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Interrogating the human/animal relation in Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*

Of all Freud's writings it is perhaps the late anthropological work *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930; hereafter *CD*)<sup>1</sup> that offers his most explicit reflections on what constitutes and characterizes the human being. The text's declared thematic focus is, after all, man's discontent within the restrictions of collective life. It is unsurprising therefore that the vast majority of the innumerable commentaries that *CD* has attracted have largely concerned themselves with the resumption, criticism, or re-elaboration of Freud's predominant concern with the struggle between *Homo sapiens* and civilization. What has tended to be left unaddressed, or at least uninterrogated, is the extent to which the text's most fundamental claims with respect to these two categories, and to the struggle between them, are conceptualized, illustrated, or articulated with reference to animals and animality. If at a manifest level *CD* is Freud's most sustained meditation on the nature of man, it also the Freudian text that is perhaps most densely and dependently subtended by propositions and presuppositions about "the animal." It is these easily overlooked yet significant theoretical perspectives, and the latent implications they have for the economy of Freud's main argument, which I wish to examine here.

In taking up these concerns my purpose is not to try to identify in *CD* a single or univocal Freudian position on the so-called human/animal relation, which could then be applauded or condemned depending on its relative anthropocentricity. On the contrary, what I am concerned with examining in *CD* are precisely the underlying variances and tensions that mark Freud's thinking in this regard. He calls on animals and animality at many vital moments — as points of theoretical reference (whether implicit or explicit), as examples of contrastive illustration, and as expository figures and metaphors. But these frequent invocations draw on a variety of discourses that are not always well integrated with one another and are sometimes in overt conflict: biological, evolutionary, and ethological, but also philosophical, mythical, and even biblical. Animals and animality are not, then, just points of reference in the development of Freud's declared theses on man and civilization. They are also potential

“pressure” points at which distinct theoretical orientations and assumptions overlap and which can, under scrutiny, imperil the cogency of Freud’s argument.

This essay tries to educe those distinct orientations and to make visible, even to aggravate, the tensions between them. It is not, however, an exercise in reproof against Freud or a demolition of his claims. Ultimately, I wish to read the text’s implicit instabilities not as mere deficits of thought but, in part at least, as symptomatic indices of a certain, problematic “constraint” exercised upon thought by the human/animal relation itself. In this regard, my approach has something in common with those of Jean Laplanche and Leo Bersani, for whom moments of tension, contradiction, and even “theoretical collapse” in Freud’s oeuvre are to be listened to affirmatively, even “celebrate[d],” as a performative and ultimately instructive function of the very nature of Freud’s object(s) of speculation (Bersani, 3).<sup>2</sup> However, what I suggest is remarkable about *CD* is that with respect to animals, animality, and their relation to the human, the text also partially apprehends and even incipiently interrogates the terms of its own theoretical instability. This partial recognition, and the reflections to which it gives rise, are held firmly apart from the main text, their articulation sealed off in a pair of almost extravagantly lengthy footnotes in chapter 4. The real theoretical value of these notes has tended to be overlooked. In them, it is not this or that conception of the human/animal relation that is at stake. Rather, the categories of “human” and “animal” are temporarily put into suspension as categories, and in a sequence of extraordinary speculations on anthropogenesis Freud sets out a radical critique of the separations they sponsor and of the constitutive fields of force they exert on thought.

This essay, then, is an attempt to track and flush out the various animals and conceptions of animality that inhere within Freud’s text, to underscore their plurality, and to demonstrate that the human/animal relation is a profoundly, if in the main implicitly, conflicted site within his thought. But it is also an attempt to give Freud his due: to acknowledge an impulse in his thinking which is nascent and not systematically integrated, yet which is, I suggest, strikingly progressive; which not only recognizes but also labours to theorize in an affirmative, critical manner the powerful determinations underlying that very conflictuality.

**Individual freedom and the community: therio-primitivism *versus* the termites.** In its most basic form, Freud’s thesis in *CD* is well known: the advance of what is called

civilization takes place at the expense of human instinctual life,<sup>3</sup> which must be repressed, sublimated or introverted in the service of collective human progress. It is an argument whose apparent obviousness, even banality, bothers Freud, who remarks several times on just how self-evident are the claims of his first five chapters, before he tackles the more novel theme of the death drive.<sup>4</sup> Yet if the manifest thesis about man's relation to civilization seems clear to the point of being "common knowledge" (CD 117), the place of animals and animality within its exposition introduces latent complications that risk putting this "common knowledge" into question.

Freud only begins to tackle in depth the struggle between civilization and the drives in the third chapter. Here, he elaborates what he sees as civilization's key characteristics, finishing up his exposition with an initial reflection on man's supposedly unique cultural disaffection within it — owing, Freud argues, to man's tendency to cling to individual freedom against the demands of collective living. However, at the core of this initial engagement with the central problematic of the book an unacknowledged yet critical tension arises between two competing conceptions of animality.

The first conception, while it is initially broached in this chapter, goes on to have a pervasive presence throughout the rest of the text and as others have shown<sup>5</sup> — is legible in a great deal of Freud's writing before and after *CD*. It consists in the attempt to code and circumscribe certain aspects of man's being as "animal." This conception is heavily marked by Freud's adherence to a certain modality of evolutionary biology and may be summed up, using Philip Armstrong's term, as "therio-primitivist" (Armstrong 142ff.). That is to say that while Freud, good Darwinian that he is, readily and repeatedly acknowledges that man is just another animal, when he invokes the putative "animality" of the human he does so in a tendentious way, *exclusively to signify those aspects of man which are anterior, antithetical or antagonistic to civilization.*

An initial aspect of this therio-primitivist conception emerges when, a few pages into chapter 3, Freud supplies the working definition of civilization which will underpin his entire exposition:

the word civilization [*Kultur*] describes the whole sum of the achievements and the regulations which distinguish our lives [*unser Leben*] from those of our animal ancestors [*unserer tierischen Ahnen*] and which serve two purposes — namely to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations. (CD 89 [448–9])

Civilization is thus *the* distinguishing factor that makes “us,” we humans, “human.” Those of our primitive genetic ancestors who were not subject to civilization were — to that very extent — *animal* ancestors. Their “animality” is the sign of nothing other than their absolute anterior ignorance of the constraints and the advances of *Kultur*.

Like so much else in Freud’s thinking, however, his attitude to civilization and acculturation is deeply marked by the influence of the evolutionary biologist Ernst Haeckel and to the famous Haeckelian principle that “ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis.”<sup>6</sup> As the chapter goes on, Freud is emphatic that civilization is not a phenomenon that happened once and for all in man’s phyletic past. Rather, the evolution from “natural” animal organism to civilized being is to be recapitulated in the ontogenesis of each new life we call “human.” His most striking articulation of this claim in chapter 3 appears, almost in passing, during the celebrated discussion of technics and of man’s development into a “prosthetic god”:

Those things that, by his science and technology, man has brought about on this earth, *on which he first appeared as a feeble animal organism [schwaches Tierwesen] and on which each individual of his species must once more [wiederum] make its entry [eintreten] (“oh inch of nature!”) [...] are a fulfilment of [...] almost every infantile wish.* (91 [450]; emphasis added)

With an exclamatory nod to Shakespeare’s *Pericles* (“oh inch of nature!”) Freud loads the passage with a certain rhetorical pathos.<sup>7</sup> However, the theatrical inflection of human birth as an “entrance” (*eintreten*) also tacitly recalibrates the first of Shakespeare’s “seven ages of man.” Each human entry onto the world’s stage is in effect a re-entry that replicates or repeats (hence: *wiederum*), in the natural, unacculturated condition of the defenceless suckling, the earlier appearance of a feeble theroid ancestor. Mewling and puking in this unacculturated state, man’s ontogenic infancy, no less than his phylogenic prehistory, is fundamentally “animalistic.”

