What Gives (*Donner le change*)[1]

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> The care taken always to pursue if possible the prey first started, and to call off the dogs and punish them whenever they get upon a false scent, gradually accustoms them to distinguish by scent the stag they are pursuing from all others. But the stag, wearied by the pursuit, seeks to join himself to others of his own kind, and then a more acute discernment is required by the dog. In this case there is nothing to be expected from those that are young. It appertains to consummate experience to form a sure and prompt judgment in this perplexity. It is the old dogs alone who are what is called *hardis dans le change*; that is, who untangle without hesitation the trail of their stag from among all those of the herd he has joined. ... If the dogs, carried away for an instant by their ardour, overrun the scent, and come to lose it, the leaders of the pack will, of their own accord, adopt the only means which men could use. They try backwards and forwards, in hope of finding in the circle they traverse the trace that has escaped them. The huntsman's industry can go no farther, and, in this respect, the experienced dog seems to attain the limits of knowledge.
> — Charles Georges Leroy, *The Intelligence and Perfectibility of Animals from a Philosophic Point of View* (1768)

At a conference on the ethics of the gift in 1990, Jacques Derrida gave a lecture that would become *Donner le temps 1. La fausse monnaie* (*Given Time I: Counterfeit Money* [1991]). It was another text entitled *Donner la mort*, however, that would appear in its place in the conference proceedings. In the author's note to *Donner la mort*, published in turn as a stand-alone volume some years later,[2] Derrida offered this caveat: "In spite of appearances, in spite of the sign of the gift, in spite of an expected passage between time and death, in spite of the appearance, albeit furtive, of the narrator of Baudelaire's *La fausse monnaie*, *Donner la mort* is *not yet* the announced sequel to *Donner le temps 1*."[3] In his translator's preface to *The Gift of Death*, David Wills would confirm in turn that *Donner la mort* was neither the text of the conference nor the second volume of *Donner le temps*, but rather "a different reflection within a series on the question of the gift" (vii).

But then what of Derrida's pledge in a note in *Given Time* (20/34), to return in a second volume to Heidegger's *Being and Time*? One might be tempted to locate this return in the seminars of the late 1990s and the early 2000s, namely *The Animal That Therefore I Am* and *The Beast and the Sovereign*—yet neither work represents a substantial enough sequel to the reflection on the gift to warrant being regarded as a second volume. What gives, amidst these turns and promised returns? Did Derrida run out of time? Out of breath? Unless it is another gift altogether that waits, in pieces, dispersed through the later works —and retrospectively in the earlier writings—to be recognized and reassembled. We propose here to follow this other trail to consider what haunts the gift beyond the assurances of its presumed humanity. What happens when giving is that which can be done by an animal being chased unto death?

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The phrase *donner le change* translates literally as "to give the change." Derrida would use it in *The Postcard* (91/100) and in *Fors*;[4] it is also cited in *Given Time* as one of many locutionary usages of the verb *donner*;[5] it appears at two key articulations in *Specters of Marx*;[6] but its most arresting occurrence is arguably in a crucial passage in *Of Grammatology*, in which Derrida evokes the place of the supplement in the libidinal economy of Rousseau's *Confessions*:

> *Mais ce qui n'est plus différé est aussi absolument différé. La présence qui nous est ainsi livrée au présent est une chimère. L'auto-affection est une pure spéculation. Le signe, l'image, la représentation, qui viennent suppléer la présence absente sont des illusions qui donnent le change.* […] Donner le change : *qu'on l'entende en n'importe quel sens, cette expression décrit bien le recours au supplément. Or, pour nous expliquer son « dégoût pour les filles publiques », Rousseau nous dit qu'à Venise, à trente et un ans, le « penchant qui a modifié toutes [ses] passions »* (Confessions, p. 41) *n'a pas disparu : « je n'avais pas perdu la funeste habitude de donner le change à mes besoins.»* (De la grammatologie 221-222)
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> But what is no longer deferred is also absolutely deferred. The presence that is thus delivered to us in the present is a chimera. Auto-affection is a pure speculation. The sign, the image, the representation, which come to supplement the absent presence are the illusions that sidetrack us. […] *Donner le change* ["sidetracking" or, "giving money"]: in whatever sense it is understood, this expression describes the recourse to the supplement admirably. In order to explain his "dislike" for "common prostitutes," Rousseau tells us that in Venice, at thirty-one, the "propensity which had modified all my passions" (*Confessions,* p.41) [p.35] has not disappeared: "I had not lost the pernicious habit of satisfying my wants [*donner le change*]." (*Of Grammatology* [1976] 154/316)

