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With Haraway and Beyond: Towards an Ecofeminist and Contextual Vegan Ethico-Politics

Pablo P. Castelló 

Department of Philosophy, Queen's University, Canada
Email: p.castello@queensu.ca

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Abstract

Some ecofeminist scholars have argued that being a feminist entails being a contextual vegan. Donna Haraway has opposed this position and received extensive critique. Yet no one, to my knowledge, has systematically studied how Haraway's theory can enrich ecofeminist vegan literature. To this end, I first establish the method of analysis, and/or framework, I use to read Haraway's work, what I call, interconstitutionality. Next, I delineate the limitations of Haraway's thinking insofar as it assumes a position of human dominion over animals. I then explore some aspects of Haraway's theory that can enrich ecofeminist vegan scholarship and provide insights to go beyond the limits of Haraway's corpus regarding: (1) the entanglements and embodied vulnerabilities that constitute human and non-human animals; (2) the agency of animals and the importance of curiosity and respect in leading just lives with other than human animals; (3) the ethical relevance of otherness, difference, and vulnerability at multiple scales: subject, community/herd, species, and cross-species (e.g., there are shared vulnerabilities between beings who are pregnant regardless of the species they belong to); and (4) the unavoidable violence that human existence entails. The text closes by affirming an ecofeminist non-anthropocentric vegan ontology and ethico-politics that aspires to overcome human dominion over animals.

In 1976, Carol J. Adams interviewed several ecofeminist women from the Cambridge-Boston community. Some fragments of the interviews were published in Adams' 'Ecofeminism and the eating of animals' (1991). One of the interviewees said that "by eating meat you are exploiting earth and to be a feminist means not to accept the ethics of exploitation" (Adams 1991, 129). From its inception, some ecofeminist scholars have argued that being a feminist entails being a contextual vegan (Curtin 1991, 68–71). To provide a few reasons: Deane Curtin has argued that an ethic of care necessarily entails eliminating the suffering humans inflict on animals when, for instance, humans breed animals for food consumption, provided that a plant-based diet is available (70). In this context, Curtin asserts: "an ecofeminist perspective emphasizes that one's body is oneself, and that by inflicting violence needlessly, one's bodily self becomes a context for violence" (70); Lori Gruen contends that non-human animals

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exist alongside humans in an entangled web of affective relationships, and that these relationships have such ethical weight that they should not be broken by keeping animals captive (2014b) or killing animals for food consumption in parts of the world where a plant-based diet is accessible (Gruen 2014a, 132). Sunaura Taylor has argued that domesticated animals should not be slaughtered because they are dependently vulnerable, which “can create opportunities for coercion, but it also holds the potential for new ways of being, supporting, and communicating.” She demonstrates that “to do right by these animals now means respecting their dependence, their interdependence, and indeed their naturalness as beings who have just as much of a right to live out their lives on this planet as we do” (Taylor 2017, 217–18).

As helpful as Donna Haraway’s work might be for building a vegan ethico-politics, she has opposed the view that being a feminist entails being a contextual vegan (Franklin and Haraway 2017, 56) and has supported actions such as producing mice with cancer for experimental purposes (1997) or killing animals for “annual departmental feasts” (Haraway 2008, 297). Vegan ecofeminist and critical animal studies scholars have criticized Haraway’s ethico-politics for various reasons. For instance, Stephanie Jenkins has shown that Haraway does not differentiate between “differences in degree, kind and intent of killing, which are ethically relevant; the killings for which a vegan is responsible differ significantly from those that an omnivore enacts” (Jenkins 2012, 507). Gruen has argued that Haraway’s stance in relation to eating animals is anthropocentric because Haraway would not support activities such as eating a pig for a departmental gathering (Haraway 2008, 297) if the being on the table was a human one (Gruen 2014a, 132). Similarly, Matthew Calarco (2021) has recently said that abolishing practices like eating meat does not mean that those animals would “become mere museum pieces (as Haraway¹ often suggests) . . . acquiescing to that conclusion, [Calarco contends], can only stem from a failure of imagination and from a lack of belief in the potential of animal life to assume other forms.”

On the other hand, several feminist authors have drawn on Haraway’s theory in *Hypatia* and elsewhere. To give a few examples, Alexandra Koelle shows that Haraway’s understanding of companion species is helpful in illuminating that human–animal interactions determine the subjectivities of the beings entangled in the interactions (2012, 653). Donovan O. Schaefer uses Haraway’s insights to stress that the point of departure of ethics should not be the illusory ideal of an autonomous independent actor but rather attentiveness to alterity, difference, and the body (Schaefer 2014, 378–79). Susan McHugh (2012, 628–30) shows that Haraway’s work is important in weaving queer and animal theory through the oral intercourse between Cayenne—Haraway’s dog companion—and Haraway herself, which, McHugh contends, ruptures calculative thinking and logics of sameness and, instead, opens through “non/human conversation” (2012, 630) “the coming into being of something unexpected” (Haraway 2008, 223). More generally, ecofeminist and critical animal studies vegan scholars have also drawn on Haraway’s work regarding human–animal entanglements, communication, and the deconstruction of the human–animal divide.² While there are extensive critiques of Haraway’s work,³ no one, to my knowledge, has systematically studied how Haraway’s theory can enrich vegan ecofeminist literature: this is the central aim of this article.⁴

To that end, I first discuss the method of analysis I use: interconstitutionality. Next, I show why Haraway holds a position of human dominion over animals (Wadiwel 2015), and demonstrate how this constrains her ethics by deconstructing the case of PigeonBlog, a violent art project between humans and pigeons that Haraway endorses

in *Staying with the trouble* (2016). I then examine the ways in which Haraway's theory can help us to lead good and just lives with animals, and to build an ecofeminist vegan ethico-politics. I do this by studying Haraway's contributions regarding: (1) the entanglements and embodied vulnerabilities that constitute human and non-human animals; (2) animals' agencies and the importance of curiosity and respect for leading just lives with other animals; (3) the ethical relevance of otherness, difference, and vulnerability at multiple scales; and (4) the unavoidable violence that human existence entails. However, my aim is not only to show how Haraway's work can be helpful to building a contextual feminist vegan philosophy, but also go beyond the limits of her thinking. The text closes by advocating for a non-anthropocentric vegan ontology and ethico-politics that aspires to overcome human dominion over animals.

Interconstitutionality as method

I want to situate this article in a different terrain to that of intersectionality, what I call, interconstitutionality. While the term is not novel,⁵ interconstitutionality has not been explicitly established as a method and/or framework of analysis.⁶ This method is nonetheless often implicit in the works of some intersectional scholars and fields such as ecofeminism, critical race theory, and critical animal studies. My intention in the next paragraphs is to offer an *overview* of what interconstitutionality entails as I use it here (a full defense of this method goes beyond the scope of this article).⁷

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the term "intersectionality" in the context of understanding discrimination against Black women.⁸ Crenshaw argued that the experiences of Black women were distinct, and so their oppression could not be understood by thinking only in terms of the oppression experienced by Black men and white women (1989, 143). According to Crenshaw, a Black woman can experience four kinds of discrimination: (1) sex discrimination; (2) race discrimination; (3) the combined effects of both, i.e., the sum of race discrimination and sex discrimination; and (4) when sex discrimination and race discrimination merge, i.e., when a Black woman is discriminated as a Black woman (149).

Since Crenshaw's ground-breaking article was published there have been many critiques of intersectionality that I cannot address here. Nonetheless, and by drawing on María Lugones' (2003, 2007) work on intersectionality, Ann Garry offers a succinct and helpful summary of the kinds of analysis "that make women of color visible" (Garry 2011, 838). Garry identifies four types of analysis:

- (1) clear-cut categories-based analysis that do not allow "for difference within categories such as gender or race" and sees the "dominant group within a category, for example, straight Black men" as the stereotypical Black person, marginalizing, for instance, "Black women, gay Black people of either gender," and so on (838);
- (2) other perspectives stress "multiple oppressions" but do not think of the interactions between different oppressions.

