourth chapter of *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008) performs a deconstructive reading of Heidegger on the animals. More specifically, Derrida reads against Heidegger’s conceptualization of language as essentially human through an extensive interrogation of Heidegger’s position on language as the unique human ability to respond and hence to deceive. Derrida does so, first, by exposing the way in which Heidegger’s conceptualization of

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language as the ability to respond and thus in terms of the ability to say “I”, as the ability, that is, to present a presence to the self, is anchored in a philosophical tradition that has forever set the human off against the animal. Second, by broaching the question of what it would mean for an animal to say “I” and, hence, to respond. Framing the matter in this way, however, Derrida does indeed trouble the traditional boundaries between the human and the animal, but he does not take into consideration Heidegger’s “third,” the stone. In fact, in my reading against Derrida I will argue that he has cancelled out this “third” in a way that I find symptomatic of a particular conceptualization of language adopted within his deconstruction of Heidegger.

This conceptualization of language relies, in part, on the work of Benveniste and the way in which Benveniste conceived of the figure of the “I” as a condition for language. However, whereas Benveniste’s language philosophy opens up to thinking the relation between language and speech in both deictic and indexical terms, Derrida rather exclusively focuses on an indexical, or more specifically, autotelic register in terms of a presence to the self. This brings a philosophical rather than poetical outlook on language into the picture that I will be seen to argue against, because it gives way to what I consider to be an irresolvable loop within Derrida’s framework. This is why my alternative consideration of the figure of the “I” will evolve from exploring the relation between language and speech in deictic terms. What I Intend to show is how, already within Benveniste’s partition between language and speech, the potential of a third is cancelled out and that this cancellation impinges itself upon Derrida’s reading of Heidegger and his subsequent cancelling out of Heidegger’s “third.”

Because I share Derrida’s fundamental critique on Heidegger’s conceptualization of language as that which sets the human and animal in opposition, I remain heavily indebted to his work. However, my approach here differs from his in that I will try to move beyond deconstruction by moving before it, precisely by attempting to open up space for this third element, Heidegger’s stone, to re-join the Human-Animal opposition as a way of upsetting and reframing it. In other words, whereas Derrida puts the animal in the Human-Animal opposition under erasure by troubling the limits of the traditional conceptualization of response, I will diverge from Derrida by putting the Human-Animal opposition under erasure by bringing in a third. Let it be clear from the start, then, that it is not my aim to replace one opposition with another. What I wish to do is to multiply and thicken the Human-Animal

opposition by exploring how realizing the potential for alternative distinctions might help to work out different forms of subjectivity alongside the kinds of subjectivity haunted by the always already implied Human-Animal opposition.

The literary work that I will use to address the issues sketched above is Jorge Luis Borges’ poem “El otro tigre” (“The Other Tiger,” 1960). The poem treats the Human-Animal relation as a problem of language. In doing so, it suggests a way of thinking about language that differs radically from the manner in which both Heidegger and Derrida, each in their specific way, conceptualize language to imagine this relation. In my view, the poem thereby invites us to take a next step in thinking through animal subjectivity and the role of language implied within the construction of the Human-Animal relation. For this reason, my close reading will focus on the various conceptualizations of the nature of language that the poem presents and I will attempt to explore the way those conceptualizations might foster alternatives to the traditional philosophical imagining of the nonhuman animal. I will do so by contrasting the role of the philosophical figure of the “I” as a general singular with the role the poetical figure of the “I” plays in such processes of the imagination. This will allow me to determine my own position on the figure of the “I” and to offer an alternative to the way in which it has been taken up by Derrida in his particular questioning of the notion of response in Heidegger. The aim of my trajectory in this chapter is, on the one hand, to effect a movement from thinking through subjectivity in terms of being, towards, if only very loosely, a Deleuzian-inspired sense of mobility, which is not premised on a primordial primacy of becoming over being, but on being as just another becoming. On the other hand, my aim is to explore the implications of such a movement for the notion of animal subjectivity within the animal rights debate.

2. Borges’ Tigers

In Borges’ poem “El Otro Tigre,” (The Other Tiger) the lyrical I deliberates on the processes that inform our modes of imagining the animal other, in this case a tiger. The poem starts with the following succinct statement: “I think of a tiger.” The “I” in question is thus presented as that peculiar instance of language from which, or through which, some sort of imaginative identification with the other might unfold. The rationality embodied by or transferred to the “I” within this “I think of” is then contrasted in the very same line as the poem takes on a dreamlike quality. The light fades and the lyrical I starts wondering about the nature of the tiger it intends to bring to life through the remainder of the poem.
El Otro Tigre

Pienso en un tigre. La penumbra exalta
La vasta Biblioteca laboriosa
Y parece alejar los anaqueles;
Fuerte, inocente, ensangrentado y nuevo,
el irá por su selva y su mañana
Y marcará su rastro en la limosa
Margen de un río cuyo nombre ignora
(En su mundo no hay nombres ni pasado
Ni porvenir, sólo un instante cierto.)
Y salvará las bárbaras distancias
Y husmeará en el trenzado laberinto
De los olores el olor del alba
Y el olor deleitable del venado;
Entre las rayas del bambú descifro,
Sus rayas y presiento la osatura
Baja la piel espléndida que vibra.
En vano se interponen los convexos
Mares y los desiertos del planeta;
Desde esta casa de un remoto puerto
De América del Sur, te sigo y sueño,
Oh tigre de las márgenes del Ganges.

Cunde la tarde en mi alma y reflexiono
Que el tigre vocativo de mi verso
Es un tigre de símbolos y sombras,
Una serie de tropos literarios
Y de memorias de la enciclopedia
Y no el tigre fatal, la aciaga joya
Que, bajo el sol o la diversa luna,
Va cumpliendo en Sumatra o en Bengala
Su rutina de amor, de ocio y de muerte.
Al tigre de los símbolos he opuesto
El verdadero, el de caliente sangre,
El que diezma la tribu de los búfalos
Y hoy, 3 de agosto del 59,
Alarga en la pradera una pausada
Sombra, pero ya el hecho de nombrarlo
Y de conjeturar su circunstancia
Lo hace ficción del arte y no criatura
Viviente de las que andan por la tierra.

Un tercer tigre buscaremos. Éste
Será como los otros una forma
De mi sueño, un sistema de palabras
Humanas y no el tigre vertebrado
Que, más allá de las mitologías,
Pisa la tierra. Bien lo sé, pero algo
Me impone esta aventura indefinida,
Insensata y antigua, y persevero
En buscar por el tiempo de la tarde
El otro tigre, el que no está en el verso

The Other Tiger

I think of a tiger. The fading light enhances
the vast complexities of the Library
and seems to set the bookshelves at a distance;
powerful, innocent, bloodstained, and new-made,
it will prowl through its jungle and its morning
and leave its footprint on the muddy edge
of a river with a name unknown to it
(in its world, there are no names, nor past, nor future,
only the sureness of the present moment)
and it will cross the wilderness of distance
and sniff out in the woven labyrinth
of smells the smell peculiar to morning
and the scent on the air of deer, delectable.
Behind the lattice of bamboo, I notice
its stripes, and I sense its skeleton
under the magnificence of the quivering skin.

In vain the convex oceans and the deserts
spread themselves across the earth between us;
from this one house in a far-off seaport
in South America, I dream you, follow you,
oh tiger on the fringes of the Ganges.

Evening spreads in my spirit and I keep thinking
that the tiger I am calling up in my poem
is a tiger made of symbols and of shadows,
a set of literary tropes,
scraps remembered from encyclopaedias,
and not the deadly tiger, the fateful jewel
that in the sun or the deceptive moonlight
follows its paths, in Bengal or Sumatra,
of love, of indolence, of dying.
Against the tiger of symbols I have set
the real one, the hot-blooded one
that savages a herd of buffalo,
and today, the third of August, '59,
its patient shadow moves across the plain,
but yet, the act of naming it, of guessing
what is its nature and its circumstance
creates a fiction, not a living creature,
not one of those that prowl on the earth.

Let us look for a third tiger. This one
will be a form in my dream like all the others,
a system, an arrangement of human language,
and not the flesh-and-bone tiger
that, out of reach of all mythologies,
paces the earth. I know all this; yet something
drives me to this ancient, endless adventure,
foolish and vague, yet still I keep on looking
throughout the evening for the other tiger,
the other tiger, the one not in this poem. 123

123 Jorge Luis Borges, *El Hacedor*, Buenos Aires, 1960, trans. by Alastair Reid, though slightly modified: in the original Spanish the fourth line of the second stanza reads: *una serie de tropos literarios* which was translated by Reid as: *a set of literary images.*
At first glance, the poem conveys an awareness of the difficulty of establishing the difference between two tigers. First, there is the tiger it weaves through the texture of the poem, which, henceforth, I will refer to as the fictional tiger. Second, there is the real life flesh-and-bone tiger that must be prowling somewhere in its natural habitat, on the fringes of the Ganges, which I will refer to as the factional tiger. The vast and unbridgeable distance between the fictional tiger in the poem, on the one hand, and the factional tiger supposedly roaming on the fringes of the Ganges on the other, is illustrated metaphorically by the great geographical distance separating the lyrical I, geographically located at a far-off seaport in South America, from the tiger on the other side of the earth. From this very basic distinction between a fictional and factional tiger alone, a distinction that could also be read as an opposition and which I will endeavour to complicate in what follows, we can already surmise that the poem offers a profound contemplation on the nature of language and its role in imagining the other. More specifically, its basic demarcation of the fictional from the factional tiger raises the questions of how language might function as a tool for imagining the nonhuman other, and what limits the nature of language imposes to such processes of the imagination. Let us now explore these questions.

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The first part of the second stanza presents us with a reflection on the difference between the fictional and factional tiger by framing the complex issue of establishing this difference as a problem of language and how it fails to capture the living.

Evening spreads in my spirit and I keep thinking
that the tiger I am calling up in my poem
is a tiger made of symbols and of shadows,
a set of literary tropes,
scraps remembered from encyclopaedias,
and not the deadly tiger, the fateful jewel
that in the sun or the deceptive moonlight
follows its paths, in Bengal or Sumatra,
of love, of indolence, of dying.
The lyrical I here conveys a keen awareness that the fictional tiger it brings to life is never at one with the factional tiger but no more than a language construct, a set of symbols, of literary tropes. In short, the only possible imaginative identification with the factional flesh-and-bone tiger, the lyrical I seems to suggest, always has to remain an approximative identification, a potentially endless linguistic and vain attempt to penetrate its inconceivable essence. The “solution” proposed to this irresolvable problem, conveyed in the first half of the last stanza, is therefore all the more puzzling.

Let us look for a third tiger. This one
will be a form in my dream like all the others,
a system, an arrangement of human language,
and not the flesh-and-bone tiger
that, out of reach of all mythologies,
paces the earth.

The role of language that was conveyed throughout the poem leading up to this last stanza gave way to the idea that the real life flesh-and-bone tiger cannot be identified through language, yet cannot be approximated otherwise, a matter which was left unresolved as it was implied within the troublesome distinction between a factional and a fictional tiger. Here, in this last stanza, it is as if we are encouraged to use a language that somehow escapes the confines of the way in which the tiger is registered up to this point, as we are offered the prospect of looking for a third tiger. In the remainder of the last stanza this encouragement is played down significantly as the quest for a third tiger is registered as an endless adventure, both foolish and vague: as if the encouragement were just a folly testifying to the limits of language and not worthy to be followed up on. At the same time, this somewhat mysterious language is envisaged as a system, an arrangement of human language.

In what follows, I will attempt to consider this third option seriously by taking as a source of inspiration what Derrida said in The Animal That Therefore I Am – but left undeveloped in the remainder of his book – about the role of language in thinking through the question of the animal.

For thinking through the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry. There you have a thesis: it is what philosophy has, essentially, had to deprive itself of. It is the difference between philosophical knowledge and poetic thinking. (7)
The third option that is offered up in Borges’ poem, then, marks a break with trying to imagine the nonhuman other, in this case a tiger, in terms of a language that is positively referential and in which the fictional tiger could be made to convey an approximate correspondence with a factional tiger whereby both tigers constitute a problematic binary opposition as quasi philosophical categories. In short, if I have now briefly considered the poem’s composition up to this last stanza to be “about” the nature and consequent limits of language in trying to imagine the other, we may now read the encouragement to look for a third tiger as an invitation to consider a poetical reading strategy of the poem in terms of what it does. In other words, the poem here offers us the prospect of imagining the tiger-other through a language that is poetical rather than conceptual-philosophical. This is why I provisionally choose to read this “arrangement” of human language as a plea for a poetical reading strategy whereby, just like in music, an “arrangement” denotes the adaptation of a composition for performance with instruments or voices other than those originally specified. Let us begin by zooming in on the way in which the seemingly odd encouragement to look for a third tiger is delivered and try to make sense of what this poetical reading strategy might amount to in more concrete terms.

The explicit encouragement in the last stanza of the poem to look for a third tiger, not the fictional tiger constructed from the books and encyclopaedias, or the factional tiger the lyrical I “fictionalizes” at the very instant it attempts to describe it, seems highly paradoxical. The paradox I am interested in, however, not so much concerns the impossibility of establishing the difference between a factional and a fictional tiger, no matter how many tigers we seek to describe. Rather, the paradox I wish to address resides with the encouragement to look for a third tiger being presented as both a necessary and a vain enterprise. It is clear why it is in vain, because this third tiger must eventually remain a language construct all the same. But why is it necessary, if we momentarily choose, as I do, to read the voice of the lyrical I here as other than originally specified; namely, by not adhering to the somewhat stereotypical romantic and foolish disposition of the lyrical I in question.

The immaculate last line of the poem: “the other tiger, the one not in this poem” might throw a light on what is at stake in presenting the encouragement to look for a third tiger as necessary. Indeed, the so-called third tiger we are asked to look out for, the one not in the poem, collapses our logical train of thought and triggers an awareness of what may be suggested by the seemingly odd, but still rather straightforward, encouragement to look for a third tiger. Especially when we draw our attention to a passage in the last part of the second
stanza, in which the lyrical I succinctly addresses the problem it is faced with as a problem of naming:

but yet, the act of naming it, of guessing
what is its nature and its circumstance
creates a fiction, not a living creature,
not one of those that prowl on the earth.

