Chapter 11
The Posthuman Imperative: From the Question of the Animal to the Questions of the Animals

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Abstract Much work in the wake of posthumanism focusses on questions which emphasise and interrogate technology as the key element calling for novel understandings of the world in which we live. In this chapter, we focus on 'the animal question' in geography and philosophy as the provocation setting in motion other than purely technologically inspired rethinking of existence. We first define posthumanism as an emerging wave of contemporary thought. Second, we discuss how a strand of research in human geography has preferred to mark its work primarily as more-than-human, rather than posthuman. Third, we consider the question of the animal in Jacques Derrida's late production to highlight three interrelated themes (the critique of 'the animal' category, the uniqueness of individual existence and violence), which we use as roadmap for considering how animal geography has been at the vanguard in calling scholars to rethink and rewrite the world by challenging humans' exceptionalism. We conclude by briefly recalling the need to interrogate what animals want.

Keywords Animals · Animal geography · Farm animals · Derrida · Biopolitics · Posthumanism · More-than-human

Introduction

In this chapter, we argue that geography is a discipline that has contributed to the establishment of posthumanism as a current, key approach in the social sciences. In so doing, we focus on how human geography has started to re-configure itself as more-than-human in the mid-1990s and we point to the role that animal geography

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has played in contributing to what North American philosopher Wolfe (2010, p. xix) calls "the posthuman pursuit [of] animal-studies".

Animal geography represents a thriving subdiscipline of human geography, which in the last twenty-five years has been contributing to the establishment of a wider field of knowledge known as human-animal studies. This is an area of research with a strong intradisciplinary character, which has emerged in Anglo-American academic debates to 'give voice' to those non-human animals that the social sciences have long confined to the margins of their research. As American geographer Julie Urbanik demonstrates in opening her introduction to the geographies of relations between human and non-human animals, despite their invisibility, these other-than-human creatures are constantly present in our daily lives, in different forms and with different roles:

> [a]nimals surround me right now as I write these words: Inside are three cats; sculptures of elephants, cats, water buffalo, frogs, birds, and an octopus; photos of cheetahs, elephants, seals, giraffes, and all sorts of birds; and a painting of coyotes. Pieces of animals decorate nearly every room (all found!) – bird nests, a porcupine quill, bison fur, a wild-turkey eggshell, too many feathers, a chip from a tree that had been visited by a beaver, seashells, pieces of turtle shell, a jaguar whisker, and the skeletal mouth of a sea urchin. Outside there are butterflies, a huge spider that lives by the porch light, mosquitoes, blue jays, cardinals, three species of woodpeckers, three species of finches, nuthatches, worms, crickets and other creepy-crawlies and creepy-fliers, starlings, humming-birds, chipmunks, squirrels, and occasionally our resident opossum, a Cooper's hawk, and the neighborhood bully cats. Furthermore, there is milk and cheese in the refrigerator, cat food made of cows, chickens, turkeys, salmon, and tuna, honey, leather shoes, a leather softball glove, and household products that have been tested on animals (Urbanik 2012, p. xi).

It should be noted that much work in the wake of posthumanism has tended to emphasise how it is technology that matters in changing both the world and the theoretical approaches we mobilise to explore it, thus sometimes implying that posthumanism is a new era in which humanity is entering. In focussing on animals in philosophy and geography, in this chapter, we suggest that posthumanism is not an historical moment but a wave of thought that helps us to rethink our theoretical frameworks and to decentre what we research beyond and besides 'the human'. We first discuss what we think posthumanism is, and then, we move on to consider how geography has approached what we call 'the posthuman imperative'. We then emphasise how, in the wake of Jacque Derrida's late production, 'the animal question' becomes crucial in philosophy (and beyond) for rethinking our categories and contemporary existence. In the last part of the chapter, we emphasise that in human geography animals have been at the core of a thriving body of work since the mid-1990s, and we highlight that this strand of research has found its inspiration in an eclectic pool of scholarly debates, which include ecofeminism, cultural studies and actor–network theory.

The Posthuman Imperative

Blade Runner, a cult movie inspired by Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids dream of Electric Sheep?*, opens with a scene in which the humanity of an individual is questioned using a machine reminiscent of polygraph. The film came out in 1982 and was set in November 2019. Thirty-eight years ago, questioning the humanity of individuals was primarily associated with the realm of science fiction. Today, however, the humanity of those who have access to the world wide web is interrogated on an everyday basis, as surfing the internet is often interrupted by captchas (Braidotti 2019, p. 1).[1]

Questioning people's humanity is nowadays both a matter of fact in our mundane activities and a concern in academic debates, as the increasing visibility of works marked as posthuman demonstrates. Although very different scholars use the term 'posthuman' as their signature, it can be broadly argued that their work contributes to shaping posthumanism as a wave of thought which is moving towards three main, interrelated directions: the demise of binary thinking, the overcoming of anthropocentrism and the rethinking of the idea of the human.[2]

