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Introduction

Balaam's Ass, the Babylonian Talmud, and Critical Animal Studies

REMBRANDT'S ASS

In Rembrandt's "The Prophet Balaam and the Ass," Balaam is at the center of the painting, his turbaned white hair streaming, his red cloak billowing around him.[1] With one hand Balaam pulls his donkey with a rope. In his other hand he holds a club that he is about to bring down on the recalcitrant donkey. An angel stands above Balaam in a pose that mirrors Balaam's. The angel is about to strike Balaam with a sword, but Balaam does not see him. Balaam looks at the donkey, the angel looks at Balaam, each in consternation. The two figures are a physics lesson in potential energy. Rembrandt has captured them at a moment of great dramatic tension.

In between the two human figures is the donkey. She has been brought to her knees, her saddlebag almost level with the ground, her head turned back toward Balaam as she, with terrified eyes and mouth agape, awaits the strike.[2] Is she looking at the angel or at Balaam? Whom does she fear more? In the painting of Balaam by Rembrandt's teacher Pieter Lastman

[1] Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1626, in the Musée Cognacq-Jay in Paris. The image can be viewed at www.museecognacqjay.paris.fr/en/la-collection/ass-prophet-balaam.

[2] The Numbers narrative describes the donkey as "crouched down under Balaam" (Numbers 22:27), which, according to Baruch Levine, suggests that the donkey either had prostrated herself before the angel or was waiting for the angel's command. The crouching is not a consequence of Balaam's blows, says Levine, though that is how Rembrandt seems to be rendering it. See Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4A, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 156–7.

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the angel stands to the side of the donkey rather than above her, so it is clear that the object of the donkey's gaze is Balaam.[3] The ambiguity in Rembrandt's version is only one of the ways in which the painting surpasses his teacher's.

In the lower right foreground of Remrandt's portrait are dark furrowed leaves that suggest the vineyard described in the biblical narrative (Numbers 22:24), while in the far shadows stand the two servants who accompany Balaam (Numbers 22:22), and lit up and on higher ground wait the Moabite dignitaries who have invited Balaam at the Moabite king Balak's behest (Numbers 22:21). But it is the donkey who is meant to occupy the viewer's interest. The angel's illuminated white robe forms the background to the donkey's head and draws the eye to it. The white both of the donkey's teeth and of the documents protruding from her saddlebag match the white of the angel's robe behind them. The donkey's agitated expression contrasts with the impassive, partially obscured face of the Moabites' horse shown in the background. Our compassion is stirred for the donkey so unjustly treated.[4]

Balaam's readers are divided between those who admire him as a rare gentile prophet and those who revile him for his mission to curse Israel and his obstinacy in this scene. Rembrandt's portrait clearly falls into the second camp.[5] For Rembrandt and his seventeenth-century Dutch audiences, Balaam would have represented the faithless persecutors of Christ, in line with conventional Christian understandings of the story, and perhaps also the contemporaneous Counter-Remonstrants in their persecution of the Remonstrants.[6] The donkey is the figure with whom

[3] Pieter Lastman, 1622, in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. For comparison of Lastman's Balaam to Rembrandt's, see Shimon Levy, "Angel, She-Ass, Prophet: The Play and Its Set Design," in *Jews and Theater in an Intercultural Context*, ed. Edna Nahshon (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 14–17.

[4] See discussion of this painting in Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the Female Nude* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 106–7.

[5] See Ed Noort, "Balaam the Villain: The History of Reception of the Balaam Narrative in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets," in *The Prestige of the Pagan Prophet Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam*, ed. Geurt Hendrik van Kooten and J. van Ruiten, Themes in Biblical Narrative Conference (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 8–9. The interpretive division begins already in the Hebrew Bible itself, as Noort discusses; see also the excursus in Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers = [Ba-Midbar]: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 469–71.

[6] This interpretation of the painting is suggested by Shelley Perlove and Larry Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith: Church and Temple in the Dutch Golden Age* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2009), 28–32. The conflict between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants was generated by a difference in views between two professors at Leiden University

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one is meant to identify. She is the Christian in opposition to the Jew, the Remonstrant imprisoned and exiled by the Counter-Remonstrants.

BALAAM'S RIDE

I begin this book with Balaam's donkey as Rembrandt portrays her because she captures the complexity of anthropocentrism in canonical religious texts, the subject of this book. The texts are anthropocentric, yet animal perspectives percolate up. In this introductory chapter I will stay with Balaam's donkey a little longer in order to illustrate the major currents within contemporary critical animal studies, the field on which this book draws. I will then make my way to the Babylonian Talmud, the late ancient literary work prized by Jewish law and culture, which is the primary text for this book.[7] I will lay out the book's purpose, which is to explore the anthropocentrism that structures talmudic discourse and to tease out the animal subjectivities that have gone unseen there. The book's broader goal is to offer some new perspectives on animals and animality from the vantage point of the rabbis.

