

ARTICLE

Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to a Slaughterhouse¹

Stephen Thierman, University of Toronto

ABSTRACT: The work of Michel Foucault is not often considered in animal ethics discussions, but I believe that many of his insights can be fruitfully extended into this area of philosophical inquiry. In this paper, I present the slaughterhouse as a technology of power that is complicit in the domination and objectification of both human and nonhuman animal subjects. I begin by arguing that Foucault's notion of an "apparatus" is a useful methodological tool for thinking about the constellation of spaces and discourses in which various bodies (both human and nonhuman) find themselves enmeshed. Next, I outline Foucault's multifaceted conceptualization of "power," and I consider whether it makes sense to think of other animals as implicated in "power relations" in the various Foucauldian senses. Finally, I analyze a journalistic account of a contemporary slaughterhouse. Here, I argue that a variety of hierarchies (spatial, racial, species, etc.) dovetail to create an environment in which care and concern are virtually impossible. By coupling a Foucauldian analysis with certain insights developed in the bioethical work of Ralph Acampora, I offer a normative critique of an institution that has pernicious effects on both human and nonhuman animals.

Keywords: apparatus, Michel Foucault, human–animal relations, Ralph Acampora, slaughterhouse.

The convict said he felt cheated. He wasn't supposed to be doing Mexican work. After his second day he was already talking of quitting. "Man, this can't be for real," he said, rubbing his wrists as if they'd been in handcuffs. "This job's for an ass. They treat you like an animal."

- Charlie LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die"

If Foucault had written a book about other animals, I imagine that it would have had a gripping introduction. Rather than beginning with Damians the regicide, he might have chosen to recount the last living moments of a pig on his (or her) way to becoming pork chops and bacon. An image of power at its most bludgeoning, it would be a scene filled with dis-

¹ My title is inspired by Cressida J. Heyes' essay, "Foucault Goes to Weight Watchers," *Hypatia* 21 (2006): 126-149.

memberment, blood and viscera. And rather than juxtaposing this scene with Léon Faucher's meticulous prison schedule, Foucault might have instead chosen to follow a day in the life of a contemporary, urban cat owner. Involving trips to the veterinarian's office, portioned meals for weight control and tooth brushing to ensure optimal oral hygiene, it would present a contrasting image of a power that regulates and normalizes. The ensuing text would have, presumably, tried to spell out how we get from one of these scenes to the other and how power can metamorph from one manifestation to the next.

Of course, Foucault did not write such a book. Thus, it is left to those of us who think his methods and conceptual tools can be fruitfully employed to explore our relationships with other animals to fill in the blanks.² This paper aims to work in that direction.

I. "Apparatus"

In an interview published in 1977, an interlocutor draws attention to Foucault's reference – in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* – to an "apparatus of sexuality" and then queries him on the meaning/methodological function of the term "apparatus." Foucault responds by defining the term in the following way:

a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.³

For Foucault, then, we might say that the description of an apparatus brings a particular "environment" into focus. It outlines a field of interactions that enables a particular kind of experience (or perception). Like a microscope or a hall of mirrors, it causes us to "see" in a particular fashion.⁴

But it is also important to recognize, at the outset, that Foucault's project is not simply descriptive in nature, that is, the exploration of an apparatus is also presented as a means to look at a particular topic in a critical way. For example, Foucault invokes the idea of an apparatus of sexuality to argue that a particular way of thinking about sexuality (i.e. the

² In my ensuing discussion, I will reference many of the theorists who are using Foucault to explore questions related to animals and animality. On a slightly different note, for a selection of essays that aims to bring Foucault into contact with environmental philosophy more broadly conceived, see, Éric Darier (ed.), *Discourses of the Environment*, (Oxford & Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999). Darier's introduction, "Foucault and the Environment," 1-33, provides an especially useful overview of how the different periods in Foucault's thought might be relevant to debates on the environment.

³ Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," in *Power/Knowledge: Select Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books Edition, 1980), 193.

⁴ Foucault's general characterization seems consonant with Jean-Louis Baudry's contemporaneous discussion of apparatuses in the context of film theory. Baudry, for his part, encourages us to turn our attention away from the content of films and to attend, instead, to the "cinematic apparatus" (i.e. the dark room, the projector, the screen, the seats, etc.) that structures our experience of them. See Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," *Camera Obscura* 1 (1976): 104-126.

repressive hypothesis) is mistaken.⁵ When a variety of different elements are juxtaposed – such as the heightened concern with the sexuality of children in medical discourse, in the context of family relations, and in educational institutions – a novel account of the historical emergence of “sexuality” comes into view. The apparatus illuminated by Foucault shows us how an understanding (and experience) of sexuality in a particular historical location is created by the interrelation (and mutual support) of various heterogeneous factors. Furthermore, since an apparatus is “always inscribed in a play of power,”⁶ thinking in terms of apparatuses allows Foucault to highlight the political and power-laden dimensions of those interrelations – dimensions that might otherwise be obscured when we think about a topic as “natural” as our sexual being.⁷

I want to appropriate this idea of an “apparatus.” Along with other Foucauldian concepts and insights, it can be redeployed to investigate another important facet of human life, namely, our interactions with other (nonhuman) animals. Foucault’s own concerns were decidedly anthropocentric, but his tools can be used to help us to see our relationships with other animals in new ways.⁸ Towards this end, it is useful to build from Giorgio Agamben’s discussion of Foucault’s terminology.⁹ While Agamben’s first gloss on the term “apparatus” appears to retain a human-centered focus,¹⁰ he subsequently goes on to characterize it in a more general fashion that, from my perspective, is much more promising. He defines an apparatus as “anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings.”¹¹ On the one hand, we have apparatuses (Agamben uses cellular telephone techno-

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books Edition, 1980). See especially, “Part Two: The Repressive Hypothesis,” 15-50.

⁶ Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” 196.

⁷ Here, again, Foucault’s use of the concept of an apparatus for political/critical ends is largely in-step with Baudry, who believes that the concealment of an apparatic structure can have pernicious ideological consequences and, thus, that its manifestation can produce a “knowledge effect” that can work in the service of ideological critique. See Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 286-298. Still, while formally similar, there are also stark differences between Foucault and Baudry’s respective approaches (e.g. their views on psychoanalysis).

⁸ Paola Cavalieri thinks Foucault missed many opportunities to deconstruct the notion of “animality,” and she criticizes his “blatant blindness” when it comes to thinking about other animals. See Paola Cavalieri, “A Missed Opportunity: Humanism, Anti-Humanism and the Animal Question,” in Jodey Castricano (ed.), *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 97-123. Donna Haraway also highlights Foucault’s “species chauvinism.” However, she clearly believes that Foucauldian concepts can enrich our thinking about human-animal relations. See Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 60. Following Haraway, I intend to take a more constructive approach to Foucault’s work.

⁹ Giorgio Agamben, “What is an Apparatus?” in *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1-24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12. Here, Agamben writes that an apparatus refers back to “*okonomia*, that is, to a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient – in a way that purports to be useful – the behaviours, gestures, and thoughts of human beings.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

logy as one example) and, on the other, we have living beings. Finally, Agamben goes on to say that a third element, “subjects,” emerge from “the relation and, so to speak, from the relentless fight between living beings and apparatuses.”¹² It is a live question whether or not other animals can also become “subjects” in this way, but this shift from “human” to “living” beings helps us to begin to acknowledge that the experiences (and subjectivities) of other creatures may also be deeply shaped by the apparatuses within which they are situated.¹³ Following Agamben, we can think of apparatuses as complex spaces where a variety of different elements – both organic and inorganic, living and nonliving, human and nonhuman – interact, support, and conflict with one another in a multitude of different, and mutually constitutive, ways.¹⁴ One advantage of this recasting is that it allows us to expand imaginatively beyond the exclusively human realm of concerns that structured the purview of Foucault’s various studies.