Posthumanism takes further what Bruce Braun calls a "deconstructive responsibility" developed within post-structuralism (2004a: 1353), namely an approach which, whilst challenging binary thinking, is attentive to how 'the human' is continuously constructed through practices and discourses in politics, philosophies and societies. The attempt to overcome binary thought implies the transgression of modern, dichotomic categories which have produced the Western notion of the human as 'man' and of the world framed as mosaic, split and organised into discretely bounded containers, easily interpretable through the application of classifications organised in oppositional categories, such as mind/body, man/woman, culture/nature, civilised/wild, etc. Posthuman debates influenced by postcolonial, postructural and feminist theories emphasise that current and past practices of discrimination and exploitation are indeed based on the binary opposition of conceptual categories, which are then placed in a hierarchy whereby the first term is presented as being more valuable than the second, and also, importantly, as if each of categories were real, clearly, separated, bounded, discrete entities and essences, divided by an unbridgeable space which, in turn, facilitates the creation of hierarchies based on oppositions. According to Haraway—perhaps the most influential scholar contributing to the development of posthuman approaches in and beyond geography—such dual categorisations "have all been systematic to the logics of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals—in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self" (Haraway 1991: 177).

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[1] It is estimated that, currently, more than four and a half billion people have access to internet. See https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm last accessed 3 April 2020.

[2] A fourth direction which could be added to this list involves taking the materiality of the world seriously, which points to new materialism's rejection of the primacy of the human over the world and to the agential properties of matter (see, notably, the works of Karen Barad and Jane Bennett). For a clear discussion of the differences and intersections of strands of thought often conflated under the umbrella term 'posthumanism', such as new materialism, transhumanism, anti-humanism and object-oriented ontology see Francesca Ferrando's excellent 2019 book.

The second tenet of posthumanism involves a decentring of the human, a move towards overcoming anthropocentrism, namely the practice of discussing and making the world from the invented perspective of 'the human' in general, and of 'man' in particular. Such a move implies an attempt to get rid of 'human supremacy' in our analyses of the world to let other humans' and other-than-humans' voices, perspectives, presences and agencies to emerge. In Western thought, the figure of the human has long been constructed as a male who is, at the same time, located at the centre of the universe/world and at the top of it, in an impossible, imagined position, which is highly problematic as it implies a fictional separation of the human from 'the rest', and from 'nature' in particular. This framing, in fact, allows the emergence of humans in a position of superiority, which justifies the exploitation and management of nature, framed as if it were at their complete disposal. Such a line of thinking has a long history in Western thought. It dates back to Aristotle, intersects with the early Judeo-Christian tradition and Descartes' framing of the body and mind as distinct, and, despite Darwin's theory of the origins of species, it has remained unchallenged until the spread in the 1970s of environmental and feminist movements and philosophies.

Moving beyond anthropocentrism means offering analyses which challenge the humanism's tradition of seeing and framing the world through the eyes of 'man'. As Badmington clearly puts it,

> humanism is a discourse which claims that the figure of 'Man' (*sic*) naturally stands at the centre of things; is entirely distinct from animals, machines, and other nonhuman entities; is absolutely known and knowable to 'himself'; is the origin of meaning and history; and shares with all other human beings a universal essence. Its absolutist assumptions, moreover, mean that anthropocentric discourse relies upon a set of binary oppositions, such as human/inhuman, self/other, natural/cultural, inside/outside, subject/object, us/them, here/there, active/passive, and wild/tame" (Badmington 2004, p. 1345).

The decentring of the human thus is closely associated with Braun's "deconstructive responsibility" and with feminists' critiques of knowledge production mentioned before. It means 'making space' for other-than-human entities, beings and forces as active parts of the planet's histories and geographies. It implies attempting to analyse the world by adopting frameworks which no longer place the human at the centre of the world. It aims to convey interpretations of the world as co-constituted with and besides humans. Animal geography, which we discuss in the last section of this chapter, has been particularly vocal in pointing to how humans have not been the only protagonists of the world's history and geography (see Wilcox and Rutherford 2018), and how they may be seen as just one species and specific organisms amongst many others—as one of the books entitled *Human* (Sleigh and Rees 2020) published in Reaktion Books' series dedicated to animals implies.

Relatedly, posthumanism, as a wave of thought influenced by critical studies of difference and intersectionality, challenges and decentralises the figure of Western human not only in relation to animals and nature in general, but also in relation to all those humans that historically have not been granted the full status of human beings: women, slaves, people with disabilities, some specific ethnic groups and migrants and other more-than-human entities like robots, bots and artificial forms

of life and intelligence, which are increasingly emerging as actors of the world we live in. Posthumanism, then, is an approach that rethinks and repositions the human. For example, feminist philosopher Ferrando starts to rethink the human by building on the work of Judith Butler and argues that the human in not a fixed entity nor an essence, but a performative process. Recalling Simone de Beauvoir, Ferrando argues that "one is not born, but rather becomes human through experience, socialization, reception, and retention (or refusal) of human normative assets" (Ferrando 2019, p. 71). In a posthuman perspective, in fact, there is not one universal human, nor one humanity, there are many humans and humanities. This specific idea, then, points to the necessity of paying attention to the histories, geographies and technologies through which bodies emerge as human or otherwise. In this sense, there remains a lot of work to be done for geographers to explore how different places, languages, cultures and tools shape the ways in which forms of life become specific humans and non-humans, in and beyond 'the West'.