The act of naming the factional tiger is said to create a fiction, causing a split between the fictional tiger and the factional tiger. This split, however, is at once dissolved as the factional flesh-and-bone tiger, once mentioned, named, takes on the quality of the fictional tiger, simply because it now becomes a set of literary tropes and can no longer be distinguished from it. This paradoxical dynamic, however, does not imply that the encouragement in the first line of the last stanza to look for a third tiger can only be read as a rather foolish-romantic and, therefore, vain enterprise. Indeed, it may also be read as an attempt to circumvent the seemingly irresolvable problem caused by mentioning, naming, this third tiger, since, strictly speaking, we are not encouraged to mention or to name the third tiger at all, but only to look for it.

In this light, the encouragement to look for a third tiger delivers yet another and arguably more interesting paradox, as the last line of the poem registers this third tiger as “the one not in this poem,” which, despite not quite guessing its nature and circumstance, always already inscribes the third tiger within the poem in the form of a present absence. In other words, the lyrical I is encouraging us to look for a third tiger, a living creature, instead of a fictional creature, which it has to mention, to name, in order to deliver its encouragement, but which it cannot name at the same time because naming it, or, more broadly, guessing its nature and circumstance, at once inscribes the tiger in the poem, relegating it to the fictional domain and separating it from the living creature we are asked to look out for.

In this view, comparing the impossibility of mentioning/naming this living creature conveyed in the last part of the second stanza with the explicit encouragement to look for a third tiger at the beginning of the last stanza does not result in an irresolvable paradox. Rather, the apparent paradox here is put to work because it effectuates a shift from an approximative and linear strategy doomed to fail towards a strategy of the unnamed; a strategy, if you will, of relation by deferral. In other words, the lyrical I is not so much asking us to look out for only a third tiger, but for a fourth, a fifth, a sixth. etc.; for as many tigers as we can construe in an imaginative effort that must, above all, keep running, as
every other tiger named blots out the previous one and is blotted out, in turn, by
the next in an endless deferral necessary to be or, better, to remain able to
eversee a living creature by tracing it, as a way of literally keeping it alive.
This can be illustrated metaphorically as every other tiger construed becoming
part of a network in a web of dispersed points in space and time of which not the
points but the interconnected texture of the lines themselves make up the living
fabric of the imagination. This is, then, how I concretely use a poetic reading
strategy to read the “arrangement” of human language conveyed through the
encouragement in the poem.

This alternative strategy of the unnamed not just recognizes the
impossibility of knowing and identifying with the other in its essence, in order to
then suggest that “identification” relies on endless deferral and a continuous
process of re-imagining. The poem does more. It does not simply ask us to
choose one strategy over the other, but effects a doubling by taking them
together as it relays our focus from identification towards imagination. It
performs a transformation of what at first seems a nonsensical encouragement to
stick with a linear strategy of identification into a radical openness implied
within a strategy of the unnamed. In this way, slipping from one strategy into the
other, the poem wrestles itself out of the grip of the Human-Animal opposition
always already implied within a linear strategy of identification. It does so, not
by deconstructing and, hence, ignoring the role of the Human-Animal
opposition, but by working with it and showing how this traditional opposition
takes effect in a strategy of the unnamed. At the same time, however,
introducing the third tiger in this way immediately begs the question what this
radical openness, implied within a strategy of the unnamed, might amount to in
more concrete terms, thereby affording a sense of urgency to explore the relation
of language, naming and their respective roles in imagining the nonhuman other
and the subsequent constructions of its subjectivity.

It is of interest, with respect to this issue, to recognize that the flesh-and-
bone tiger imagined to be prowling on the fringes of the Ganges is set at a
distance from a lyrical I and not from a real life flesh-and-bone “I”, let alone the
author Borges. The first implication of this simple fact is that the imaginative
identification played out in the poem might be read as primarily concerned with
a notion of language as a nonhuman vehicle, rather than with trying to convey
how an essentially human being might identify with an essential animal being.
In short, the impossibility of imagining the real life flesh-and-bone tiger in its
essence here not just points to a certain conception of the nature of language as
deceptive because it is not suited to the task, but also touches upon the problem
of identifying language, here in the shape of a lyrical I, as corresponding to or
veiling something essentially human. In this light, the suggestion in the above fragment that the third tiger cannot be spoken of might have something to with the fact that, contrary to the lyrical I positioned as fixed and immobile within the confinement of a house, it does not concern a marked-off and fixed entity “out there,” but something fleeting, an event that, within a strategy of the unnamed, can never be caught in the act. Moreover, it is worth remembering that we are encouraged to look for it rather than being forbidden to speak of it.

In fact, I would suggest it cannot be spoken of, and thus not be forbidden to be spoken of, even when imagined to be spoken of, because the problem with “speaking of” here does not reside with this “speaking”; that is, with forever being trapped within the prison of language. Rather, the problem of “speaking of” concerns the “of” in question. This “of” signals an “about,” which suggests a philosophical rather than a poetical knowledge of the essence of the animal in question to be at hand, which reversely implies the a priori ability of language to somehow correspond to or veil the essentially human. Yet, since the “I” in the poem is anything but essentially human, in this case a lyrical I for being the voice of a poem, the real life flesh-and-bone tiger can never be “spoken of.” Firstly, because this would imply the essence of humanness, and, consequently, the essence of tigerness, to be available to us through language and identifiable somewhere outside, in the real world. Secondly, it would hinge on mistakenly identifying the figure of the “I” with something essentially human, instead of thinking of whatever “I” we stumble upon as a piece of language and, therefore, always already nonhuman.

By implication, a philosophical reading strategy in terms of “aboutness” would not just reinvigorate the Human-Animal opposition with its two essentialist poles, but also expose a fundamental connection between this opposition and the relation between the philosophical figure of the “I”, language and the human. In fact, language here would no longer function as the decisive marker floating about between the human and the animal, separating the human from the animal as some sort of threshold whilst at the same reiterating their opposition. Rather, language becomes no less than a substitute for the human, reducing the notion of “human language” not to an exclusive faculty but to a tautological construction. In this scenario, it is language that is not merely contrived as uniquely or exclusively human, but which is subsequently posed as essentially human for being attributed the power of “speaking of.”

By contrast, aspiring to a poetical reading strategy to imagine the nonhuman other and taking our cue from the functioning of the third tiger we have now explored in Borges’ poem may warrant a different reading of the figure of the “I” and the way in which it relates to language. Indeed, in a
poetical-deictic reading, the figure of the “I” not so much resembles a piece of language that has momentarily cut itself loose from what generally, on a meta-level and in tautological vein is referred to as human language, but concerns an act of speech that calls into being, and that even when it is suggested to be “speaking of,” cannot be qualified as corresponding to something essentially human. In short, the impossibility of a “speaking of” within a poetical reading strategy would imply that any attempt at imaginative identification through language must always amount to a speaking to, a tracing of the unspeakable, which, albeit hard to concretely envisage, one way or the other, involves addressing the other not in terms of correspondence, but as other.

This begs the question, first, whether the lyrical I takes in an exceptional position within our conceptualizations of the figure of the “I”. Second, if so far I have considered the figure of the “I” in terms of what it is not, the question remains of how to understand the conceptualization of the pronoun “I” when it is considered to correspond to or to veil – and thus to literally stand for – what, at any given time, might come to qualify as an essentially human being.124 Hence, the question becomes how to understand the conceptualization of language in relation to envisioning the figure of the “I” and the question of subjectivity. To further explore these complex matters, I will now zoom in on the way in which Derrida conceives of the figure of the “I” and its relation to language, to naming and to subjectivity by looking at what I consider to be two key passages on the figure of the “I” that not only foster Derrida’s exposition of the philosophical tradition he criticizes, but which also inform his deconstructive reading of Heidegger for cancelling out Heidegger’s third. Close reading the ways in which the “I” in Borges’ poem might interact with Derrida’s conception of the stakes of the figure of the “I” will, first, allow me to develop my own position on the figure of the “I” in order to, second, read against Derrida’s particular deconstruction of Heidegger’s Human-Animal opposition, which, third, will clear the way for re-introducing and critically reflecting on Heidegger’s third, the stone.

3. The figure of the “I” and its Relation to Language, Naming and Subjectivity

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida proposes that we are passing through a critical phase regarding the question of the animal due to the unprecedented way in which we have come to treat them in our industrialized

124 Pro/noun from Latin pro/nomen, literally meaning in place of/name.
world. In order to address this pressing matter through the metaphysical discourse that underlies our modern treatment of animals, he retracts a long philosophical tradition that has forever defined the animal in opposition to the human. Going back to Descartes, who defined Man as the only thinking species, Derrida discusses philosophers such as Kant, Levinas, Lacan and Heidegger and scrutinizes the way in which the traditional Human-Animal opposition surfaces in their works. What Derrida observes, through detailed deconstructions of the works of those philosophers, is that the traditional Human-Animal opposition they arrived at is still very much indebted to Descartes. In short, Man is still registered as a thinking animal, which implies Man is considered unique for having some sort of supreme consciousness, which is generally registered as the capacity for language and hence to respond, which the animal is deprived of.

As Derrida demonstrates, in Lacan, although he does not deny the animal some capacity for signs and communication, this deprivation of response stems from a particular notion of the animal not being able to erase its traces; in Levinas the deprivation of response is bound up with his trouble with granting the animal a face, whereas in Heidegger the deprivation of response is ultimately arrived at as Heidegger considers the animal to be captive within its own environment without being able to comprehend its own captivity. In Heidegger’s terms this translates into being poor-in-world for being deprived of language. In his exposition of the way in which Kant defined the human as a rational being in opposition to the irrational animal, Derrida scrutinizes the idea of response as just another Cartesian “I think” by questioning Kant’s notion of an “I” that presents a presence to the self as a unique demarcation criterion for response, an issue we will see he later takes up in questioning the notion of response in Heidegger. For this reason, I will now examine how Derrida raises the stakes of the figure of the “I” by offering a reflection on his critique on Kant’s position on the figure of the “I”.125

Power over the animal is the essence of the “I” or the “person,” the essence of the human (this conforms, moreover, to the divine injunction that, from Genesis on, assigned to man such a destination, that of marking his authority over living creatures, which can be effected only through the infinitely elevated power of presenting himself as an “I,” of presenting himself and just that, of presenting himself to himself, by means of a form

125 I refer here to, but will not expand on, Paul de Man’s dealing with Hegelian aesthetics, in the context of which De Man traces a similar problem with the term and use of the term ‘I’. On this see Paul de Man, “Sign and Symbol in Hegel’s Aesthetics”. In: Critical Inquiry 8 (1982), pp. 761-775. For the importance of this issue in relation to aesthetics (and politics), see: Isobel Armstrong, The Radical Aesthetic (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell), 2000.
of presence to himself that accompanies every presentation and representation [sic]. This presence to oneself, this self of the presence to itself, this universal and singular “I” that is the condition of the response and thus for the responsibility of the subject – whether theoretical, practical, ethical, juridical or political – is a power, a faculty that Kant is prudent or bold enough not to identify with the power to speak, the literal power of uttering “I.” (93)

In this passage, Derrida illustrates how Kant conceives of the figure of the “I” as a universal singular figure, essentially at one with the concept of person that I scrutinized in the first chapter. Interestingly, Derrida emphasizes the word faculty by italicizing it and comments that Kant is bold or prudent enough not to identify this faculty with the literal power of uttering “I”. Of course, Derrida here does not state his own position on this matter but merely seems to appreciate the philosophical consistency that Kant demonstrates by arguing that the power, the faculty, of the universal singular “I” concerns an aptitude of language that must, at all times, be abstracted from particular, concrete speech. Yet Derrida neither poses an alternative to Kant’s position at this point, nor does he do so in the remainder of his text. At the same time, for Derrida, this universal singular figure of the “I” conditions response and, thus, subjectivity – let us say, language – because it presents a power to perform a form of presence to the self.

This latter point is highly relevant to my project because Derrida, in his reading of Heidegger, challenges the rigid distinction between response and reaction that informs Heidegger’s conceptualization of language as the unique and, therefore, essentially human ability to respond through an interrogation of the figure of the “I”. In the following passage, leading up to his deconstruction of Heidegger’s Human-Animal opposition, Derrida already starts to complicate the notion of response and its relation to the figure of the “I”.

No one denies the animal auto-affection or auto-motion, hence the self of that relation to the self. But what is in dispute – and it is here that the functioning and structuring of the “I” count so much, even where the word “I” is lacking – is the power to make reference to the self in deictic or autodeictic terms, the capability at least virtually to turn a finger toward oneself in order to say “this is I.” For, as Benveniste has clearly emphasized, that is what utters and performs “I” when I pronounce or effect it. It is what says “I am speaking of me”; the one who says “I” shows himself in the present of his utterance, or at least of its
manifestation. Because it is held to be incapable of this autodeictic or auto-referential self-distancing (autotelie) and deprived of the “I” the animal will lack any “I think,” as well as understanding and reason, response and responsibility. The “I think” that must accompany every representation is this auto-reference as condition for thinking, as thinking itself; that is precisely what is proper to the human, of which the animal would be deprived. (94)

What Derrida suggests here, and I propose to read the passage in a somewhat reverse order to deliver my point more clearly, is that philosophy has always entertained a deliberately narrow definition of the figure of the “I”, namely as an “I think.” In this way, it has enabled itself to set the human apart from the animal indefinitely. This poignant point delivered, Derrida, in the remainder of his text, starts to disengage the capacity to respond from this “I think.” He does so by dwelling on the question of what it would mean for an animal to respond, not as a way of saying “I think” but in what Derrida himself refers to as “deictic” or “autodeictic” terms, in order to convey a presence to itself. Yet let me note that Derrida’s understanding here of a presence to the self as deictic, would have to be understood as indexical rather than deictic since indexicality presupposes a relation of contiguity whereas a deictic relation is concerned with an “I” and a you that are necessarily other. This caveat made, it will be of central concern in what follows that Derrida focuses on an indexical, then, or, to avoid further confusion of terminology, autotelic understanding of the figure of the “I” in Benveniste’s Subjectivity in Language while leaving unaddressed the way in which Benveniste relates the figure of the “I” to a “you”. Hence, what is left unaddressed is an understanding of the figure of the “I” whereby it is the speaker who sets himself up as a subject. Within such an understanding of the figure of the “I” the speaker does not so much turn a finger towards itself to say “I am speaking of me” in order to convey a presence to itself, but it is the speaker speaking to the other that informs its subjectivity.126

Hence, within Derrida’s understanding of the figure of the “I,” language is the technique by which “self-presence” is possible via language. The Kantian position reflected on by Derrida’s Benveniste-inspired understanding of language suggests that within every utterance an “I” is always already implied. For example, when one says “go away” there is an “I” present in this utterance in the form of an absence, because what is implied is “I urge you, go away.” For Derrida, this “I” presents a form of presence to the self, since with every utterance I present myself as present to myself. Within Benveniste’s

126 Ibid., 224.

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understanding of the figure of the “I”, however, the “I” is connected to a you, which implies the possibility of being addressed. In short, whenever one utters “I” there is always already an opening up to the possibility of being addressed as a you. In this conceptualization, the figure of the “I” is not so much revealing a “presence to the self” but dialogical, whereas language, rather than being understood as a technique, implies a bodily constituted “presence to the other.” It is here that poetry may provide an instructive angle on the figure of the “I” because it opens up to an experience whereby a first person addresses a you that might very well not be present, rather than conveying a mere philosophical conceptual reflection about being present in third person descriptive terms.