“Apparatuses of animality” may be an appropriate title for the domains I am interested in exploring, and these apparatuses certainly contain all of the multifarious and heterogeneous elements that Foucault enumerates in his definition above. It will be useful to highlight some of these elements, while keeping in mind that this list is by no means exhaustive, so as to get a sense of the terrain that needs to be explored.

Discourses pertaining to/focused on other animals are continuously emerging from ethology, comparative psychology, sociobiology, veterinary medicine, agricultural engineering, dog breeding circles, and literature and film. Institutions, broadly conceived, would include practices such as pet-keeping and animal husbandry; more narrowly, we might think of religious organizations (e.g. animal sacrifice), universities (e.g. animal research), and 4H Clubs (e.g. sheep rearing) as institutional sites where animals are implicated in various ways. Architectural forms encompass slaughterhouses, laboratories, zoos, aquariums, animal shelters, and “dog Meccas.”¹⁵ Regulatory decisions and laws in Canada include the Canadian Agricultural Products Act and the Health of Animals Act. In the United States, one would have to consider the Humane Slaughter Act and the Animal Welfare Act. Criminal code pro-

¹² Ibid.

¹³ For a fascinating (Foucauldian) exploration of some of the ways that bovine subjectivity is constituted in relation to new robotic milking technologies, see Lewis Holloway’s, “Subjecting Cows to Robots: Farming Technologies and the Making of Animal Subjects,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007), 1041-1060.

¹⁴ My use of the term “apparatus” may share some affinities with Bruno Latour’s use of the term “network” (wherein many incommensurable elements interrelate in a mutually constitutive fashion). Furthermore, Latour’s attempt to make the laboratory visible, as an important node in the circulation of a variety of forces, is similar to Baudry’s attempt to force the cinematic apparatus into the light, to Foucault’s reconstruction of an apparatus of sexuality, and to my own attempt, here, to draw attention to pernicious elements of the slaughterhouse. For some examples of Latour’s approach, see, Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Bruno Latour, “Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World,” in Mario Biagioli (ed.), *The Science Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 258-275.

¹⁵ LA Dogworks recruited a “top architectural team” and “the best mechanical engineer in the animal care industry” to design a boarding/grooming facility that offers exclusive spa treatments and “retail therapy” in the boutique. See <http://ladogworks.com/welcome.html> for more information.

visions related to bestiality (sec.160 in Canada's), animal cruelty statutes, and municipal bylaws affecting restaurant operation and pet ownership are further legal elements of interest. Administrative measures could involve decisions to allow/bar pets from workplaces or study spaces.¹⁶ Scientific statements are made by ethologists, zoologists, evolutionary biologists, etc., and philosophical propositions are advanced on the nature of animal minds, with respect to the essential differences between humans and other animals, and, of course, with respect to their moral status. Moral propositions are contained in animal "rights" and "liberation" discourse and in arguments for vegetarianism. Finally, philanthropic propositions (and solicitations) can be heard coming from humane societies, PETA, and Greenpeace. This group is heterogeneous, no doubt, and this heterogeneity invites a number of preliminary questions.¹⁷

As far as the specification of a particular apparatus of animality is concerned, we might begin by asking what types of relations are, or can be, established between these various elements. What types of understandings of other animals are promoted at particular junctions; how are particular animals treated in specific locations; and, how are human actors invited/forced to act in various situations? My intuition is that no coherent, overall picture will emerge and that, in trying to hold these different elements together, we will be glaringly confronted with aspects of what Gary Francione has called a human "moral schizophrenia" with regards to other animals.¹⁸ We need only think of the different spaces occupied by, and discourses concerning, companion animals and livestock animals to get a sense of the vast incongruities in the ways that particular human and nonhuman animal bodies are constructed within different apparatuses.¹⁹ My hope is that the incoherence evidenced by a consideration of these diverse and incommensurable elements will be instructive. Investigations and comparisons of different apparatuses can, I believe, provide the occasion for disruptive thoughts that will allow us to think about our relations with nonhuman animals in new ways.

¹⁶ The question of whether or not to allow dogs in the student carrel room was addressed at one meeting of my departmental student union.

¹⁷ My examples point primarily towards domestic (and captive) animals and this is where my focus will remain. These contexts are the most obvious places to start when it comes to an extension of Foucauldian insights/categories, but I also am convinced that Foucault's thought can contribute to a conceptualization of human relations with (and management of) wildlife.

¹⁸ Gary L. Francione, *Introduction to Animal Rights – Your Child or the Dog?* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), see especially chapter 1. Also, see his article, "Animals – Property or Persons?," in Cass R. Sunstein and Martha C. Nussbaum (eds.), *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 108-142.

¹⁹ Foucault highlighted a seemingly similar schizophrenia in the strictly human context – what he called an "antinomy of political reason" – namely, the "coexistence in political structures of large destructive mechanisms and institutions oriented toward the care of individual life." See Michel Foucault, "The Political Technology of Individuals," in *Power (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.3)*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), 405.

II. Technologies

Human interactions with other animals can be explored along two (Foucauldian) axes. Each contributes to the creation of a critical lens that allows us to envision new (and better) forms of interrelationship. The idea that there are better and worse ways to interrelate with other creatures implies that there are some normative fulcrums around which a critique can be developed. These pivots will come to light in the discussion that follows.

Foucault indicated that two matrices of practical reason kept his attention most in his research. On the one hand, he was interested in what he called “technologies of power.” These are technologies that “determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination” – they involve “an objectivizing of the subject.”²⁰ *Discipline and Punish* might be taken as the primary example of Foucault’s examination of these particular technologies.²¹ On the other hand, he was also interested in “technologies of the self.” These are technologies, according to Foucault, that “permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”²² He investigated this second form of technology primarily in the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* (*The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*).²³ Obviously, Foucault uses the term “technology” in a very broad sense. It does not refer simply to equipment, tools, or material means, but to all the techniques, practices, and disciplines that can be pressed into the service of achieving a particular goal or objective. For his part, Foucault was especially interested in cases where the goal/objective of the application of particular technologies is the creation of a certain kind of human subject.

Given my own concerns, I am most interested in cases where these “technologies” also implicate other animals. First of all, I am interested in looking at instances where animals are submitted to “certain ends,” that is, where they are dominated and/or objectivized in some way. More specifically, I would like to focus on sites where power relations affect/involve both humans and other animals at the same time. Secondly, I think that it is important to look at the ways that human beings act on themselves in various ways, or engage in various practices, which attempt to establish (or express) a particular type of relation to other living creatures and where, in doing so, they also aim to make themselves a certain kind of person (e.g. vegetarianism). I take up the first task in the present paper and leave the second for a future inquiry.²⁴

²⁰ Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.1)*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1998), 225.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (2nd ed.) (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

²² Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” 225.