How forms of life become human or otherwise is not a purely human achievement, as Haraway's notions of the cyborg and naturecultures suggest. Or, as Karen Barad would argue, humans do not have ontological privilege over matter (Barad 2003), and they may be seen as specific phenomena that emerge from intra-actions with other elements and forces. Importantly, not only humans can be seen as a hybrid processes, emergent performances which are reiterated, but also other forms of life, elements and categories are not conceptualised as pure essences. For example, robots and technologies of automation, they can be seen as artefacts which mimic human and animal abilities. The robotic industry is currently working to profit from the production of robots with abilities that human body does not have. Also, farm animals and their breeds, which are at the core of our recent work (Colombino and Giaccaria 2015, 2016), can be seen as historical products of human and technological intervention such as artificial insemination and selection, of so-called animal science.

To conclude this overview, the challenge for posthuman thought and research practice is to develop strategies for rethinking and remaking the world, approaches which avoid putting things and people into homogeneous containers, to think through the complicated interconnections, rather than separations, of humans, natures and technologies, to analyse the active presences and agencies of non-human forces, beings and elements and to undermine practices of discrimination and exploitation based on binary modes of approaching the world. The task of posthuman thought is thus to offer respectful and responsible accounts and politics for a world, which is far messier and less controllable than modern, humanist representations have too often produced.

One of the strategies to bypass binary thinking and overcome, at least in part, anthropocentrism is to use theoretical frameworks built on what we call 'transgressive' notions, which do not essentialise, fix or capture the world and its dwellers, human and otherwise, and which, importantly, open up the conditions of possibility for novel ways of becoming. These are concepts able to inspire the reimagination and re-building of a more diverse, plural, more-than-human and, hopefully, just planet. Such notions include, for example, Haraway's metaphors of the cyborg and naturecultures, which point to the hybrid nature of the texture of bodies and

the world, as socio-technical and socio-natural compositions; Latour's ideas of the network, actanct and symmetry, which suggest how agency is spatially distributed and how agents are not just human beings. Importantly, such transgressive notions are to be found in philosophies of becoming rather than being, of movements and emergences rather than essences, namely in the vocabulary developed by radically non-anthropocentric philosophers such as, for example, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.[3] Such philosophies offer what Braun calls "ontological stances that […] provide a sort of 'groundless ground' from which the 'fixing' of the human comes into view as a problem" (Braun 2004a, p. 1353).

Posthumanism, which we understand both as an emerging wave of thought and as a "project to come" (Peterson 2011),[4] draws on a variety of intellectual traditions that span from poststructuralism, postcolonialism, studies of differences and feminism to include the work of scholars such as Haraway and Latour which, in turn, have inspired the emergence of a geography that, as we discuss next, has reconfigured itself as more-than-human.

More-Than-Human and Posthuman Geographies

There seems to be a lot of confusion in the social sciences on what posthumanism ought to be, perhaps because of the variety of streams of thought which have informed its emergence.[5] Yet, (human) geographers seem to have a more precise stance when it comes to configure the relationship between posthumanism and our discipline: posthuman geographies are more-than-human geographies.

In our discipline, the term 'posthuman' enters the geographical debate with two edited works by Noel Castre and Catherine Nash (2004,2006), which follow a session held at the 2003 Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers' meeting, although Whatmore, in her important *Hybrid Geographies* (2002), refers briefly to Hayle's influential work (1999) and Anderson's 2003 paper provides an excellent, explicitly posthuman critique of the figure of the human. From these early engagements up to more recent publications (Legun and Henry 2017; Andrews 2018; Williams et al. 2019), posthuman geographies are equated to what our discipline prefers to call 'more-than-human geography'. Such a preference may be due to the fact that the term posthuman contains a connotation which some geographers have problematised: first, the historicisation of posthumanism and its conflation with the

[3] For a glossary of posthuman terminology, see Braidotti and Hlavajova (2018).

[4] Building on Derrida's idea of "democracy to come", Peterson thinks of posthumanism as an ongoing task for thought which is imperfectible and never fully accomplished. Such an understanding is important also to avoid the pitfall of thinking posthumanism in a chronological manner as a historical era, which runs the risk of forgetting how humanism is at work and of seeing posthumanism as transcending the human.

[5] See Ferrando (2019) for a discussion of the genesis of posthuman philosophy.

condition of contemporaneity; second, and relatedly, the persistence of a problematic dichotomy between what is human and what is not (see Braun 2004b).[6]

More-than-human geography then, an expression used by Sarah Whatmore (2002), seems to be more convincing than the posthuman signature to capture the geographies that many contemporary geographers have been writing. According to Whatmore (2004), who criticises attempts to historicise posthumanism, this approach should deal not with what comes after the human, but with notions of excess. She writes:

> [a]s I sought to argue in *Hybrid Geographies* it is what exceeds rather than what comes after the human, however configured in particular times and places. […] Using various devices to push hybridity back in time, I sought to demonstrate that whether one works through the long practised intimacies between human and plant communities or the skills configured between bodies and tools, one never arrives at a time/place when the human was not a work in progress (Whatmore 2004: 1361).