The latter two approaches reproduce the logic of purity (Lugones 2003, 127) in that they continue to analyse oppressions as being separable (Garry 2011, 838):

- (3) "*intersectionality of 'interlocked' oppressions*" (838; italics in original). This framework starts to see oppressions as interacting with each other but does

not see oppressions as changing each other's natures, for example, patriarchy, under this logic, does not affect racism and anthropocentrism;⁹ and

- (4) "*mutually constituted and fused oppressions*" (838; italics in original). This is Lugones' understanding of oppressions, which thinks of oppressions as being impure, as constituting each other, and as "impossible to understand apart from each other" (Lugones 2007, 187).

My methodology is in alignment with Lugones's but I am going to use a different imagery, metaphor, and discourse to capture the all-pervasiveness hierarchizing nature of, what I call, Western conceptuality.¹⁰ By Western conceptuality I mean a set of historically situated and interconstituted conceptual forces that form reality, our political and legal institutions, and the subjectivities of most humans world-wide in our colonial present.¹¹ I am referring to concepts and dichotomies (like *the* human/animal, nature/culture, primitive/civil, Black/white, man/woman) which I understand to be anthropocentric forces that humanize and animalize, establish who belongs to the political community and is "civil," and racialize and gender subjectivities, institutions, and reality (Butler 1990; Plumwood 1993/2000; Kim 2015; Ko 2019a).

It is my contention that there are cases and instances in which intersectionality fails as a method of analysis because it cannot explain how subjects, institutions, and reality are *constituted* by this violent Western conceptuality. Consider the language often stressed by intersectional writers: "juxtaposition," "interaction," "overlaps," "connections," and "intersections." All these terms speak of oppressions as being in a relationship of *externality* to each other, and as if they were external to subjects. Intersectional discourse correctly captures the idea that oppressions cannot be understood through single-axis frameworks. However, it sometimes misses that our existence is, as Claire Jean Kim argues, "lived *through* race" (Kim 2016), that "race, species and other taxonomies of power structure how we see, think, feel, and act" (Kim 2015, 20), and that racism and animality "are dynamically interconstituted *all the way down*" (Kim 2017, 10: italics in the original). This means that when Crenshaw argued that a Black woman could be oppressed *only* as woman or *only* as Black (1989, 149), as if race and gender were separable, she missed that a Black woman can be oppressed *only as* a Black woman, i.e., gender and race are *not* separable—the fourth kind of oppression that Crenshaw herself identified.¹²

What is more, Crenshaw used an analogy of traffic in an intersection to illustrate how Black women experience oppression (1989, 149), which has been expanded by Garry in that she refers to a roundabout and adds up many other streets to the streets of gender and race that Crenshaw theorized (Garry 2011, 831). This imagery is problematic not only because roundabouts and streets remain horizontal and cannot, therefore, account for hierarchy, as Garry acutely discusses (833), but because they are physical, localizable, and solid entities. When we think of epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) and of a concept like *the* human (read: *the* white rational and able-bodied man), we cannot think of it as something physical that can be easily localizable like a car or a street: where is *the* human? We need to think of individual concepts as resembling the force of gravitational fields, and of Western conceptuality as an all-pervasive force constituted by the merger of all those gravitational fields (e.g., *the* human, *the* woman, *the* Black) rather than thinking of cars, streets, and roundabouts.

Terms like "force" and "gravitational fields" enable us to better understand hierarchy, epistemic violence, and the nature of oppressions. Importantly, and as it happens with gravity,¹³ we humans do not decide to be born into a violent Western conceptuality that constitutes ourselves and our respective languages.¹⁴ I stress that we are born into

Western conceptuality, as opposed to deciding concepts, because interconstitutionality does not focus on choice, but rather on the conceptual, ontological, and ethico-political conditions that form humans' subjectivities and human institutions to think that it is the differential sovereign right of humans to decide over those lives who deviate from the paradigmatic human person (Wadiwel 2015).¹⁵ In short, interconstitutionality understands that oppressions constitute each other, are situated in specific historical contexts, and that subjects are composed by an all-pervasive and violent Western conceptuality. It is especially important to use an interconstitutional method in this case because Haraway's thinking, I argue, is limited and constituted by Western conceptuality to hold a position of sovereignty over animals.

Haraway's sovereignty over pigeons: the case of PigeonBlog

Given that I intend to go beyond the anthropocentric limits of Haraway's corpus, it is necessary to understand first why her thinking is limited. Dinesh Wadiwel's critique of Haraway's work (Wadiwel 2015, 202–22) has, I think, disclosed some of the key structuring problems in Haraway's epistemology and ethics. Hence what follows explains Wadiwel's theory in relation to human dominion over animals, and shows afterwards how the anthropocentric sovereign conceptuality deconstructed by Wadiwel delimits Haraway's thinking through a case study.¹⁶

Wadiwel argues that human sovereignty over animals, which he regards as "a mode of human domination of animals" (2015, 21), is a key leverage point for humans to undertake violent practices against animals.¹⁷ More concretely, human sovereignty refers to the unfounded self-proclaimed human right to decide over others' lives.¹⁸ Importantly, human sovereignty is not a power held by a few or a sole all-powerful sovereign—exemplified perfectly in the figure of the King. Instead, Wadiwel shows that sovereignty is "minutely ... disseminated through the populace ... This is an individualized power, a personal prerogative exercised with respect to animals across diverse fields, including animals that meet the knife in the slaughterhouse, animals tormented in experimental facilities, or animals at the end of a leash in suburban backyards" (Wadiwel 2015, 191).

When Wadiwel refers to human sovereignty as a power that "is minutely disseminated through the populace," he directs our attention towards how power infiltrates our subjectivities and practices. The subjectivities of Westerners¹⁹ are constituted by a conceptuality that forms us to hold a position of dominion over animals because concepts such as *the* sovereign human subject, who is meant to be endowed with reason and language, constitute Western conceptuality. Westerners emerge from this conceptuality as subjects in opposition to *the* subjugated animal, that is, Western subjects emerge as rulers *over* animals (read: the epistemically violent concept of *the* animal (Derrida 2008a, 14)). Crucially, Wadiwel argues that Westerners construct ethics from this epistemological vantage point and, therefore, "ethics comes *after* sovereignty" (2015, 44; my emphasis). We can then understand why human sovereignty over animals circumscribes the "limits [of] ethical possibility" (55): for the sovereign the possibility of ethics is open only insofar as "our dominion right [is not tempered] (captured perfectly in that diabolical phrase 'unnecessary suffering')" (22).

In *Staying with the trouble*, Haraway discusses the case of PigeonBlog, an art project initiated by Beatriz Da Costa (Haraway 2016, 20). PigeonBlog consisted in letting racing pigeons fly with "backpacks" attached to them that could detect the level of pollution through a pollution sensor, locate the pigeons through a GPS, and map levels of pollution on Google Maps (Haraway 2016, 22). Figure 1 is a picture of the project.²⁰

According to Da Costa, the project's purpose was "to collect and distribute information about air quality conditions to the general public" and foster collaborative relationships between humans and pigeons (Da Costa 2008, 377). In this manner, PigeonBlog attempted to change people's tendency to perceive pigeons as "flying rats," and open a discussion "about possible new forms of cohabitation" (378). Haraway endorses Da Costa's project by: thinking of pigeons as being "invited to join" the project; describing the project as seeking to "join savvy, inexpensive, do-it-yourself electronics with citizen science and interspecies coproduced art and knowledge 'in the pursuit of resistant action;'" and regarding the project as a "collaboration in ... multispecies art in action for mundane worlds in need of—and capable of—recuperation across consequential differences" (Haraway 2016, 21).