In the Balaam tale, the donkey is the literal vehicle on whom Balaam rides toward Balak and the metaphorical vehicle through which God teaches Balaam obedience.[8] She will also be *my* vehicle for introducing the central concerns of critical animal studies. As the story begins, Balaam is traveling to King Balak, who is pressuring him to curse the people of Israel (Numbers 22:21). God is angry with Balaam for his compliance with Balak's request (Numbers 22:22).[9] The action

and had torn apart the Dutch Reformed Church at the time that Rembrandt made this painting. While not himself a Remonstrant, Rembrandt had many ties to the group; see ibid., 25. For early Christian understandings of Balaam (key texts are Revelation 2:14, 2 Peter 2:15–16, and Jude 11), see Geurt Hendrik van Kooten and J. van Ruiten, eds., *The Prestige of the Pagan Prophet Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam*, Themes in Biblical Narrative Conference (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 233–302.
Rembrandt had many relationships with Jews, painted them in a surprisingly dispassionate mode given European painting's tradition of grotesque depiction of Jews, and sold this particular painting to a Jew named Alfonso Lopez, so one might plausibly interpret this painting also in more Judaism-friendly terms; see Steven M. Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 82.

[7] On what makes animal studies "critical," see Dawne McCance, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 4–5.

[8] The donkey's role is described this way in Kenneth C. Way, *Donkeys in the Biblical World: Ceremony and Symbol* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 187.

[9] God is angry even though just two verses prior God tells Balaam in a dream to go to Balak. That is one feature among many suggesting to source critics that the story with

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proceeds by patterns of three. The donkey tries three times to avoid the angel (Numbers 22:23, 25, 27). Each time Balaam does not see the angel and is angry at the donkey for her seemingly unwarranted stop. Over the course of the repetitions, the drama intensifies.[10] The angel keeps advancing, the donkey finds herself with less and less room to move, trapped between the angel and Balaam, and Balaam grows increasingly aggressive. The drama culminates in a tête à tête between Balaam and the donkey, whose mouth God miraculously opens. God finally permits Balaam to see the angel, Balaam realizes his error and offers to turn back, but the angel urges him on to his prophetic task now that he has been prepared to speak only God's word. The story is filled with irony[11]: a seer who cannot see, a man more stubborn than his mule, an ass who is anything but asinine.[12] At the very moment that the angel's sword is under his nose, Balaam says in exasperation that, if he had a sword, he would slay the donkey with it – an irony made visual in Rembrandt's painting. By the end of the story, the irony is resolved. The seer has learned to see; Balaam has gone from stubborn to subservient. The ass presumably goes back to being asinine, since we never hear from her again.

the donkey is an interpolation in the larger Balaam narrative. See Clinton J. Moyer, "Who Is the Prophet, and Who the Ass? Role-Reversing Interludes and the Unity of the Balaam Narrative (Numbers 22–24)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 37, no. 2 (2012): 169–74. Moyer himself argues for the donkey episode being an integrated part of the narrative. Building on Moyer's approach but arguing with his conclusions is Amos Frisch, "The Story of Balaam's She-Ass (Numbers 22: 21–35): A New Literary Insight," *Hebrew Studies* 56, no. 1 (2015): 103–13.

[10] On the patterns of three and their intensification, see Way, *Donkeys in the Biblical World*, 183–4.

[11] On the ironies in the story, see Milgrom, *Numbers*, 469. To them can be added the gendering of the characters – the femaleness of the ass versus the maleness of the prophet – which Kirova sees as contributing to the carnivalesque dimensions of the story; see Milena Kirova, "Eyes Wide Open: A Case of Symbolic Reversal in the Biblical Narrative," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 24, no. 1 (2010): 85–98. Kirova points to the role of the ass's female gender in the lesson of subordination that she teaches, and compares the miracle of God's opening the donkey's mouth to the miracle of God's opening wombs (the first observation is seriatim through the article; the latter point is on p. 94).