²³ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, vol.2* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990); *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, vol.3* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988). Another relevant source would be the 1981-82 lectures given at the College de France, published as Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

²⁴ For work that pursues this second line, see Chloë Taylor’s, “Foucault and the Ethics of Eating,” in *Foucault Studies* 9 (2010).

My investigation of a particular “technology of power” begins with an outline of Foucault’s different conceptualizations of power. In this section, I consider whether it makes sense to think of other animals as implicated in “power relations” in the Foucauldian sense. Next, I look at one apparatus of animality – the slaughterhouse – where disciplinary power is brought to bear on both human beings and other animals. Here, I focus primarily on an article published in *The New York Times* on June 16th, 2000, titled “At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die.”²⁵ In my analysis of this piece of journalism, I draw periodically on the work of Ralph Acampora. His bioethical thought provides a variety of helpful theoretical tools that can be used to critically assess one of the political “environments” we share with other animals. These tools provide my (Foucault inspired) analysis with some grounds for/guides to normative critique.

III. Power

The question of power was most explicit in Foucault’s work from the mid-’70s to the early ’80s. Three more or less distinct elements in his thinking can be marked, each presenting various opportunities, and barriers, for understanding how human interactions with other animals might be conceived of as power relations.²⁶

Disciplinary power was Foucault’s initial focus. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault develops a historical thesis which argues that the “classical age discovered the body as object and target of power” and that this targeting focused on the body as something that can be “manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces.”²⁷ As the introduction to the book so effectively displays, this disciplinary power stands in contrast to a sovereign form of power that was embodied in the right to kill and which was often deployed in an excessive, and clumsy, fashion.²⁸ Armies, schools, hospitals, and prisons

²⁵ The article, “At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die,” by Charlie LeDuff, is reprinted in Cary Wolfe (ed.), *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 183-197.

²⁶ In this section, I venture across much of the same terrain that was first charted out by Clare Palmer in “‘Taming the Wild Profusion of Things’? A Study of Foucault, Power and Animals,” *Environmental Ethics* 23 (2002): 339-358. My approach differs from Palmer’s primarily in terms of organization and emphasis, as I am interested in drawing some more general ethical conclusions about the power relations I discuss, which is a move Palmer explicitly resists. Elsewhere, Palmer presents an interesting analysis of Foucault’s only extended discussion of “animality;” see Clare Palmer, “Madness and Animality in Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*,” in Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity* (London & New York: Continuum, 2004), 72-84.

²⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

²⁸ For an excellent application of the theoretical tools of *Discipline and Punish* to the topic of intensive pig farming, see Dawn Coppin’s, “Foucauldian Hog Futures: The Birth of Mega-Hog Farms,” *Sociological Quarterly* 44 (2003): 597-616. For a discussion that goes in a different direction than the one I’ll pursue here, see Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel’s, “Cows and Sovereignty: Biopower and Animal Life,” *Borderlands E-journal* 1:2 (2002). Wadiwel starts from the distinction between sovereign and disciplinary power and then moves into an exploration of the ways that Agamben’s reflections on sovereignty, bare life, and biopower are relevant for thinking about human–animal relations. Also, Nicole Shukin’s, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), works imaginatively (and critically) with the Foucauldian concepts of biopower and biopolitics. In comparison, my analysis has a much more modest/

are, for Foucault, prime examples of sites where this new, meticulous form of disciplinary power was exercised and developed. His related notions of “docility” and the “docile body” are also closely connected with this particular form of power. A docile body is one, for Foucault, that “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved”²⁹ by various exercises and regimens. Docility is inculcated and perpetuated by a variety of techniques, such as the distribution of individuals in space by enclosure, partitioning and ranking (e.g. in barracks, classrooms, etc.), by the control of activity (e.g. with time-tables, training to perform particular gestures, etc.), and through various forms of surveillance (e.g. panopticism).

One of the main obstacles to using the idea of disciplinary power to think about human interactions with other animals is the problem of deciding whether or not we can think of other creatures as “docile bodies.” In other words, does it make sense to use concepts like “subjection,” “transformation,” and/or “improvement,” when we think about the ways that the bodies of other animals are acted upon and caused to perform in different contexts? I think that it does. Teaching a dog to sit seems to be a simple example of the manipulation of a particular body. That is, the possibility of training seems to evidence a degree of docility possessed by the canine. And this is just one of the ways in which we transform, “improve” and instill capacities in the bodies of other creatures. More extreme examples can also be envisioned. Think of turkeys that can no longer move or support their own bodies because they have been bred to be more palatable for Thanksgiving and Christmas consumers.

The juxtaposition of these two examples should caution us against reading a strictly pejorative tone into Foucault’s discussion of disciplinary power. To acquire any number of skills (say, being able to get dressed or to use the bathroom), our bodies must be rendered docile in a variety of ways. I must be subjected to a variety of routines and exercises – I must be disciplined – to acquire the abilities that are necessary to perform these actions. There is not anything necessarily pernicious about discipline, in either the human or the nonhuman case – as I think the dog-training example could support.³⁰ But, clearly, disciplinary power can take problematic forms in certain contexts. Foucault obviously thought the prison was one such instance and I believe that turkey farming is another. In the next section, I will argue that the slaughterhouse should definitely be seen as a troubling disciplinary institution. In other words, it should be viewed as a site where many docile bodies (both human and nonhuman) are subjected, used and transformed in problematic ways. Discipline is problematic, or so I will argue, when the individual is ontologically reduced in a way that elides their individuality/singularity.

A second conceptualization of power, advanced in later work, portrays power as a *productive* force. Foucault presents this particular account as an alternative to what he calls the liberal, or the “juridico-discursive,” model of power. Foucault thinks that this conception

preliminary character, though ultimately I feel that it is very much in sympathy with the “zoopolitical” critique that Shukin aims to engage in.

²⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

³⁰ This is not to say that I believe animal training is always morally benign, or that it cannot be corrupted by a trainer’s bad faith, but only to suggest that human interactions with other animals must be seen as existing along a broad spectrum of possibilities. For a great discussion of animal training, see Paul Patton, “Language, Power, and the Training of Horses,” in *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*, 83-99.

(which sees power as a restrictive force, exercised from top to bottom, and as something that can be transferred like a commodity) is inadequate for understanding our modern social order. For him, power is not that which is exercised by a sovereign over its subjects, rather, it "is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society."³¹ Foucault invites us to think of power as something that is channeled through various struggles and conflicts. Dominant forms of power, and those forms that resist it, are not to be seen as separate entities, but as interrelated. Power is not simply a repressive force – it also produces the possibility of its own subversion.

Foucault advances a number of methodological prescriptions to guide investigations of power understood in this way.³² These methodological points can be further extended to help us to explore our interactions with other animals. First, Foucault instructs us to look at how power works at its extremities. For his part, he indicates that he is less interested in looking at how general theories of punishment might be grounded in ideas about sovereignty, or monarchal/democratic rights, and more interested in looking at how the power of punishment is embodied in particular local, regional and material institutions. Similarly, rather than beginning with a general theory of the rights, or moral standing, that other animals might be said to possess, it will be germane to look directly at those places where other animals come into contact with human beings, so that we can see how power might be functioning in those concrete instances.³³

Secondly, Foucault insists that we should not look for intentions/motivations behind particular expressions of power. He wants us to ask, not, who has power and how do they use it, but rather, where is power installed and what are its real effects? This point is meant to develop Foucault's insistence that power not be conceived of abstractly, or as a possession that exists apart from individuals that they can decide to retain or alienate. He wants us to see power as a force that actually shapes and constitutes individuals in their subjectivity. Foucault thinks that we should "discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects."³⁴

Going back to a question that first reared its head in my appeal to Agamben, we must ask, can we think of other animals as "subjects" in this sense, that is, as beings whose very existence is shaped and constituted by power in some significant way? I think that we can. Neither human beings, nor other animals, are Hobbesian fungi; that is, neither we, nor they, "suddenly (like mushrooms) come to full maturity."³⁵ We, and they, are gradually, progres-

³¹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, 85.

³² Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980). See especially p. 96-102, for Foucault's discussion of these methodological points.

³³ Palmer endorses a similar point, suggesting that it is best to begin analysis by looking at a variety of "micropractices." See Clare Palmer, "'Taming the Wild Profusion of Things?,'" 346.

³⁴ Foucault, "Two Lectures," 97.

³⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive or The Citizen*, ed. Sterling P. Lamprecht (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1949), 100. It is clear that Hobbes uses this metaphor as a thought experiment and that he does not

sively, really and materially constituted in different contexts by a variety of different forces. Animals in the wild will be very different from their laboratory (or zoo) raised counterparts.³⁶ A dog confined to a cage at a shelter is a very different creature as compared to a well-loved family companion. In this sense, other animals are subjects that are shaped by a variety of forces, and who respond to that shaping in many different, and idiosyncratic, ways. They are not inert objects without the ability to react or respond.

Thirdly, and developing the previous point, Foucault suggests that power must be analyzed as something that circulates and flows, and not as something that is possessed by one individual or group. We should not think of individuals as either powerful or powerless, as only power's "inert or consenting target," but as always in the "position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power."³⁷ This is one of the ways in which Foucault asks us to understand power as not only a repressive force, but also as a productive one. Power does not just say "no" – it can also produce, enable and empower. I have suggested that we can think of other animals as Foucauldian subjects, but perhaps here we are given another occasion to pause. Can we also think of them as individuals who can exercise (or are exercised by) power in some meaningful way? Admittedly, this type of agency is difficult to visualize. Cows on the way to slaughter are sometimes quite reluctant to follow the herd (in which case they are prodded on towards their fate) and my cat puts up a real fuss when I try to clip his claws. Clearly, animals do resist in various scenarios. But I suspect that most would see this as a simpler form of resistance than the types of redirection and reappropriation of power that Foucault seems to have in mind. One explanation for this limited range of resistance may be the fact that many animals find themselves within human systems that are constructed so as to ensure a kind of perpetual domination. As Clare Palmer puts it:

from a Foucauldian perspective perhaps we can think of human/animal relations as, broadly, consisting of multiple individual micro-situations in a variety of environments where animals may respond unpredictably, resist human power, and even exercise power themselves; but these micro-situations are, "invested, colonized, utilized, involuted... by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination."³⁸

Thus, on the one hand, this methodological prescription may help us to pinpoint sites where animals are dominated in problematic ways by having their avenues for resistance and response foreclosed. On the other hand, in considering this particular point, we might also think of the various movements and responses – such as are advanced by activists of various

think that humans actually come into being fully formed in this spontaneous manner. Foucault's suggestion seems to be that we should avoid these hypothetical/abstract philosophical beginnings; he would rather have us deal with the detail/complexities that confront us.

³⁶ Sarah Whatmore presents a compelling picture of how enmeshment in a particular context causes Duchess, an elephant, to become a very different creature as compared to her wild counterparts. See the third chapter of Sarah Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: Natures, Cultures, Spaces* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), "Embodying the Wild: Tales of Becoming Elephant," 35-58.

³⁷ Foucault, "Two Lectures," 98.

³⁸ Palmer, "'Taming the Wild Profusion of Things?'," 352. The quote in Palmer's text is from Foucault's "Two Lectures," 99.

stripes – which human beings forge on behalf of other creatures. These individuals respond and react within the web of power relations in a variety of strategic ways that other animals are largely incapable of (e.g. running for political office, working for legislative reform, disrupting whaling fleets, passing out literature on factory farming methods, etc.).

The fourth prescription put forward by Foucault is that one must conduct an “ascending” analysis of power. This analysis must start with power’s “infinitesimal mechanisms,” each of which has its own history and trajectory, its own techniques and tactics. He does not think we should start with some general fact, such as the dominance of a particular class, and then proceed to account for particular phenomena in terms of this fact (a descending mode of analysis). Rather, one “needs to investigate historically, and beginning from the lowest level, how mechanisms of power have been able to function.”³⁹ It is with this point in mind that I would like to use the slaughterhouse as a starting point. I am interested in determining how power is able to function and circulate in this particular institution, and I am interested in exploring the consequences this circulation has for the various bodies situated within its walls.

Thus far we have seen two elements in Foucault’s conceptualization of power: a historical thesis about the development of *disciplinary* power and some methodological prescriptions with respect to theorizing power as a *productive* force. Finally, one finds a *power/freedom* connection in Foucault’s last work on the topic.

In “The Subject and Power,” Foucault indicates – as is clear from my survey thus far – that it is the subject, and not power in and of itself, that has formed the general theme of his research.⁴⁰ When thinking about power, he is concerned with the way it affects and shapes the body and the individual, that is, with the way it subjugates and subjectivizes. At this point, Foucault distinguishes power relationships from relationships of communication and from what he calls “objective capacities.” He characterizes objective capacities as powers that are exerted over “things” and which are able to modify, use, consume, or destroy them. Conversely, the power he wants to analyze brings into play relations between individuals: “the term “power” designates relationships between “partners.””⁴¹ We might wonder how other animals would fit into this distinction. They are certainly subjected to our objective capacities, that is, they are modified, used, consumed, and destroyed in a variety of ways, but I would balk at characterizing them simply as “things.” Furthermore, it seems to be a question whether we can think of humans as involved in “relations” with other animals and whether we can think of them as “partners” (a point that I touched on in the discussion of subject-hood above). It seems likely that Foucault would slot them into the “thing” category – at least he gives us no reason to think otherwise – and thus that he would exclude them from his central concerns. I would insist that a more expansive ontology is needed. The person/thing distinction does no justice to a world in which we exist, interact and communicate with, other animals. While it might be the case that other animals are not our “partners” in every way that other human beings can be, it is useful to conceive of them as subjects of power in Foucault’s sense. His

³⁹ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *Power (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.3)*, 326-348.

⁴¹ Ibid., 337.

person/thing dichotomy is ultimately inadequate, serving, as it does, to occlude a whole domain of social, political, and ethical questions/problems.

It is important to note, however, that Foucault does not think that these three domains (relations of power, communication and objective capacities) are always distinct; rather, they overlap and intersect with one another in various ways:

Take for example, an educational institution: the disposal of its space, the meticulous regulations that govern its internal life, the different activities that are organized there, the diverse persons who live there or meet one another, each with his own function, his well-defined character – all these things constitute a block of capacity – communication – power.⁴²

It is illuminating to think of the slaughterhouse as another example of a block of capacity – communication – power. But I would stress, in contrast to Foucault's approach, that it is essential to resist the ontological reduction of other animals to "things," and to consider how they are integrated into, and affected by their participation in this particular block.