In sum, 'more-than-human' works as an expression which suggests how there are a number of actors, forces and elements, which are other than purely human that co-constitute the world and deserve theoretical and analytical attention. In commenting on Whatmore's (2002) work, Badmington draws attention to the very language which *Hybrid Geographies* mobilises:

> At various moments in the text, [Whatmore] professes a commitment to what "exceeds" (page 69), what comes to "overspill and undermine" (page 68), "the porous" (page 117), the "unsustainable" (page 33), and that which "disturbs" (page 116), "perverts" (page 162), "unravels" (page 9), or "complicate[s]" (page 1). This, in other words, is a book that hones and honours "the messy heterogeneity of being-in-the-world" (page 147), in the fault-lines of which histories and geographies are made by more than human subjects (Badmington 2004, p. 1345).

Such a language points to how more-than-human geographies contribute the posthuman pursuit of overcoming modern ways of ordering the world, which foster the very human illusion of controlling it. It thus suggests that more-than-human/posthuman geographies have in common with non-representational theory the idea that "world is more excessive than we can theorise" (Dewsbury et al. 2002, p. 437 cited in Williams et al. 2019, p. 640).

Despite uncertainty on the terminology to be used, and before the emergence the 'posthuman imperative' in the last decade, a body of work within geography has paved the way to less anthropocentric understanding of the world. We are referring here to new animal geography, which enters the scene in the mid-1990s and, as we show in the last section of this chapter, is today perhaps the most prolific and vibrant subfield of our discipline. With this body of work, human geography anticipates 'the animal question', which exploded with Jacque Derrida's late production, to which we turn next.

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[6] Castree and Nash (2004, p. 1343) argue that another reason why not so many geographers have adopted the 'posthuman' as a useful term is because such an approach does not seem to be that different from deconstructive approaches which challenge dichotomic thinking.

The Question of the Animal

The mobilisation of 'the animal' as a category to think about human identity has long been present in western philosophy. In Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* animals are framed as beings at the service of humans, and they have a 'voice' to express pain and pleasure, but lack logos to understand what is good and what is wrong. Only humans are recognised as political, moral animals. In Descartes's *Discourse on the Method,* animals are framed as automata that lack self-awareness, mind and speech. In Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, differently from the stone, the animal and the human are put into relation with the world: whilst humans are capable of forming the world, animals are as poor in world; that is to say, they do not have the capacity to "grasp other beings *as such*" (Calarco and Atterton 2004, p. xviii).[7]

In Western, continental philosophy that of 'the animal' becomes a 'question'—namely the category (animality) and the form of life crucial to rethink contemporary existence—only recently, with the success of Derrida's late production and, in particular, with *The Animal therefore I am* (2008).[8] As Calarco and Atterton (2004, p. xvi) note, the Anglo-American philosophical tradition has started much earlier to focus on animals, their political and moral stand: notably with Tom Regan's and Peter Singer's works on ethics (e.g. 1976), also inspired by the emergence of primatology and cognitive ethology's discoveries of animals' abilities to think, communicate and feel a wide range of emotions. However, in continental philosophy, the animal question emerges specifically as a rethinking of philosophy (see Caffo 2014, pp. 19–21), which the success of Derrida's latest lectures sets in motion.[9] As Caffo, notes, in continental philosophy, the question on whether animals are subjects of moral and political consideration (i.e. the question analysed in Regan's and Singer's works) should be seen as just one of the consequences of Derrida's key intervention (*idem*; see also Cimatti 2013, 2020). In the following paragraphs, we point to three themes present in Derrida's work on animality, which have inspired recent human-animal studies and which geographers have contributed to developing in the last twenty-five years.

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[7] For a brief and clear overview of the question of the animal in philosophy see Calarco (2015), for more comprehensive discussions see Calarco (2008) and Wolfe (2003).

[8] But see also Derrida's interview with Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) and his last lectures published in two volumes (2009, 2010).

[9] In continental philosophy, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Jean-Luc Nancy, for example, rethink existence in a more radical non-anthropocentric manner than Derrida. However, animality per se has not been at the core of their philosophies. After Derrida, the animal question in Italian philosophy has been recently addressed by Giorgio Agamben, Felice Cimatti, Leonardo Caffo and Roberto Marchesini. Particularly important for human-animal studies, and also with some resonance in geography, is the work of Belgian philosopher and ethologist Despret (2016; see also Despret and Porcher 2007). In Anglo-American academia, the question of the animal has been differently addressed by philosophers such as, for example, Cary Wolfe, Mathew Calarco, Dinesh Wadiwel, Lisa Kemmerel, Ralph Acampora and Kathie Jenny.