It is in line with this developmental conception that the text’s most pervasively recurrent means of figuring the restraint continually imposed by civilization upon the drives is as a process of *taming*. As I have argued elsewhere, for Freud instinctual life increasingly becomes the domain *par excellence* of man’s putative animality.<sup>8</sup> In *CD* this circumscription is consistently enforced by the repeated use — not just in chapter 3 but throughout the text — of the husbandrian terms *zähmen* and *bändigen*, and their

derivatives. The drives here are conceived as being fundamentally “wild [*wilden*]” (79 [437]). They are that aspect of man that must be “tamed [*gezähmten*]” in the name of community, at the expense of the convulsive enjoyments attendant on the satisfaction of primary impulses that go “untamed [*ungebändigten*]” (ibid.). Without such civilized restraints on his instinctual life, Freud indicates — in a term whose significance we will return to — man is, or remains, “beast”-like (112).

Freud’s most explicit avowal of the logic at work here comes two years after CD in the exchange of letters with Einstein, where Freud describes the “process of civilization” in relation to “instinctual impulses [*Triebregungen*]” as being “comparable to the domestication [*Domestikation*] of certain species of animals” (Freud and Einstein 214 [26]). But it is already a thoroughgoing theoretical support in CD and a repeated entrenchment of the delimitation of man’s animality as that which is most “crude and primary [*grober, primärer*]” (CD 79 [438]), most uncivilized, within him. In this connection Alan Bleakley has rightly drawn attention to the importance of Freud’s few but significant comments in the main text of CD on the treatment of non-human animals by civilized man (Bleakley, chapter 2). A key passage, which Bleakley quotes twice, appears in chapter 3 of CD, in the paragraph immediately following Freud’s allusion to the “feeble animal organism” of man’s ontogenic/phylogenic past. A country that has “attained a high level of civilization,” Freud avers here, is one in which “wild [*wilden*] and dangerous animals have been exterminated and the breeding of domesticated animals [*Haustieren gezähmten*] flourishes” (92 [451]). As Bleakley emphasizes, this claim is nothing less than the correlative of Freud’s central, metapsychological argument that man’s “cultural advancement” is achieved precisely at the cost of his “instinctual or animal body [being] cultured or tamed [...] through the [...] mechanisms of sublimation and displacement” (32).

The crucial discussion of freedom takes place towards the end of the chapter where Freud is considering civilization’s function of regulating relationships among individuals — “adjust[ing] the mutual relations,” as he described it in the initial definition of *Kultur*. In the passages on freedom, Freud ventures the claim that the “liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization” (CD 95). On the contrary, because living in communities (*Gemeinschaften*) requires the inhibiting of certain individual wishes, liberty must, he proposes, have been “greatest before there was any civilization,” before, that is, man had emerged from his purely theriod condition (ibid). Freud then goes on to distinguish between two different urges towards individual

freedom and their relation to civilized life. One type of urge — exemplified by an individual revolt against an injustice — may be, Freud claims, entirely compatible with the development of civilization and beneficial to the community as a whole. However, a “desire for freedom” may also arise

from the remains [*Rest*] of [the] original personality [*der ursprünglichen {...} Persönlichkeit*], which is still untamed [*ungebändigten*] by civilization and may thus become the basis in them of hostility to civilization. The urge for freedom, therefore, is directed against particular forms and demands of civilization or against civilization altogether. (96 [455])

Freud thus differentiates between on the one hand an urge towards liberty which, arising in contingent circumstances of oppression or injustice, is progressive and ultimately operates in the service of evolving civilized life, and on the other hand an urge towards liberty which is wholly atavistic and thus fundamentally inimical to civilization. The therio-primitivist position remains, of course, strongly to the fore here. The second, essentially antagonistic, urge for freedom is not contingent but elemental, the residue of a primal — *ursprünglich* — condition that remains wild or untamed (*ungebändigten*): man’s original, “animal” core.

And yet in the two sentences that immediately follow, sentences that have the appearance of doing nothing but elaborating this position further, we meet with a surprise. Freud says: “It does not seem as though any influence could induce a man to change his nature into a termite’s. No doubt he will always defend his claim to individual liberty against the will of the group” (96). Having thus far described in broad, theroid terms that which in man is historically anterior to civilization and/or fundamentally antagonistic to it, Freud’s specific appeal to termites introduces a variant, complicating logic. Where earlier — deploying a paradigm that will recur many times later in the text — Freud has conceptually assimilated to “the animal” what is least civilized within human beings, now he suddenly invokes non-human animals to exemplify civilized life in its absolute form: the termitary as the paradigm of civilization without discontents. After this brief invocation, Freud will carry on as though it made no difference, but the undeclared variance between the two perspectives thus brought into play is, nevertheless, significant. On the first view, human beings resist absolute absorption into the collective life of civilization because there is too much of “the

animal” about us to renounce entirely our urge for individual freedom. On the second view, it is our very resistance to this absorption, our clinging to individual liberty against the exigencies of the group, that *distinguishes* us as human beings.

The text’s initial discussion of man’s *malaise* in respect of the impulse for freedom is thus host to distinct theoretical perspectives that are not well integrated. On the one hand, Freud puts in place an emphatic and pervasive circumscription of the “pre-” and “un-civilized” dimensions of man’s being as “animal”; on the other, he affirms the possibility that certain non-human species, far from being antithetical to *Kultur*, might be seen as exemplary sites of its manifestation. The very presence of the termite example discretely erodes the stability — as termites will sometimes do<sup>9</sup> — of the former construction; it gives the lie to the generalized equation on which Freud’s pervasive therio-primitivism relies, between “animality” and the crude, the primal, the unrestrainedly wild, the bestial. Yet this tension goes, of course, unaddressed by Freud himself. Instead a tacit theoretical uncertainty is lodged at the basis of what he worries is merely a “common sense” argument — an instability that leaves him caught between suggesting that there is too much and suggesting that there is too little of the “animal” about us humans ever to be contentedly civilized.

**Differentiation: Eros and the death drive.** *Civilization and its Discontents* of course features one of Freud’s most memorable accounts of instinctual life as a clash between the creative, binding force of Eros, or the life drive, and the destructive, entropic force of the death drive. How are we to position *vis-à-vis* the larger metapsychological architecture of the text this initial, problematic treatment of freedom and discontentment which we have traced? Where does it fit into the text’s distinctive elaboration of the impulses of life and death? And in what ways is that elaboration marked by recourse to animals and animality?