The distinction between relationships of violence and relationships of power also raises questions about the application of Foucault's thinking to relationships between humans and other animals. On the one hand, according to Foucault, a "relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys, or it closes off all possibilities"; on the other hand, a power relationship:

can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up.⁴³

In the case of an institution like the slaughterhouse, it looks as though we have a relationship of violence, not power, as far as the animals killed there are concerned. That is, there does not seem to be a field of responses that are available to them, and they are certainly not recognized as subjects in any meaningful way. As we will see, the slaughterhouse provides us with a case where a relationship of violence is connected in an intimate way to a multitude of power relationships. Indeed, I will show that the violence inflicted on other animals, and the ontological reduction that undergirds it, is interwoven into the fabric of the human relationships found in the abattoir. Of course, things are different in other apparatuses of animality. An individual training a dog, or a horse, is perhaps more clearly involved in a relationship where communication and some form of reciprocity/partnership are possible. Thus, these might be cases where a relationship between a human and another animal can be seen as a proper power relationship, in the Foucauldian sense.

In "The Subject and Power," Foucault defines "power" as a mode of action upon the actions of others and he explicitly connects it with the idea of freedom: "Power is exercised

⁴² Ibid., 338.

⁴³ Ibid., 340.

only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are “free.”⁴⁴ By characterizing power in this way, Foucault connects his analysis with the idea of “governmentality,” which he presents as a form of power that structures the field of possible actions for the individuals under its dominion. He thinks that there is no relationship of power when determining factors are exhaustive (this would be a relationship of violence/domination) and, thus, that a relationship involving governance is one that allows space for mobility and resistance (a point that connects back to Foucault’s *productive* characterization of power). The idea of “government” is a useful concept for thinking about the ways that human beings relate to other animals (while realizing that we need to be mindful of the fact that “domination” also characterizes many interspecies interactions), since we structure the possible field of actions for many other animals in a large number of ways. And I think that the scare quotes around the word “free” in the quote above leaves the door open to this particular application of Foucault’s thought. That is, they seem to indicate that Foucault is skeptical of the idea that human beings possess an unconstrained autonomy/freedom. This skepticism would appear to undermine what has often been assumed to be one of the essential differences between “man” and “the animal,” namely, the human possession of a free will – and an accompanying responsibility – as opposed to the animal’s instinct driven, robot-like existence.⁴⁵ If humans are not radically free, that is, if they become what they are in local, specific, and power-laden contexts, then, perhaps, our grounds for assuming a sharp difference in kind between human beings and other animals is thrown into question.

To summarize, I believe that Foucault’s ruminations on the subject of power can be developed to help us think about the different ways that human beings relate to other animals. His discussion of *disciplinary* power allows us to begin thinking of other animals as “docile bodies” who are submitted to a variety of techniques, exercises, and regimens in a multitude of different contexts. I have indicated that we should be cautious about seeing all instances of discipline as problematic, but reiterate that there are certainly cases where we need to critically evaluate discipline’s application and consequences. Foucault’s methodological considerations with respect to *productive* power point to new regional/local starting points for thinking about how other animals are implicated in our lives and for thinking about how that implicatedness may call for new ways of thinking about their moral status. Finally, Foucault’s insistence on the *power/freedom* connection opens new avenues for thinking about how the lives of other animals are governed (and dominated) in a myriad of ways. I pick up on these threads and develop them more concretely in what follows.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 342.

⁴⁵ One variation of this position can be glimpsed in Heidegger’s characterization of “the animal” as “poor-in-world,” whereas man is taken to be “world-forming.” See Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Meta-physics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeil and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 197.

IV. The Slaughterhouse

In this section, I cast the slaughterhouse as a technology of power through an analysis of a journalistic article.⁴⁶ This may seem odd to some, so I would like to take a moment to explain my use of this source. Obviously, LeDuff's article is a subjective account of one slaughterhouse⁴⁷ – there are thousands of other stories to be told, all of which would come with their own nuances and idiosyncrasies. Racial tensions loom large in LeDuff's abattoir, situated as it is in the present day, southern United States. These tensions might be absent in other times and places, or to points-of-view blind to their existence. Different slaughterhouses may be managed in different ways, they may have workforces that are more or less harmonious, and they may be subject to different demographic realities. Thus, it might seem ill-advised to try to draw out broad generalizations from such a limited sample. But generalization is not my primary goal. Rather, I am more interested in looking at a concrete example to enable a "sensitization."

My adoption of this idea of sensitization is inspired by a statement made by Foucault. In regard to the Hungarian revolution's effect on Marxist thought, he claimed: "Since 1956 philosophers have no longer been able to think history by means of preestablished categories. They therefore have to resensitize themselves to events. Philosophers must become journalists."⁴⁸ Philosophers must become journalists – that is, be sensitive to events – in order to develop more adequate analyses of various developments. Generally, I take Foucault to be calling for openness to being affected, displaced, and/or surprised by what happens around us, as opposed to attempting to fit particular events into a pre-established framework that is built with stale categories and concepts. Using journalism as a springboard for philosophical reflection is a way to remain open to being unsettled; this sensitization, in turn, can be the

⁴⁶ There are obviously many other sources that one might also consider. Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle: The Uncensored Original Edition* (Tucson: Sharp Press, 2003), is a classic. The third chapter in Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), "Down on the Factory Farm..." 95-158, has had widespread effect. Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation: the Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), and Richard Linklater's film based on the book, would also be interesting to look at, as would Gail Eisnitz's *The Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Tale of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S. Meat Industry* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997). Paula Young Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse* (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008) is an excellent collection of essays that trace the historical development of the slaughterhouse, from the 19th to the early 20th-century, in a variety of European and North American contexts. Lee's conclusion to the volume, "Conclusion: Why Look at Slaughterhouses?," 237-243, makes explicit connections between this technological form and Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon. As a final suggestion, Jonathan Burt's, "Conflicts Around Slaughter in Modernity," in The Animal Studies Group (ed.), *Killing Animals* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 120-144, has much to recommend it from a Foucauldian perspective, focusing as it does on the wider historical (and technological) context within which it was possible for mass forms of animal killing to emerge. Burt's essay also offers an interesting analysis of the ways that religious forms of slaughter were supported (or challenged) in debates about "humane" slaughter.

⁴⁷ LeDuff actually became a staff member at the Smithfield Packing Co.'s plant in North Carolina in order to conduct research for his piece, thus much of the information comes from firsthand familiarity.

⁴⁸ Colin Gordon, "Introduction," in *Power (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.3)*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), xxxvi. It is unclear in what context this statement (from 1977, apparently) was originally made, since Gordon leaves it unsourced.

starting point for new evaluations, insights, and critique. It is in this spirit that I explore LeDuff's article. My intention is to start at a local source, to look at how power is applied there, and to use this exposure to draw more general insights and conclusions about how particular human beings and other animals can be mistreated, misrepresented, and misunderstood.