By implication, we may begin to surmise that Derrida’s deconstruction of the works of the philosophers that make up the metaphysical tradition he retraces is, primarily, a philosophical project undertaken by a language philosopher. In other words, Derrida’s one-sided focus on Benveniste’s understanding of language here seems to demonstrate that his understanding of language and its role in imagining the animal is not informed by the poetical outlook on language that he himself in the beginning of his book considered vital for thinking through the question of the animal. As we will see, this is further evidenced by the lack of poetical analysis in thinking through the question of response in Heidegger since, unlike in Borges, no “third” is brought into the picture. For now, let us try to clarify what Derrida’s philosophical understanding of language and its role in imagining the nonhuman animal amounts to in more concrete terms. This is perhaps conveyed most clearly in the following fragment from his famous interview “Eating Well”:127

The idea according to which man is the only speaking being, in its traditional form or in its Heideggerian form, seems to me at once undisplaceable and highly problematic. Of course, if one defines language in such a way that it is reserved for what we call man, what is there to say? But if one re-inscribes language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside, everything changes. I am thinking in particular of the mark in general, of the trace, of iterability, of difference. These possibilities or necessities, without which there would be no language, are themselves not only human. It is not a question of covering up ruptures and heterogeneities. I would simply contest that they give rise to a single linear, indivisible, oppositional limit, to a binary opposition between the human and the

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infra-human. And what I am proposing here should allow us to take into account scientific knowledge about the complexity of “animal languages,” genetic coding, all forms of marking within which so-called human language, as original as it might be, does not allow us to “cut” once and for all where we would like in general to cut. (284-285, italics in text)

In the above fragment we can see how – just as the figure of the “I” is taken up in autotelic terms within Derrida’s Benveniste-inspired reflection on Kant – the idea of language and, hence, response, is conveyed from within a framework of the Derridaean philosophy of differance, which hinges on an interrogation of a presence to the self. More specifically, language is approached as a system of signs, of traces that provide for the iterability of difference, a matter that has been key throughout Derrida’s work on deconstructing the “metaphysics of presence” tradition that philosophy according to Derrida represents. As Peter Benson has observed elsewhere, what Derrida means by presence in this context – and this amounts to a massive limitation – is that speech has traditionally been favoured over writing for the literal lack of mediation it was assumed to convey.128 Hence, Derrida’s vocabulary of the mark, the trace, which we will see he invokes in his reading against Heidegger’s position on language and thus response as essentially human, conveys an understanding of language as not essentially human for never fully being present to itself.

This Derridaean approach to the figure of the “I”, language and, hence, response to imagining the question of the animal here appears to result in an expansion of the idea of language as beyond any reductive “I think” and in a subsequent problematizing of the traditional demarcation line of language as separating the human from the animal. Before I move on to address the implications of Derrida’s language philosophy for reading against Heidegger’s notion of response, however, let me introduce what I find lacking, namely a deictic-poetical rather than an autotelic-philosophical reading of the figure of the “I”. To this end, I will now return to Borges’ poem, because I believe it suggests yet another way of thinking about the figure of the “I” that I wish to contrast with that of Derrida resonating both within the above two passages and within the fragment cited from “Eating Well.”

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Whereas Derrida focuses on the question of response for thinking through the animal in terms of the capacity to say “I”, Borges’ poem offers an exploration of the different ways in which the figure of the “I” may be uttered. More specifically, the figure of the “I” in Borges’ poem addresses the other through a deictic calling into being of a third that must remain unnamed. This exploration of the figure of the “I” not only defies the binary between a fictional and a factional tiger but, at the same time, disrupts a speaking of the other in terms of an “aboutness” that must, nevertheless, remain approximate. In short, Borges poem explores the I - You relation in two ways. First, thematically, through its reflections on the fictional and the factional tiger and the conceptual issues it raises by its insistent attempt at conceiving of a third tiger. Second, poetically and performatively, through its experiments with the lyrical “I”, which differs from the philosophical “I” of the “I Think.” Let us now explore the various ways in which the figure of the “I” in Borges poem is uttered.

The figure of the “I” in Borges’ poem may be understood, at its most basic level, as a lyrical I for constituting the voice of the poem. However, this description of the “I” in Borges’ poem as a lyrical I is merely a formalistic exercise. It follows from nothing else than that we name the “I” that we encounter in a poem a lyrical I and, as such, merely constitutes a convention of genre, the categorical description of an instance of language. Another convention in literary theory, albeit less descriptive than the former, is the qualification of the figure of the “I” for the way it functions in a given text. This qualification of an “I” as lyrical is generally registered as concerning a communication situation whereby the “I” in a poem speaks out to another and the reader is placed in the position of overhearing. Since I am interested here in contemplating what the figure of the “I” in the poem does, rather than in fixing a label on it in literary terms, I choose not to apply the aforementioned qualifications too strictly, but to explore the operations of the figure of the “I” by considering it in light of the encouragement to look for a third tiger at the beginning of the last stanza.

This encouragement is delivered in the following way: “Let us look for a third tiger,” which suggests, first, that the “I” in question has literally withdrawn from the scene of the passage. In other words, the “I” is at most implied here and, for all we know, could have turned into a “we” in the process, because the addressee, the “us” mentioned within the address, could be evoked by both an “I” and a “we.” Second, it suggests that this implied “I” – if we momentarily choose to accept the “I” to be implied within the address of the “us” and thus to “count” as an “I” – is addressing the reader directly. This indicates we are no longer in an apostrophic position of overhearing and thus not dealing with a
lyrical I for the way it functions in the text, but, at most, with a lyrical I in the formal sense, for being the voice of a poem.  

These various guises in which the “I” in Borges’ poem manifests itself suggest that it cannot be qualified as a general and universal singular for the way it operates. Hence, the difference between, on the one hand, the universal singular “I” that, within Derrida’s reading of Kant is dealt with in terms of a presence to the self that conditions language and, on the other hand, the literal uttering of the “I” through speech is foregrounded here as the “I” of literal speech is not general, because at times it is literally absent or, is present but then shifts back and forth from lyrical to non-lyrical. Nor is this poetical “I” singular per se, because once it is implied within the address of the “us,” we can never be sure whether if it has not shifted into the plural “we.” This is why I propose that, if we momentarily stop and think through this difference between the philosophical figure of the “I” as a general singular and the poetical-literal “I” that speaks as constitutive of the difference between language and speech, Derrida’s claim in the third line of the passage above that the figure of the “I” is always implied, even when the word “I” is lacking, becomes problematic when read in a poetical vein.

First, because this implied “I”, due to the fact that it is always implied, cannot belong to the literal “I” of speech that is uttered. Hence, it may at best correspond to the universal singular “I” that Derrida interrogates in autotelic terms, as the power to present a presence to itself. Yet, the concept of an always implied “I” in autotelic terms cannot be reconciled with the idea that the implied “I” in question, because it is implied, would then have to be spoken for, whispered, so to speak, by the one that does not speak, because it makes the notion of “self” within this “presence to itself” dependent on another “I” as external to the “I” itself; that is, as caught up within a conceptualization of language as distinct from concrete speech. This, of course, is a fundamental distinction in Benveniste’s thinking through of subjectivity in language and the very reason why he does not only understand the figure of the “I” in autotelic terms but also in terms of deixis. Moreover, we can now imagine the “I” that speaks, or whispers, the “I” that does not speak, as an “I” that does not speak either, but that is spoken by yet another “I” that might or might not speak. Here the concept of the “I” as a universal singular, begins to reel, which suggests the notion of “presence to the self” implied within Derrida’s philosophical

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conceptualization of the implied “I” must be read, from within a poetical reading strategy, as always already a “presence to the other.” Hence, the notion of ‘self’ can only be conceived of as pointing to a non-marked off entity, a fluidity of interconnected bodies of speech.

Apart from my reservations concerning Derrida’s philosophical interrogation of the figure of the “I” as a universal singular through an alternative and poetical reflection on the differences between the lyrical I as such, the formal lyrical I and the conceptualization of an implied I, it is meaningful to note that there are yet two other specific “I”’s to be distinguished within Borges’ poem. On the one hand, there is the “I” implied with the “I think,” as in “I think of a tiger.” On the other hand, there is the “I” implied within the “I dream you.” This “I dream you” is conveyed as follows in the last part of the first stanza:

In vain the convex oceans and the deserts
spread themselves across the earth between us;
from this one house in a far-off seaport
in South America, I dream you, follow you,
oh tiger on the fringes of the Ganges.

The “I dream you” offers yet another way of imagining the tiger, namely through some sort of dream-language. It is in this dream-language that the “I” in question does not perform a form of presence to itself, but a presence to the other. In fact, if we agree that it is the dream that allows the self-critical conscience – or what Freud called the ego – to be subdued, we could infer that the “I” within the “I dream you” is here no longer hindered by the “working through” of the laws of inherited social and cultural standards, naturalized, as it were, by the traditional Human-Animal opposition implied within an “I think.” Rather, the “I” dissolves within the dream, upsetting thereby in yet another way the whole conception of the figure of the “I” as a universal singular that performs a presence to the self. Thus, contrary to the “I” implied within an “I think,” and in line with a poetical thinking through of the concept of an implied “I” in Derrida’s philosophical interrogation of the figure of the I” as a general singular, we can here no longer “speak of” a fixed and marked-off self either. In other words, the “I” within the “I dream you” not just resists being qualified as a general singular “I” because it shifts back and forth from lyrical to non-lyrical, but also, I suggest, because the “of” – as in “I dream of you” – is missing. This holds for the original Spanish as well, in which “dreaming of” is grammatically
registered as “soñar con,” which would literally denote “dream with,” but which, in the poem is – ungrammatically – conveyed as “te sueño,” I dream you.

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As we have seen, Derrida reflects on Kant, who reads language as conditioned by a general singular “I” and then understands its functioning primarily in autotelic terms, whereas Benveniste also understands language as that which conditions deixis captured through speech. Notwithstanding these significant differences, both theorists thus share an understanding of the figure of the “I” not so much as a piece of, but as an aptitude of language that conditions subjectivity. This begs the question, in which way both theorists, but especially Derrida, conceive of the relation between the figure of the “I” within speech, on the one hand, and as a condition for language, on the other. Let us address this question by zooming in on what Benveniste has to say about the figure of the “I” as a general singular.

Now these pronouns are distinguished from all other designations a language articulates in that they do not refer to a concept or to an individual.

There is no concept “I” that incorporates all the “I’s” that are uttered at every moment in the mouths of all the speakers, in the sense that there is a concept “tree” to which all the individual uses of tree refer. The “I,” then, does not denominate any lexical entity.130 (emphasis in original)

In this passage, Benveniste understands the figure of the “I” as a general singular in the “true” sense: it cannot be conceptualized and does not refer to a concept or to an individual, but, as it does not denominate any lexical entity, stands outside of speech as a purely grammatical function, as an always implied “I” without conceptual content. Hence, Derrida’s outlook on language is tied together with that of Benveniste because the figure of the “I” is viewed as a condition for language and thus posited, somehow, outside of or external to language, which registers language as a philosophical concept that can be abstracted from speech as a system of signs. For now, it is not my aim to contest the obvious possibility of this abstraction itself. Rather, I wish to use Borges’ poem to examine how it impinges itself upon Derrida’s framework and his subsequent reading of Heidegger in order to read against it and thicken the

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130 Ibid., 226.
Human-Animal position I believe it is still too exclusively caught up in.

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A good point of departure for exploring this complex matter seems to be to retrace how the poem invites a reflection on the nature of language through the opposition between a factional and a fictional tiger. As we have seen, the way in which this opposition is conveyed and complicated suggests language’s natural (fictional) disposition and makes it lack the power to lay bare the underlying (factional) truth of its words. Hence, on a thematic-conceptual level the nature of language conveyed in Borges’ poem may be qualified as deceptive for the insistent suggestion of correspondence with the factional tiger that every other fictional tiger inspires. This deceptive quality of language reaches its most dense peak whenever there is an “I” that speaks, lyrical or otherwise, which make it seem as if language could present itself, of itself, as disclosing, as being at one with the essentially human. In this respect, the deceptiveness of language played out in Borges’ poem draws on a particular allegorical notion of language as a veil. This allegorical notion of language, however, is simultaneously evoked and shattered in the poem and thus could be said to be deceptive in its own right.

First, literally first, we are seduced into identifying a lyrical I with an essentially human being. I would qualify this as an allegorical operation because the suggestion of correspondence between a lyrical I and a human being here comes to function as a catalyst for entering into the impossible figure of a linear strategy of approximation, which, as I discussed in my second chapter, thrives on the old misconception of language as an allegorical construct all the same. By implication, the “I” in question here is not a general singular, but, as a result of a particular allegorical reading of language shifts into a general singular and is read as the most condensed sustained metaphor of the human subject. This shift itself is the shift in focus from language as it is used, speech, to philosophically conceptualizing language as an abstract system of signs. The problem this shift conveys is that we are thus presented with a reading of both the figure of the “I” as a general singular, on the one hand, and language, on the other, as no longer standing in metaphorical relation to one another. In short, the figure of the “I”, once conceptualized as a general singular within an allegorical reading – and this is the problem with Derrida’s autotelic reading – does not so much illustrate, but kill off its supposed metaphorical power, which ultimately results in the two concepts, the figure of the “I” and “language” being read in a synecdochical vein as perfectly congruent substitutes, which causes the conditionality upon which the distinction rests to evaporate.
At the same time, in the poem, the idea of language as a veil, as an allegorical construct, is shattered, because ultimately its implied strategy of linear approximative identification is deemed untenable as we are offered an opening towards an alternative strategy of the unnamed. This “shattering” of the idea of language as a veil by opening up space for a strategy of the unnamed offers a different perspective on the nature of language as deceptive, whereby language is no longer understood as a veil but as a performative instance that calls into being. This does not imply, however, that we should now read this performativity as some sort of corrective measure applied to an allegorical conception of language. Rather, instead of reading the performative character of language the poem brings to bear as effectuating a reverse shift from philosophical thinking of language as an abstract system of signs towards a poetical thinking of language for the way it is used, I choose to read it as pointing to the problem of registering language as a philosophical system of signs for the thinking through of nonhuman subjectivity since it causes the nonhuman entity to be read in terms within which the figure of the human is always already inscribed.