As to the place of the discussion of freedom in respect of life and death, the answer only begins to emerge after the fact, at a significantly later moment in the text. To understand why, it is worth briefly noting the peculiar relation that *CD* bears to its own theoretical heritage. By the time of the text’s composition, the dualism of the life and death drives had been in place in the theory for nearly a decade, since *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Prior to 1920 Freud had posited a different dualism, consisting of the distinction between pleasure-oriented sexual impulses (*Sexualtriebe*) and the impulses of self-preservation (*Selbsterhaltungstribe*).<sup>10</sup> The path towards the second drive theory was cleared in 1914 with the introduction of the concept of narcissism. In light of this

concept the original dualism (sexuality versus self-preservation) turned out not to be a dualism at all: sexuality and self-preservation, Freud now claimed, were just two modalities of a single, affirmative energy of libido. The work of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as far as the drive theory goes, was formally to consolidate this newly recognized unity under the rubric of “Eros” and to formulate a new, more encompassing dualism between Eros on the one hand and an antagonistic energy, which he named the death drive, on the other.<sup>11</sup>

It is noteworthy that the starting point of *CD*'s argument is thus significantly out of synch with its moment of composition. The book gets going, and moves through its first four chapters, as though the upheaval in the theory of the drives had never happened: chapters 2 and 3 thus talk easily about the pleasure principle being “what decides the purpose of life” (*CD* 76), as though Freud has forgotten his own work on the decisive importance of precisely what is *beyond* the pleasure principle; the copious remarks on “instinct” here carry no trace of the death drive; and Eros goes completely unnamed. Only in chapter 5 does Freud bring the notion of Eros explicitly into play, and only from this point does he formally begin to integrate his conviction that aggressivity and entropy have a grounding position in the instinctual domain, summarizing in chapter 6 the hypotheses that led to this conviction (narcissism gets its first mention at this late point!) before the systematic discussion of introverted aggressivity in chapters 7 and 8. In short, *CD* is a work that, rather than presupposing earlier developments in the theory of the drives, ends up curiously restaging them. As we have seen, the text makes theoretical recourse to the evolutionary principles of Ernst Haeckel, as do so many of Freud's writings. However, *CD* is perhaps unique in constituting a kind of discursive enactment of their logic: the unfolding of its argument concerning instinctual life recapitulates in miniature the diachronic, anterior evolution of Freud's thinking in this very domain.

The effect of this compositional idiosyncrasy, inevitably, is to introduce a belated differentiation into Freud's central argument concerning the relation between civilization and the drives. Throughout the key passages from chapter 3 discussed above, as for the entirety of the book's first four chapters, Freud invokes “instinct” (*Trieb*) to encompass self-preservative and sexual needs (as in the earlier drive theory) and does not seek to give distinct elaborations of their respective vicissitudes within civilization. From chapter 5 onwards, however, the analysis of instinctual life



increasingly bears on two distinct theoretical fronts simultaneously: on the one hand, the relation between civilization and Eros and, on the other, the relation between civilization and the destructive impulses of the death drive.

Now, in respect of the text's account of animals and animality there are two key observations to be made about this emergence of the life/death dualism. Firstly it is worth stressing that the book's earlier remarks on freedom are not left isolated from, or inconsistent with, these later developments, but are reprised and integrated into their larger framework. Thus in the final chapter, Freud returns to the question of civilization and the urge for individual freedom and makes the following affirmation:

[The] struggle between the individual and society is not a derivative of the contradiction [...] between the primal instincts of Eros and death. It is a dispute within the economics of the libido, comparable to the contest concerning the distribution of libido between ego and objects. (141)

Since the end of chapter 6 (121ff) Freud has stressed that the constructive, binding force of Eros is in many respects congruent with the unifying goals of civilization. The above passage serves to pre-empt the tempting inference that all resistance to civilization must therefore originate in the death drive. On the contrary, Freud insists, the particular wish to retain individual liberty against the demands of the group is a matter not of hate or aggressivity but of love (an excessive erotic/libidinal investment in one's own ego) and thus of the life drive. Of course, this affirmation does nothing to resolve the conceptual tensions that inhere in the formulations on freedom in chapter 3. It merely resumes them from the perspective of the schema of the second drive dualism and in doing *so inscribes them anew within the conception of Eros itself*.

The second observation is that even if the specific urge for individual freedom is thus affiliated to Eros, the tensions that mark its initial articulation manifest themselves again in Freud's presentation of Eros's instinctual adversary, the death drive.

The death drive begins to take shape in the main text during Freud's famous critique in chapter 5 of the imperative: "love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>12</sup> Throughout the pertinent passages of *CD* he remains committed to the claim that the "struggle between Eros and Death [...] is what all life consists of" (122). This instinctual antagonism is inherent in the existence of human and non-human animals alike, and even in vegetal life. Nonetheless, as chapters 5 and 6 progress Freud makes a number of gestures toward the possibility that the death drive within human beings has an exceptional potentiality. Thus

alongside the stated position on the instinctual continuity among living things, Freud's phrasing repeatedly emphasizes a particular relation between aggressivity and man: "the primary mutual hostility of human beings" (112); "the inborn human inclination to 'badness'" (120); "the inclination to aggression [which] is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man" (122) etc.

The possible exceptionality of human destructiveness is resumed in a less gestural way in chapters 7 and 8. In a key passage that opens chapter 7, Freud returns to the example of eusocial animals first invoked in chapter 3:

Why do our relatives, the animals [*unsere Verwandten, die Tiere*], not exhibit any such cultural struggle? We do not know. Very probably some of them — the bees, the ants, the termites — strove for thousands of years before they arrived at the State institutions, the distribution of functions and the restrictions on the individual, for which we admire them today. It is a mark of our present condition that we know from our own feelings that we should not think ourselves happy in any of these animal States or in any of the roles assigned in them to the individual. (123 [482])

We have seen how Freud will resume the early question of individual freedom versus society in the final chapter, analyzing it in terms of a distribution of libido within Eros. Here, however, and without seeking to articulate the two claims together, he ventures a contrary hypothesis in response to his question about "our relatives, the animals." Having speculated that the reason for the stability of non-human animal societies may be the achievement of "a balance [...] between the influences of their environment and the mutually contending instincts within them," he goes on to propose: "[i]t may be that in primitive man a fresh access of libido kindled a renewed burst of activity on the part of the destructive instinct" (*ibid*). Freud does not develop the specifics of this hypothesis about its primitive cause, but the exceptionality, in relation to other animals, of man's capacity for destruction will underpin the rest of the text. Famously, in chapters 7 and 8 the greatest source of man's discontent within civilization will be identified with his distinctive "sense of guilt," the virulence of which is precisely the introverted manifestation of man's exceptional instinctual aggressivity (123–139).

However, the integrity of this hypothesis on man's putative exceptionality is no less troubled than is the hypothesis on freedom by the variant conceptions of animality on

which its exposition relies. The tensions to which they give rise are legible at two key moments in the decisive critique of “love thy neighbour” which leads up to the broaching of chapter 7’s hypothesis.