At the beginning of Haraway's story about PigeonBlog she says that one could look at this project's story through the lens of "human brutality toward pigeons" (20). Haraway *decides* not to mention anything else beyond those four words regarding



Figure 1. This photograph portrays pigeons grabbed by humans participating in DaCosta's art project PigeonBlog. The pigeons are equipped with "backpacks," which contain a pollution sensor and a GPS devise. Credit: Deborah Foster, retrieved from "With backpacks and cellphones these Pigeon Scientists transmit data to a website;" the same photograph appears in Haraway 2016, 23.

the violence the pigeons might experience.²¹ This decision is symptomatic of Haraway assuming a position of sovereignty over animals because the sovereign “has the right not to respond, [s/he] has the right to the silence of that dissymmetry. [S/he] has the right to a certain irresponsibility” (Derrida 2008b, 57). Haraway, as sovereign, decides not to respond, and instead focuses on praising PigeonBlog as a collaborative art project between humans and pigeons, the relations of companionship and co-shaping that emerge through this project, and similar tropes.²²

Unsurprisingly, Haraway does not pay attention to the pigeons’ will, and to whether they want to participate in this project and be grabbed. However, she does value animals’ agency (e.g., 2003/2016, 141). The problem is that when one holds animals in regard from a position of sovereignty, ethico-political dimensions such as agency are undermined by the impossibility of tempering the sovereign’s right. As Wadiwel argues: we humans, as sovereigns, “have the freedom to provide forms of limited consideration [to those subjugated] that do not temper our dominion right” (2015, 22). The last words being crucial in this case, the sovereign—Da Costa as initiator of the project, and Haraway as an actor in reproducing the established order’s epistemological/conceptual paradigm—can consider and ponder ethical considerations but only insofar as their dominion right is not tempered. Regarding pigeons as self-determining agents (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2015, 64; Blattner et al. 2020) would certainly temper the sovereign’s right to decide over animals’ lives, and Da Costa’s project would have not been realized, at least not in the anthropocentric unilateral terms it was constructed.

Haraway also makes clear throughout her work that she values animals as different others (e.g., Haraway 2008, 90). Yet again, she fails in being ethically attentive to the pigeons’ otherness, which would have entailed experiencing some sort of feeling of ethical perplexity when confronted with an image like the one above. We should feel at least troubled: what are we doing to these real beings while we grab them? Are they experiencing anxiety, fear? Are *these* pigeons going through some sort of negative experience that escapes our understanding? What are we doing? Despite Haraway’s insistence on otherness, difference, and respect in her work as a whole, she does not even mention the possibility that any of these features of the pigeons might have been violated when they were grabbed by humans (Haraway 2016, 20–29).

Learning with Haraway and beyond

In short, and in spite of what Haraway and some authors say (Haraway 2008, 77; Lipschitz 2012, 562), Haraway’s work operates *within* the anthropocentric sovereign conceptuality discussed by Wadiwel (2015).²³ However, Haraway’s work in general and her lexicon in particular can be helpful for ecofeminist vegan scholarship. Let us now turn to the central aim of this article: to disclose in what ways Haraway can enrich an already rich ecofeminist vegan literature while going beyond the limits of her thinking.

Embodied entanglements

Perhaps the most salient of Haraway’s tropes are those of entanglement and companionship. Like ecofeminist vegan scholarship, Haraway’s position opposes traditional approaches to animal ethics, often associated with Peter Singer and Tom Regan, which usually regard individuals and individuals’ properties as the source of value (Singer 2009; Regan 1983). This is a problem because such theories undermine the value that is inherent in living beings’ bonds and entangled existences (Slicer 1991,

111–12; Gruen 2015, 15–26). My first target consists precisely in drawing attention to what such bonds and entanglements entail, and showing that they are valuable through Haraway's distinctive discourse.

Haraway's work impels us to live real entanglements, and makes us attentive to the fact that "to be one is always to *become with many*" (2008, 8). This spirit is best captured in Haraway's term companion species, that is, "*cum panis*, with bread, at table together—not 'posthuman' but 'com-post'" (Haraway 2016, 11). Our composted existence involves putting the emphasis on *humus* rather than *homo* when thinking of humans, that is, directing our attention "into the soil, into the multispecies, biotic and abiotic working of the Earth, the earthly ones, those who are in and of the Earth, and for the Earth" (Franklin and Haraway 2017, 50). The ontological stress is in our being and becoming "with each other, as in compost. We are truly with" (50). We are transformed together at different levels: from the macroorganisms with which we share our *socius* to the microorganisms we coexist with in our bodily lives. What is important to understand from these last lines is that relationships and entanglements do not merely occur between independent individuals who decide, as isolated individuals, to forge relationships. Our humanimal existence is always already entangled, that is to say that from birth, and even before birth,²⁴ humans and animals are subjectively co-constituted by relationships, and then, from those entanglements and relationships individuality emerges. This means that "relationships . . . define not just the interactions between humans and animals, but determine the shape and nature of those very entities themselves" (Koelle 2012, 653). In other words, the idea that humans are independent rational beings is mistaken: individuals are irremediably composed and composted by entanglements.²⁵ What Haraway's thinking and discourse (e.g., "compost") bring to the fore is that human and non-human animals are co-constituted not only by social relationships but also by biotic, abiotic, and ecological relationships.

One of Haraway's most intimate sisters, Anna Tsing, illustrates Haraway's muddy ontology by putting mushrooms at the centre. Tsing explains that "the role of fungi in ecosystem renewal makes it more than obvious that fungi are always companions to other species" (2012, 144). The previous words problematize human exceptionalism because they emphasize species' inter-dependency, which she claims "is a well-known fact—except when it comes to humans. *Human exceptionalism blinds us*" (144). Tsing's discourse does not only destabilize anthropocentrism, but also challenges the discourses of human mastery present in some scientific stories and monotheistic religions (144).²⁶ These stories, Tsing argues, "fuel assumptions about human autonomy, and they direct questions to the human *control* of nature . . . rather than to species inter-dependence" (144). The target is Enlightenment's conceptualization of man as an independent rational being.²⁷ Consider how much we humans depend on Earth to survive and flourish, and how vulnerable we are to phenomena such as climate change. For instance, phytoplankton alone (which amounts to 1 percent of Earth's photosynthetic biomass) contributes "almost half of the world's total primary production [of oxygen], making them as important in modifying the planet's cycle of carbon and carbon dioxide as all the world's land plants combined" (Falkowski 2012, 19).

In this context, Haraway's notions of entanglement, companion species, and compost can be read as contesting not only the dominant Western conceptuality that prizes individualism and abstraction, but also as a call to change ourselves. Haraway makes us attentive to our shared vulnerabilities and relational vitalities (2008, 331–32) because she claims feminism as a structural feature of her ontology (Hamilton and Neimanis 2018, 504): embodied vulnerabilities, entanglements, and our human-animal composted

existences originate from a feminist “refusal of typological thinking, binary dualisms, and both relativisms and universalisms of many flavors” Haraway 2003/2016, 99). Instead, Haraway affirms a “rich array of approaches to emergence, process, historicity, difference, specificity, cohabitation, co-constitution, and contingency” (99). This entails, among other things, celebrating dependency as part of what it means to lead relational lives: we flourish *with* others by living *with* (Haraway 2016, 38–39).

So far we have seen that Haraway’s nuanced insights on entanglement are helpful in disrupting logics of human mastery, and in showing that the subjectivities of human and non-human animals are interconstituted through and by entanglements. However, as the case of PigeonBlog illustrated, Haraway’s understanding of entanglement and relationality does not deconstruct how human–animal relationships are embedded within ethically and epistemologically perverse limits. In order to go beyond these limits, while retaining Haraway’s insights, I want to critically examine Lori Gruen’s contributions on empathy (2015).