[12] I borrow that last locution about the ass from Heather A. McKay, "Through the Eyes of Horses: Representation of the Horse Family in the Hebrew Bible," in *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, ed. Alastair G. Hunter and Philip R. Davies (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 138. On the stereotype of the donkey as stubborn, see the cultural history in Jill Bough, *Donkey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

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TALKING ANIMALS

Animals such as Balaam's donkey who speak in human language have a long history in western culture. From the "contest literatures" of the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians in which two animals spar over who is better, to the talking dogs of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* in ancient Rome, right up to Tony the Tiger selling Frosted Flakes, speaking animals would seem to be the ultimate in what primatologist Frans de Waal calls anthropocentric anthropomorphism.[13] Anthropomorphism – the attribution of human characteristics to the nonhuman – is not all bad, says de Waal. The continuity between human beings and other species, however minimal it may be in some cases, means that human beings can use their own experience to understand other species. Yet one must also take into account the many differences between a human being and a chimpanzee, or dog, or bat.[14] De Waal suggests that an anthropomorphism that considers both continuity and difference be called "animal-centric." An example would be recognizing that a dog's "smile" may be expressing fear or submission. Anthropocentric anthropomorphism, by contrast, would presume that the dog is happy. Anthropocentric anthropomorphism imposes human systems of meaning on other species and effaces the systems that other species make for themselves. It is the difference, de Waal observes, between giving someone a gift that *they* would want and giving someone a gift that *you* would want. Animals such as Balaam's donkey who speak in human language are giving us a gift that we would want.[15]

Their anthropocentrism notwithstanding, animals who speak in human language do reflect a genuine desire to see the world from an animal's perspective, Karla Armbruster argues.[16] Balaam's donkey, in my

[13] On the "contest literatures," see Cameron B. R. Howard, "Animal Speech as Revelation in Genesis 3 and Numbers 22," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter L. Trudinger (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 23. On anthropocentric vs. animalcentric anthropomorphism, see Frans B. M. de Waal, *The Ape and the Sushi Master: Cultural Reflections of a Primatologist* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 74–8.

[14] Echoing, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," in *Mortal Questions*, ed. Thomas Nagel (New York: Canto, 1979), 165–80.

[15] See Karla Armbruster, "What Do We Want from Talking Animals? Reflections on Literary Representations of Animal Voices and Minds," in *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing*, ed. Margo DeMello (New York: Routledge, 2013), 17–33. Armbruster cites Erica Fudge, who says that speaking animals in literature say what we want to hear, e.g., Lassie tells us she wants to come home (p. 21). Armbruster also calls speaking animals a form of "speaking for others," a practice conceptualized and critiqued by feminism (pp. 22–3).

[16] See ibid.

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reading of her, is such a case. In her dialogue with Balaam, the donkey reproaches him not only for his physical blows but also for his betrayal of their trust[17]:

> Then the Lord opened the ass's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?"
> Balaam said to the ass, "You have made a mockery of me! If I had a sword with me, I'd kill you!"
> The ass said to Balaam, "Look, I am the ass that you have been riding all along until this day! Have I been in the habit of doing thus to you?"
> And he answered, "No."
> Then the Lord uncovered Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord …[18]

The donkey's opening line challenges Balaam's repeated beatings. All the donkey has done is stop walking. The punishment, if merited at all, is out of proportion to the crime. Balaam retorts that the harm done by the donkey is to Balaam's dignity ("You have made a mockery of me!") and that, in fact, the donkey deserves a worse punishment than Balaam has so far inflicted ("If I had a sword with me, I'd kill you!").[19] The donkey in response reminds Balaam of her loyalty to him ("Look, I am the ass that you have been riding all along until this day! Have I been in the habit of doing thus to you?"). The response seems to put Balaam in his place. His one-word answer "No" is the turning point in the tale. At that moment God opens Balaam's eyes so that he can see the angel. The dialogue between Balaam and the donkey begins with God's opening the donkey's mouth and closes with God's opening Balaam's eyes.

The impact of the donkey's speech on Balaam is due to her (and, obviously, the storyteller's) prodigious rhetorical talents. Most of us in the

[17] To see how the rabbis cleverly fill out the dialogue, see Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105b and discussion in Ronit Nikolsky, "Interpret Him as Much as You Want: Balaam in the Babylonian Talmud," in *The Prestige of the Pagan Prophet Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam*, ed. Geurt Hendrik van Kooten and J. van Ruiten, Themes in Biblical Narrative Conference (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 213–30. One of the more intriguing rabbinic interventions is the claim that Balaam has sex with his donkey every night, the product of a wordplay on the name Balaam ben Be'or that reads it as *ba'al be'ir* ("he has sexual intercourse with cattle").

[18] Numbers 22:28–31.