There is, first of all, Freud’s brief but significant invocation in chapter 5 of a certain grouping of animals to underscore the absurdity of an imperative to universal love:

But if I am to love [a human stranger] (with this universal love) merely because he is an inhabitant of this earth, like an insect, an earth-worm or a grass-snake... (110)

Obviously, the remark mocks the ethical imperative by comparing human neighbors (*Nächsten*) whom one is supposed to love, insofar as they are dwellers on the earth, with a selection of earth-dwelling animals who are thus called on to represent what is apparently least worthy of love: insects, worms, snakes. Note the disjunction between this sarcastically intoned comment made *en passant* and the later, more formalized claims about the animal “states” created by our non-human relatives (*unsere Verwandten*), not least of all insects. The latter claims rely on ethological observation and stress man’s “admiration” for such social achievement. In sharp contrast, the above comment appeals to a deeply traditional taxonomic hierarchy that antedates and remains foreign to organized ethology and which is ultimately traceable to Leviticus: its derisory point, that is to say, is communicated by a pragmatic underwriting of the ancient abasement of all animals that “creep upon the earth” — even the ant and the termite — as abject and impure.<sup>13</sup> Of course, the implicit tension here — which means that the same animal species may potentially be seen as both contemptible (neighbors) and admirable (relatives) — goes unacknowledged. However, Freud’s fleeting, contemptuous allusion to creatures that crawl the earth has the significant effect of pulling against the basic theoretical argument he will go on to propose: namely that the human neighbor is unworthy of my love precisely because at the least provocation he will unleash his innate aggression (the death drive) against me. For if, as Freud will declare, this innate destructiveness is *exceptionally* powerful in man, relative to all other animals, then the more harmonious instinctual make-up of non-human species — including insects, earth-worms and grass-snakes — might logically be thought to disqualify them, rather than recommend them, as representatives of what is most undeserving of our affection.

Freud's apparently unequivocal claim about the exceptionality of human instinctual violence is compromised more emphatically just a few pages later. The critique of "love thy neighbor" builds to a climax when Freud begins to detail the manifestations of specifically human aggressivity:

[Man's] neighbour is not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. (111)

This forceful proliferation of subordinate clauses is followed by the briefest sentence in the entire text — a proverbial declaration for which Freud chooses not to supply a citation<sup>14</sup> and which operates as a kind of shorthand to encapsulate all the behaviours he has just listed: "*Homo homini lupus*": man is a wolf to man (ibid). This well-known formulation has its roots in Plautus's comedy *Asinaria* and has, as Jacques Derrida has shown at length, been "taken up, reinterpreted, reinvested and mediated by [...] many others: Rabelais, Montaigne, Bacon, especially Hobbes" (Derrida, "The Beast and the Sovereign" 11; First Session).<sup>15</sup> Freud's rhetorical appeal to the figure of the wolf at once unites his exposition with a venerable tradition within European social thought and, as it were, marks a critical disunity within his own exposition. On the one hand, we have the developing affirmation that something about the death drive in man sets him apart from his fellow animals, that his capacity not just for aggressivity in the name of survival but for cruelty (humiliation, torture, atrocity) is a distinguishing characteristic of the human. On the other hand, we have Freud's recourse to a perspective and a dictum that figure this supposedly exceptional cruelty as the expression of something fundamentally non-human: an inner, "wolfish" animality. The human species's most devastating atrocities, Freud states later in the same paragraph, from the "invasions of the Huns" to "the horrors of the recent World War," only serve to "reveal" (*enthüllt*) that ultimately "man [is] a savage beast [*wilde Bestie*]" (CD ibid. [471]).

As with the analysis of liberty, the account of the death drive is thus marked by a determined tension in its theoretical positioning of the human vis-à-vis the animal and animality. In respect of aggressivity CD postulates that human beings are too little like their relatives the animals ever to be free of "cultural struggle" (123); yet it codes and

defines the devastation resulting from that struggle, the “excesses of brutal [*Brutalen*] violence” it entails (112), as nothing less than animal itself. The cruelty that is supposed to distinguish the “human” from the “animal” as such is *also*, on this account, what shows the human, at bottom, to be a wolf, a beast, a brute. Once again the conceptual delimitation of animality and the animal introduces a problematic and unacknowledged uncertainty into the exposition: man is at once, Freud’s text indicates, too much and not enough of an animal to be adequately integrated into *Kultur*.

The ambivalence and instability that characterize chapter 3’s initial diagnosis are, then, neither resolved nor abandoned as Freud’s exposition evolves its core propositions. On the contrary, that ambivalence and instability are carried over into the elaboration of its central claims, reprised and re-inscribed within Eros and repeated, in a slightly different modality, with respect to the death drive. Thus subtended by appeals to animal being which are ill at ease with one another theoretically, Freud’s analysis of man’s own unease (*Unbehagen*) within *Kultur* rests upon conflicting conceptual foundations.

**The hypothesis of impaired olfaction: two feet / two footnotes.** And yet what *CD* has to say about the human/animal relation is in no sense exhausted by these troubled formulations in the main text concerning liberty, instinctual love, and destructiveness. On the contrary, Freud turns his attention to this theme in a more direct, if highly compressed way in the two famous, lengthy footnotes that depend from either side of *CD*’s structural midpoint — one affixed to the beginning of chapter 4, the other to the same chapter’s final sentence. These dense passages detail Freud’s speculation on the relative impairment of the human sense of smell owing to the evolutionary phenomenon of man’s upright stance, his capacity to walk on two feet: for Freud this sensorial loss may be the decisive physiological factor in determining the defensive capacities of the human psyche.

The core of this hypothesis is not original to *CD*. It in fact derives from Freud’s “pre-psychoanalytic” past. He first broached it more than three decades earlier in private correspondence with his friend Wilhelm Fliess (*Complete Letters to Fliess*, November 14, 1897). Thereafter, he returned to it periodically but never very systematically and never in such a way as to fully assimilate it into theoretical orthodoxy. Prior to *CD* he sketched the idea in print only twice: in the *Rat Man* case of 1909 (248)<sup>16</sup> and in 1912’s “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love” (189–190). The discussion in *CD* is Freud’s last treatment of it. It is also his most extensive and evolved.

The notes require slow and careful reading, since their argumentation is more cumulative than linear. Looked at schematically, that argumentation consists of three “moments,” the second and third each emerging as a kind of recursive amplification and entrenchment of the one that precedes it. The first presents a specifically sexological reflection on the consequence of the upright stance for erotic life. The second presents a broader, anthropological perspective, linking bipedalism to the inauguration of civilization. The third and most compressed consolidates the earlier observations, hypothesizing an inaugural expulsion of “animality” — brought about by locomotive elevation — at the root of all human psychic defence.

What has not always been fully appreciated by the few authors who have commented substantially on Freud’s “olfactory” hypothesis<sup>17</sup> is the extent to which this recursive exposition represents an expansion and a drawing out of the implications of the original 30-odd-year-old idea. A hypothesis that started out as, and remained for years, a more or less limited attempt to give repression a theoretical grounding in the physiology of the human body, begins to evolve in *CD* into an incipient, speculative account of anthropogenesis as such — one that is both striking and, in many respects, progressively counter-humanist.

Striking and progressive but also, it must be emphasized, poorly integrated. Expanded as the hypothesis may be in this text, its typographic marginalization is significant. As Bersani has astutely observed, the footnotes in *CD* constitute a kind of “unconscious” of the text itself (18), bristling with theoretical possibilities that in spite of an appearance of continuity are at a potentially dangerous tangent to the dominant claims of the “upper body” of the work. Set off and relegated to the bottom of the page, Freud’s speculations on bipedalism are partially insulated from the tensions that traverse the upper text in its theorization of civilization and the drives. More than that, however, they constitute an implicit interrogation of the presumptions and exigencies that underlie those very tensions.