It is quite easy to see the slaughterhouse in Foucauldian terms, that is, as a site of disciplinary power (and domination) where a multitude of bodies are rendered docile.⁴⁹ These bodies are made the objects/targets of power and are thereby subjected, used and transformed. One of the requirements of discipline, according to Foucault, is the distribution of individuals in a space by means of enclosure and a partitioning into functional sites.⁵⁰ This distribution is certainly evident at the Smithfield Packing Co. pork processing plant (in North Carolina), where each individual is assigned a place in more ways than one. As LeDuff remarks: "Everything about the factory cuts people off from one another."⁵¹ This partitioning takes a number of different, mutually reinforcing forms. First, individuals are cut off from one another by spatial organization and task assignment. Those on the kill floor are separated from those on the cut line. These types of workers are both, in turn, separated from warehouse workers and from the managers whose offices are positioned above the factory floor. This separation is intensified further by the noise in the establishment, that is, by "the hammering of compressors, the screeching of pulleys, the grinding of the lines,"⁵² which makes effective communication between employees in the same area impossible. Furthermore, these spatial and auditory separations are buttressed by other barriers, such as language, which separates Spanish and English speaking employees, nationality, which separates Americans from Mexicans, and race, which creates divisions between white, black and Latino workers. Finally, I would insist that species constitutes yet another axis across which bodies are partitioned. The pigs also have a space to occupy, and a role to play, in the continued functioning of this disciplinary mechanism. For the pigs, however, this particular system might be better conceived of as the endpoint of a docile life. From their perspective, the slaughterhouse can be thought of as the point where a docile body – a docility inculcated thanks to confinement and rearing in other agricultural contexts (i.e. a hog lot, free-range farm, etc.) – is transformed into a dead body.

Hierarchical observation is another instrument of disciplinary power highlighted by Foucault.⁵³ This surveillance is one of the means by which coercion and a consequent docility are achieved. At this particular plant, the architectural design helps to create a literal hierarchy by placing the managers' offices on scaffolding above the factory floor. This arrangement allows the workers to be surveyed and assessed. LeDuff describes one manager as looking

⁴⁹ My normative evaluations of the slaughterhouse share many affinities with the conclusions reached by Mick Smith in "The Ethical Space of the Abattoir," *Human Ecology Review* 9 (2002): 49-58. While his discussion draws specifically on the thought of Hegel, Bourdieu, and Levinas, his focus on "the evolution of deliberate managerial and spatial techniques that seek to suppress the animals' room for self-expression," 50, is quite consonant with the Foucauldian approach I'll develop here.

⁵⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141.

⁵¹ LeDuff, 187.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170.

like a “tower guard” or “border patrol agent,” which invokes the policing role they enact within the factory walls. If necessary, a manager can descend to the factory floor and discipline a worker who has fallen out of line. The raised location of the managers also helps, presumably, to induce a panoptical effect in the workers whereby they begin to discipline themselves; they are certainly all too aware that their actions could be under surveillance at any moment.

But, there are also hierarchies created amongst the employees on the factory floor. There are “dirty jobs,” such as killing and cutting, and “clean menial jobs,” involving warehouse work. This division of labor appears to intermesh with, and reinforce, hierarchies of a racial nature. Blacks and Mexicans get the “dirty” jobs; American Indians tend to get the “clean” jobs in the warehouse; and the few whites on the payroll “tend to be mechanics or supervisors.”⁵⁴ And, again, we must also acknowledge that the pigs occupy a place in these various hierarchies. It seems to me that it is their absolutely commoditized bodies that create the base that keeps this whole pyramid standing.

These hierarchical positionings are signaled at a number of points in the article. For example, after being chastised by a white manager, one of the black employees threatens, “Keep treating me like a Mexican and I’ll beat him.” The comment clearly indicates that to be treated like a Mexican, for this individual, means to be treated as less than he really is. In other words, for him, Mexicans are positioned on a lower rung in the hierarchy. As another example, we might consider a comment made by a convict working at the plant, Billy (quoted in my epigraph). Having been assigned to the cut line, he feels cheated. He felt, according to LeDuff, as though he “wasn’t supposed to be doing Mexican work”; in his own words, he declares: “This job’s for an ass. They treat you like an animal.”⁵⁵ So, again, we see an individual feeling as though he is being treated as something less than he really is. For Billy, this is work for a donkey, not a human being. The fact that he doesn’t want to be treated “like an animal” underscores the fact that other animals occupy a lower place in a hierarchal arrangement. Furthermore, in his eyes, cutting line work is for a Mexican, not a white American. Reading between the lines, we might infer that there is a pernicious parallel being drawn here that affects a conflation of the two hierarchical arrangements at play. By placing the animal/human hierarchy next to the Mexican/white American hierarchy, Billy invokes an equation of the Mexican with the animal, on the one hand, and the white American with the human, on the other.⁵⁶

As problematic as they are, the feelings expressed by Billy are intimately connected to the question of dignity. Human beings want to be treated with respect, that is, they want to be treated like human beings, and not like dogs, cattle or guinea pigs.⁵⁷ In cases like these, we

⁵⁴ LeDuff, 184.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁵⁶ Two works that expand on the connection between speciesism and racism, which I allude to here, are Cary Wolfe’s *Animal Rites* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), especially the fourth chapter, “Aficionados and Friend Killers: Rearticulating Race and Gender via Species in Hemingway,” 122-168, and Marjorie Spiegel’s *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, revised and expanded ed. (New York: Mirror Books, 1996).

⁵⁷ Another concrete example of this type of concern occurs in the film *Gene Hunters* (prod. and dir. Torbjorn Morvik and Petter Nome, 54 min., Ying-Yang Films, 1988, videocassette). There, an indigenous activist

see the human/animal distinction being used in a hierarchical fashion. To be treated “like a dog,” or “like a guinea pig” – to be treated “like an animal” – is to be treated as though one were not a human being; it is to be treated as though one is less than what one really is. People want to be treated like humans, not animals, and I wholeheartedly agree that humans should be treated like humans (whatever that might mean). But these particular formulations of that desire leave certain (hierarchical) assumptions about the human/animal binary unexamined. Furthermore, pleas for the recognition of one’s dignity that rely on the juxtaposition of the “human” and the “animal” leave the fact of human animality unacknowledged, fallaciously suggesting that human beings are not animals and ignoring the fact that to be treated “like a human” will involve being treated in a way that is becoming of a particular animal. This implicit hierarchy calls out for a deconstruction. Are nonhuman animals obviously “lower” than human ones? Is it problematic that other animals are treated “like animals?” We must acknowledge the possibility that nonhuman animals also have a dignity that needs to be recognized. I am not necessarily suggesting that other animals must be treated like human beings, but rather, that we make room for considering them on their own account, as creatures worthy of a certain form of esteem.

Readers of LeDuff’s article can surely admit that a lack of inclusivity contributes to the problematic racial relationships in this slaughterhouse; the institution fails to foster, or support, the idea of a basic equality existing between human beings regardless of their race. I want to suggest that this slaughterhouse (and perhaps slaughterhouses more generally) occasion a similar failure when it comes to recognizing a common “animality” running between the pigs and their human counter-parts – a commonality that opens up, or so I am suggesting, considerations about what dignity and respect will mean in both the human and the nonhuman case. It is clear, in the context of the slaughterhouse at least, that an acknowledgment of this commonality will be next to impossible.

Ralph Acampora gives us some theoretical tools that can enrich my Foucauldian investigation of the slaughterhouse and which help us to make normative evaluations of the power relations enacted in this particular space.⁵⁸

Firstly, I am interested in what Acampora calls the dialectic between the carnal and the carceral, that is, the relationship between the fleshy, organic excess of the carnal body, on the one hand, and the rigid, bounded, and panoptical surveillance of the carceral institution, on the other. For his part, Acampora puts forward a model of animal individuality where the individual is conceived of as a “body-self,” which incorporates its surrounding, and not as an “atomistic subject” or “mental monad.”⁵⁹ This is a model that characterizes the individual and environment as being in an inextricably intimate relationship of mutual constitution. The environment establishes the horizon in which, upon which, and with which an animal body can

(living in the rainforests of northern Columbia) speaks out against the collection of her people’s blood by scientists working on the Human Genome Biodiversity Project, asserting that the indigenous peoples should not be “treated like guinea pigs.”