[19] The Hebrew for "You have made a mockery of me" is הִתְעַלַּלְתָּ בִּי (*hitalalt bi*). The verb's usage elsewhere suggests not light mockery but traumatic humiliation. It is used to describe God's mockery of the Egyptians (Exodus 10:2, 1 Samuel 6:6), the rape of the concubine (Judges 19:25), Saul's fear of what the Philistines might do to him (1 Samuel 31:4), and Zedekiah's fear of what the Judeans might do to him (Jeremiah 38:19). See Milgrom, *Numbers*, 320, n. 71.

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donkey's place would have responded to Balaam with some version of "Can't you see that there's an angel standing in my way?" (Most of us in Balaam's place, for that matter, would have reacted to the donkey with some version of "I must be crazy if my donkey is talking to me," but Balaam takes it in stride.) The donkey never mentions the elephant in the room (i.e., the angel in the vineyard) and instead calls attention to their own relationship.[20] This choice on the donkey's part – and it is a choice, since while God opens the donkey's mouth, God is not said to be putting words into it – is critical to the donkey's lesson to Balaam.[21] Just as the donkey is subservient to his master, so too should Balaam be subservient to his master – God.

While the moral of the story is human obedience to God, the story does not skirt the subjectivity of the donkey. What does it feel like to be a donkey, the story implicitly wonders, saddled and weighed down with cargo, beaten for not going fast enough? When the donkey teaches God's lesson to Balaam, she is also teaching him, and the story's readers, about her experience as a donkey. She may be speaking God's words, but she is also speaking her own. A person can never really understand what it feels like to be a donkey, and the story evinces interest neither in how donkeys normally express themselves nor in liberating them from human servitude. When the story describes the donkey's mouth being opened, it presumes that prior to that moment the donkey's mouth was "closed," even though braying constitutes speech, albeit not a speech in which human beings are fluent.[22] Moreover, the story holds up the subordination of animals to people as a model for the subordination of people to God.

[20] The donkey speaks of her past subservience to Balaam using unusual language (הַהַסְכֵּן הִסְכַּנְתִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת לְךָ כֹּה, *ha-hasken hiskanti la'asot lekha koh*). Milgrom understands the phrase ("Have I been in the habit of doing thus to you?") in the tradition of Targum Onkelos and Rashi; see Milgrom, *Numbers*, 320, n. 74. Highlighting the power dynamics between the donkey and Balaam, Levine renders it as "Have I ever before sought to gain an advantage by behaving towards you in such a manner?" Levine describes his translation as "merely an educated guess"; Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 4A:142. The Rabbis point to the same root's use in 1 Kings 1:2 to describe Avishag's "warming" of David by lying with him at night, and they understand the phrase here to be a reference to the donkey's sexual relationship with Balaam (Sanhedrin 105b; see note 17). The high-flown language of the donkey may be meant to contrast ironically with the one-word simple answer to which Balaam is reduced.

[21] God is described several times later in the narrative (Numbers 23:5, 12, 16) as putting words into Balaam's mouth, but God is not described as doing so here.

[22] Levine misses this when he says that "speech comes naturally to humans, but not, of course, to animals, who are given this exceptional faculty in fables"; Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 4A:157.

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The only challenge that the donkey poses to Balaam is why he does not act more responsibly as a master. Nevertheless, the story's choice to have the donkey speak from her own position as a donkey, even if not in her own language, suggests that at the heart of the story is curiosity about the animal's experience, even if that experience serves human purposes and is wrapped up in human perspectives. It is no surprise that Rembrandt chose to portray the donkey with mouth open, at the moment that she speaks, since this is the moment in the story filled with greatest pathos. In Rembrandt's portrait and in the biblical story itself, the donkey is a vehicle, but she is also more.

CRITICAL ANIMAL STUDIES

Mainstream Jewish understandings of Balaam's ass have resisted seeing her as anything more than a vehicle.[23] Maimonides chalked the whole incident up to a dream.[24] These traditions of reading have solidified and in many cases amplified the anthropocentrism of the ancient texts such that the anthropocentrism seems inevitable and invisible rather than historically conditioned and actively ideological. The posthumanist perspective offered by critical animal studies brings that anthropocentrism to light, making it possible to encounter Balaam's donkey, and the talmudic animals who will be introduced in the chapters that follow, as characters in their own right even as they are trapped in human perspectives and products of them.[25]

The story of animal studies has philosophy as its main character.[26] Matthew Calarco describes a shift within animal studies from its early

[23] Howard, "Animal Speech as Revelation in Genesis 3 and Numbers 22" tries to offset the anthropocentrism with theology: "For the animals to appear only as servants of *human* needs would be an unmitigated anthropocentrism. For them to be presented as agents of *divinity* is another matter" (p. 28). The animal is still a vehicle in the theological model, however.