It will, I hope, be clear in the discussion that follows that by taking the content of the notes seriously, my interest does not lie in revivifying Freud’s own inclination towards a reductive “biologism,”<sup>18</sup> nor in the possibility of confirming or “refuting” — in the Popperian sense — the objective veracity of the details of what is ventured in the notes. Epistemologically speaking, their argument is comparable with the more famous

“scientific myth” — as Freud himself calls it (*Group Psychology* 135) — of the murder of the primal father in *Totem and Taboo*. To be sure, partial aspects of what Freud proposes do anticipate later, empirically-based advances in the field of human evolution.<sup>19</sup> But I am less concerned with trying to legitimize or substantiate his openly speculative conjecture empirically than with apprehending the critical intuition that it vehiculates.

**Sex and the upright stance.** The upper text of chapter 4 is concerned with love and the function of the family within civilization. The two footnotes in question are attached to separate conjectural remarks about the characteristics of human sexuality and what facilitates its subjugation to familial and civilized restriction. The ostensibly instigating concern of both notes is to argue that this subjugation is made possible by a fundamental, even constitutive, impairment of the sexual life of the human animal. Freud’s specific thesis concerning human sexual impairment is that it is a consequence of what he calls an “organic repression” linked to “[man’s] assumption of an upright gait” (CD 99n). In the sexual field, Freud proposes, the shift from quadrupedal to bipedal locomotion had the effect of causing a “diminution of olfactory stimuli” (ibid.). To be sure, this reduction in the significance of the sense of smell freed man from the regulated periodicity of the sexual process; but in placing man as it were “above” the olfactory enjoyments of the body (genital, anal, excretal etc.) it also exiled him forever from a certain instinctual *jouissance*. In addition, the upright posture made the “[human] genitals, which were previously concealed, visible and in need of protection,” thereby “provok[ing] feelings of shame” for the first time (ibid.). Thus on the basis of a purely organic development, alienated from olfaction and subject to pudency, “the whole of [human] sexuality” (106n) became marked by a fundamental inhibition.

It is necessary to underscore certain details and implications of this specific claim in order to grasp the implications of the broader, anthropogenetic hypothesis arising from it. Cary Wolfe, in his brief comments on CD in *What is Posthumanism?*, regards Freud’s claim warily. On his account “Freud’s parsing of the evolutionary sensorium” is to be seen as one of the “canonical” expressions of the privileging of “visual prowess” and thus of the “humanist *ability* to survey, organize and master space” (Wolfe 130). However, this does little justice to the substance of Freud’s argument, which is less an attempt to perpetuate the “stereotypical” (ibid.) humanist paradigm described by Wolfe than to account for the very quasi-conceptual hierarchy from which it emerges. On Freud’s view the locomotive elevation of the human being does not — definitively does not — amount to an ontological or sensorial elevation: on the contrary, it effects a *loss* of

sensory capacity, a reduction or impairment of apprehension with respect to outer and inner worlds. More significantly, for Freud, if the upright posture of the human animal causes a “*diminution* of [...] olfactory stimuli” it also, and by extension, causes a “*devaluation* of olfactory stimuli” (CD 99n; emphases added). The italicized words in these respective phrases translate two distinct German terms that it is important not to confuse: *Zurücktreten* and *Entwertung*. With the notion of the “*Zurücktreten* of olfactory stimuli” Freud describes as it were a purely physiological decline in what is or can be smelled by the human animal, in consequence of his vertical elevation. The “*Entwertung* of olfactory stimuli” moves us from a quantitative reduction at the level of physiology to the qualitative cathexes and decathexes of the sensorium, to which the physiological reduction gives rise. In other words, Freud’s text distinguishes between, on the one hand, an objective decline in the functional significance of the sense of smell within human beings, and, on the other, the resulting psychic devaluation or disinvestment of the sense of smell per se. Man is thus positioned not just as an animal whose relation to olfactory stimulation has been diminished but as *the animal which — for that very reason — seeks to dismiss olfaction tout court as an “inferior” sense*. Freud’s human being, then, is not, as Wolfe believes, somehow sensorially superior to non-human animals owing to a “visual prowess” that supervenes after the diminution of the sense of smell. On the contrary, Freud deploys his account of the physiological diminution of olfaction in man to explain the existence, and more particularly the *contingency* and the *factitiousness*, of precisely that qualitative stratification of sensoria presupposed by the humanist paradigm Wolfe condemns.

**Shame, cleanliness, and dogs.** The critical implications of Freud’s position begin to emerge more forcefully in the second half of the first footnote. Here, he makes overt the next “step” in his exposition, specifically positioning civilization itself as the consequence of the erect posture.

This account of the origins of civilization arises directly out of his foregoing proposition regarding the emergence of shame. He treats the latter as one of three decisive phenomena of civilized life caused by man’s upright stance, the others being family and cleanliness. His remarks on family are fairly brief. He has already conjectured in the chapter’s upper text that man’s motive for keeping his sexual objects near him in durable relationships must owe something to his capacity for continuous erotic excitement. At this point, Freud merely tries to ground that claim by insisting that this



capacity is an effect of the loss of sexual periodicity caused by olfactory repression. What concerns us more directly, however, is the excursus into cleanliness. This theme is subject to a more extensive discussion and is eventually linked up with shame through a reflection on the figure of the

Freud argues, then, that the human “incitement [*Antrieb*] to cleanliness” — for which hygiene is merely an “*ex post facto* justification” — was first caused by the shift away from quadrupedalism (100n). It arose, that is, not just from the “urge to get rid of the excreta,” which is common to living things, but from the conjunction of this vital necessity with the fact that, owing to the organic repression of olfaction, the excreted substances had become “disagreeable to the sense perceptions” (ibid.).

Now, the subsequent development of civilization entails the progressive entrenchment and accelerated recapitulation of this conjunction. The latter must itself be re-established afresh within every new “human” life, since initially “[t]he excreta arouse no abhorrence [*Abscheu*] in children” (ibid. [459n]).<sup>20</sup> Civilization thus puts, Freud claims, a “special energy” into “hastening the course of development” laid down organically for human beings by the repression of olfaction in the distant past: education and upbringing serve to enforce and expedite at an ontogenic level the identification of the excreta, and their strong smells, with all that is “worthless, disgusting, abhorrent and abominable” (ibid.).

Crucially for Freud, however, an adjuvant “social” factor, as he calls it, is glimpsed in the operations of civilization. If the latter is the avatar of the diminishment of olfaction in the upright human, it is also the avatar of the human devaluation of olfaction *tout court*, of the factitious — and fundamentally anthropocentric — stratification of sensoria which the devaluation implies. In short, civilization serves to efface *as privation* the privation (namely, “organic repression”) in which it has its origin. For the work of civilization does not only accelerate and solidify the physiologically-based predisposition to deem certain substances and smells worthy of contempt. It also enlists the human animal into deeming others who do not share the sense of abhorrence — those “who are not clean [...] who [do] not hide [their] excreta” (ibid.) — as being equally worthy of contempt therefore. To be a civilized human being is not simply to be capable of abhorrence; it is to apprehend the absence of this capability — and thus the “failure” or absence of olfactory repression — as being *abhorrent in itself*.