With respect to this issue, I argue that Derrida’s treating of language as a philosophical system of signs that can be abstracted from speech raises a problem for his exposition of the general singular “I” as traditionally an “I Think.” The reason is that an understanding of language as a system of signs that can be abstracted from speech implies that without speech there would be no such thing, no such system of signs we refer to as language. We can speak, our bodies can speak, but we cannot “language.” There simply is no verb that allows us to speak language, we can only speak and talk “about” language. In this light, thinking through animal subjectivity seems to require a counterintuitive leap of faith because it forces us to let go of any philosophical idea of language on a conceptual level and to focus instead on a heterogeneous multiplicity of languages, of intertwining and overlapping structures of speech. In other words, first there is embodied speech, only then there is the possibility of abstracting language as a system of signs. Hence, instead of working within the language - speech distinction we would have to understand language as embodied speech. It is here that I diverge from Derrida since the figure of the “I” loses its non-conceptual status precisely when we start thinking “about” the animal for always already inscribing the human within our thinking. In other words, whereas the distinction between language and speech implies language to be philosophically conceived of as an abstract system of signs, as a technology that is external to the human being, the poetical performativity of speech as embodied expression and not primarily as something from which language as a
philosophical system of signs can be extrapolated, has appeared to defy the non-conceptuality of the philosophical “I,” because the philosophical “i” can only think of the animal in terms of “aboutness.”

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I have now concluded that Derrida’s interrogation of the figure of the “I” as a general singular is bound up with a view on language as a system of signs that is understood in an allegorical vein. To put it somewhat crudely, Derrida, in his valuable critique on the philosophical tradition, does not problematize the idea of the figure of the “I” as a general singular beyond delivering a critical reservation on the traditional reading of the figure of the “I” as always, and unfortunately so, an “I Think.” This is, of course, a very important philosophical gesture. It creates space for disengaging the figure of the “I” from the “I Think” and allows for rethinking the figure of the “I” as a condition for response, opening up an immense field we are only beginning to explore today. At the same time, Derrida’s autotelic, rather than deictic concern with the figure of the “I” as a condition for response still does nothing to radically contest, on the one hand, the figure of the “I” as a general singular, and, on the other, the inextricable taking up of language allegorically; that is, as a philosophical system of signs that would be perfectly interchangeable with conceptualizing the figure of the “I” as a general singular. In other words, the figure of the “I” in Derrida shifts from being a condition for language towards being at one with it, which introduces an irresolvable loop within his framework.

For this reason, I will now explore the way in which this loop affects Derrida’s complex line of thought on the question of response, first, by looking at what he problematized as this other general singular, the animal, and which he subsequently proposed to put under erasure by imaginatively substituting it with the neologism *animot*. Second, by looking at what his Benveniste-inspired adherence to the figure of the “I” in terms of *conditionality* means for his articulation of language as a philosophical concept and, consequently, for the exploration of subjectivity within his deconstructive reading of Heidegger.

4. The “I” and the Animot

In the first chapter of *The Animal That Therefore I am* Derrida introduces the neologism *animot* for the first time. The word *animot* is a pun on the word animal – Derrida aims to have the plural heard in the singular. According to
Derrida, the *animot*, contrary to what the tradition of the “I Think” has forever defined as the general singular animal, designates “a heterogeneous multiplicity of living creatures” and, in that capacity, allows for a reconsideration of the notion of response, which Heidegger (and the wider tradition he represents) denied the animal. This is why Derrida proposes to imaginatively substitute the word animal with the word *animot*, which not only enables him to work out a specific way of opening up to the notion of response, but, eventually, also leads him to conclude that the capacity to respond might not be distinguished so absolutely from the capacity to react as Heidegger has suggested.

This begs the following questions: first, how does Derrida envisage the *animot* as potentially opening up to the notion of response in a way the general singular animal cannot; and, second, what are the implications of introducing the neologism *animot* while remaining indebted to setting it off against what I have now come to consider Derrida’s problematic critique of the figure of the “I” as a general singular in autotelic rather than deictic terms? The third question I wish to pose is whether we can think of a different angle to read the Human-Animal opposition. This different angle must not only enable us to address the specific way in which Derrida, through the notion of *animot*, destabilizes Heidegger’s absolute distinction between reaction and response. It must also confront Derrida’s ultimate negation of this distinction as absolute in a manner that allows for breaking free from the implied continuity of the Human-Animal opposition on which it relies.

With respect the first two issues, it is important to note that when Derrida develops his idea of *animot* and the way in which it might open up to the notion of response, he sketches what, at first glance, appears to be a level playing field for both the figure of the “I” and the animal. Indeed, he begins his deconstructive reading of Heidegger by framing both figures as general singulars. This affords both terms some sort of positional equality with regard to one another:

> It happens that there exist, between the word *I* and the word *animal* all sort of significant connections. They are at the same time functional and referential, grammatical and semantic. Two general singulars to begin with: the *I* and the *animal* designate an indeterminate generality in the singular and by means of the definite article. (49)

The positional equality afforded both the general singular “I” and the animal as a general singular in the above passage might lead one to expect that Derrida critiques the figure of the animal as a general singular in very much the same
manner as he did the traditional philosophical figure of the “I”. Yet, at the end of the very first chapter of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida not so much critiques what he defines as this other general singular, the animal, in autotelic terms but primarily finds fault with the name animal:

> Whenever “one” says “The Animal,” each time a philosopher, or anyone else, says “The Animal” in the singular and without further ado, claiming thus to designate every living thing that is held not to be human (man as *rational animal*, man as political animal, speaking animal, *zoon logon echon*, man who says “I” and takes himself to be the subject of a statement that he proffers on the subject of the said animal, etc.), well, 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. (31)

As we have seen, on the one hand, Derrida delivers a critique on the figure of the “I” as traditionally an “I Think” and, consequently, as too narrow a concept. This fundamental insight allows him to reframe the figure of the “I” by looking at it in terms of the ability to respond and to contemplate what response might amount to apart from thinking. On the other hand, and herein lies a discrepancy, the term Derrida highlights in the above passage as this other general singular, the animal, is not so much registered as too narrow a concept, but as a word that is so horrific *because* it is a general singular and *therefore* complicit with no less than a veritable war on the species. Let it be noted in passing that Derrida here not just places the violence lodged in the word animal in a philosophical tradition but explicitly suggests this violence to be implicated whenever “anyone else” speaks of the animal as well. The point here, however, is that in view of this difference in critical treatment of both terms as general singulars, it should not come as a surprise that Derrida focuses on the general singular animal as the most urgent point of departure for thinking through the ability to respond and all that this implies.

In the following passage, Derrida succinctly conveys the problem with the general singular (the) animal. He does so by pointing out that the conceptualization of the animal as a general singular must be placed in an age old
philosophical tradition that has registered the animal as a general singular for being deprived of language and, hence, from a response.

Animal is a word that men have given themselves the right to give. These humans are giving it to themselves, this word, but as if they had received it as an inheritance. They have given themselves the word in order to corral a large number of living beings within a single concept: “The Animal,” they say. And they have given it to themselves, this word, at the same time according themselves, reserving for them, for humans, the right to the word, the naming noun (nom), the verb, the attribute, to a language of words, in short to the very thing that the others in question would be deprived of, those that are corralled within the grand territory of the beasts: The Animal. All the philosophers we will investigate (from Aristotle to Lacan, and including Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Levinas), all say the same thing: the animal is deprived of language. Or more precisely, of response, of a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction; of the right and power to “respond” and hence of so many other things that would be proper to man. (32)

As becomes clear from the above passage, this age old philosophical tradition has held, and most conspicuously so in Heidegger, that the animal, contrary to the human, is deprived of the ability to respond and can merely react. This idea, in turn, is centred on the belief that the animal does not have the ability to deceive, which, according to Derrida, is always already implied within the notion of response. In a complex reading of Lacan on the difference between pretence and lying in the third chapter of The Animal that Therefore I Am, Derrida has convincingly argued that the animal cannot be deprived of the quality to deceive but that this matter must remain fundamentally un-decidable. In fact, as we will see, it is precisely this notion of deception that will be key to Derrida’s use of the animot to read against the clear-cut distinction between reaction and response in Heidegger.

To better grasp the specific way in which Derrida’s proposed substitution of the general singular animal with the neologism animot informs his deconstructive reading of Heidegger, let me bring into focus what, for the purposes of my current project, is essential to Heidegger’s complex position on the animal. In my view, Richard Iveson has formulated this position most aptly. I choose not to paraphrase Iveson here, but to quote his position on Heidegger in
full because I need both the specificity of its wording and its comprehensiveness to touch on all the relevant aspects we will need to address:

In the fourth chapter of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, and via the work of the biologists Hans Driesch and Jakob Johann von Uexküll, Heidegger argues that the nonhuman animal is excluded from the worlding of world as a necessary result of its *captive*ion (*Benommenheit*), that is to say, “(c) captivation is the condition of possibility for the fact that, in accordance with its essence, the animal *behaves within an environment but never within a world*” (FCM 239). This is because, as far as Heidegger’s animal is concerned, there can never be anything *beyond*, nor any differentiation *within*, the disinhibiting ring which marks the absolute limit of her environmental capture. As a result of this essential undifferentiated *absorption* (Eingenommenheit), “the animal” can never apprehend (“have”) “its” own captivation- that is, can never apprehend “its” own capture within a set- and hence “it” is poor-in-world (*weltarm*).

The condition of possibility of world, withheld as we have seen from the animal, “is” precisely the “having” of captivation *as such*, that is, the apprehension of the undisconcealedness of Being *as* undisconcealedness (i.e. of the withdrawal of Being). In other words, the human “is” only in this having of the “as” –structure (die ‘als’ –Struktur), which is the condition of possibility for the *logos*, as it is only in having the “as” that the human is given to apprehend beings *as beings*– the wonder that beings *are* which is the worlding of world- and thus, beyond the captivation of the disinhibiting ring, to perceive itself as *an* (individuated) being. 131

As we can infer via Iveson, Heidegger claims that the animal, because it is deprived of the ability to respond, does not have language and thus cannot be thought in terms of being “as such,” a logic that ultimately allows him to attribute the animal, one the one hand, and the human, on the other, a different ontological status. What Derrida aims at in his deconstructive reading of Heidegger, then, is precisely a renegotiation of the ontological abyss Heidegger has put in between the human and the animal. He does so, first, by rejecting the idea of the animal as a general singular and proposing to put in under erasure by

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imaginatively substituting it with the neologism animot.\textsuperscript{132} Hence, the way in which Derrida envisages the animot to open up the notion of response must be understood as an opening up to at least a consideration of the possibility of what Heidegger would call – but denied – the being “as such” of the animal. Second, Derrida questions Heidegger’s rigid distinction between reaction and response in a particular way; namely, through a contemplation on whether the animot and its leaving of marks and traces could not be viewed as conveying the capability of deception, as just another way of responding.

With respect to both issues, it is important to observe that Derrida remains indebted to approaching the Human-Animal opposition in Heidegger from the same vantage point as the tradition he traces has done since time immemorial, namely in terms of the relation between reaction and response. This framework is – in accordance with his autotelic understanding of the figure of the “I” as a general singular – still reliant on taking up language in a profound allegorical sense. As I concluded before, such a traditional framing fails to account for the way in which the figure of the “I” shifts from being posited as a condition for language towards simultaneously being at one with language whenever the role of language is exclusively thought as a philosophical system of signs that may be abstracted from bodily speech.

In fact, I would argue, it is the specific quality of deception implied within such an allegorical outlook on language, this notion of veiling, covering and, alternatively, uncovering, that not merely informs the traditional notion of response, but that, given Derrida’s contemplations on the animot and its marks and traces to be covered or uncovered, remains key to his argument in a most literal way. Admittedly, we do not have to read Derrida’s language of marks and traces in a literal way, especially not since Derrida has in mind the metaphorical language of marks and traces that he uses to deconstruct the metaphysics of presence we discussed earlier. Yet, even if we choose not to read Derrida in such a literal manner, the allegorical outlook on language within Derrida’s framing is not destabilized. Rather, it seems as if the allegorical outlook implied within the difference between language and speech in Derrida brings forth a potentially endless deferral of binary oppositions whereby the question of the animal is alternatively traced in terms of the Human-Animal, Reaction-Response and Presence-Absence. In other words, language, both in Heidegger and Derrida, can only be attributed to a body if it is defined in traditional allegorical terms, as betraying some sort of mysterious extracorporeal essence; the Cartesian essence, if you will, of the “I Think” always already implied once we set the nonhuman

\textsuperscript{132} “I’ll do it several times but each time that, henceforth, I say “the animal” I’ll be asking you to silently substitute animot for what you hear.” Ibid., The Animal That Therefore I Am, 47.
other – whether conceived of as animal or animot – against the figure of the “I” as a general singular caught up within a one-sided autotelic understanding.

This begs the question, first, how to confront the category of the human as other than a general singular still tied up with the traditional “I Think” for being conceived of in autotelic terms. Second, it asks for a further exploration of the notion of animot, not just of the way in which it supposedly opens up to the possibility of the “as such” of the animal, but more specifically of the way in which it evolves from Derrida’s as yet unquestioned adherence to the general singular human as not primarily problematic for its name. In order to do justice to the complexity of these interrelated issues, I will now, rather than dealing with each question separately, try to address them in conjunction. Let me start by zooming in on the role the animot plays in Derrida’s renegotiation of Heidegger’s position on the rigid distinction between reaction and response, which, as we have inferred via Iveson, is centred on the animal’s captivity and its subsequent lack of the “as such” structure.