In *Entangled empathy*, Gruen provides important insights in relation to empathizing and making better ethical judgments with and about those who do not wear shoes (2015, 81–95). Gruen identifies two ways of making mistakes in empathizing: *epistemic and ethical inaccuracies* (82). The former refers to an “overestimation of the nature or weight of the others’ mental states or underestimating or missing altogether the significance of the others’ experiences” (83). In the pigeons’ case discussed above, we can appreciate that Haraway misses the significance of the pigeons’ experiences and agency, since she is not attentive to whether the pigeons were willing to be grabbed. “Ethical inaccuracies” refers to failures in weighing “values in different situations” (82). To return to the pigeons’ case, Haraway’s theory values animals as different others, but she fails to weigh the value of difference and otherness when it comes to the real-life project that humans force pigeons to participate in.

Gruen’s corrective to Haraway is crucial because it allows us to notice that entanglements and our ability to empathize cannot be taken at face value. This seems especially poignant in Haraway’s case, as she fails to empathize with animals at both the epistemic and ethical levels. I want to suggest, however, that while the divide between ethical and epistemological inaccuracies is very helpful in some respects, it does not account for how epistemology and ethics are interconstituted, and how humans are constituted by a violent Western conceptuality that deprives us of feeling and being empathetic. It is here where we might be able to appreciate the limits of intersectionality as a method of analysis—Gruen explicitly adopts an intersectional method but, in my view, she goes at some points beyond it.²⁸ Going beyond the limits of intersectionality is important because if we want to build ethically good human–animal relationships, we need to understand how Western conceptuality constitutes our human subjectivities and ethical responses, especially given that this conceptuality is hostile to animals.

Wadiwel argues that, when a given epistemology (read: Western conceptuality) fails “to recognize another, violence follows” (2015, 256). In a similar line, Judith Butler says that “a life can register as a life only within a[n epistemological] schema that presents it as such” (2020, 112). Drawing on the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), Wadiwel describes “the concept of ‘epistemic violence’ as the process by which knowledge systems silence particular subjects, removing recognition and rendering them invisible” (2019, 215).²⁹ This invisibility should not only be read in terms of whether one recognizes that another being’s life registers as a life. Haraway, for instance, recognizes lab animals’ lives as lives when humans experiment on them, yet she supports such experiments (Haraway 2008, 69). What Wadiwel targets is, I think, an unintended

lack of attentiveness towards the ethical weight animals' lives have. One (e.g., Haraway) might recognize another's life as a grievable one, but if the conceptuality that structures the subjectivities of humans (including Haraway) renders such lives as less livable, less grievable (Stanescu 2012, 569), then violence can follow. Notice that the stress is not on whether Haraway is epistemically and ethically accurate in assessing another being's experience or the ethical weight of a given action. My discussion precedes those questions because authors such as Haraway are deprived of being ethically and epistemically attentive in the first place, that is, *before* they make a judgment. The violent Western conceptuality that constitutes most, if not all, Westerners to be anthropocentric and sovereign over animals closes us off, leads us to turn away and disavow others' lives (Kim 2015, 20).

All this is important in relation to entanglements, empathizing, and vulnerability because paying attention to the value that inheres in bonds and dependency *requires* understanding and deconstructing the violent Western conceptuality that constitutes and disallows humans from being attentive to the ethical weight of those entanglements, embodied vulnerabilities, and dependencies. I contend that it is by deconstructing such matters that the sensitive ontology that emerges from ecofeminist vegan theory can be recognized with all its ethical weight—which can never, of course, be fully known. From this standpoint, the relational ontology disclosed by ecofeminist scholars has the potential to rupture how power relationships structure hierarchically and traditionally oppressive human–animal relationships and, importantly, our animal-eating culture that holds *the* abled rational and independent white man at the centre (Adams 1990/2015, 109; Taylor 2017, 217–21). In short, the vegan ethico-politics advocated for here affirms an embodied relational ontology of care that values and celebrates dependency, prizes our entangled and vulnerable existence, and simultaneously calls for a constant deconstruction of our beings, everyday lives, and how Western conceptuality and ethics are interconstituted.

Agency, respect, curiosity

For Haraway entanglements occur between agents, that is, decision-makers who are the authors of their lives (2003/2016, 95). Haraway's position, as that of many vegan theorists,³⁰ stems from the recognition that there is someone at home when we encounter and hold animals in regard (Smuts 2001, 308), that is, animals are not mere objects but beings with personalities who respond (Haraway 2008; Derrida 2008a; Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011).

Haraway offers a more nuanced and richer account of agency than most liberal analytic philosophers, who usually understand agency in individualistic terms. As the entanglement author *par excellence*, Haraway understands humans and animals as being “partners-in-the-making” (Haraway 2008, 208) who are constantly co-shaping each other's agency. Focusing on human–dog relationships, Haraway reminds us of the ethico-political fact that “beings do not pre-exist their relatings” (Haraway 2003/2016, 98). This means, among other things, that animals (including humans) and human–animal relationships do not pre-exist history either. One only needs to consider the historical legacy of domestication that constitutes dogs' very bodies and beings (100) together with the fact that we do not “pre-exist our relatings.” In contrast to anthropocentric and humanist accounts of agency that regard agency as an ahistorical property that independent individuals have,³¹ Haraway shows us that the agencies of humans and animals emerge from socially and historically situated contexts, and that

one does not *have* agency; agency is dynamic and always in the making (or unmaking). Haraway thickens the content of agency with two other notions: respect and curiosity.

The Latin version of respect, *re-specere*, means “to hold in regard, to respond, to look back reciprocally, to notice, to pay attention, to have courteous regard for, to esteem” (Haraway 2008, 19). The previous words impel us to respond to another when s/he looks at us. Respect demands that we listen (Donovan and Adams 2007, 4) and that we do not disavow another’s will (Oliver 2010, 269). A response-able ethic can be understood as tempering our anthropocentric and sovereign Western conceptuality since, as we have seen, one of the structuring characteristics of the sovereign is that s/he has “the right not to respond” (Derrida 2008b, 57). Respect is intimately knotted to the *polis*, that is, the space “where and when species meet” (Haraway 2008, 19) and where one greets others politely, that is, responsively. Ontology, ethics, and politics could not be more entangled here: “to knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who and what are* is precisely what is at stake” (19). Again, these words direct us to think that agency is not a property that independent individuals have. Instead, animals’ agencies (including humans) emerge through processes of mutual becoming (Spanning 2019).

Curiosity can also have a structuring role for a vegan ethico-politics because, when knotted with respect, it obliges us to pay attention to what a real animal “might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to [oneself] in looking back” (Haraway 2008, 20). In this regard, curiosity is an attitude, a generative way of being that opens ourselves to being surprised. A responsive vegan ethico-politics needs to be structured by respectful curiosity and be opened to “a possible invitation [by another animal], a possible introduction to other-worlding” (20; Oliver 2009, 108).

Haraway’s understanding of agency, respect, and curiosity puts the emphasis on forms of interdependent agencies that are constitutively and historically entangled, and require embodied responsivity: from sensing with other animals in a respectful manner up to a transformative curiosity that seeks to prevent us from totalizing other beings. Haraway directs our attention towards decision-making processes in which human and non-human animals co-construct decisions and emerge as agents from and within “embodied cross-species sociality” (Haraway 2003/2016, 96).

However, Haraway, like other materialist thinkers, is not attentive enough to questions related to justice and hierarchically unfounded human–animal power relationships (Meijer 2019, 163). For example, Haraway positively links curiosity with experimenting with mice bred to have cancer (1997) and trained her dog Cayenne since she was 12 weeks old to play agility games, distorting Cayenne’s agency (Haraway 2003/2016, 132). Who would have Cayenne become if Haraway and other human trainers had not shaped Cayenne’s subjectivity to follow strict human orders since she was 12 weeks old? It seems clear that this case also attests to how Haraway’s thinking is limited by human sovereignty (Wadiwel 2015). If Haraway’s insights are taken beyond these anthropocentric limits, we can then see that they could lead us to co-author a completely different (and more just) political and democratic system: a zoodemocracy. In this regard, the work of Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka (2011) is illuminating.