It is in this connection that Freud turns more overtly to the question of the human/animal relation, opening up a line of interrogation that will become broader and more trenchant still in the second footnote. Here is the key passage, which concludes the first note:

It would be incomprehensible [...] that man should use the name of his most faithful friend in the animal world — the dog — as a term of abuse if that creature had not incurred his contempt through two characteristics: that it is an animal whose dominant sense is that of smell and one which has no horror [*scheut*] of excrement, and that it is not ashamed of its sexual functions. (ibid. [459n])

What is in question here is both actual hostility to a non-human animal (implicit contempt for the faithful quadruped, owing to its physiological incapacity for the shame and abhorrence that regulate civilized life) and the metaphorical “animalization” (by means — in this instance — of canine terms of abuse) of human beings who are somehow “below” civilized standards of cleanliness and decency, inhibition, sexual restraint etc. The upper text of *CD* is of course greatly preoccupied with the means by which human beings denigrate and justify aggression towards members of their own species. Here, however, Freud’s concern with the linguistic idioms that sometimes articulate that aggression brings into focus the fundamental human derogation of other species. Apropos of this theme, the passage above is patently not an advocacy of man’s “superiority” to the dog — or to any other non-human animal — owing to the sensory and psychic reorganization provoked by his locomotive elevation. Everything Freud has said up to this point makes it clear that for him the dog becomes an object of contempt and an exemplum of abjection only because human civilization is constitutively invested in the tendentious abasement of the sensory organization the dog represents. In other words, Freud is at pains to stress the peculiarly factitious basis for the dog’s “inferiority” within the material and symbolic universe of the human. Far from assuming a position of “humanist” ascendancy himself, Freud thus begins to open up for critique precisely the devaluation of non-human animals — and the devaluation as “animal” of “uncivilized” humans — on which the illusion of that ascendancy supports itself.

As the implications of this argument are developed in the second footnote, it increasingly emerges that for Freud the question of the origin *as such* of the human being is fundamentally inseparable from the question of these factitious devaluations.

**The human / animal separation as primordial defence.** The second footnote is appended to the closing remarks of the chapter. In the upper text Freud has by now returned to the impairment of “the sexual life of civilized man” and conjectured that “not only the pressure of civilization but something in the nature of the [sexual] function itself denies us [i.e. human beings] full satisfaction and urges us along other paths.” Apparently withholding “full satisfaction” himself, Freud has ended the thought with the equivocal statement: “This may be wrong; it is hard to decide” (105). In the extensive note that follows he spends a good deal of time supporting this conjecture nonetheless.

Contrary to what one might expect, the note doesn’t immediately resume Freud’s account of the specifically human experience of sexuality. He in fact begins by postulating that the sexual function of many living creatures — human or otherwise — entails some incapacity for full satisfaction owing to the coexistence within each organism of “male and female” impulses (106n). No single object can simultaneously satisfy these differential impulses and therefore no individual can provide another with full sexual satisfaction. And this, Freud insists, is true for man only because he is “an animal organism with (like others) an unmistakably bisexual disposition” (105n). The significance of this claim, which stresses the continuity between human and non-human sexuality, is the retrospective nuance that it implicitly grants to the position set out in the previous footnote. Freud is not about to contradict that position; he will shortly return to the particular sexual effects of the upright stance in man. Extravagant as the remarks on bisexuality may appear in their own right, what they achieve within the recursive argumentation of the notes is a calibration of the erotic bases from which the upright stance is said to cause a departure. Their effect is to make Freud’s account of the consequence of man’s bipedalism irreducible to a tale of expulsion from an original unimpaired plenitude. It isn’t quite the case that for Freud “our sexuality fell when we stood up,” as Bersani has suggested (17; emphasis mine). Rather, Freud sees the impairment of upright man’s sexual function as a specific and extreme instance of a deficiency that is already integral to the sexual function *per se*, even in non-human animals.

After briefly adverting to the further, complicating factor of sadism within erotic ties — the text's first direct invocation of the death drive and one in which he refrains from hypothesizing its relative distribution among human and non-human creatures — he opens a new paragraph to treat in detail the conjecture which, he says, “goes deepest” (CD 106n). This returns him specifically to the human and to the consequences of the upright stance. He takes the opportunity here not simply to restate his hypothesis but to give it a further, recursive deepening — one that offers a summative statement of everything our reading has ascertained from the footnotes so far. Thus he recapitulates his basic hypothesis that the erect posture and the depreciation of man's sense of smell impaired “the whole of man's sexuality,” and he briefly underlines the continuity between this basic human repugnance (*Widerstreben*) towards erotism and contemporary manifestations of psychosexual pathology. However, he then goes on to venture the following — compressed — claim:

[T]he deepest root of the sexual repression [*Sexualverdrängung*] which advances along with civilization is the organic defence [*organische Abwehr*] of the new form of life achieved with man's erect gait against his earlier animal existence. This result of scientific research coincides in a remarkable way with commonplace prejudices that have often made themselves heard. (ibid. [466n])

It is worth underlining two, related points of development in this passage. Firstly, the more apposite term “organic defence” has been substituted for the earlier “organic repression.” Just a few years before *CD*, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud had spoken in favor of a terminological distinction between “repression” (*Verdrängung*) and “defence” (*Abwehr*). The latter, he had proposed, should be used generically to refer to any operation involving the “protection of the ego against instinctual demands” (164). Repression as such would be only one modality of defence and, what's more, would not necessarily be the earliest, since other modalities may be assumed to exist “before [the] sharp cleavage [of the mental apparatus] into an ego and an id” (ibid.). At this point in the footnotes, the term *repression*, which Freud has hitherto used a little awkwardly to describe the prehistoric repudiation concomitant with the upright stance, is redeployed in its restricted sense to describe psychosexual repression of the classical kind. It is replaced by *defence* — the elementary term now distinguishing the primordially of the operation in question. Secondly, we witness, in tandem with this gesture of

terminological nuancing, the boldest framing yet of the function of this foundational rejection. Where previously Freud has described the elementary defence in terms of particular examples — the devaluation (*Entwertung*) of olfaction and the attendant devaluation of “olfactory” species such as dogs — he now presents a consolidated characterization of its action: the foundational defence of the upright life-form — and the germinal “root” of all other defences the latter might subsequently evolve, including the sexual repression of civilization itself — is nothing less than a *defence against “animality,” against being-“animal.”*

Here, we have perhaps the most striking affirmation of the counter-humanist impulse we have traced in the notes so far. What impels the footnoted exposition is not an imperative to adjudicate the putative frontier between human and animal, even though, as we have seen, Freud will labor to do so elsewhere in the upper text. It is to recognize — and give a constitutive place to — the human animal’s non-neutral preoccupation with establishing and consolidating precisely such a frontier. What crystallizes most overtly here is the endeavor not to entrench or renew any distinction between “human” and “animal” but to problematize the human animal’s urge to be ontologically distinct. On this view the perennial enigmas of anthropocentric thought — What separates “us” from “animals”? What is “proper” to the human? etc. — must be seen not simply as questions to be answered but as determined outgrowths of what is always already a defensive operation.

The account of *Homo sapiens* which gradually emerges from this typographically set-off, cumulatively adumbrated hypothesis, then, is one that, to borrow the terms of Giorgio Agamben, presents the human less as “a clearly defined species [or] a substance” than an “anthropogenic (or [...] anthropological) machine” (Agamben 26) — a being that is defined/defines itself by the production and exclusion of “the animal” as a kind of constitutive outside. For Freud — as also for Agamben — this entails not just an originary rejection of the new life-form’s own earlier (i.e. pre-bipedal) “animal existence,” but, as we have seen, the devaluation of non-human others, and the relegation of devalued human others to the status of (mere) “animals.”