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After broaching the question if the rigid distinction between reaction and response in Heidegger can be maintained, Derrida goes through great pains to question the uniqueness of the quality to respond. Indeed, in the two citations below, Derrida interrogates the way in which the philosophical tradition defined response by speculating on whether the ability of animals to cover their tracks or erase their traces cannot be understood as a way of responding.

As we shall see, even those who, from Descartes to Lacan, have conceded to the animal some aptitude for signs and for communication have always denied it the power to respond-to pretend, to lie, to cover its tracks or erase its own traces. (33, italics in text)

Having or not having traces at one’s disposal so as to be able to dissimulate [brouiller] or erase them, in such a manner as, it is said, some (man, for example) can and some (the animal, for example, according to Lacan) cannot do, does not perhaps constitute a reliable alternative defining an indivisible limit. (33, italics in text)

In the first quotation, Derrida’s critique on the philosophical tradition betrays an explicit literal rather than a metaphorical understanding of the animal’s capacity to cover its tracks or erase its traces, which is a matter I will address shortly. For
now, suffice it to say that Derrida posits that we can never know if the animal is not using its marks and traces as just another deceptive language, which is why language, the ability to respond, to deceive, cannot be distinguished absolutely from a reaction. Hence, the question of response must remain undecidable and, therefore, response cannot be qualified as exclusively and essentially human as Heidegger suggested.

Of course, such a deconstructive reading of Heidegger is an important gesture, as it seems to once and for all settle the question on whether language can be defined as the decisive marker separating the human from the animal in essentialist terms. At the same time, however, Derrida’s conclusion on the undecidability of the difference between reaction and response opens up a whole different can of worms, since it would imply that we might have to revise the juridical conception of responsibility on which our traditional conception of personhood has been built.133 My immediate purpose here, however, is to explore what precisely informs Derrida’s conclusion on the undecidability between reaction and response, which, albeit a solid argument in itself, I find problematic; first, for the way it is arrived at through the notion of animot; and second, for the specific branch of ontology on which it is centred and from which I seek to get away from by bringing in Heidegger’s third, the stone.

On the one hand, Derrida deconstructs Heidegger’s position on the rigid distinction between reaction and response and radically redefines response. But, on the other hand, he still operates from within a traditional philosophical framework, because he stills follows Heidegger and the wider tradition he critiques in registering response and, hence, deception, as key to distinguishing between different categories in essentialist terms. The reason I refer to these terms as essentialist is that the Human-Animal opposition implied within thinking through the difference between reaction and response still constitutes a binary, while, as a matter of principle, we cannot have a binary opposition that is not framed in essentialist terms unless we would have a positive knowledge of what those terms mean. To put this complex matter in a somewhat oversimplified way: Derrida works from within the same preordained framework as Heidegger, and the fact that he reaches a different conclusion does nothing to upset this traditional framework and; indeed, he thus ultimately reinforces it.

133 For an instructive introduction to Derrida’s thinking on responsibility that is not centered on the distinction between reaction and response but understood in terms of what Derrida calls the Aporia of the Law, see: “Derrida: The Impossible Origins of Responsibility.” In: François Raffoul, The Origins of Responsibility (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 282-299.
By implication, Derrida’s proposed imaginary substitution of the animal with the *animot* as a possible alternative to the general singular animal and as a way of opening up to the possibility of the animal “as such” becomes suspect. In short, Derrida’s notion of *animot* may put the animal under erasure but not the Human-Animal opposition itself. In this respect, and in light of Derrida’s explicit literal understanding of the language of traces and marks in the citations quoted above, the proposition to imaginatively substitute the animal with the *animot* becomes a symptom of an allegorical reading that ultimately re-installs the Human-Animal opposition. When he finally arrives at his conclusion, he has already taken for granted that he is speaking of certain animals: those that leave tracks and/or erase their tracks as a way of deceiving their enemies. In other words, Derrida has, in his valuable critique on a philosophical tradition that registers the deceptive quality of language as a unique and, therefore, essentially human phenomenon, taken the notion of language here as deceptive in terms of tracks and traces in a most straightforward allegorical sense, without accounting for the paradoxical status of his conceptualization of language as both at one with and a condition for the ability to respond.

Of course, this does not mean that those animals that cover or veil their traces are performing allegorical operations. Rather, it suggests that their “literal” use of signs is read allegorically in Derrida’s critical reading of the philosophical tradition that Heidegger represents. This allegorical procedure, albeit testifying to the fact that the quality to respond might not be such an exclusively human affair after all, brings to mind the procedure we witnessed in my analysis of *Animal Farm*, whereby only certain animals, the most humanlike ones, could respond to the humans. Not only does this line of thought seem to run contrary to Derrida’s own notion of *animot*, but while seemingly doing away with the Human-Animal opposition on one level, it also brings a categorization of difference into play that causes the Human-Animal opposition to be surreptitiously reintroduced in the most essentialist terms on another.

To be sure, the problem with Derrida’s foregrounding of the undecidability between reaction and response is *not* that this conclusion is not “true” from a philosophical point of view. Indeed, his argument is very convincing and I fully agree with it. Rather, the problem with Derrida’s conclusion on this undecidability is that it installs an argument that, ultimately, hinges on very much the same undecidability that characterized the scientific research on the animal’s capacity to suffer, which I sketched and analysed in the previous chapter. In short, the question of response is indeed undecidable. But not so much because certain animals may or may not cover their traces, whether literally or metaphorically, but because Derrida’s conclusion on this
undecidability ultimately raises the question of consciousness, the traditionally primary asset of human language, even while deconstructing the traditional Human-Animal opposition itself.

This dynamic, I propose, may be attributed to what causes Derrida to introduce the neologism *animot* as an adequate way to deconstruct the ontological deprivation of the animal in Heidegger in the first place; namely, his understanding of the figure of the “I” in autotelic terms and his subsequent one-sided focus on the general singular animal. In other words, finding fault with the word animal as a general singular and proposing to imaginatively substitute it with the *animot* is not enough if envisaging the figure of the “I” as a general singular to an important extent remains unquestioned. More than that, precisely *because* it is only questioned from within an autotelic understanding of the figure of the “I”, it is uncritically transposed to certain animals and, therefore, awkwardly reductive.

In my reading, Derrida’s argumentation is simultaneously successful and flawed. He has framed his argument ultimately, but effectively a priori, in traditional terms, as a problem of demarcation that hinges on an undecidability about what may be considered human and what may be considered animal by looking at capacities, in this case the capacity to respond, however loosely, or creatively defined. Thus, the way in which the question of response is framed in Derrida results in a reinvigoration of the traditional Human-Animal opposition because of the allegorical outlook on language implied within his analysis. But also, I suggest, because it is precisely his not merely metaphorical but also literal thinking of the *animot* in terms of marks and traces that effectuates what I consider to be a one-sided ethological strand at the core of Derrida’s thinking. In short, thinking in terms of marks and traces as assets to be attributed to certain humanlike beings betrays a concern with the behaviour and organisation of a particular selection of the animal domain and harks back to looking at the question of the animal from a biological perspective. However important it is to learn more about animals, such a reductive focus on demarcation not only reiterates what Iveson in his comment succinctly conveyed as Heidegger’s concern with *environment*, on the one hand, and with *world*, on the other, but effectively veils what should really be at stake and therefore cannot but result in forever being locked up in the Human-Animal opposition, even whilst seemingly deconstructing it.

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For this reason, I propose that what should really be at stake here is not how to deconstruct the traditional Human-Animal opposition, but how to demarcate the category of the animal/animot if we can no longer rely on opposing it to the human, which seems to be precisely what happens if, as Derrida concludes, the rigid distinction between reaction and response can no longer be maintained. This problem does not primarily ask for a deconstruction of the Human-Animal opposition by an imaginary substitution of the word animal with the word animot. Rather, it asks, first, for a further exploration of the word animot, both of the specific way in which it is conveyed within Derrida’s framework and as other than as a substitution for the word animal. Second, it asks not only for an interrogation of the animal as a general singular, but also for formulating an alternative to Derrida’s interrogation of the figure of the “I” as a general singular, not so much in terms of the way in which it is conceptualized in relation to language, but in terms of how it is used, both within and outside of the juridical sphere. Third, I would argue, it asks for bringing in a conceivable “third” that allows for the human and the animal to take in a veritable positional equality with regard to one another.

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A good point of departure for exploring these complex matters might be to zoom in on the way in which Derrida approaches the problem of the animal as a general singular throughout his text, namely as a problem of naming. This is Derrida:

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

On a very basic level, the reference in the above fragment to the word animal as a name is problematic because it suggests the name animal, once substituted with the neologism animot, is only substituted with another name. In other words, there seems to be no significant difference between using the word animot and the word animal, because it would be somewhat ludicrous to suppose that when we hear the word animal we are inclined to think of all the animals we can and cannot imagine as one and the same general, singular, animal. On the contrary, it seems to me that when we hear the word animal we immediately imagine an immense variety of creatures we, if only for being able to use the particular “language” in which we express ourselves, speak; that is,
generally refer to as animal. It is not so much, then, that we are not doing justice to “a heterogeneous multiplicity of living creatures” when we generally refer to those creatures as animal. Rather, it just happens that speech works by selecting and splitting, not within the abstract concept of language, but within itself.

This is why I now propose we let go of the difference between language and speech as a conceptual tool for thinking through the subjectivity of the animal other. Instead of exploring subjectivity in language, as Benveniste and Derrida have done, I propose we must think through subjectivity as speech. Without wanting to fill in how to go about thinking through subjectivity as speech, but leaving it open, such a frame presents two concrete advantages. First, the continuous selecting and splitting of speech can no longer be understood as causing a split between the fictional and the referential “it” supposedly veils. There is no longer an “it”, no “language,” that is, that veils. Second, since this particular notion of speech cannot be understood in such an allegorical vein we avoid getting caught up in the loop we have now identified within Derrida’s framework. Instead of a loop, there is only a splitting within itself, an insistent mobility when we speak.

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In my view, the loop in Derrida’s framework is not merely caused by his autotelic understanding of the figure of the “I”. It also stems from his finding fault with the general singular animal as a form of naming, whereas I conceive of our use of the word animal, and consequently, the human, as categories. My understanding of the terms “category” and “name” here is not indebted to a specific philosophical conceptualization of those terms. Rather, it follows from my earlier exploration of those terms in my reading of the bird’s case in Animal Farm. If in Animal Farm the name wings was substituted with legs and if the demarcation categories were the categories of the human and the animal we may now surmise that the difference between categories and names is that, unlike names, categories cannot so easily be substituted with one another. In other words, affording an entity a different name might very well allow it to be placed within a different category, as might happen, for example, with the notion of personhood within an expansive model. Categories, however, are formed ideologically in relation to the world we believe to inhabit. I must agree with David Wood on this point, who, in an essay on an excerpt from Derrida’s The Animal That Therefore I Am called “Thinking with Cats,” suggests that what we
do when we set the human against the animal is not a matter of naming but of categorization. 

But I have doubts about this. The violence lodged in the word Animal is not the product of naming. We do not *name* the creatures of the world “animal” or “the animal.” Rather, “animal” is a category, one of the same order as “man.” To call it a category rather than a name is important. Categories are gross ways in which we (humans) carve up the world.

The point here is *not* that categorization is always also a performative act that is more complex than a straightforward philosophical designation, which is a matter that has been discussed at length in the previous chapters. Rather, I wish to raise an issue here in relation to Derrida’s argumentation concerning the *animot*; namely, that if the word *animot* helps us to think of animals not in terms of a general singular but as designating an incredible variety of living beings, it is also true that biology has done exactly that. Ever since Aristotle, it has endlessly striven to distinguish, classify and attribute different names to an incredible variety of nonhuman beings that it has categorized as either animal, plant or (in) organic matter. What is at stake here, then, is not the name animal that demarcates, but the demarcation such a category implies. It is noteworthy, in this respect, that Derrida does not offer the same treatment to the other pole of the Human-Animal opposition he is interrogating: he does not explicitly speak about the human as “designating an incredible variety of living beings that we have given ourselves the right to call human.” In short, whereas Derrida insists on imaginatively substituting the general singular animal with the neologism *animot* in order to point out and, to some extent, fend off, at least verbally, our complicit involvement with a horrific and organized injustice that he qualifies as no less than a veritable war on the species, the human remains the human.

This might have something to do, first, with the fact that the human, the category human, although each of us is given a name, does not signal such an incredible variety of creatures as the category of the animal does. Not just because, I would suggest, our physiology is obviously much less diverse, but also because any attempt at distinguishing between humans on the basis of even the slightest physiological feature or behavioural characteristic within the category human, as the histories of women, slaves, colonialism and recent genocides have taught us, puts one at risk of entering the dangerous territory of

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racist bias. In other words, Derrida’s ethological speculation on the animal in terms of marks, traces and behaviour cannot be administered to the other pole of the equation without upsetting the supposed positional equality – both in between and within – he has so generously afforded those poles at the beginning. In fact, we can now conclude that the “I” standing, so to speak, for the human in this equation not only immediately falls apart when not read within an allegorical conception of language, but also that framing the human and the animal as two general singulars can only be maintained if one of those general singulars is understood as a name instead of a category.

This is why I now propose to diverge from Derrida, first, by insisting that addressing the question of the animal from the perspective of the animal necessarily involves a “passing through” rather than a deconstruction of the traditional Human-Animal opposition, precisely by looking at both terms as uneven categories and not as names. Second, I would argue that looking at the question of the animal asks for a framework that is not ontologically predefined by a clinging onto and, hence, setting the animal against the figure of the “I” conceptualized as a general singular. Let us now reflect on the human and animal as categories and try to imagine in which way the category of the human is used rather than conceptualized.