Donaldson and Kymlicka have argued and advocated for a *zoopolis*, that is, a zoodemocratic political system in which domestic animals are recognized as dependent and relational agents who have a voice, make decisions, and have an intrinsic interest in liberty (2011, 65). Even though Donaldson and Kymlicka’s theory stems from the liberal tradition, the reader should know that their position is situated in stark contrast

to many liberal authors (e.g., Gary Francione) who regard dependency as a deprivation or lack.³² Crucially, like Haraway, Donaldson and Kymlicka do not understand agency as a mere property that individuals have, agency can rather be enabled or disabled (2011, 84).

If one's starting point is not anthropocentric, considers that we are enmeshed in domesticated animals–humans relationships, and that humans have the power of enabling or limiting domestic animals' agency, it seems apparent that justice demands enabling animals' agency by, among other things, recognizing animals as self-determining agents (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2015, 64). Under this understanding of democracy, the *polis* becomes an animal space where we coexist, co-inhabit, and participate politically as differently equal (Donaldson 2020a, 710), that is, the voices of different beings are not only respected but constitutive of the *zoopolis* (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 65–69). In such a *zoopolis*, and it is here where Donaldson and Kymlicka go well beyond Haraway's anthropocentric limited political imagination, all animals co-construct—as equal actors under the law of the *zoopolis*—politics and policies (Figure 2).

The position upheld by Donaldson and Kymlicka is in alignment with “a feminist ethic of care [which] offers a liberatory framework that has the potential to complicate conceptions of dependency by paying attention to domesticated animals' agency as vital participants in and contributors to our shared world” (Taylor 2017, 207). As Adams and Donovan put it, we should be attentive to “what the animals are telling us—rather than to what other humans are telling us about them” (2007, 4). Donaldson and Kymlicka's crucial move resides in translating these new ways of regarding other



Figure 2. Bench (190x160cm). A representation of what a square could look like in a Zoopolis. Courtesy of Harmut Kiewert (2015).

animals as relational and dependent agents into more systemic and political terms (Donaldson 2020b), which is, as a matter of fact, necessary to build and actualize vegan ethico-political zoodemocratic systems.

Different ontological scales, different vulnerabilities

A response-able ethico-politics requires attentiveness to different ways of living and being. Let us then turn to difference, otherness, and why taking into account different ontological scales matters ethically and politically. To frame this section, it is worth mentioning that there tends to be consensus within animal philosophy and ecofeminist scholarship that the animal ethics associated with Singer and Regan has focused excessively on sameness and on valuing that which resembles *the* human (Wolfe 2003, 33–36; Gruen 2015, 15–26; Calarco 2015, 24–32). The problem with approaches such as Singer’s and Regan’s—even though they are very different in many ways—is that animals’ beings are reduced to “an atomistic bundle of interests” (Slicer 1991, 111) and the differences between specific animals tend to be erased (Warren 1990, 142; Gruen 2015, 8–15). Instead, ecofeminists have called for a “respectful acknowledgement” of differences (Warren 1990, 142), and an ethic that pays careful attention to the incalculability of animals’ value (Weil 2012, 17).

Haraway’s work resonates with vegan ecofeminist scholarship. For instance, when encountering an-other dog, Haraway suggests that “people must learn to meet dogs as strangers first in order to unlearn the crazy assumptions and stories we all inherit about who dogs are” (2008, 232) and tells us that “nonmimetic caring and significant otherness are my lures for trying to think and *feel* more adequately; and multispecies flourishing requires a robust nonanthropomorphic sensibility that is accountable to irreducible differences” (Haraway 2008, 90; emphasis added). When Haraway talks of “feeling more adequately,” she means to attune us with our animality in a sensory-sensual way. For Haraway respecting irreducible differences is, among other things, being differentially entangled through slobbery kisses with her dog-companion Cayenne (Haraway 2003/2016, 93–94).

This move toward the body coincides with Sunaura Taylor’s powerful autobiographical narrative as a disabled woman. Taylor destabilizes the mouth as *the* organ that is meant to be for speaking and eating by describing how she picks up several objects with her mouth in order to write *Beasts of burden* (2017, 115). She says that using her mouth in this manner transgresses the boundaries of what one might call the “proper of mouth”: eating and language. The reason is that the mouth, in contrast to the Platonic *logos* (language), “is deeply private, an orifice containing germs and breath and slobber. The mouth is sexual. The mouth is animal” (115). This narration leads Taylor to say: “I feel animal in my embodiment, and this feeling is one of connection, not shame. Recognizing my animality has in fact been a way of claiming the dignity in the way my body and other non-normative vulnerable bodies move, look, and experience the world around them . . . we *are* animals. A fact so boringly commonplace that we forget it—perpetually” (115).

Haraway and Taylor meet in moving beyond the gaze and focusing instead on our multisensory bodies. Their works can be read as gesturing towards the ethical need of animalizing our beings. This co-transformation should occur with and through our bodies by tasting, touching, and smelling and by being touched, smelled, and tasted. Among other things, this process of transformation should lead us to understand that disability “is not a ‘lack’” but rather “*another mode of existence*” (Burgat 2015,

54: italics in original). This thinking impels us to appreciate disability and other than human ways of living as a certain opening toward “the beautiful potential of living alternative ways of moving through space and of being in time” (Taylor 2017, 136). Haraway similarly thinks about different ways of being and different ways of experiencing life and time, which leads her to stress that there are “many scales of space-time that need rethinking” (2008, 17). I would like to pause here and examine more carefully what those different scales can entail (beyond Haraway) because considering different ontological scales is ethico-politically important to building an ecofeminist veganism.

It will be helpful to find support in ethologist Jakob von Uexküll’s work. Von Uexküll invites us to imagine that each animal in a meadow has a bubble around them. The bubble represents “each animal’s environment [which] contains all the features accessible to the subject” (Von Uexküll, 1934/2010, 43). Imagine further that one were able to “enter into one such bubble”; if that were possible, Von Uexküll asserts, “the previous surroundings of the subject [would be] completely reconfigured. Many qualities of the colorful meadow [would] vanish completely, others [would] lose their coherence with one another, and new connections [would be] created. *A new world arises in each bubble*” (43; emphasis added). These words make us attentive to how different subjects exist in the world and the worldview that emerges by virtue of being an individual.

While I endorse Von Uexküll’s eloquent ontological language, I want to pay attention to other than the subject’s scales. At the level of species, we can think of bees buzzing in meadows as having a bubble (worldview) of their own that can be distinguished from the earthworm. As Schaefer puts it, attentiveness to difference and otherness “requires an attention to the other body in its alterity, a holistic prehension of that species and the conditions of their flourishing” (Schaefer 2014, 378–79). Consider further the level of community/herd/shoal. For example, the decision of fishes³³ such as Japanese rice fishes (*Oryzias latipes*), Guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*), and Zebrafishes (*Danio rerio*) “to join a group [shoal] is an active choice” (Bruslé and Quignard 2020, 163) which suggests that there are differences between different shoals of the same species. Similarly, Carl Safina has shown that different groups of animals of the same species have their own cultures (2020). In other words, different communities of animals have their own modes of social organization and internal dynamics (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 170–74).

We can then appreciate that there are scales of difference at the level of subject, community, and species. These differences need to be read in at least a two-fold manner. First, in terms of a triadic (scale-wise) significant otherness: “a new world arises in each bubble” (Von Uexküll 1934/2010, 43). These new worlds at the triadic level I am discussing (subject, community, species) are in many ways inaccessible to different others: for a bee, by virtue of being a member of the bee’s species, the earthworm’s *umwelt* is in great part alien, and vice versa. Similarly, for an individual or community of the same species, another individual or community’s worldview is inaccessible by virtue of being a different individual or community. Crucially, a response-able vegan ethico-politics ought to be attentive to all those unreachable differences. The reason is that depriving animals of their differential ways of living and existing causes “a kind of premature death, the death of a form of flourishing that has been judged to be worthy of respect” (Nussbaum 2007, 347).