**Summation: inside / outside.** In the opening pages of *CD*, Freud describes the originary process of infantile subjectivation. It is a process in which the ego forms as a differentiated entity by distinguishing as “other,” expelling from its nascent self, whatever is perceived to cause unpleasure — whether its origin is “external” (objects in the outer world) or “internal” (*CD* 67). Thus indiscriminately rejecting as “not-me”

everything that is supposed incompatible with its rudimentary sense of identity, the burgeoning subject carves out a coherent psychic “inside” only by creating a “strange and threatening ‘outside’” (ibid.). The speculative hypothesis in the footnotes effectively transposes the logic of this ontogenic argument onto the still more obscure horizon of anthropogenesis. Here, as we have seen, the becoming-human of man is fundamentally linked to a defensive withdrawal from non-human animals and a rejection as “animal” of those aspects of man’s own being which are intolerable. In short, the hypothesis gives the tendentious repudiation of “the animal” a grounding, constitutive place within what is called — what calls itself — *man*. Further, *Kultur* is not unique to man: in addition to characteristics it may share with the cultures of other animals, human civilization is an apparatus whose most elementary purpose is to consolidate and transmit the defensive illusion of man’s uniqueness, to perpetuate this foundational rejection of an animal “outside.” For all of its extravagance, then, the argument of Freud’s olfactory hypothesis adumbrates a vision of man, and of human civilization, which is driven by a counter-humanist impulse more emphatic and progressive theoretically than perhaps anything in the upper text.

**Innovation and going-astray.** Where does all this progressive insight of the olfactory hypothesis leave us in terms of *understanding* the tensions and contradictions that we have traced in the upper text? At the beginning of this essay I cited the work of the eminent French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche as a key influence in the development of my argument. In this final section I would like to resume briefly one key aspect of Laplanche’s thought in order to address this question.

In a move that Laplanche is fond of citing, Freud famously places his own work within a tradition of scientific breakthroughs that have “de-centered” the human being and struck a blow against what Freud calls “human narcissism” (Freud, “A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis” 141): Copernicus de-centered man’s place in the universe; Darwin de-centered man’s place among the animals; Freud himself de-centered man’s ego, revealing him to be a psychically “heteronomous” being. However, in a series of texts reaching back several decades Laplanche has shown in detail just how rarely Freud’s thought is able to sustain this radical, de-centring impulse. Whatever Freud’s declared ambition in respect of the de-centring of man, Laplanche argues, the “constant threat of narcissistic closure” (“Unfinished Copernican Revolution” 81) pervades his theorizations. Time after time — and indeed increasingly as his work matures — Freud

ends up theoretically re-centring human psychic life by postulating an alternative but no less secure, essential and integrable “core self.” The late postulation of the biological core of the “id” is, in Laplanche’s account, only the most perspicuous instance of the ways in which a safely “monadological” (83) or “ipsocentric” (“Time and the Other” 245) view of the subject subtly reasserts itself in Freud’s thinking.

What is particularly instructive about Laplanche’s approach to these “goings-astray” (*fourvoiements*), as he calls them, of Freud’s de-centering ambition, is that for Laplanche they are not simply signs of intellectual failure or inconsistency on Freud’s part. They are indices of what he views as a quasi-mimetic relation between Freudian theory and its primary object: viz. the human psyche in its formation and development. Freud’s theory does not, he proposes, evolve independently of that object. Rather, the latter tends to magnetize the theory into an unwitting complicity with the very narcissism the theory seeks to understand and displace. Laplanche sometimes illustrates this claim by means of a parody of Haeckel’s “biogenetic law,” so dear to Freud. Where for Haeckel “ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis,” for Laplanche “‘theoretico-genesis’ recapitulates ontogenesis” (Laplanche, “Unfinished Copernican Revolution” 81). Put simply: any (human) theory of the human subject will be almost ineluctably oriented and constrained by the gravitational pull of man’s own illusory sense of autonomy and egoic centrality. On Laplanche’s account Freud’s oeuvre thus emerges as a conflicted site bearing the traces of a “double history of [de-centering] innovation and going-astray [i.e. theoretical re-centerings] — a sort of braid in which at times one strand of the plait is uppermost, at times the other” (Laplanche, *op. cit.* 61). Interpreting Freud productively, Laplanche insists, means not simply attacking him for inconsistency or contradiction. On the contrary, it requires that we recognise that such manifest theoretical tensions are the effects of determinate and conflicting fields of force underlying Freud’s thinking: the radical impulse to counter human narcissism and the regressive tendency, peculiar to all efforts to think the human, to connive unwittingly with that narcissism. Only then, Laplanche proposes, can we begin to expand the de-centering impulse of the Freudian discovery, and do so in a way that is as resistant as possible to the incorrigible human constraint to efface that discovery’s humiliating audacity.

As a psychoanalytic theoretician and clinician, Laplanche’s reading and interpretation of the conflicting tendencies driving Freud’s work are mainly preoccupied with Freud’s formulations on metapsychology: that is, with the description of the psychic apparatus

itself. However, in their partial anticipation of Agamben's "anthropogenic machine" Freud's footnotes enable us to supplement Laplanche's approach by positing alongside Freud's "metapsychological goings-astray" a fundamental "*anthropological* going-astray." What Freud and Agamben both suggest is that the self-serving human production of, and separation from, a putative "animal outside" is not a contingent possibility to which one may or may not fall prey. It is constitutively woven into the fabric and the conventions of human thought — no less indeed than the narcissistic illusion, which elsewhere draws Freud's metapsychology adrift, that we are psychically "centered" and autonomous. As Agamben indicates, it may take different forms in different epochs — and indeed in different cultural settings<sup>21</sup> — but its most traditional and emphatic form in Western thinking is that glimpsed in Freud's notes: a repudiation of non-human animals as uncivilized and the animalization of derogated aspects of man.

Now on the one hand, Freud's theorizations in *CD* are demonstrably impelled by this anthropological gravitation within thinking. The displacement of human atrocity onto the figures of the wolf and the beast, the bald and sarcastic repudiation of certain species as the antithesis of the civilized "neighbor," the negative circumscription of man's putatively unacculturated "animality": these manifest a complicity with the sedimented hierarchies of the anthropogenic machine which Freud is also, elsewhere, able to intuit — in the partial, highly marginalized form we have examined. However, as we have seen in the theses on "Erotic" and "Thanotic" impulses, this rhetorical and theoretical denigration of animals contends in various ways with declarations of admiration; the animalisation of man's unacculturated being and of instinctual excesses antithetical to civilization contends with repeated and affirmative claims about non-human eusociality; the assumption of connotative hierarchies between species contends with ethological claims about the differences among them. And we have also traced the curious theoretical contradictions to which these overlappings implicitly give rise in terms of Freud's central problematic: is man too much or not enough of an animal ever to be civilized without discontent? To that extent we may say that with respect to its variances regarding the human/animal relation, the upper text of *CD* is "braided" in a way that is analogous to the formulations on metapsychology analyzed by Laplanche. Its multiple innovations and intuitions contend, in an unresolved manner, with potent resurgences of an impulsion that is anything but unique to Freud, pulling the text back



towards the abjection of animality through which the human being constitutively labors to define, and valorize, itself.