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The category of the human, of the general singular human, differs from the category of the animal as it is necessarily universal; that is, if we aspire to not live in a (proto) fascist world. Indeed, to deny this universality would imply affording some humans a humanlike, animal status. In fact, I propose that the category of the human is, in the first place, at heart, a juridical figure, as Man is the same only for the law. In other words, the only way in which the category of the human can be sustained for the way in which it is used, is as a legal category; or, as Erica Fudge so aptly put it:

In the late eighteenth century the American Declaration of Independence formulated the human in a slightly different way by arguing that ‘man’ had certain inalienable rights, such as ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’ (and in the mid-nineteenth century Harriet Taylor Mill was to question the limitation of these rights to men). To say that a right is inalienable is to say that without those rights human status cannot be; is to
say that, if those rights are gone, so too is the human. The human here becomes a being with an essential status that is fixed, stable.135

In this respect, the ontological difference between the human and the animal the philosophical tradition has established and that Heidegger reaffirmed in his own idiosyncratic way, has only partly been contested by Derrida, because he has remained indebted to the traditional vocabulary and limited himself to try and understand one category in terms of the other. The idea that the animot, a certain group of animals, might leave marks and traces in a way the general singular animal obviously cannot, does nothing to change this fact. Hence, the way in which the notion of animot is developed by Derrida, can never function as a lever to open up to the “as such” of this multiplicity of living beings we have given ourselves the right to call animal. First, because the resulting contradiction in terms would dictate we must do justice to a certain, homogenized and a heterogeneous multiplicity in terms of each “individual” being “as such.” Second, and more fundamentally still from a practical point of view, because setting the animot against the figure of the “I” as a general singular always already implies looking at the animot – and I agree here with Erica Fudge – exclusively from within, even if not explicitly articulated as such, a juridical framework which, under the regime of personhood is centred on a predefined ontological difference between the human and the animal.

Finally, let me conclude that Derrida’s proposed substitution of the “name” animal with the “name” animot, rather than opening up to a strategy of the unnamed by bringing in a third, as my analysis of Borges’ poem demonstrated to be a possible alternative, a beginning of a way out of a predefined ontological difference, aligns his project with that of the endlessly named species of biology; that is, it gives way to a strategy of the named. Derrida has limited himself to questioning the figure of the “I” as a general singular, on the one hand, and the figure of the animal as a general singular, on the other, while not exploring the figure of the stone in Heidegger’s tri-partition and the ontological stage it sets for Heidegger’s denial of response to the animal. Returning to Heidegger’s stone, then, which I will now set out to do, might, first, provide us with another angle on how to read into the predefined ontological difference within both Heidegger and Derrida, so as to, second, explore possible alternatives for thinking through animal subjectivity and the way in which such subjectivity might be imagined, if at all, within a legal sphere not contained by an expansive model.

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5. Heidegger’s Stone

Within an ontologically predefined framework it has proved impossible not to end up with a demarcation discussion where liminality is negotiated on the basis of certain faculties; for example, response, which, as we have seen, is typically followed up by a renegotiation on how to interpret these faculties. This inescapable mechanism has appeared to characterize the way in which the Human-Animal opposition impinges itself upon our modern political, scientific and philosophical context, in which the expansive model has appeared to be symptomatic of the way this mechanism “translates” to the juridical sphere. This begs the question, what, if not in terms of a predefined ontology, might be a fruitful way of addressing the question of the animal, other than by placing it in binary opposition to the figure of the human, but also other than through the substitution of the word animal with the word animot such as proposed by Derrida. Again, Borges’ poem might guide us here, especially when we compare the way in which the “I” operates the poem with Erica Fudge’s reference to the figure of the human: the general singular “I” as fixed and immobile for the way it is contained within the juridical sphere.

The figure of the “I” in Borges’ poem is imagining a tiger at the other end of the earth from within the fixed and immobile confinement of a far-off seaport house, whereas the tiger it is tracing is forever on the move, prowling around the fringes of the Ganges. In other words, the imaginative identification of the figure of the “I” at work in the poem could be said to revolve around a sense of mobility, whereby the figure of the “I” is registered as immobile and the figure of the tiger is registered as mobile. In contrast to this immobile “I,” the tracing of the tiger throughout the poem, first by way of a linear strategy of approximation, then through what I qualified as an opening up to a strategy of the unnamed, and ultimately through some sort of dream-language, suggests the occurrence of a multiple, heterogeneous, dividual figure of the “I” in Borges’ poem. This multiple, heterogeneous, dividual figure of the “I”, rather than conveying an attempt to identify the tiger in linear essentialist terms, betrays an insistent exploration at the threshold of the other as the driving force of the poem.

Hence, what I propose the figure of the “I” in Borges’ poem is doing, through a combination of its inseparable yet distinct functionalities – and thus not through the myth of the general singular individualized figure of the “I” – can be illustrated metaphorically as the movements of a blind person groping for, with hesitation and uncertainty, and moving along with difficulty, that which it has to feel rather than to name, in order not to give or make meaning,
but to make sense. In fact, as it is well known that Borges suffered from a condition that verged on blindness as he grew older, this sensation lends the poem a magical-ambiguous quality, not in the shape of an aesthetic polish that can be brushed off, but as constitutive of its performance. In short, Borges’ poem confronts us with a performance that re-senses rather than rethinks the animal and its subjectivity. This re-sensing does not stand in binary opposition to thinking, because thinking here, far from being excluded from this re-sensing, appears to operate as one of its modalities. In other words, liminality is not so much perceived in terms of the literal physical mobility of the animal re-sensed, but operates through the mobilization of the modalities of the *dividual* figure of the “I”.

This re-sensing splits the identifying party up in two distinct ways. On the one hand, ontologically, whereby the figure of the “I” is staged as fixed and immobile within the confinement of his house and the tiger is staged as mobile, forever moving. In this ontological staging we can see the allegorical figure of the “I”, the abstract figure of the human at work, extrapolated, as it were, from our being seduced into identifying the writer Borges with the figure of the “I”. On the other hand, if we wish to do justice to the *multiple, heterogeneous, dividual* figure of the “I” performing Borges’ poem, and of which, consequently, the “I” registered as fixed and immobile is only a modality, the identifying party’s supposed (human) subjectivity as ontologically predefined and essentialist shatters into a multiplicity whereby mobility seems no longer ontologically predefined. Taking my cue from Borges’ poem, then, what I propose to do now is to explore whether looking at Heidegger’s tri-partition Man-Animal-Stone, in terms of mobility, in both of its emergent forms I have now discussed, namely ontologically and non-ontologically, might shed a different light on the Human-Animal opposition and offer a way out of the limits an ontologically predefined framework poses.

To begin with, I suggest we do not take anything for granted and look upon Heidegger’s tri-partition Human-Animal-Stone as a strange and arbitrary categorization. It is arbitrary in a most fundamental sense: because, as I concluded in my second chapter, any categorization is necessarily arbitrary. Yet, it is a strange categorization as well, for if we take a closer look at Heidegger’s ontological framework; that is, at the way in which Heidegger fills out the relation of these respective terms to one another, a fourth terms surfaces, the term “world.” In short, the human has world, the animal is poor-in-world and the stone is world-less. If we zoom in on this tri-partition in relation to this fourth term, it immediately becomes clear that the stone is the odd one out for not having world at all. In fact, I would go further and suggest that it is precisely
because Heidegger positions the stone as world-less that the human and the animal, albeit differing in the way in which they relate to world, can be defined in ontological terms in the first place, i.e. in terms of world.

In this view, the attribution of world-lessness to the figure of the stone enables Heidegger to position the Human-Animal opposition within a predefined ontological framework and, hence, is much more important to his framework than Derrida’s deconstructive reading of Heidegger’s Human-Animal opposition suggests. This begs the questions, first, why has Heidegger chosen the figure of the stone to set up his ontological framework? And second, can a reading of the figure of the stone in Heidegger’s tri-partition, other than in terms of world, namely, in terms of mobility, provide us with another outlook on his framework?

It is important to note here that if I have just now referred to Heidegger’s stone as part and parcel of what must be considered an arbitrary categorization, then I do not mean the conservative kind of arbitrariness that plays out the binary objective/subjective, since – as I concluded in my second chapter – there can never be an objective position from which to categorize. By implication, doing justice to Heidegger, one must read this arbitrariness in another way and infer that the term stone is not so much chosen subjectively, much less randomly, but well-informed. This would suggest that his choice for the stone enables him to set up a predefined ontological framework in a way that, let us say the plant, cannot. In other words, if Heidegger, within his tri-partition would have substituted the stone with the plant and have argued the plant to be world-less, he would seemingly have arrived at the same conclusion.

And yet, he has not done so. Thus, we might infer that, first, the figure of the stone, for Heidegger, presents us with something that can be put to work so as to correspond to something else in a unique way. Second, we may recognize that the figure of the stone informs Heidegger’s ontological framework not just by affording the human and the animal “world”, but in a manner that eventually allows him to further distinguish between kinds of beings and the way in which they relate to world, namely as either existing (the human) or merely living (the animal). In an effort to further explore the unique position of the stone within Heidegger’s framework, let us momentarily take a step back and begin by looking at the spheres within which the stone generally manifests itself, both traditionally and within everyday language.

As Jeanne Gaakeer observes, the stone has traditionally served to demarcate spheres of power, both in biblical and juridico-political terms:
Law is fond of boundaries. On the edges of the village in which I live the passer-by comes across two solitary stones. The one reads East of Stone, the other West of Stone. Both indicate jurisdictional boundaries from well before the time that the country of the Netherlands got its current form, both geographically and juridico-politically, as a nation-state. From times immemorial such boundary stones of the law have been used to demarcate spheres of power, indicating the consequences for the people inside the space of their influence, and fending off those deemed outsiders. Examples abound. In the Bible, the book *Deuteronomy* (19:14 and 27:17, *King James Bible*) gives express warnings in order to regulate human relations, “Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour’s landmark (i.e., boundary stone) which they of old time have set in thine inheritance […]”, and to make sure that people suffer the consequences of transgression, “Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark.” In Roman Law, the Julian Law on Agrarian Matters, approx. 58 BCE, instructs magistrates and landowners alike to take good notice of their professional obligations.136

In this passage, Gaakeer points out that the figure of the stone has traditionally served as a symbol of liminality to regulate relations between human beings in terms of space. And I assume that Heidegger was well aware of this unique asset when choosing the stone over, say, the plant. This division of space, however, was not so much discursive, but practical in nature as it was concerned with the allocation of land, with the physical space in which bodies could lawfully move. Hence, if we compare Heidegger’s use of the figure of the stone to the traditional use reflected on by Gaakeer, we may observe that Heidegger has not so much used the figure of the stone in its traditional-practical sense but discursively: to separate the non-living stone from both the living and the existing (the animal and the human). The difference between the traditional-practical division of space, on the one hand, and Heidegger’s modern-discursive division of space, on the other, is that even though both divisions install a juridical order, the former was not ontologically predefined. In fact, the harsh retribution that was promised on unlawfully removing the stone, suggests those boundaries were subject to change whenever power-relations demanded a different division of space.

Now, if we momentarily read the figure of the stone for the way in which it is used within our everyday language, in phrases such as: “his face turned to stone” or “it is written/engraved in stone,” it becomes clear that in both expressions the figure of the stone serves as a token of immobile fixity; as if today the figure of the stone has shaken off its arguably more flexible and practical status it was once afforded by the tradition to which Gaakeer refers. In fact, the latter expression might provide us with a possible clue to where this emphasis on the fixity of the stone as ontologically predefined “originates,” if explicitly not on the tradition commented on by Gaakeer. Indeed, the latter expression almost inevitably calls to mind the Stone Tablets through which God’s Law was communicated to the people. Hence, this expression directs our attention to the function of the stone not so much within, but before (the inauguration of) the traditional juridico-political sphere – in this time before time – in which the stone functioned as an intermediary technical device, as the hardware, if you will, that enabled God to transmit his text.

The immobile fixity of the figure of the stone within this biblico-techno-juridico-political sphere before tradition, at this mythical originary moment, was presented as both everlasting and originary, as the laws of the world God’s (human) beings inhabited. This implies that the figure of the stone was not used in the traditional way Gaakeer invokes, but in very much the same way as Heidegger has done, namely as a token for immobile fixity within an ontologically predefined framework. Hence, Heidegger’s use of the stone can be qualified as non-traditional because he has not worked out a discursive system in which the figure of the stone might be re-inscribed within the modern techno-juridico-political context, but merely substituted, as it were, God’s authority with his own and cast the stone aside. In another sense, however, Heidegger’s framework remains traditional in that it regulates relations between human beings, since the animal, in Heidegger merely living, bears no essential relation to the human being but remains separated from it by an ontological abyss.

For this reason, I will now speculate on what I believe to be the implications of what Heidegger has not done with the figure of the stone. I will do so by following up on the potential that the traditional use of the figure of the stone Gaakeer describes might offer us today. First, by reading against the figure of the stone and the specific way in which Heidegger uses its immobility as an ontological marker. Second, through an analysis of the figure of the stone in terms of a mobility that is not ontologically defined.

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The figure of the stone as an example par excellence of fixedness, of immobility, is key to Heidegger’s reading. In other words, if it seems that Heidegger uses the human to set apart the animal as its ontological other, it is even more true that he has used the stone as a figure of the inert, the immobile, to bind the human and the animal together. This binding consists of a sharing of that which opposes the inert, namely a mobility. Read in terms of mobility, a mobility that operates ontologically through the binary immobile/mobile, this strategy works to construct the human and animal as alike in that they are – in what I consider to be an important in-between moment – after being compared to the stone, but before Heidegger distinguishes further between the human and the animal, on the same ontological level. It is at this stage, after eliminating the stone from the tri-partition, that I propose the problem of differentiating between the mobile human and the mobile animal must have presented itself to Heidegger. Here, I would suggest, the body, which would have the ability to move around, and which binds them together, must be cut out of the equation if there is any additional ontological difference to be established. Hence, the theory of Dasein, the logos, response, deception, let us say language, and the shifting into the background of this bodily connection as potentially a constitutive element of a zone of identification.

In this view, however, there is something odd going on with Heidegger’s position on language, more specifically with the way in which it informs his further distinguishing between the human and the animal in additional ontological terms. As we have seen before, language, for Heidegger, is essentially human and therefore separates the human and the animal ontologically, whereby the first exists as a being “as such” and the latter is merely living. As a first step towards reading this distinction through a mobility that is not defined ontologically, but still on Heidegger’s own terms, I propose that within Heidegger’s framework, once he has cast aside the stone, not the human and the animal, but mobility is split into being “as such”; that is, into existing, on the one hand, and living, on the other.