Secondly, there is a risk in essentializing differences and establishing thick walls, rather than “ramifying webs” (Haraway 2008, 97). It is one thing to understand, value, and respect the scales of difference mentioned, and another altogether to think

that different animals' *umwelts* are entirely separated from one another. Instead, we should be sensitive to how differences are shared between multispecies individuals and communities. For instance, the vulnerability that is shared between pregnant beings of different mammalian species crosses species boundaries, while simultaneously establishes an ontological difference between pregnant mammals and those who are not pregnant. This kind of difference-based thinking also ruptures the kind of identity politics that essentializes gender, and amplifies what, for example, womanhood and the feeling of being a woman can be: from a normatively social, biologicistic, and essentializing identity politics to a differential understanding of womanhood that respects what the feeling of being a woman can be for different subjects (Butler 1990/1999, 22)—this logic also goes beyond a dichotomous (man–woman) understanding of gender.

What this discussion illuminates is that respecting difference requires a multidimensional comprehension of difference at several scales: subject, community/herd, species, and cross-species.³⁴ Arguably, a just zoodemocracy can only exist if these differences are celebrated and animals can flourish at multiple levels. Our ability to reciprocate and empathize respectfully depends, in my view, on understanding these different ontological scales. In short, difference as understood in this article is attentive to multiple ontological scales, crosses species boundaries, ruptures identity politics' essentializing views, and does *not* erase notions such as womanhood.³⁵

The violence of existence, moral remainders, and loss

While the previous sections have focused on living and flourishing, this section intends to act as a warning not to be self-assured and, perhaps, as a reminder that loss and moral remainders are unavoidable. There is a tendency within some vegan and vegetarian discourses, especially liberal ones, to uphold vegetarianism and veganism as “*the moral code of eating*,” and this “risks stalling the question of eating well and collapsing into a self-assured form of good conscience,” as the vegan philosopher Matthew Calarco has argued (2004, 195). For this reason, Calarco urges vegans and vegetarians to deconstruct “existing discourses and practices” within these movements (197). This self-assuredness is labeled by Haraway as “innocence.” Its counterpart, noninnocence, entails understanding that:

in eating we are most inside the differential relationalities that make us who and what we are and that materialize what we must do if response and regard are to have any meaning personally and politically. There is no way to eat and not to kill, no way to eat and not to become with other mortal beings to whom we are accountable, no way to pretend innocence and transcendence or a final peace. Because eating and killing cannot be hygienically separated does *not* mean that just any way of eating and killing is fine, merely a matter of taste and culture. Multispecies human and nonhuman ways of living and dying are at stake in practices of eating. (Haraway 2008, 295)

We can learn from these words that a vegan ethico-politics should be articulated and lived in such a way that we do not “clean our hands” (Gruen 2014a, 133) and do not look away (Haraway 2016, 35). The vegan ethico-politics advocated here is a call to turn toward our embodied and fleshy existence (Kim 2015, 20), and to understand that our existence is unavoidably violent and involves killing. Our current forms of agriculture kill animals such as worms and mice, our transport systems kill birds, humans

accidentally step on ants and snails, and so on. We vegans have an ethico-political responsibility and obligation to be attentive to these facts, and mourn these deaths (Stanescu 2012).

In a similar line, Haraway provides a new commandment that I deem a potential cornerstone of the, perhaps, zoodemocracies to come:

I suggest that it is a misstep to separate the world's beings into those who may be killed and those who may not and a misstep to pretend to live outside killing ... This is not saying that nature is red in tooth and claw and so anything goes ... I think what my people and I need to let go of if we are to learn to stop exterminism and genocide ... is the command "Thou shalt not kill." The problem is not figuring out to whom such a command applies so that "other" killing can go on as usual and reach unprecedented historical proportions. The problem is to learn to live responsibly within the multiplicitous necessity and labor of killing, so as to be in the open, in quest of the capacity to respond in relentless historical, non-teleological, multispecies contingency. Perhaps the commandment should read, "Thou shalt not make killable." (2008, 79–80)

Haraway acutely points out that dividing in a clear-cut manner those that can be killed from those whose lives are sanctified and cannot be killed is a problem (Haraway and Williams 2010, 160–62). This logic is problematic because it contributes to "un-fleshing" humans and some animals in that it strips us from our shared vulnerability with other animals: we are all vulnerable mortals (Plumwood 1995; Deckha 2015, 50; Calarco 2015, 59–60). Further, such a logic allows us humans to be self-assured and not take responsibility for killing. An ethico-politics of "killability" impels humans to think that killing those who are killable should leave us in peace and content. Instead, Haraway advocates breaking this logic and proposes a new crucial commandment: "thou shalt not make killable." Importantly, this is not to say that "anything goes." As Haraway says, it is important to work "for the mortal entanglements of human beings and other organisms in ways that one judges, without guarantees, to be good, that is, to deserve a future" (2008, 106).

Haraway's writings, however, have been far from supporting veganism. In fact, she has vehemently opposed it and even ridiculed it (2008, 80). Haraway's lack of support towards a vegan ethico-politics, however, does not follow from her premise that eating involves killing and we should not make killable.³⁶ In fact, Calarco has argued that it is precisely by not making animals killable and being sensitive to animals' shared vulnerabilities as mortals that we should support a vegan ethico-politics (2004, 194). Perhaps for some realizing that our human existence entails killing leads to loss of motivation for reducing violence, but "there are others who accept the inevitability of 'real' sacrifice and subsequently do their best to limit it" (194).³⁷

I would similarly like to argue that Haraway's nuanced contributions on loss should lead us, precisely, to adopt a contextual vegan ethico-politics that seeks to reduce violence as much as possible. Haraway says about the unravelling of entanglements in relation to loss:

the body is always in-the-making; it is always a vital entanglement of heterogeneous scales, times, and kinds of beings webbed into fleshly presence, always a becoming, always constituted in relating. The corpse's consignment to the earth as ashes is, I think, a recognition that, in death, it is not simply the person or

the soul who goes. That knotted thing we call the body has left; it is undone. (Haraway 2008, 167)

To be clear, the point of being sensitive to loss in this entangled manner is *not* to endorse Haraway's violent ethico-politics, that is, an ethico-politics that accepts actions such as producing and forcing mice to live with cancer by default (1997), or grabbing pigeons against their will (Haraway 2016, 20–29). What I am advocating for is an ethics and politics of avowal that is sensitive to the complexity of loss and its unavoidability: the death of another does *not* entail the death of an individual who is independent from her entanglements. When we die, the entanglements that co-constituted ourselves and others also go—even though traces of those co-constituted entanglements persist in those who remain alive.

An attentive vegan ethico-politics needs to understand that any form of agriculture, and human existence more generally, requires that some entanglements will be destroyed: the ants that will accidentally be stepped on, the land that humans occupy, the resources humans consume and others cannot use. Our human existence will entail at least entangled deaths of those kinds.³⁸ And it is here where Deborah Slicer's profound words on moral remainders ought to be pondered:

there are certain elements of moral tragedy in having to make some choices despite the daunting complexity of these situations, despite having few, if any, principles or precedents to guide us, despite having little or no assurance that we have chosen rightly. And regardless of how we choose, we may have to live with, as some have recently put it, irresolute, nagging “moral remainders.” (Slicer 1991, 121)

Towards an ecofeminist and contextual vegan ethico-politics

Deane Curtin (1991) coined the term “contextual moral vegetarianism.” In this last section, I gather some of the insights discussed so far that will thicken and enrich the ecofeminist contextual vegan ethico-politics argued by Curtin, and offer some concluding remarks.