[24] *Guide of the Perplexed* II:42. See discussion of Maimonides's view of animals in Hannah Kasher, "Animals as Moral Patients in Maimonides' Teachings," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (2002): 165–80.

[25] "Posthumanities" and "posthumanism" are interested in the implications of artificial intelligence as much as in animals. See Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Stefan Herbrechter, *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014). Bringing together the interests in artificial intelligences and animals is "From Cyborgs to Companion Species," in Donna Jeanne Haraway, *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 295–320.

[26] Article-length accounts of animal studies include one oriented toward Continental philosophy – Cary Wolfe, "Human, All Too Human: 'Animal Studies' and the Humanities,"

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years, when Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* popularized the term "speciesism" and advocated for equal consideration for animals, to a second wave, when Derrida's "The Animal That Therefore I Am" reflected on the violence in the homogenizing term "animal" and developed an animal ethics based on alterity.[27] Calarco calls early thinkers like Singer the "identity theorists." They attacked the prejudice against other species at the core of classical philosophy and advocated for the

Proceedings of the MLA 124, no. 2 (2009): 564–75 – and another oriented toward history – Erica Fudge, "A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals," in *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 3–18. Monographs include Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); McCance, *Critical Animal Studies*; Anthony J. Nocella et al., eds., *Defining Critical Animal Studies: An Intersectional Social Justice Approach for Liberation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013); Paul Waldau, *Animal Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); John Sorenson, *Critical Animal Studies: Thinking the Unthinkable* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2014); Nik Taylor and Richard Twine, eds., *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014); Derek Ryan, *Animal Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

Recent readers in animal studies include Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton, eds., *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams, eds., *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald, eds., *The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings* (New York: Berg, 2007); Susan Jean Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler, eds., *The Animal Ethics Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Jodey Castricano, ed., *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008); Aaron S. Gross and Anne Vallely, eds., *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Louisa Mackenzie and Stephanie Posthumus, eds., *French Thinking about Animals, The Animal Turn* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015).

For a brief but useful discussion of the significance of literary studies (like this one) to critical animal studies, see Colleen Glenney Boggs, *Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 19–21. She describes literature as "the site where the relationship with animals is worked out …" where "we confront the irreducible alterity of animals that is the basis for a relationship beyond anthropomorphism" (p. 20). For more on animal studies and literary studies, see Carrie Rohman, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Scott M. DeVries, *Creature Discomfort: Fauna-Criticism, Ethics and the Representation of Animals in Spanish American Fiction and Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). The classic work treating literature's contribution to thinking about animals is J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, Princeton Classics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[27] Matthew Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals: Identity, Difference, Indistinction* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015). This section is an encapsulation of his arguments.

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inclusion of other species within the circle of moral accountability.[28] These theorists changed the terms of philosophical reflection by uprooting human exceptionalism and by stressing instead the features that human beings share with other animals. Singer's arguments against speciesism are, however, themselves rife with speciesism. His assumption in *Animal Liberation* is that while animals may suffer as human beings do, they are inferior creatures in most other ways. Even when corrected for speciesism, critics argue that such an approach remains logocentric, grounding its arguments in appeals to human rationality, attributing the problem of speciesism to an individual's irrational biases, and predicating the moral status of other species on their approximation to human beings. The more similar an animal is to a human, the more likely it is that identity theorists will attribute moral significance to them.

For "difference theorists," associated with the continental tradition and the postmodern rather than the analytic and the modern, the basis of ethics is not empathy with a fellow creature, but encounter with the Other. The animal demands an ethical response not because they are in some way or another the same as human beings (e.g., the capacity to suffer, to have intention, to communicate, and so forth), but because they are irreducibly different. Difference theorists see the roots of species hierarchy not, as the analytic philosophers tend to, in an individual's irrational bias on behalf of his or her own species, but in elaborate and frequently invisible infrastructures of power that maintain the privilege of the human.[29] Difference theorists critique the apparatus that melds all life forms other than the human into the single essence known as "the animal," and they see the human/animal binary as similar and related to other reductive binaries: white/black, male/female, straight/gay, able-bodied/disabled, culture/nature, and so forth.

[28] On the classical philosophical background, see Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993). On the view of animals as *automata* promulgated by Descartes, the "villain" of the animal rights narrative if there were one, see Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1–33. On Descartes's reliance on Aristotle, see Catherine Osborne, *Dumb Beasts and Dead Philosophers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 63–97.

[29] On the distinction between "speciesism" and "anthropocentrism," see Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals*, 25–6. For further on anthropocentrism, see Rob Boddice, ed., *Anthropocentrism: Human, Animals, Environments* (Boston: Brill, 2011).

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