Now, if, as I concluded before, language as essentially human does not “exist” since we simply cannot define what the essentially human is; and if I have now demonstrated through my analysis of the heterogeneous, multiple, individual figure of the “I” in Borges’ poem that speech is, essentially, a mobility, the stakes change dramatically. In short, if we choose not to read Heidegger on his own terms but in terms of a mobility not ontologically predefined, this would suggest that it is neither the animal, nor language, but speech that (merely) lives. In fact, it is precisely in this sense that I read language, contrary to Heidegger, as essentially nonhuman, and contrary to Derrida, as not essentially nonhuman.
either. Indeed, in my view, language, in Heidegger, when read through the prism of a mobility not ontologically predefined does not “exist” but can only be maintained as speech and, as such, must be qualified as both essentially nonhuman and living. Paradoxically, this would translate back to Heidegger’s framework as being understood, primarily, as essentially animal.

However, since it is impossible to attribute the animal an essence, I propose that we introduce here a different version of Derrida’s animot, namely as the embodied mobility of the living other. This notion of the embodied mobility of the living other opens up to a reading of this living other as not necessarily bound up with what we generally refer to as animal at all. In other words, instead of looking at the figure of the animot in allegorical terms, I infer that what Derrida’s animot is doing when covering and alternatively uncovering its tracks – whether understood literally or metaphorically – is not about response/deception, but, quite simply, moving. This alternative interpretation of the animal in Heidegger, as a category read in terms of mobility, leads me to conclude that the animal in Heidegger, without wishing to definitely qualify it, to name it, effaces itself or, better still, does not concern what Iveson in his comment referred to as an undisconcealedness; that is, a withdrawal from being, but a withdrawal from the animal. In this light, the animal in Heidegger comes as close as it gets to the word before the general singular animal, to the therion: the mobile body to be hunted.

Here, the ontological distinction between the human and the animal in Heidegger collapses. More than that, it no longer makes sense. Not because language is not necessarily essentially human, as Derrida has demonstrated, but because it can only be thought of as a non-existing becoming-animal. This becoming-animal may, but also may not, be understood in a Deleuzian sense. It is Deleuzian because it has nothing to do with what we generally qualify as animal. Rather, it may be read as a becoming that “reveals the ontological primordiality of the in-between.”137 It is not Deleuzian because it may be understood in a far more literal sense; namely, as not yet animal but as a species of Therion, in the manner I used the word species in the previous chapter, i.e. in a deliberate non-specific way by drawing on the etymological root of the Spanish “una especie.” This alternative outlook on the animal in Heidegger does not erase the differences between the category of the human, on the one hand, and the category of the animal, on the other. By contrast, reading these categories in terms of a mobility not ontologically predefined, points to the way in which their difference is constituted by the way in which their space is

defined and contained in the techno-juridico-political sphere of our time. At the same time, it suggests that Heidegger’s ontology may be reliant on a confusion of what mediaeval philosophers referred to as *Metaphysica Generalis* with *Methaphysica Specialis*; between being “as such” and being of a certain kind.

To be sure, setting the stone against both the human and the animal can be read – if considered in terms of mobility – as primarily a categorization of the being “as such” of the latter two terms, which, consequently, should have limited the theoretical space for Heidegger to distinguish between the human and the animal to a preoccupation with their being of a certain kind. This, in my view, is precisely what happens if we agree that existing in Heidegger does not “exist” when his tri-partition is read in terms of a mobility that is not ontologically predefined. It is here that we encounter in Heidegger what we have come to recognize as a categorization of difference running through all the discourses we have explored so far and which, ultimately, in one way or the other installed the Human-Animal opposition. In Heidegger, this categorization of difference is effectuated by a surreptitious replacement of a traditional ontology with a literary strategy, which seemingly enables a further distinguishing into ontological levels, a procedure that we usually encounter in literary genres that range from the literary fantastic to the postmodern.138 This strategy resembles what can be illustrated metaphorically by the unpacking of matryoshkas, whereby the human is hierarchically one up in the rank and has the ability to look down at the animal below. The animal cannot perceive the human but can, at most, perceive what is below as well, which, from the point of view of the human in question, can indeed be qualified in Heideggerian terms, namely as a captivity.

*The question becomes what do living and mobility mean? More concretely, what should we make of the idea that the stone does not live for its immobility? Indeed, if we momentarily substitute the stone with the plant, we might infer that the distinction between living and non-living is not as solid as we generally think and as Heidegger’s particular choice for the stone suggests. Let us consider, for example, what Luc Ferry has to say about the figure of the plant and its relation to living about three ages ago:

At the end of the eighteenth century, life was apt to be defined as “the faculty to act according to the representation of a goal” – which is why it

was believed that plants, which cannot move “because they have their stomachs in the earth,” were not living beings. This definition no longer has a place within the structure of contemporary sciences. It nonetheless continues to have meaning from the perspective of a phenomenology of the sign of freedom: finalized movement, or action, if one prefers, remains for us the visible criteria of animal nature, what distinguishes it from unorganized matter, but also from the vegetable world – which is why the intermediaries, anemones or carnivorous plants, are still somewhat mysterious to us.\textsuperscript{139}

This passage illustrates how the conventional understanding of an anthropomorphism, namely as endowing the nonhuman other with essentially human attributes, must be viewed, as I concluded in the first chapter, as a personification – at most, a trope. In short, the plant might be attributed something essentially human, like a stomach, but this attribution does not warrant a qualification of it as living, which ruptures the idea of the human and the living as strictly bound up with one another. Instead, the categorization of the plant into the domain of the non-living results from an anthropomorphism in the strict sense, as the supposed immobility of the plant is taken as given to imply its non-living. In other words, what my momentary substitution of the figure of the stone with the figure of the plant is telling us, is that what matters in demarcating the living from the non-living depends both on the specific techno-juridico-political sphere we inhabit, and on a concurrent and ontologically predefined conceptualization of mobility.

As Ferry notes, the idea of a non-living plant has no place in contemporary sciences. This must, of course, be attributed to the fact that science and technology, and their marriage in our modern techno-juridico-political context, have enabled us to learn more about plants than ever before. In cinema, for example, the capacity to permanently record over a longer period of time and then to play what has been recorded at a very high speed, by using the narrative strategy of compressing time, has allowed us to meticulously visualize the mobility of plants and of a vast range of other living materials. In this respect, the advance of technology has made it become increasingly problematic to deny that the binary mobility versus immobility is a false one. Rather, we are forced to acknowledge this binary as performing a function for the conventional arbitrary way it operates a demarcation politics and for the specific ontological stage that it might set up in accordance with the requirements of the techno-juridico-political sphere at any give time. But also, I propose, because Ferry’s

\textsuperscript{139} Luc Ferry, “Neither Man nor Stone.” In: \textit{Animal Philosophy}, ibid., 148-149.
specific example of the changed ontological status of the plant demonstrates that pertaining to the category mobile or immobile and, hence, living or non-living, would just seem a matter of speed or flow, which opens up space for renegotiating the functioning of those latter terms as ontological markers.

This may be illustrated by contemplating the figure of the sponge, in a sense the historical, biological predecessor of the stone. The sponge, it is estimated, started moving about five million years ago. Until that time, it was immobile for it did not need mobility, because its sustenance circumstances were such that it could filter its food out of the water by staying still. In other words, in order to live, immobility was key. Thus, from the perspective of the sponge back then, mobility did not matter; what did was the context in which it found itself and which enabled its sustenance. In fact, leaving the question of sustenance aside, if only momentarily, could we seriously argue it was not living before it started moving now that scientists have concluded it started moving at some point? This question may seem non-rational, and perhaps even nonsensical, but it is sensible in the manner I have now come to understand sense through my reading of Borges’ poem. Let us therefore contemplate the sense of this question.

If we look at any object in terms of an ontologically predefined mobility that is structured on the binary mobile/immobile, let us say at the sponge I use in my home, it would seem obvious it is not moving, not living, etc. But, when I move from my living room to my kitchen to pick up the sponge from the kitchen table to clean the windows, is the sponge not moving towards me as I move towards the sponge? Is my ability to perceive the sponge moving towards me, or even to perceive the sponge perceiving itself moving towards me as I move towards the sponge, an illustration of my being “as such”, an illustration of my capacity to deceive because my perception pays no heed to the laws of physics, or could it be conceived of as something I do, that I experience, sense and, thus, as a law of perception that is – and this is key to my argument – only corrected or neutralized as a deception by the laws that are supposed to define me ontologically. Of course, this has only been a thought experiment or, better, an experiment of sense, a making sense of experience. The fundamental point is that to ask the question whether the sponge is not moving towards me as well is not to interrogate its mobility, is not to interrogate the laws of physics, if you will, but to interrogate its mobility as predefined ontologically; namely, as operating on the binary immobile/death, on the one hand, and mobile/living on the other.

Hence, what both Ferry’s example of the figure of the plant and my contemplation on the figure of the sponge illustrate is that mobility does not
need to be defined ontologically, with immobility, on the one hand, and mobility, on the other. Rather, an arguably more convincing case can be made for conceiving of mobility as speed, flow, as movement in space, of being as sharing this space with others rather than of being in the world. Yet, if today we must reject the idea of the plant as not living for its immobility, it is not because we have now suddenly let go of living/mobility as ontologically predefined. Rather, as Ferry rightfully points out, our modern conception of the living, as denoting a capacity for finalized movement and the ability to act freely, is still part and parcel of our collective and juridical imagination. In short, the idea of the living is still structured around an ontologically predefined conception of mobility and the categorizations such a conception implies. In this view, the expansive model, with its potentially endless demarcation problem on the difference between the human and the animal is, again, only a troublesome symptom of a much wider problem. This problem, I suggest, is that we are still conceptualizing the living in the ontologically predefined vocabulary of a liberal rights discourse, which cannot accommodate a living mobility in terms of speed and flow, let alone address the question of the animal from within the juridical sphere we inhabit today. Let us further explore this issue through a contemplation of the workings of, on the one hand, the binary living/non-living and, on the other, the binary living/dying and the way in which they function within our modern techno-juridico-politico context.

I choose to do so by looking at what Jonathan Safran Foer identified as the animal we are most directly involved with today, the animals that we eat. As we observed earlier, these animals, which we use for our sustenance, for living, for our lifestyle, are, in more than 95% of all cases, factory-farmed animals. These are the animals that, whilst qualified ontologically as living, cannot be murdered, but can only become the objects of what Derrida in “Eating Well” has called a “noncriminal putting to death.” For Derrida, this noncriminal putting to death resulted from what he envisaged as the sacrificial discourse of carnophallogocentrism. Without wanting to rehearse Derrida’s elaborate and complex line of thought on this issue, suffice it to say that what Derrida meant by this was a discourse that constructs human subjectivity by allowing for the noncriminal putting to death of animals and, hence, of those humans that, at any given time, lose their human status and are viewed as animals.

At first glance, this noncriminal putting to death seems to be an adequate description. In light of my present discussion on mobility, however, I find Derrida’s specific terminology problematic; first, because his noncriminal putting to death performs a revitalization of the ontological operation of the binary living/death within his very critique, which ultimately must render it
ineffective on a discursive level if not in practice. Second, because the term noncriminal revitalizes the vocabulary of a liberal rights discourse with its intentional subject. More specifically, it narrows the discussion on the animal question down to the punitive sphere of penal law, in which, generally, a wrong committed must be intended to be judged as criminal.\textsuperscript{140} Third, and more importantly, because the noncriminal putting to death of animals in factory-farms today cannot be qualified as criminal, as Derrida’s provocative indictment seemingly wants to suggest, since, as we have seen in my second chapter, our very laws facilitate it. More specifically, nobody can seriously maintain it is noncriminal for being non-intentional. On the contrary, the putting to death of animals in the factory-farming-industry is intended from the beginning to the end of the process, which suggests, again, that the animal today refuses to be conceptualized within a liberal rights discourse on which an expansive model is centred.

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In this respect, I believe mobility, as a predefined ontological marker, has come back to haunt us today in a most literal way as our factory-farmed animals are not (living) animals in any traditional sense. Instead, we have now seen that they are always already defined ontologically as non-living, immobile and uniform material, both for the discursive and physical spaces in which they are cramped. I am not talking here about the literal and metaphorical spaces that enfold them and that operate as systems that effectively register their bodies as immobile bodies. These “enfoldings” do not just have an impact on those bodies by preventing them from moving and by destining them for immobility, but they also effectively diminish and alter the spaces their very bodies occupy. If we reframe this issue in Heideggerian terms, it is as if these animals are not only not allowed to exist, but it is as if they are not even allowed to be captive. In short, the processing of the “animal” that concerns us most directly today, and what happens within this process, cannot be thought as a noncriminal putting to death, because the ontological stage such a critique sets when read in terms of mobility, implies the animal has stopped living ever since the invention of factory-farming, and thus can no longer can be put to death, let alone be murdered. Hence, the figure of the animal contemplated by Heidegger, but also the figure of the animot proposed by Derrida, i.e. the figure of the animal as living, no

\textsuperscript{140} For a classic elaboration on the general tendency to understand law as primarily concerned with the punitive sphere and for a convincing argument why law should not be conceived of in such a reductive manner, see: H.L.A. Hart, \textit{The Concept of Law} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).
longer bears any resemblance to what we must conceive of as the animal for the way it is used within our modern techno-juridico-political context.

Overlooking the stretch from the earliest domestication of animals towards the only very recent advent of factory-farming, then, the animal has stopped living. It has stopped living in a double sense, ontologically, and in that it does not speak to us anymore. In the process of its processing, it has become a genetically engineered creature for which no suitable vocabulary, neither philosophical, nor juridical, has emerged. Instead, we are still thinking about the animal that has not yet withdrawn itself from itself and from the sphere of our experience. In fact, perhaps the best way to grasp the status of the “animals” today is by citing a supporter of Chelsea Football Club overheard complaining about his breakfast at an Amsterdam hotel: “I had a croissant and a carrot for breakfast. A carrot is not food, it is what food eats.” In my view, this comment illustrates the status of (factory-farmed) animals in a most acute way, namely as non-living raw material. At the same time, the idea that food eats is astonishingly poetic and, as such, catches us off guard, working to playfully complicate the ontological dimension as that which eats is generally conceived of as sustaining itself, as living. More importantly, it testifies, once again, to the totalitarian streak we identified within our modern discourse on factory-farming. This totalitarian streak appears to be constituted by the way in which factory-farmed animals are demarcated as other than animals as a result of the complementary juridical and popular performances of this demarcation, rather than because of an underlying philosophical split between factory-farmed animals and other animals. On the contrary, we may conclude that within a modern animal rights discourse, the animal is still framed in terms that we have found to be still very traditional, namely as living.