⁵⁸ Here, I focus primarily on the fifth chapter, “Body Bioethics in Realms of the Carnal and the Carceral,” in Acampora’s book, *Corporal Compassion* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 95-115.

⁵⁹ In this sense, Acampora’s discussion of constitution of individuality is very similar to Foucault’s discussion of the development of the subject/subjectivity, which I discussed above.

act. That animal body is, in turn, constituted and sustained by the opportunities that this horizon affords. Acampora suggests that the cage is the prime example of a carceral environment. If the individual is constituted by interactions with their environment, then the cage (or, carceral environments more generally), will create very particular types of subjects. In the case of a lab rat, Acampora suggests that the “rodent comes to phenomenally assimilate the carceral into the carnal.”⁶⁰ The rat is transformed into what Acampora calls a “jailhouse” body, that is, a body that has incorporated its imprisonment. He also presents the zoo as another example of a context where the “carceral petrifies the carnal.”⁶¹ Following Foucault, we might say that a particular type of disciplinary environment works to create a particular type of (docile) body.

In LeDuff’s report, we see a number of ways in which the carcerality of the slaughterhouse is assimilated by the bodies bounded by its walls. The workers are not encased in this building in any kind of abstract way. Their environment literally penetrates into the materiality of their bodies. Various examples are presented. The chlorine used in sanitation procedures burns the eyes and throats of the employees. After a shift on the cutting line, necks are strained and fingers no longer open freely – one woman’s hands “swelled like claws.” Workers’ muscles are left sore and their minds are dulled. Knees lock, noses run and teeth throb. At the end of the day, they hurt and they are exhausted. As far as the pigs are concerned, they assimilate this carcerality in a much more dramatic and terminal fashion. The slaughterhouse penetrates their bodies to the point of complete disintegration. Their lot is to end their phenomenal existence with a journey along the “disassembly” line. Thus, we see that both human and nonhuman bodies are deeply shaped by this (carceral) environment which they inhabit. In this light, a common saying from the plant is striking. It is said that, “they don’t kill pigs in the plant, they kill people.”⁶² The equivocation around the word “kill” invokes an image of a kind of death in life, a zombie-hood grounded in the tasks performed at the plant. Workers simultaneously bring home “the bacon” and find themselves transformed by their environment into a slaughterhouse body.

A second operation enacted/enabled by this carceral abode is what Acampora refers to as the downgrading of particular bodies from “the somatic to the corporeal.”⁶³ His terminology requires some elucidation. In his argument, the term somatic refers to live bodies in all of their phenomenal richness and unique singularity. He would say that humans and pigs both have bodily existence in this sense. The somatic refers to living, autopoietic bodies. The corporeal, on the other hand, refers to the body as mere brute materiality. Rocks and chairs would be examples of corporeal bodies in this sense. Acampora argues that laboratories and zoos – and I would suggest that the slaughterhouse be seen in a similar light – have emptying effects that “reduce” the bodily beings that are situated there. In the case of the laboratory, rats are reduced to particular gene effects or physiological responses. One forgets that these laboratory rodents remain living creatures. They come to be identified with their provision of

⁶⁰ Acampora, 99.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶² LeDuff, 185.

⁶³ Acampora, 101.

information, disappearing, in effect, as individual animals. This might also, then, be seen as a further way to flesh out what it means to be treated like a guinea pig or “like an animal.”

We see this “emptying” in other types of contexts. It is presented very forcefully in the dramatic recreation of a Nazi propaganda video called *Dasein ohne Leben* (Existence without Life).⁶⁴ In the video, a professor lectures to an auditorium full of people, arguing that the disabled and mentally ill are best seen as having an “existence without life,” which burdens the German health care system. This characterization represents a discursive attempt to enact what Acampora calls the downgrading of the somatic to the corporeal. The speaker says, in effect, that these individuals are not living (read: like “normal”/“healthy” human beings). Instead, we should see them as merely existing (read: like other animals? like inanimate objects?). Ultimately, in the film, this downgrading is used to encourage the euthanization (and, thus, a very literal reduction) of those who have “existence without life.” Another strong example is seen in the critically acclaimed HBO adaptation of Margaret Edson’s play, *Wit*.⁶⁵ There, the protagonist (Vivian, a professor of English Literature) is frequently portrayed as a source of data for the doctors. They are more interested in the information/knowledge she is going to provide them and less concerned about the person/life/history that they encounter. The great emotional impact of the film is created by the juxtaposition of the instrumentalization and coldness of Vivian’s interactions with the doctors next to her own very personal reflections on the life she has led and the impact that her cancer is having on her as an individual. Generally, we think that there is something troubling about reducing human beings from the somatic to the corporeal; it is perceived as an affront.

Analogous reductions take place along numerous lines in the slaughterhouse. Most obviously, porcine individuality is nowhere to be found. Their reduction – begun in the various locations where they have been reared to slaughter weight – continues with the killing of the individual pigs when they enter this establishment. They become “shoulders” that are segmented into different “cuts” as they travel down the line and are packaged for distribution. To echo Linda Birke (whom Acampora quotes), I would say that in the production of meat at the slaughterhouse, the living, breathing animals who ate, slept and interacted – often in atrocious conditions – literally disappear. In the slaughterhouse, their individuality is completely elided as they become inert commodities for human consumption.

And it appears that human reductions also take place in this particular slaughterhouse – if not from the somatic to the corporeal, then at least from the particular to the (stereo)-typical. We find individuals being continually typecast along racial lines: “Blacks don’t want to work... They’re lazy”;⁶⁶ the Mexicans are “too small” for kill floor jobs; one Mexican worker declares, “I hate the blacks”;⁶⁷ black workers complain that Mexicans are “dragging down the pay.”⁶⁸ In yet another example of reduction, Mexican employees get called “Hey you” by

⁶⁴ All of the original copies were apparently destroyed at the end of the second World War, but the portrayal I am referring to can be seen in *Selling Murder: The Killing Films of the Third Reich* (prod. Steward Lansley, dir. Joanna Mack, 53 min., Domino Films Ltd., 1991, videocassette).

⁶⁵ *Wit* (prod. Simon Bosanquet, dir. Mike Nichols, 98 min, HBO films, 2001, DVD).

⁶⁶ LeDuff, 187.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

white supervisors who cannot be bothered to learn their names. The people in this environment have a hard time seeing each other and this inability leads to distrust, segregation, and animosity. A very tangible effect of these reductions seems to have been the stifling of attempts at collective action with respect to unionization. In this carceral institution, the disciplinary partitioning and ranking of individuals along various axes causes individuals to effectively disappear.

I would like to address two issues here. First, a moment ago I compared pigs being slaughtered to people suffering from cancer and to those who met their demise at the hands of Nazi “doctors,” but I want to stress that my point is not to say that exactly the same kinds of reduction are taking place in each case. However, I do think that there is a similar failure in each instance, namely, a failure to appreciate the vulnerability that is an essential facet of both human and other animal life. It is this vulnerability, this shared animality – the deterioration of the flesh in the face of chemotherapy, the powerlessness of so many vis-à-vis those entrusted with their care, the squeals of a pig in pain – that opens up the space for comparison.