In *The animal therefore I am*,[10] Derrida offers a critique of the philosophical continental tradition for having treated animals as 'the animal', an abstract category against which the human has been thought. Even when humans are recognised as animals, their animality is unique and superior to that of other creatures. From Aristotle to Lacan, 'the human' is characterised with possessing a wide range of attributes (e.g. rationality, speech, feelings) that 'the animal' lacks. In Derrida's deconstruction, animals emerge as what metaphysics has removed: animality is a condition of humanity, but which has been deleted through the construction of human subjectivity (Ferraris 2005, p. 99). Importantly, in Derrida's work animals are no longer framed as lacking. It is human language which is unable to capture neither individual animals nor the difference which the encounter with otherness triggers.

One of Derrida's recurring critiques concerns the mobilisations of categories to think about encountering otherness:

> the usage, in the singular, of a notion as general as "The Animal", as if all nonhuman living things could be grouped within the common sense of this "commonplace", the Animal, whatever the abyssal differences and structural limits that separate, in the very essence of their being, all "animals", a name that we would therefore be advised, to begin with, to keep within quotation marks. Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite article ("the Animal" and not "animals"), as in a virgin forest, a zoo, a hunting or fishing ground, a paddock or an abattoir, a space of domestication, are all the living things that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers. And that is so in spite of the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee, the camel from the eagle, the squirrel from the from the tiger, the elephant from the cat, the ant from the silkworm, or the hedgehog from the echidna (Derrida 2008, p. 34).

Human language, in other words, is unable to simultaneously approach and be respectful of alterity. There is a profound diversity not just between species, but between individual singularities, which Derrida discusses in his famous encounter of the cat. Here, the philosopher remarks the fact the cat is "real": it is not "an allegory for all the cats on earth, the felines that traverse myths and religions, literature and fables" (Derrida 2008, p. 6). The emphasis is thus on the singularity and uniqueness of the encounter with a specific, animal form of life. The cat looks at the philosopher as he stands naked. Nakedness is a propriety which is thought to pertain only to humans, as it is thought that only humans can feel shame about their undressed bodies. The cat's gaze encountering the philosopher thus disrupts our certainty about a number of categories such the self, the other, the human, the animal (Calarco 2008).

Derrida's account of the encounter with his specific, real cat serves to show that "the animal", as universal category, makes little sense other than having the function of perpetrating the violence of categorisation and subjugation of other sentient creatures. Derrida coins and often uses in his lecture the neologism *animot*, which plays with the assonance with *animaux* (animals in the plural), indicates that 'animal' is a *mot*, a word, which captures an immense variety of forms of life in a single category

[10] *The animal therefore I am* is the title of one part of a seminar Derrida conveyed in 1997 at a conference in France dedicated to his work.

as if they were the same. In other words, *animot* works as a *Leitmotiv* of how our language, which informs how we interpret and make the world, is not able "to take into account the singularities without categories of which one wish to discuss" (Caffo 2014, p. 21).

Derrida points to how enroling animals in philosophical thought only through negativity (i.e. by framing them as beings who 'lack' and by depriving them of what is understood to be essentially and uniquely human) is profoundly violent. Such violence is the result of the usage of human language (and subsequently of its limits), which imposes itself on the world and its beings. Yet, violence does not stop at the register of language, as it reverses on the fleshy materiality of existence. Derrida in fact talks about "the war against animals" waged in the last two centuries for nourishing humans and improving their well-being. The philosopher argues:

> This war is probably ageless but, and here is my hypothesis, it is passing through a critical phase... To think the war we find ourselves waging is not only a duty, a responsibility, an obligation, it is also a necessity, a constraint that, like it or not, directly or indirectly, no one can escape (Derrida 2008, p. 29).

The violence towards animals is then something to which one cannot be indifferent, and which precipitates the philosopher's thought, as he finds Jeremy Bentham's famous question much more appropriate for developing his critique of continental philosophy's anthropocentrism:

> the question is not to know whether the animal can think, reason, or speak, etc., something we still pretend to be asking ourselves (from Aristotle to Descartes, from Descartes, especially, to Heidegger, Levinas, and Lacan, and this question determines so many others concerning power or capability [*pouvoirs*] and attributes [*avoirs*]: being able, having the power or capability to give, to die, to bury one's dead, to dress, to work, to invent a technique, etc., a power that consists in having such and such a faculty, thus such and such a capability, as an essential attribute). […] The first and decisive question would rather be to know whether animals can suffer. Once its protocol is established, the form of this question changes everything… [It] is disturbed by a certain passivity. It bears witness, manifesting already, as question, the response that testifies to a sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able. The word can [*pouvoir*] changes sense and sign here once one asks, "Can they suffer?" Henceforth it wavers… "Can they suffer?" amounts to asking "Can they *not be able*?" (Derrida 2008, pp. 27–28, emphasis in original).

More than pointing to the possession of, or lack of thereof, specific faculties (e.g. the ability to think) which would suggest a reflection towards the existence of a discrete subject, the question about suffering signals instead the emergence of a relationship with the other. It is the inability not to suffer that demands ethical attention: "the capacity for suffering, then, indicates an incapacity, an inability, or a radical passivity that is prior to all capacities, an incapacity that problematizes every recourse to reason, language, or any other capacity" (Meighoo 2014, p. 56) that would render 'the human' superior to 'the animal', conceptually and materially.