To try to understand in this way the latent tensions that govern contradictory formulations in Freud's work does not mean giving those tensions a pass and allowing them to stand. As I hope will be clear, those tensions can and should be identified, analyzed and aggravated. By doing so, I suggest, we gain a richer understanding of what is a critical and complex yet rarely discussed aspect of his extraordinary thought. We can also then begin to ask how a psychoanalysis *to come* might best resist the foundational humanist impulse that can constrain and lead astray the thought of Freud himself.<sup>22</sup>

In tracing the conceptualizations and representations of animals and animality in CD, my intention has not been to present an encompassing account of Freud's perspectives on the human/animal relation. His oeuvre is too complex and too shifting, his debts to — and displacements of — disparate traditions within science, philosophy, literature and mythology are too disparate, for this to be possible within a single essay.<sup>23</sup> What I have tried to show is that animals and animality play a critical role in his thinking. They are at once indispensable reference points and sites of implicit conflict and instability. Tracking the different manifestations of animality elsewhere in Freud, and educing their respective implications for the different areas and eras of his thought, is a task for further research. However, it has also been my goal to suggest that as far as the concerns of human/animal studies go, Freud's oeuvre warrants being seen as more than just an object for critique. For all of its conflictuality and ambivalence, the Freudian text also bears within it openings of considerable critical potentiality in their own right. These are sometimes marginal and incipient, and may require patient analysis and elaboration to disintricate, but they open onto theoretical intuitions and possibilities which deserve to be understood, which can themselves be put to work in the interpretation of the oeuvre's own instabilities, and from which we may continue to learn.

## Notes

1. Where, within quotations, I also refer to Freud's original German texts the page reference for the *Gesammelte Werke* will appear in square brackets.

2. Bersani's approach takes inspiration from methodological principles set out in Laplanche's "Interpreting (with) Freud" and developed systematically by him until the end of his life.
3. I am in favor of using the term "drive" to translate Freud's *Trieb* and do so throughout, except when quoting Strachey's standard translation, which translates this term as "instinct." However, since there is no English adjectival form for "drive" (the relevant German term is *triebhaft*) I retain the word "instinctual" where the adjective is required.
4. Cf. Bersani 14.
5. See, for example, Laplanche, "Biologie et biologisme."
6. *CD* does not cite Haeckel explicitly, and nor do any other of Freud's published works. However, as Sulloway and Gould have demonstrated, the absence of any localized mention of Haeckel's name is an indication of the almost pervasive influence and presence within Freud's thinking of recapitulation theory.
7. The "inch of nature" phrase is something of textual crux — one of many — in Shakespeare's play and is not reproduced in all editions. Freud's translator, James Strachey, conjectures that Freud's familiarity with the phrase may derive from his reading of Georg Brandes's monograph *William Shakespeare* (1896). See *CD* 91, n. 1.
8. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is perhaps the most developed example of this tendency. It comes most strongly to the fore in Freud's later work and is evident in the ease with which he refers, for example, to elementary animal [*elementaren animalischen*] instinctual sources [*Triebquellen*] ("The Resistances to Psychoanalysis" 218 [105–106]). See my essay "Psychoanalysis and the 'Animal': A Reading of the Metapsychology of Jean Laplanche" which tracks and critiques this development in Freud.
9. The termite's ability to eat through wood — to the point that structures supported by wood may weaken and collapse — is reflected in the etymology of its name, influenced as it is by the Latin *terere*: "to rub, to wear down, to erode."
10. On this conceptual pairing see "The Psychoanalytic View of Psychogenic Disturbances of Vision."

11. For a meticulous account of the evolution of Freud's drive theory see Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, esp. chapters 2, 4 and 6.
12. It is, however, broached earlier in a footnote in chapter 4. I discuss the notes to chapter 4 in detail later on.
13. See Leviticus, 11 : 41–44, esp.
14. The footnoted reference to Plautus given in the English Standard Edition is an editorial addition and does not appear in Freud's German text.
15. Later in the First Session Derrida discusses Freud's hypotheses about man's supposedly exceptional capacity for cruelty and cites Freud's admiring discussion of "our animal ancestors" at length. It is all the more striking therefore that throughout his extensive treatment of *homo homini lupus* in the seminar, Derrida never reflects upon, or explicitly acknowledges, Freud's own appeal to this dictum in relation to the death drive.
16. Later the same year Freud raised the matter in some detail at a meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. It met with some scepticism among his colleagues. See Nunberg and Federn ( Scientific Meeting of November 17, 1909).
17. Other discussions of the hypothesis may be found in Harvey (chapter 7); Lippit (chapter 4); Sulloway (chapter 10). Bersani (chapter 1) touches on it interestingly but with relatively little explicit development. The hypothesis is of interest to Derrida ("Before the Law" 194) — and one can perhaps detect the trace of its influence in his "hypothesis" on modesty ("But as for me, who am I (following)?" 61) — but he never gives a systematic reading of it. More recently, in his essay on "The Pharmacology of Desire" Bernard Stiegler has taken a deconstructive approach to the notes. Stiegler's important comments are sensitive to the question of anthropogenesis. However, his primary concern is with the *CD*'s exemplary foreclosure of man's relation to technics, rather than its exposition of man's defensive relation to a putative animality. I discuss Cary Wolfe's brief comments on the olfactory hypothesis in the next section.
18. For a polemical discussion of the repudiation of Freudian biologism within much contemporary psychoanalysis, see Green.
19. Notably, the discovery of Zinjanthropian in 1959 showed the grounding role of bipedalism in the development of the human brain. This demonstrable relegation of the

brain to a secondary rather than a directive role in hominization was something of a scandal for the anthropocentric conception of the human being, as French anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan famously underlined: “We were prepared to accept anything except to learn that it all [that is, hominization] began with the feet!” (Leroi-Gourhan 65). The profound implications of this empirical blow to anthropocentrism are further developed in Bernard Stiegler’s book *Technics and Time: The Fault of Epimetheus* (1.§3).

20. Translation altered. Here Strachey translates *Abscheu* as “disgust.” However, *Abscheu* is distinct from the word Freud tends to use when he speaks specifically of disgust vis-à-vis sexuality. In his discussion of the perversions in *the Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, for instance, Freud refers to the “limits of disgust [*Grenze dieses Ekels*]” as being purely “conventional” i.e. differing between cultures (152 [51]). Freud’s concern in the footnotes to *CD* is with an antipathy that is not reducible to the specific mores of a single culture but which plays a founding role in the establishment of human culture (*Kultur*) itself. Moreover, *Abscheu* and its derivatives imply a fear or horror that is not essential to disgust (cf. chapter 1 of *Totem and Taboo: “Die Inzestscheu”* (“The Horror of Incest”)). In order to retain the distinction implicit in Freud’s writing — and maintained elsewhere by Strachey’s *Standard Edition* — I use “abhorrence” to translate *Abscheu* here.

21. I do not have space here to discuss Freud’s most sustained discussion of the human/animal relation in non-Western cultures in *Totem and Taboo*.

22. I have discussed this at greater length, and with close reference to Laplanche’s re-foundation of Freudian metapsychology, in Ray.

23. This has, however, been attempted, not without interesting results, by Genosko.

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