Curtin stresses that feminist approaches to ethics usually put the emphasis on context, attend to the “lived experiences” of other animals, and think that “moral inquiry [is] an ongoing process through which persons are defined contextually and relationally” (64). In this line, we have seen that Haraway directs our attention to understand that humans and animals “do not pre-exist their relations,” history, and their situated context (Haraway 2003/2016, 98). Domesticated animals have been bred by humans to fulfill certain human purposes. This legacy co-constitutes both, human animals and non-human domestic animals (100). I recall these insights because a contextual vegan ethico-politics stresses that “caring for particular persons” involves respectful responsibility to “the context of their histories” (Curtin 1991, 68), which entails that if, for example, a given domestic animal depends on humans due to our historically situated context, we have a responsibility to care and be attentive to domesticated animals as they are today.

In a similar vein, it has become apparent that we cannot think of agency as an ahistorical and “acontextual” property; agency is dynamic, always in the making, and can be enabled or closed off (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 84). An attentive contextual vegan ethico-politics needs to put this insight at the centre and be responsive to the specific contexts, biographies, and histories of other animals in order to open up situated

zoodemocratic spaces where different animals can not only co-author politics and policies, but the very terms and conditions of what constitutes the political and political practices (Meijer 2013, 46).

We have also seen that the contextual ethico-politics advocated for here celebrates different modes of existence, experiences of gender, and vulnerabilities at multiple scales. This approach also opens moral veganism to reasons that “may differ by locale, by gender, [and] by class” (Curtin 1991, 69). While this article’s contextual veganism shares a lot with Curtin’s, there is at least one substantive difference, and the need to refine the content of context. First, on the latter point, Curtin is attentive to different locals, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds (69), however, his understanding of context (Curtin 1991) does not seem to capture that, whenever we evaluate what’s the right thing to do, we need to evaluate different ontological scales. In other words, ethical judgments need to consider the specific species involved in a given circumstance in our historically situated present, whatever might be distinctive about a given community, its individuals and their context, all the actors’ positionality (Kim 2015) as well as their specific entanglements (Gruen 2015).³⁹ Secondly, the last section of this article calls into question Curtin’s argument that human and non-human animals should not be counted as beings who can be eaten (1991, 71). Instead, and following authors like Haraway (2008, 79–80), Plumwood (1995), and Calarco (2015, 59–60) we should understand that human and non-human animals are vulnerable to be eaten *like* other animals and *as* other animals: we are all embodied and fleshy beings who can be prey (Plumwood 1995). It is by assimilating this, perhaps, counter-intuitive argument that we should be able to caringly attend to the fact that we are vulnerable mortal animals. As Calarco eloquently puts it: “to acknowledge oneself as inhabiting a shared zone of exposed embodiment with animals is to recognize that we are in deep and fundamental ways *like animals*” (2015, 58). To appreciate these insights directs our attention towards our bodily lives, and enables us to empathize (Gruen 2015) with other than human animals, with their situated contexts and existences. This way of thinking also displaces the universal commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” and instead opens ourselves to learn and live not only through Haraway’s crucial prerogative of “Thou shalt not make killable,” but also to a commandment that demands attention to context and situated others: “Thou shalt not make harmable.” This commandment is a “Yes” to respectful responsivity, and entails a loud vegan “No” to creating mice with cancer, killing animals for departmental feasts, and dominating animals more generally.

A new beginning

Eva Meijer ends *When animals speak* by stating: “We can begin again, we should begin again” (2019, 241). Today, we can work for a vegan ethico-politics that values human and non-human animals as embodied and different entangled agents who are dependent and vulnerable. This ethico-politics opposes innocence and self-assuredness—there are no guarantees and predetermined outcomes—and asks for us to constantly deconstruct and be attentive to how Western conceptuality constitutes us humans.

Respecting animals in the terms advanced in this article means working on transforming our human *polis* into a *zoopolis*, that is, situated spaces where animals meet, animals’ voices are respected in their own terms, and political agencies are enabled.⁴⁰ Respecting animals entails aspiring to see ourselves, humans, as “plain members and citizens of [the] world” (Calarco 2020, 35), as grounded and embodied earthlings (Taylor 2017, 115), instead of sovereigns over animals with the self-proclaimed right to decide over others’



Figure 3. Hill (250x380cm). This painting illustrates what breaking bread at table together could mean in a vegan ethico-politics. In the background, a farm factory of Tönnies Group is represented, this group is currently “a family company that is active at several levels of the food industry ... in 2018 generated annual revenue of EUR 6.65 billion. The core business of the company, which was established in 1971, concerns the slaughter, butchering, processing and refining of pigs, sows and cattle” (Tönnies Group, 2020). Courtesy of Harmut Kiewert (2019).

lives (Wadiwel 2015). One of our main political tasks is to create ways of living “that no longer rotate around the human” (Calarco 2015, 65). We cannot look away (Gruen 2014a, 132–35; Haraway 2016, 35), we must turn toward animals (Kim 2015, 20).

At the end of *Zoopolis*, Donaldson and Kymlicka endorse *Star Trek*’s ethic “for inter-species contact, coexistence, and cooperation” (2011, 257). They summarize the Federation’s “first contact” ethic as follows: “encounters with new ‘life forms’ should be governed by caution, curiosity, and respect ... guided by an overriding injunction to do no harm” (2011, 257). The fictional USS *Enterprise* encounters many different life forms, yet they are all respected in their difference and uniqueness. Even though a no harm ethico-politics is not possible due to the inherent violence that living entails, and especially given our anthropocentric infrastructure, agriculture, energy production systems and law, we should be led by *Star Trek*’s injunction “to do no harm,” and truly “do [our] best to limit” violence against animals (Calarco 2004, 194). Let’s break bread at table together as animals (Figure 3). Let’s make kin with respect, without the sword, and without innocence.

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Notes

- 1 See Williams and Haraway 2009, 160–62.
- 2 See, e.g., Weil 2012, 18–19; Gruen 2014a, 132–35; Meijer 2019, 217–18; Calarco 2020, 30–31; Westerlaken 2021, 526; Timeto 2021, 323–24.
- 3 See Weisberg 2009; Jenkins 2012, 507; Wadiwel 2018, 540.
- 4 While I will refer to Haraway’s early work at times, I will mainly focus on Haraway’s work post-“The Companion Species Manifesto,” i.e., the 2000s and 2010s.
- 5 It is inspired by the work of Claire Jean Kim, who argues that racism and animalness “are dynamically interconstituted *all the way down*” (Kim 2017, 10).
- 6 The terms “method” and “framework” are contested and used in various ways by different authors. It goes beyond the scope of this article to delineate these differences, I can only say here that I will use those terms interchangeably and that they do not refer to method in the sense of empirical data collections. By “interconstitutional method/framework” I refer to a lens that should allow us to disclose the nature of oppressions at both the level of conceptual violence (Spivak 1988; Wadiwel 2018; Butler 2020) and how humans’ subjectivities are constituted by concepts, culture, capitalism, and so on to be violent against those who deviate from the paradigmatic human person. See Ann Garry (2011, 830) for a nuanced discussion on the use of framework/method.
- 7 However, I would like to make explicit that while this method has not been systematized before, the works of Martin Heidegger (1927); Michel Foucault (1976/1998); María Lugones (2003, 2007); Lori Gruen (2015); Claire Jean Kim (2015); Dinesh Wadiwel (2015); and Aph Ko (2019a), among others, have inspired this method, and arguably used it already.
- 8 While Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, she was decisively influenced by the Black feminist statement of the Combahee River Collective, which was a Black feminist lesbian socialist group. The collective found “it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously” (1978/2014, 274)—I am indebted to the second reviewer for reminding me of this important source and its influence on Crenshaw’s thought.
- 9 Anthropocentrism meaning discrimination against those who deviate from the idealized paradigmatic human person, understood as a white, heterosexual, and able-bodied man who is independent, rational, and “civil” (Calarco 2015, 25; Deckha 2020, 87–92).
- 10 I have extensively discussed the notions of Western conceptuality and interconstitutionality in Castello 2021.
- 11 On colonialism, see Fanon 1961 and Said 1978/2019.
- 12 See Lugones 2007, 193; Garry 2011, 844; and Aph Ko 2019a, 95.
- 13 And in contrast to cars, streets, and roundabouts.
- 14 As a result of colonialism and neoliberalism, we will find that Western conceptuality infiltrates in different ways many languages, subjects situated in many, if not all, geographies, and the very foundations of most legal and political systems worldwide (Foucault 1978/2004; Wadiwel 2015; Deckha 2020). Notice that most legal systems are fundamentally structured by the legal categories of personhood and property. All humans are included in the former category, which means that humans are subjects of rights. By contrast, domesticated animals have property status. This means that it is legal for humans and human institutions to dominate, use, sell, and kill animals (Deckha 2020).
- 15 I say “differential” because the content of this right will vary depending on the specific subject’s context and identity: a white male academic right to sovereignty entails that he can, *de facto*, silence a Black woman in an academic space, while the right to harm other animals will vary depending on the jurisdiction and culture of different peoples (e.g., in Spain humans have the right to be violent against bulls, which is a cultural and constitutional right, in a way that is not permitted in the UK).
- 16 The reader might wish to know that Wadiwel is influenced by Giorgio Agamben (1998), and especially Michel Foucault’s (2003) understanding of sovereign power—see especially the fifth lecture of Foucault’s course at the Collège de France *Society must be defended* (87–114).
- 17 I use the terms dominion, domination, and human sovereignty interchangeably.
- 18 For an extensive discussion of why humans’ dominion over animals is illegitimate and unfounded, see generally Derrida’s *The beast and the sovereign volumes I*, and Wadiwel’s (2015, 252–72) careful discussion of these book.
- 19 By “Westerner” I do not only refer to people who live in so-called occidental countries, but to those humans whose subjectivities have been constituted by Western conceptuality in one way or another. For