As Calarco (2008, p. 349) argues, Derrida points to how "the 'lack' of human language among animals is not in fact a 'lack' or privation. To think difference privatively, which is the dominant way of thinking found in Heidegger's and Levinas's discourse on animals, is the dogmatic and anthropocentric prejudice that Derrida's

work on the question of the animal is aimed at overcoming". This is an important point because, as Henry Buller notes (2015), the lack of language has long constituted the impossibility for animals to enter the domain of social sciences as actors which partake in society and world-making.[11]

In sum, with the work of Derrida, animals are no longer forms of life that lack something: it is human language which is unable to ethically capture the singularity of beings, which clearly emerges when alterities encounter each other. Relatedly, mobilising 'the animal' is also profoundly violent as it does not do justice to the multiple and diverse forms of life which are rendered homogeneous within this category.[12] Such violence is not only symbolic, but it has material consequences as non-human animals have long been naturalised via the category as inferior forms of lives which can be killed. Furthermore, intensive animal farming is quickly spreading around the world and represents a factory of immense suffering for animals, to which humans can no longer be indifferent. The lives and the deaths of animals are no longer obvious, natural facts which humans can take for granted, they become matter of debate and enter the realm of ethics and politics. Finally, and perhaps here lies the turning point for continental philosophy, for the first time with Derrida's work, animals emerge as agents that act in the world: they no longer are the object of a gaze, they are subjects able to observe the world, that precipitate thought and, through their suffering, also provoke ethical action.

It should be noted that Derrida is not interested in thinking about abolishing the distinction between humans and animals. Whilst Calarco (2008) is uncertain about the reasons for Derrida's refusal of abandoning the separation, it can be speculated that this might be because the French philosopher is primarily interested into difference and its politics, into complicating the ways in which otherness is encountered

[11] It should be noted that Derrida in opening his lecture he alerts his audience that of the animal is not a novel question he addresses but one which goes back to his early work, including his rethinking of language though his *notion of* grammē (see Senatore 2020). He briefly gestures back towards a non-anthropocentric understanding of language as he criticises philosophy's logocentrism: "[the] very first substitution of the concept of trace or mark for those of speech, sign, or signifier was destined in advance, and quite deliberately, to cross the frontiers of anthropocentrism, the limits of a language confined to human words and discourse. Mark, gramma, trace, and *differance* refer differentially to all living things, all the relations between living and non-living" (Derrida 2008, p. 104). As McFarland and Hediger (2009) argue about Derrida's proposition, extending language to non-human animals and thinking them as subjects open up the possibility for animal scholars in the social sciences and humanities to investigate non-verbal, embodied animal communication (McFarland and Hediger 2009).

[12] Derrida's project points to how language is not able to respect, without violating, our encounters with otherness, be these encounters philosophical or otherwise (i.e. transforming animals in objects of knowledge). This is clearer from his interview with Nancy (1991, *On eating well*), when Derrida emphasises that a pure ethical encounter with the other is impossible. As Calarco argues about Derrida: "on his line of thought, violence is irreducible in our relations with the Other, if by nonviolence we mean a thought and practice relating to the Other that respects fully the alterity of the Other. In order to speak and think about or relate to the Other, the Other must—to some extent—be appropriated and violated, even if only symbolically. How does one respect the singularity of the Other without betraying that alterity? Any act of identification, naming, or relation is a betrayal of and a violence toward the Other" (Calarco 2008, p. 328).

(see Ferraris 2005). Subsequently, the dissolving of any separation would make thinking through difference difficult, if not impossible. Relatedly, abandoning the human-animal divide, as for example actor–network theory would encourage us to do, the ethical imperatives towards the other risk of dissolving and, therefore, political action would come to a halt (see Colombino and Palladino 2019). Highlighting that Derrida's project focusses on difference and considers what human, anthropocentric language does to the Other[13] could perhaps explain the lack of curiosity about the cat, which Haraway (2008, p. 20) laments of the French philosopher, also of Deleuze and Guattari's inability to say something about "actual" animals (*idem*, pp. 27–30); a curiosity for other-than human creatures with which animal geography seems to have been better equipped than metaphysics. In the next section, we offer a discussion of emergence of 'new animal geography' and we briefly point to geography's contribution to the question of the animal. The Derridean themes of animals' suffering, their categorisations and the uniqueness of individual animals' lives serve us as a guide through an admittedly very partial discussion of geography's rich explorations of how animals constitute the world we share with them.