The point here, then, is that reading against Heidegger and Derrida as, I have done, now seems to require an urgent worrying of the concept of the animal in our time. Indeed, if even the animals that we are most directly involved with are not the animals we still take them to be, and if our pets are anthropomorphized creatures with a humanlike individuality, and hence, can be murdered, where on earth do we encounter the animal today? One might argue that the living animal we are discursively accommodating may still be encountered in wildlife, in those exotic creatures, tigers, for example, that are not mediated by human contact. But are there any such creatures left? Of course there are, but could they be accommodated under the category animal as it stands? Apart from the nostalgic and worn out “return to nature” attitude this would imply, a critique I do not wish to rehearse here, I do not think we should make the exception the rule, since it would not help us to renegotiate the space
of the animal. Moreover, the sad fact remains that whenever we are confronted with “wildlife” it is more often than not because a “species” is on the verge of extinction, at which moment they are undergoing the same fate as our pets, in that they become individualized humanlike beings that merit legal protection under a liberal rights discourse.

This conclusion, that the animal does not seem to exist or live anymore, must have implications for our traditional conception of the human, as it has forever been defined against the animal, both within and outside of the juridical sphere. This implies that we will not just have to worry the concept of the animal but all those concepts, human, animal, stone, again and again before we can even start to talk about animals as subjects of rights. A good point of departure for undertaking this massive task, in my view, and as I hope to have demonstrated, would be to return to Bentham’s footnote and to adopt his commitment to suffering in ways that accommodate a re-sensing of the relations between ourselves with the other within our thinking. In this respect, rethinking subjectivity as speech, whereby speech does not stand in a conceptual relation to language, a matter I purposely left open and wish to leave open here for others to explore, may be a thread to follow. One way of addressing this matter would be, again, to return to Bentham’s footnote: “But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old” and start with the recognition that we do not have to read this line as accommodating a potentially endless demarcation polemic within the confines of an expansive model. Rather, we could begin our exploration of subjectivity as speech by choosing to take Bentham’s notion of a “conversable animal” in a more literal way and original Latin sense, not so much of *conversare* but of *conversari*: to keep company with.

6. Conclusion

In this final chapter, I have taken up the continuity of the traditional Human-Animal opposition within an expansive model. In previous chapters, this appeared to be symptomatic of the way in which the question of animal rights is theorized in our time. It has become clear that this continuity of the traditional

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Human-Animal opposition stems from an underlying demarcation problem that cannot be resolved as long as we think through the question of the animal from within a framework in which the stakes are set by tradition. This is evidenced by my analysis of the way in which Derrida deconstructed the Human-Animal opposition in Heidegger through the notion of *animot*. More specifically, my close reading of Derrida has shown that even the deconstruction of this Human-Animal opposition is not enough if we wish to take on the question of the animal in a manner that may accommodate its position in our modern political techno-juridical context.

In order to open up space for renegotiating the limits posed to our thinking through of the question of the animal, I have, in this chapter, radicalized my concern in the previous chapters with demarcation as a performative act constituted by tropological forces that constitute different types of allegorical reading. My strategy here has consisted of an attempt at moving beyond deconstruction by moving before it, an effort which has forced me to shift my focus from the tropological forces that sustain demarcation as performative acts towards an exploration of the way in which language is conceptualized within our thinking through of the question of the animal.

My reading of Borges’ poem *The Other Tiger* has been key to this effort. In Borges’ poem the relation between the human and the animal appeared to be complicated through the utterances of the figure of the “I” that operate the poem. My analysis of the complex roles of the figure of the “I” in Borges’ poem has ultimately led me to qualify this figure of the “I” as a dividual, multiple, heterogeneous “I,” which, as a poetical figure of mobility, operates various modalities of sense. I have then contrasted this poetical figure of the “I” with the way in which the philosophical figure of the “I” as a general singular has been taken up in relation to language in Derrida’s deconstructive reading of Heidegger. This has led me to conclude that the question of response, on which Derrida’s deconstructive reading of Heidegger was centred, is perhaps not the most important question to ask if we want to move beyond the endless renegotiating of how to demarcate the human from the animal that characterizes our modern animal rights debate. The question of response has appeared to be a question that, in its own specific way, installs a demarcation problem. It does so, not so much because the difference between reaction and response must ultimately remain undecidable, as Derrida rightfully argued. Nor does it do so because it ultimately comes up against the question of consciousness, as I argued. More fundamentally still, the demarcation problem it installs appears to stem from the fact that the question of response in Derrida’s reading – even though Derrida radically redefines response – remains indebted to a preordained traditional framework whereby language is registered as a concept
that can be abstracted from speech and which, therefore, cannot offer a way out of the Human-Animal opposition and its insistent demarcation problem.

For this reason, I propose that we must think language as speech if we want to re-sense, rather than rethink, the question of the animal. It has not been a matter of denying the possibility of understanding language as a concept that can be abstracted from speech. Rather, I propose that our thinking through of the animal question in our modern political juridico-technical context demands an imaginative and counterintuitive leap of faith that consists of thinking through language as speech if we want to do justice to the dividual, multiple, heterogeneous figure of the “I,” and if we wish to move away from the traditional Human-Animal opposition and the general singular figure of the “I” that has appeared to govern it. Given the fact that in this same modern political juridico-technical context the traditional boundaries are increasingly under strain, and again taking my cue from Borges’ poem, my subsequent proposition has been that we must begin to rethink the Human-Animal opposition in terms other than those of the opposition itself and, hence, must look for a missing third.

I have attempted to bring in this missing third by re-introducing the figure of the stone that Derrida, in his reading of Heidegger, left unturned. In an admittedly highly speculative gesture I have reconsidered Heidegger’s tri-partition Man-Animal-Stone, which has led me to contemplate that the question of the animal cannot be taken on within a framework that is centred on an ontologically predefined mobility as opposed to immobility. I have then steered my argument back to what has gradually become my main object of concern in the preceding chapters, namely the performative instances of language – both within the popular and the juridical sphere – that operate the demarcation policies that discursively sustain the incomparable suffering of the vast majority of animals, which are factory-farmed animals. This is why it seems appropriate to end this final chapter by offering some remarks on factory-farming, which I have come to view as the most challenging issue within the animal rights debate.

To begin with, if, today, factory-farmed animals are imagined as raw, organic material, as food, the legal thinking through of the subjectivities of animals seems pointless. Not just because, as Gary Francione has observed elsewhere, we eat animals and because they are legally our property, but, as I hope to have demonstrated through my analysis of Heidegger’s tri-partition, because there is no juridical language available for addressing the subjectivity of the non-living. In this respect, the language of a liberal rights discourse with

its autonomous individual, its intentional subject on which the expansive model is centred is only one side of the issue. A more fundamental side is the juridical categorization of the animal that follows from characterizing the animal in terms of world, for, as my reading of Heidegger has shown, any categorization in terms of world cannot but install a juridical order in which the category animal is ontologically predefined both as living and as standing in a relation of deprivation to the human. This, as I have established in the previous chapters, would indeed be the case within an expansive model as it masks the hierarchical subjection of the animal-other by presenting itself as a system of equality. In this final chapter, I have established that a non-ontological outlook on living, which becomes unavoidable if we want to think through the question of the animal from without the Human-Animal opposition, unmasks the way in which the animal is performed as living since our modern animal rights discourse effectively does not even allow the animal to be captive.

The huge gap I identified between the way in which animal rights discourse registers our treatment of factory-farmed animals, both discursively and physically, is evidenced by our modern thinking through of animals across the political spectrum. Effectively, this spectrum is constituted by, on the one hand, those advocates of a limited legal protection of factory-farmed animals by way of rights, for example, to avoid more suffering than what is considered strictly necessary for “the animal” to be produced as food. On the other hand, we may identify the more radical animal rights activists and liberation movements, that wish to abolish factory-farming altogether. Both sides face two separate problems. First, they are bound by a liberal rights discourse that cannot address animal subjectivity as other than as in terms of dignity, intentionality, autonomy, etc. Second, when either group does try to appeal to the law within such a liberal rights discourse, let us say, with the admirable intention of protecting factory-farmed animals from unnecessary suffering, their critique becomes part and parcel of the juridical fiction that installs the animal as living. There is, in a non-ontological setting – the setting that I insist is required for thinking through animal subjectivity in the first place – no reason to do so, however, not in our modern imagination of those animals, and especially not in the practice on factory-farms.

143 For an elaboration on this problem, especially with regard to the way in which corporations escape liability for the cruel treatment of animals, and for causing massive environmental damage as the scattered responsibility they assume cannot be addressed by a liberal rights discourse see: Ted Benton, *Natural Relations, Ecology, Animal Rights & Social Justice* (London: Verso, 1993).
In my introduction I proposed that the way in which animal rights are discussed today hinges on an irresolvable demarcation problem that is implied within a discourse that is still very much indebted to a traditional framing of the question of the animal. My wish to intervene in the discussions in order to progress an animal rights debate caught in a polemical deadlock, prompted a radical turn to language. This is why, in the above three chapters, I have explored the way in which tropological formations operate the fundamental juridical concepts implied within demarcation. This strategy ultimately forced me to consider the question of the animal as a problem of language itself, which I attempted through a close reading of Derrida’s deconstruction of Heidegger on animals.

In the chapters leading up to this overall conclusion, we established that the conceptualization of personhood within an expansive model was embedded in a philosophical discourse centred on the concept of dignity, which we retraced – via Kant – to the advent of human rights. In the first chapter, my exploration of the way in which the notion of “person” is performed, rather than taken as given, through a comparison of the trope of personification and anthropomorphism, has enabled me to tease out an important conceptual distinction between anthropomorphism and trope. This has helped me to develop another outlook on person; namely, as a name that is to be understood in a homonymic vein if we want to do justice to the fundamental arbitrariness any demarcation decision within the law implies.

This has led me to conclude that the law, if it wants to come to responsible decisions, must acknowledge itself as “an expert in the unknowable,” since it cannot operate but in an arbitrary way. Hence, instead of compulsively invoking its mythical foundation each time a demarcation decision has to be made, the law should perhaps not address those questions it is not equipped to answer; that is, if it does not want its “natural” arbitrariness to be excessive and, hence, irresponsible. One poignant example of such a dynamic whereby arbitrariness turns to excess has been the prisoner’s council case, which I read through the lens of Barbara Johnson and which offered a striking parallel to the position of animals within the animal rights debate. The different homonymic notion of person I developed not only exposed the fundamental arbitrariness involved in the law’s decision not to grant the prisoner’s council personhood, it also illustrated that the law could not address the prisoner’s council question to get their cigarettes restored but that its decision on the prisoner’s council’s personhood led to the denial of their cigarettes anyway. It is
here that we may find arbitrariness becoming excessive and spinning off into irresponsibility. This irresponsibility became even more apparent when we explored the reasons for not granting the prisoner’s council personhood. It appeared that this decision was motivated by an interpretation strategy of legal texts that were formulated in such a way that there was enough room for the judge to make a policy decision that exempted the prisoners from qualifying for legal protection under personhood.

In the second chapter, we explored the fundamental concepts of harm and cruelty and recognized the way in which those concepts that structure the animal rights debate were performed rather than given. This has become especially apparent within my reflection on the analysis of Wolfsón and Sullivan’s research on the impact of animal cruelty laws in relation to factory-farming in both the United States and Europe. It appears that animal cruelty laws across both continents provide an exemplary case of the type of irresponsibility that is implied within an excessive form of arbitrariness. In this respect, we may now observe that animal cruelty laws generate the cruelty they are installed to protect against as they have appeared to create a legal climate of exemption, which effectively generates its own unprotected animals. My exploration of this climate of exemption for factory-farmed animals has also suggested that those animals we may have expected to be subsumed under the general singular the animal, making up the vast majority of animals, are actually registered as other than animal. This troubles the boundaries between the Human-Animal opposition in a fundamental way.

My subsequent zooming in on the exceptional status of factory-farmed animals through a close reading of George Orwell’s Animal Farm has not just fostered a better understanding of the demarcations between humans and animals, but it has also shown how, within this traditional demarcation, another demarcation, namely between animals, is always already implied and performed in relation to this opposition. Whereas Wolfsón and Sullivan focused on the legal aspects of the climate of exemption that animal cruelty laws installed, I have attempted to explore the underlying forces that discursively install this climate of exemption. This has led me to identify a conceptual gap between harm and cruelty within the juridical sphere that hinges on the impossibility of the law to conceptualize animal dignity. Since this conceptual gap is reinforced by the way in which the relation between harm and cruelty is performed both within and outside of the strictly juridical sphere, but also within the context of the animal rights debate, I have come to qualify the way in which factory-farmed animals are accommodated within juridical discourse as representing a totalitarian streak that has nested itself in the animal cruelty laws. At the same
time, it is constitutive of a much wider variety of disciplinary discourses that operate the biopolitical situation we now live in, globally.

My findings here have not just led me to conclude that animals cannot be accommodated within an expansive model for the endless polemic on demarcation that such a model installs, but also that granting more animal rights is not the solution if we want to live in a world with animals in a responsible way. This is why, in the third chapter, I have proposed other ways of thinking through the way in which we might imagine the relation between ourselves and animals, through a reflection on their victimhoods as other than constructed through the fundamental concepts of harm and cruelty. Here, my alternative and necessarily heuristic notion of “pain” has opened up to imaginative identifications with the victimhoods of animals. These imaginative identifications, rather than having remained indebted to the traditional Human-Animal opposition and all the demarcation problems implied, have offered the prospect of a zone of identification we might share with animals and hopefully spurred the idea that we may try to re-sense our relation in terms of connectivity, rather than opposition, through emphatic readings of the world we share with animals. In this re-sensing of the question of the animal, thinking has by no means appeared to be out of fashion but to operate as an important constitutive mode.

Finally this re-sensing, rather than re-juridifying, of the question of the animal has begged more questions and territory to be explored than I could have imagined when I started this project. What has become clear, though, is that this re-sensing involves introducing a “third” in more than one way. On the one hand, the proposal to introduce this “third” may be understood as a reading strategy, where each time one reads one text through the lens of the other, rather than going to the “source” of a text. This is what I have aimed for in each and every chapter. On the other hand, and still more fundamentally, at a time when the boundaries between the human and the animal are increasingly blurred, this introduction of a “third” appears to be indispensable if we want to renegotiate the traditional Human-Animal opposition that the animal rights debate is still too exclusively caught up in. This is what I have attempted in my final chapter in the shape of a speculative analysis of Heidegger’s tri-partition, which I hope will stimulate further debate.