Secondly, some might be wondering about my appeals to “individuality” and “ontological reduction,” worrying that they are in tension with a Foucauldian account of subject formation and that they evidence an implicit regression to the language of “rights.”⁶⁹ This worry is explicitly voiced by Lewis Holloway. As he puts it:

representations of animals as morally considerable, or as the bearers of “rights,” risk attributing a particular, fixed subjectivity to animals. That is, they essentialise what it is to be a subject – accepting a centred subjective being rather than a continual process of becoming subject, and a heterogeneity of becoming which produces different subjectivities.⁷⁰

I will make two points in response. On the one hand, it is not obvious to me that the use of rights language is necessarily a regression. Perhaps we could use this language in a strategic fashion without presuming any “fixed subjectivity” to whom the usage refers. Foucault himself seemed to do exactly this on at least one occasion.⁷¹ This is not to say that I think rights terminology is the best way to conceptualize the moral status of other animals. I would just point out that this language might be compatible with a “continual process” view of subject formation (which is advanced by the likes of Foucault and Acampora). On the other hand, I think that it is definitely possible to talk about the importance of “individuality,” or “unsubstitutable singularity,” in ethical thought in ways that entirely avoid framing the issue in terms of rights. Think, for example, of Jacques Derrida’s encounter with his little cat, that “irreplaceable living being” who, as he puts it, “one day enters my space, enters this place where it [sic] can encounter me, see me, even see me naked.”⁷² This is quite far from a rights claim and I believe that it is this individuality (understood as a type of encounterability) that the slaughterhouse ultimately destroys. Furthermore, I believe that one can consistently hold

⁶⁹ This worry was raised by one of my anonymous reviewers.

⁷⁰ Holloway, 1044.

⁷¹ See Michel Foucault, “Confronting Governments: Human Rights,” in *Power (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.3)*, 474-475.

⁷² Jacques Derrida, “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),” *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2002): 378-379.

that this subjectivity – be it human or nonhuman – is constituted in continual processes of becoming (and in relation to a heterogeneity of power-laden apparatusic structures) and, at the same time, insist that the subjectivities so constituted call for a particular kind of ethical consideration. Focusing on the effacement of individuality does not belie a Foucauldian approach, rather, it helps us identify processes (and structures) in which the creation (or destruction) of subjectivity has become intolerable.⁷³

Returning to Acampora, we might say that a major consequence of the hierarchical reduction taking place in the slaughterhouse is that no “conviviality” – no “authentic encounter” – is possible. According to him, the authentic possibility of cross-species conviviality diminishes to the extent that “the carceral overtakes the carnal.”⁷⁴ The adjective “convivial” denotes a fondness for the pleasures of good company, a sense of joviality, and a festive energy. A convivial atmosphere avoids instrumentalization, or reduction, of one at the hands of another. Consider the contemporary zoo as an example of a site that inhibits conviviality. Acampora stresses that the “zooptical” nature of this environment – “constituted by capture, feeding schedules, architecture of display, and breeding regimens”⁷⁵ – disables the possibility of authentic encounters between humans and other animals. Think of a surprise encounter with a deer while jogging in the forest in comparison to an encounter with a caged tiger at the zoo. Acampora would juxtapose the tension, heightened awareness, and potency of the gazes established between human and animal in the wild, in the former case, with the lethargy, boredom, and passivity of the communication between the humans and the incarcerated animal, in the latter case.

Authentic, convivial encounters with pigs are certainly impossible at the slaughterhouse. Authentic encounters with other human individuals seem equally stifled. I am not sure what an “authentic encounter” with a pig would ultimately amount to, but, at a minimum, it would have to resist the kind of petrification highlighted by Acampora. Similarly, the authenticity of human interactions would be improved if there was less reduction of individuals along racial, national, and linguistic lines. But, this may also be impossible in the context of the slaughterhouse, given that, as Mick Smith so aptly puts it: “Its machinery dissects and grinds more than animal bones it also annihilates the space where care and compassion might otherwise survive.”⁷⁶

⁷³ In his discussion of Foucault’s relationship to phenomenology, Todd May suggests that Foucault was concerned both with “explanatory reductionism” (in his early phenomenological work) and with “categorical reductionism” (in his later archaeological and genealogical projects). See Todd May, “Foucault’s Relation to Phenomenology,” in Gary Gutting (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 284-311. Obviously more needs to be said, but this at least gives me hope that my concern about “ontological reduction” may not be entirely alien to a Foucauldian investigation of animals/animality.

⁷⁴ Acampora, 100.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁷⁶ Smith, 57.

V. Conclusion

I imagine Foucault would be skeptical of calls for more “authentic” encounters. He would want us to be vigilantly cognizant of the introduction of new norms and new vectors for power’s circulation, and to be doubtful of Edenic visions and utopian aspirations. And I do not mean to suggest, with my appeal to authenticity, that there is one perfect way that we might relate with other animals (or with other human beings). But I do think that we can relate to them in better and worse ways, and that we can envision contexts where the faces of other animals are met more forthrightly. I want to evoke something similar to what Donna Haraway intends when she talks about “truth telling” in human-animal relations, that is, “not some trope-free, fantastic kind of natural authenticity,” but a “co-constitutive naturalcultural dancing, holding in esteem, and regard open to those who look back reciprocally.”⁷⁷ Towards that end, I believe that a Foucauldian analysis is buttressed by certain normative considerations, for instance, a recognition that ontological reduction is an affront to subjectivity and, thus, is something to be highlighted, and combated, when found in particular locations. An analysis directed in this way allows us to critically explore one of the apparatuses within which humans and other animals exist and subsist, and it helps us to begin to envision better forms of coexistence. This enhanced Foucauldian lens illuminates the obscured instances of power’s expression that color human interactions with nonhuman animals – instances that can often appear highly troubling.

The idea of an “apparatus” is a constructive heuristic tool for envisioning the complexity, and the interconnectivity, that characterizes the multifarious places that other animals occupy in our thinking and in our lives. It allows us to conceptualize those spaces where living beings (both human and nonhuman) become subjects. Foucault’s work on the question of power helps to illuminate the nooks and crannies of these apparatuses in new and interesting ways. His approach provides methodological guidance for this project – insisting that we begin with local, concrete situations. Acampora’s work provides normative guidance – insisting that we guard against ontological effacement. LeDuff’s article provides a space for these various elements to intersect. Together, they enable a trenchant analysis of a very destructive technology of power.⁷⁸

Stephen Thierman
University of Toronto
Department of Philosophy
170 St. George Street, 4th. Floor
Toronto ON,
Canada M5R 2M8
stephen.thierman@utoronto.ca

⁷⁷ Haraway, 27.

⁷⁸ I would like to thank the editors and my anonymous reviewers for their suggestions, Chloë Taylor for her excellent commentary on an earlier version of this paper (which I presented at the Canadian Philosophical Association’s annual meeting in 2010) and for her thoughts on the penultimate draft, Dianna Taylor and Rosemary Collard for their thoughts on that same draft, and Sareh Pouryousefi and John Bunner for their feedback and support – they all helped to make this a better paper.