Animal Geography: A Very Short Re-introduction

Interest in animals is by no means new to geography. Julie Urbanik structures the history of animal geography into three "waves", to which Canadian geographer Hovorka (2018) has recently added a fourth one (we briefly come back to the fourth wave in the conclusion of this chapter). The first wave includes zoogeography of the late nineteenth century, which studied and mapped the evolution and movements of species in space and time trying to understand how animals adapted to different ecosystems (see Hesse et al. 1937). The main object of research was wild animals (see Newbigin 1913). Domestic animals characterised the second wave of animal geography, whose best-known exponents were Sauer (1969), who was particularly concerned with the history of animal domestication, and Bennett (1960), who invited his colleagues to do research on what he explicitly called "cultural animal geography", i.e. a geography for studying human cultures that engaged with animals in, for example, subsistence hunting and fishing. Yet, Bennett's call did not result into further research and animals were left to physical geography and other natural sciences.[14]

Animal geography emerges again in the mid-1990s. This third wave is the most prolific and lively body of work, which has been contributing to posthuman and human-animal studies. The 'animal question' in geography arises with the convergence of debates in diverse subfields, which include ecofeminism (Emel 1995), rural and agro-food studies and related concerns about the impact of factory farming on animals and the environment (Emel and Wolch 1998), urban and cultural studies

[13] See also Despret's (2020) critique of philosophy's and philosophers' domain of language.

[14] For a more detailed account on early animal geography see Philo and Wolch (1998).

with their troubling of the nature/culture divide (Philo and Wilbert 2000; Wolch 1998, 2002). At the same time, actor–network theory starts to influence geographical scholarship and opens the theoretical door to consider non-humans and their agencies, including animals (see Whatmore and Thorne 1998).

In asking why did animals become in the mid-1990s part of social theory, Emel and Wolch (1998, pp. 1–24; but see also Wolch and Emel 1995) argue that it is the rupture of Modernity's myth of interpreting and making the world as if it were ontologically ordered into powerful hierarchies of dichotomic categories that opens up the space for rethinking the world as more-than-human and, thus, also made by animals. The two North American geographers suggest that such critique of Modernity emerges specifically from feminist and postmodern thought, is put into practice by cultural studies' emphasis on the importance of everyday life as a key terrain of empirical research which, in turn, makes space for animals as subjects of serious academic study. In their account of the emergence of new animal geography, they discuss how under current capitalism animals are increasingly made invisible (e.g. via the removal of slaughterhouses from urban centres, the sophisticated marketing and commercialisation of mass-produced, cheap proteins, which succeed in removing the animal origins of food for human and pet consumption). In discussing "the animal economy" and its consequences, Emel and Wolch emphasise how agricultural protein production has expanded and intensified in space and time. The spread of Western diets to other countries has increased a demand for meat and dairies. Animal production has concentrated in factory farms, with impacts on the environment and humans and animals' health, whilst CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) become places where zoonoses and epidemics develop, and large abattoirs are places of unbearable suffering for both humans and animals (see, respectively, Allen and Lavau 2015a, b; Fitzgerald et al. 2009). Their early account of animal economies (in farming, hunting, poaching, ecotourism, biotechnology, pet-keeping, medical research and development) thus opens up the way for further and important geographical research, which has been animating economic geography (Colombino and Giaccaria 2016; Barua 2019; Collard 2020; Gillespie 2020).

Emel and Wolch's interests in the role of factory farming and a renewed animal geography find inspiration in debates originating in ecofeminism, which seems to be often underplayed in accounts of human-animal studies (Gaard 2011; Fraiman 2012). Critical scholars of difference such as Carol Adams, Lori Gruen, Greta Gaard, Lynda Birke and Josephine Donovan, among others, have long been challenging the humanism implied in conceptualising gender, animality, race and consumption. Carol Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1991) has been very influential in demonstrating how distinctions of gender and species have been used to denigrate women and vice versa. In fact, as Fraiman (2012) argues, ecofeminism and intersectional theory anticipate the critique of social sciences' anthropocentrism, a theme that lies at the core of contemporary human-animal studies, including geography (see also Cudworth 2005).

Today, animal geography is perhaps the most prolific subfield of our discipline, as demonstrated by the eight reports recently published in *Progress in Human Geography* (Buller 2014, 2015 and 2016; Hovorka 2017, 2018, 2019; Gibbs 2020a, b) and other reviews in geography journals and entries in encyclopaedias and handbooks (Mayda 1998; Wolch et al. 2003; Lorimer and Srinivasan 2013; Hovorka 2020; Sellick 2020; see also Urbanik and Johnston's 2017 edited collection of 150 entries). Here, we limit our discussion to the some of the excellent work which has interrogated the suffering of animals, challenged 'the animal' as a category and brought to light how non-human creatures are world-makers, as opposed to Heidegger's famous framing of animals as poor in the world.