example, the subjectivity of a human person living in countries such as India, China, or Chile might be structured by Western conceptuality because that person might have been Christianized; educated to pass PISA exams (Peim 2018); or decisively influenced by the dominant capitalist culture of consumerism, commodification, and objectification present in the abovementioned countries, amongst many others. For an extensive discussion on this topic, see Said 1978/2019; Foucault 1978/2004; Wadiwel 2015.

20 Photograph by Deborah Forster 2006; the same picture appears in Haraway 2016, 23.

21 See Haraway 2016, 20–29. It is worth noting that it is a tendency in Haraway's work to understate the violence animals experience due to humans' actions, see Wadiwel 2015, 212–13 n. 3.

22 Another paradigmatic example of Haraway's sovereign tropes is the notion of "the contact" zone and her silence regarding violence when it comes to human–animal interactions. For a nuanced discussion of this matter, see Wadiwel 2018, 532–41.

23 The case of PigeonBlog is not an anecdote. Haraway has also supported other violent practices against animals and has been extensively criticized by ecofeminist scholars, critical theorists, and philosophers. To name a few violent practices against animals endorsed by Haraway, and several critiques: (1) experimenting with mice bred to have cancer (Haraway 1997)—for a critique see Weisberg 2009, 25–33, and Donovan 2014, 109–11; (2) a fictional experiment in which guinea pigs "during their working hours ... were held in tight little baskets while wire cages filled with biting flies were placed over them ... The flies gorged themselves on the guinea pigs' blood" (Haraway 2008, 69)—for a critique see Weisberg 2009, 39–40; and (3) hunting by a religious studies scholar for "annual departmental feasts" (Haraway 2008, 296–97)—for a critique see Gruen 2014a, 131–32. For further critiques, see also Wadiwel 2015, 202–22, 2018, 532–41; and Calarco 2021, 131–44.

24 When a fetus develops in the womb of a mammal, or the egg of a reptile or bird, the mammal, lizard, or bird mother and the fetus co-shape each other even before the actual birth happens.

25 This does not entail, as Gruen acutely puts it, that the self–other divide needs to go. While individuality emerges from and is constituted by relationships, there is still an individual self that relates to an-other who can, e.g., empathize (Gruen 2015).

26 For an extensive discussion of human mastery over nature and animals, see Plumwood 1993/2002, 19–40.

27 For a critique, see Horkheimer and Adorno 1947/2002; Heidegger 1947/2011; Foucault 1961/2009; Derrida 1972/1982, 121, 123–36; 2008a, 69–87, 92–102.

28 E.g., Gruen has argued that "our relationships with human and animal others co-constitute who we are and how we configure our identities and agency, even our thoughts and desires" (Gruen 2015, 63). She has also shown that emotion and reason blend, and that entangled empathy *integrates* "a range of thoughts and feelings to try to get an accurate picture on the situation of another" (81). Hence, Gruen can be regarded as an interconstitutional author insofar as she is attentive to the ways in which we are composed by human–animal relationships. I think, however, that Gruen does not go far enough in relation to how epistemology (read: conceptuality) and ethics are interconstituted, and how our Western conceptuality infiltrates our subjectivities.

29 While epistemic violence and Western conceptuality are related, they operate at different registers. The latter enables the former insofar as epistemic violence needs to be preceded by an epistemology (Western conceptuality) that can render oppressed groups (e.g., Black and Aboriginal peoples) as less than the paradigmatic human person—see Spivak 1988; Wadiwel 2015; Syl Ko 2019b; Deckha 2020; Castello 2021.

30 Agency has increasingly become central in the political turn in critical animal studies, see Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011; Garner and O'Sullivan 2016; and Blattner et al. 2020. Animals' agency has also been identified by authors who study animal resistance—see Hribal 2003, 448–50; Pachirat 2011, 144–48; Wadiwel 2016.

31 For a few representative examples, see Regan 1983; Cochrane 2012; Ladwig 2015; Pepper 2021.

32 One should read these lines as opposing in some respects the position upheld by authors such as Regan (1983); Cochrane (2012); and Ladwig (2015). Donaldson and Kymlicka give a lot of importance to agency, but where the previous authors put the weight on independence, rationality, and intentionality in the rationalistic sense, Donaldson and Kymlicka emphasize agency as relational, constituted by an entangled network of dependencies, and put collectivity and what is communal at the centre of their analysis. See generally Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 2015; Jones 2014; Taylor 2017, 216–18; Blattner et al. 2020; Donaldson 2020a.

33 The use of the term "fishes" is informed by Jonathan Balcombe's argument that the word "fish" reinforces the idea that fishes are not individuals (2017). We do not talk of "mammal" or "bird" but rather of "mammals" and "birds." Similarly, Balcombe argues, we should talk of "fishes."

34 The reader should not reduce difference to these scales, they are rather an illustration of why difference and vulnerability matter ethically at multiple scales.

35 For a discussion on why different cultural and ethnic backgrounds should also be cherished, see Audre Lorde 1984/2019, 110–13; and generally bell hooks 1992/2015. For a discussion on difference in relation to queerness in the non-human realm, see Jones 2019.

36 For a tactical reading of Haraway's position regarding veganism, see Giraud 2019, 88.

37 See also Calarco 2015, 48–61.

38 On this, see Gruen's (2014a) insightful chapter "Facing death."

39 Crucially, I use the term "entanglement" in Gruen's sense (2015, 3; 2019, 18–22), which means both entanglements in the sense of the bonds that exist between individuals who interact with each other and, for instance, forge friendships, and the material entanglements that exist, e.g., between people working in the Global South—who produce goods consumed by people in the Global North—and people in the Global North. Human and non-human animals are entangled in this material sense, too. For an illustrative example of what "entanglement" means, see Gillespie 2021, 5–9.

40 See Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 59–61, 84, 108–09, and 2015, 62–64.

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Pablo P. Castelló currently works as a postdoctoral research fellow at the department of philosophy at Queen’s University. Pablo is interested in interdisciplinary research that ranges from ecofeminism and critical race theory to conservation and animal law. His publication record includes articles in the *American Political Science Review*, *Biological Conservation*, and *The Journal for International Wildlife Law and Policy*, amongst others. twitter: @PabloPCastello; email address: p.castello@queensu.ca

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