The animal rights' movement and the work of philosophers as Tom Regan, Peter Singer and Paola Cavalieri (see, e.g., Cavalieri and Singer 1994) on the moral standing of non-human animals has only in part resonated in animal geography's attempt to explore how animals do matter: politically, morally and geographically. The limited extent to which North American philosophy's engagements with animals has exerted on contemporary animal geography may be due to the fact that in calling for rights and liberation Regan, Singer and Cavalieri have been trapped within the anthropocentric logics that support ideas of the subject, the citizen and juridical person which are at the core of contemporary legal and political systems (Calarco 2008, pp. 313–317). Critical animal geography (Gillespie and Collard 2015) and vegan geography (White 2015, 2019), which prefer to distinguish and characterise their fields as activist scholarship, have in fact drawn inspiration from, respectively, feminist and anarchist thought to show the unbearable suffering of farm animals and their exploitation, and to broadly point to the need to profoundly rethink our relations with non-human animals. Farm animals have been at the core of very important work in geography which has contributed to stretching further Foucault's biopolitics beyond the governance of the lives and deaths of humans to explore the bodies, roles and existences of non-human animals. These work include, for example, the investigation of breed selection, farming practices and the maximisation of animal bodies' productivities (Holloway and Morris 2008; for an excellent discussion of animal biopolitics in agriculture, see Wadiwel 2018), the re-introduction of the wolf in alpine pastures (Buller 2008), rewilding and nature conservation practices (Lorimer and Driessen 2013).

'The animal' as a category has been generally questioned throughout the entire body of work produced within contemporary animal geographies. Initially, geographers have questioned the figure of the animal through work conducted to explore what Philo and Wilbert (2000) notably called "animal spaces", namely the material and symbolic places where humans have placed specific animal individualities and collectivities. Geographers have devoted particular attention to investigate, for example, the places of companion animals (Power 2008; Urbanik and Morgan 2013) and wild animals (Van Patter and Hovorka 2018), the slaughterhouse and the killing of animals for food (Day 2008; Fitzgerald 2010; Higgin et al. 2011; Miele and Rucinska 2015), animals in and outside the city (Philo 1995; Wolch 2002), animals in the zoo (Anderson 1995) and in the farm (Buller 2013; Buller and Roe 2018). They have exposed the ways in which animals have been, at the same time, framed as inferior forms of life and have also resisted such categorisations (see Colling 2017, 2020).

As Buller (2015) argues, early "new animal geography" was informed by cultural geographical approaches that understood, at least in part, animals as representatives of 'Nature' and explored how humans placed or felt animals 'out of place'. In showing how animals also transgress and resist how humans see 'their' places, this work also clearly points to how animals differently exert their agencies in the world.

The agency of animals is further emphasised in work which has explored "beastly places" (Philo and Wilbert 2000) or what Hodgetts and Lorimer (2015) prefer to call "animals' geographies". These are animals' own everyday places and spaces, which they make through their individual and collective cultures and practices. These works focus more on attempting to get at the 'animal side' of human-animal relations, in opposition to work that focus on the human side of such relations. This move implies paying more attention to animals' individualities and personalities, and also their social and cultural life with other animals, including human animals. This body of work follows geographers' recent endeavours in exploring the world in ways which no longer place humans at the heart of geographical enquires, practices and reflections. It also evades treating at animals as an indistinct category such as species and breeds, as it focusses also on animals' individualities (e.g. Bear 2011; Gillespie 2018).[15]

Conclusion: The Questions of the Animals

Novel geographical investigations which profoundly challenge the humanism of our discipline by looking at animal individualities and collectivities and by theorising animals as hybrid emergences and becomings find their inspirations in the work of Donna Haraway, but also in Bruno Latour's rethinking on the social beyond the human, Science and Technology Studies and theories of performance (see Law and Miele 2011). Rethinking animals as hybrid emergences, rather than fixed and essentialised beings, brings current animal geographies in its fourth wave, as identified by Hovorka (2018), and contributes to the further strengthening (animal) geography as a key discipline that nourishes the posthuman endeavour of providing a livelier and more holistic appreciation of the world, without however privileging technology as the main engine for rethinking contemporary thought and existence. In other words, whilst Buller (2014, 2015, 2016) would seem to thin that animal geography is a subdiscipline influenced by the posthuman turn, we wish to propose that geographical curiosity for animals and the more-than-human have, if not preceded, at the very least contributed to paving the way to what we have called 'the posthuman imperative', which is impressing its signature in much work conducted today across the social sciences. As we read it, contemporary animal geography has its intellectual roots *besides* continental and Anglo-American philosophy. In drawing on an eclectic range of debates—ecofeminism, intersectional and cultural studies, science and technology studies and by focussing on non-human creatures as semiotic, material beings

[15] For more specific reviews of excellent work on the diverse themes explored in animal geography see the already cited 'Progress Reports' by Buller, Hovorka and Ginn.

and becomings, animal geography has worked more along the lines of Haraway's curiosity for "actual" animals. More than 'the question of the animal, at stake in geography and human-animal studies are 'the questions of the animals'. That is to say, a move towards trying to "ask animals the right questions", as Despret (2016) notably argued, namely to think of animals as active and material actors who possess, at different degrees, sentience, emotions and feelings and who may have questions for us, to which we must respond. Relatedly, doing research with animals for geographers, today and in the past, has been both an intellectual project but also a political, ethical project calling for more-than-human justice. The challenge is now for geographers, and human-animal scholars more generally, to think about animals in terms of desire, as philosopher and ethologist Roberto Marchesini (2016a, b) does, and reflect on and put into practice appropriate methodologies to ask non-human animals what they want—a question which is too often left implicit, at the margins of empirical research.

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