Where Derrida alludes to the rich polysemy of *donner le change*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her first translation of the passage, left the phrase

in the original French while offering in parentheses two of its possible meanings: "sidetracking" and "giving money." In the 2016 re-translation, these are replaced by the more literal "giving change" (*Of Grammatology* [2016] 167-168). Yet, while the word "change" in French undeniably implies an economy of substitution and exchange, *donner le change* cannot reasonably be understood as meaning "giving money," "sidetracking," or "giving change," nor can its work in this passage be made sense of through such terms. To be clear, here, "*donner le change à mes besoins*" describes Rousseau's fragile success (following the "propensity which had modified all [his] passions") in fooling his sexual desire into accepting a substitute object—namely, his own self, in body and representation. The experience of auto-affection, in other words, abides *par excellence* by the logic of the supplement: there can be no fullness of (self-)presence; there is at best the *illusion* of immediate coincidence with oneself, at worst the sober awareness of self-deception, of shortchanging oneself.

As it turns out, it is the same duplicitous structure that Derrida had identified—using the same words "*donner le change*"—at the outset of *Of Grammatology* when he presented speech's tendency to pass as originary and self-sufficient, to "give itself" as fully present to itself and, thereby, to subordinate writing as mere "technics in the service of language" (8). In a well-known reversal, Derrida had ventured that the Western concept of language as *phonè* might be but a "moment" of writing, though one that dissembles its own historicity:

> It is therefore as if what we call language could have been in its origin and in its end only a moment, an essential but determined mode, a phenomenon, an aspect, a species of writing. And as if it had succeeded in making us forget this, and *in wilfully misleading us,* only in the course of an adventure: as that adventure itself [*Tout se passe comme si ce qu'on appelle langage n'avait pu être en son origine et en sa fin qu'un moment, un mode essentiel mais déterminé, un phénomène, un aspect, une espèce de l'écriture. Et n'avait réussi à le faire oublier, à* donner le change*, qu'au cours d'une aventure : comme cette aventure elle-même*]. All in all a short enough adventure. It merges with the history that has associated technics and logocentric metaphysics for nearly three millennia. And it now seems to be approaching what is really its own *exhaustion.* (8/18, emphasis in original)

Thus the very thrust of Derrida's philosophical project—his contesting of the derivative or auxiliary status traditionally imputed to writing, and of the primacy granted to live speech—found its early premise in the recognition of a "willful […] misleading" operating ("as if") within language. Here the work of "*donner le change*" reveals its maximal stakes, describing as it does a millennial subterfuge: since Plato, we have mis-

taken something else, something quite partial, contingent—a mere mode of language —for language itself.

"*Donner le change*: In *whatever sense* it is understood," Derrida insists, "this expression admirably describes the recourse to the supplement." If "giving money" and "sidetracking" are not accurate renderings of *donner le change*, what are these other senses that Derrida implies? As it happens, we must turn to medieval hunting manuals to find the forgotten provenance of the expression. In hunting parlance, *donner le change* was originally used to refer to the substitution by which a chased animal, most often a deer, would escape by offering up another of its species in its place. In his *Natural History*, Georges Buffon, reader of Gaston Phoebus' *Book of the Hunt* (1387-1388) and of Jacques du Fouilloux's *La Vénerie* (1561), described at length the dramatic choreography of the deer hunt:

> After the report of the huntsman, and the dogs are led to the refuge of the stag, he ought to encourage his hound, and make him rest upon the track of the stag till the animal be unharboured. Instantly the alarm is given to uncouple the dogs, which ought to be enlivened by the voice and the horn of the huntsman. He should also diligently observe the foot of the stag, in order to discover whether the animal has started, and substituted another in his place. But it is then the business of the hunters to separate also, and to recall the dogs which have gone astray after false game. The huntsman should always accompany his dogs, and encourage, without pressing them too hard. He should assist them in detecting all the arts of escape used by the stag; for this animal has remarkable address in deceiving the dogs. With this view, he often returns twice or thrice upon his former steps; he endeavours to raise hinds or younger stags to accompany him, and draw off the dogs from the object of their pursuit [*il cherche à se faire accompagner d'autres bêtes pour donner le change*]: He then flies with redoubled speed, or springs off at side, lies down on his belly, and conceals himself. In this case, when the dogs have lost his foot, the huntsmen, by going backwards and forwards, assist them in recovering it. (79-81)

Faced with wily tricks from its fleeing prey, the hunting dog had to be trained to resist the temptation of chasing the *change*. The term would occasionally find its way into English: "The greatest subtilty a Huntsman need use in the Hunting of the Buck," reckoned Nicholas Cox in *The Gentleman's Recreation* (1677), "is to beware of Hunting Counter or Change" (70). Old hunting handbooks warned repeatedly of the cunning of the deer, detailing the many ruses it was known to deploy to throw its pursuers off its scent:

> [T]he Hart will frequently seek other Deer at Layr, and rouze them, on Purpose to make the Hounds hunt Change, and will lie down flat in some of their Layrs upon his Belly, and so let the Hounds over-shoot him, and because they shall neither Scent nor Vent him, he will gather up all his four Feet under his Belly, and will blow or breathe on some moist Place of the Ground, in such Sort, that I have seen the Hounds pass by such a Hart within a Yard, and never Vent him. (Ibid. 64)

The deer's ability to "give the change" induces an ontological anxiety at the heart of the hunt: is this the same deer, or another? The anxiety is foremost that of the huntsman, for whom, since the noble art of venery stages the encounter between hunter and beast as a duel, it matters that the creature flushed out of its hiding place at the start of the chase be the same as the one killed at the end. But how could one make absolutely sure of it? The deer gives the change by inscribing a difference for which there is no mark or concept. Even as it seems to endorse our reasoned calculations—offering up, after all, in its stead a being sufficiently in its likeness to be mistaken for it—in fact it ruins them. By its flight, the ontological count is revealed as aberrant, its boundary duplicitous. (Is it our dread of this non-mastery that has pushed animals to the brink of disappearance? And that by the same token makes their disappearance appear to us as something incredible?)

Until the 18th century, *donner le change* remained quite common in hunting treatises and agricultural dictionaries and appeared not infrequently in literary works from La Fontaine and Molière. Yet, by the time of Flaubert—when the era of industrial slaughter and of mass extinction was well under way—the phrase was already near archaic, a vestige of the great *chasses à courre* (organized chases of stags using horses, and hounds, practiced for centuries in France, and banned recently in Britain, Belgium and Germany). In present-day French, meanwhile, *donner le change* has come to mean—significantly for our argument here—simply *to deceive* or *to mislead*, to pass one thing for another. Usually attributed to humans, it is moreover often used pronominally (*se donner le change*: to convince oneself of an untruth, usually more convenient or less unpleasant than the truth). What is foreclosed in this shift from the literal to the figurative is not merely the notion of an animal subject but specifically the possibility for an animal *to give*, and further, to give *another as itself*. To retrace the cynegetic origins of the phrase, then, is to recall the scene of a gift (by the animal, of its likeness) more capacious and far more ambiguous than can be thought within our current economy of signification—but also our material economy—in which the animal disappears, or appears merely *as (a) given*. The capacity imputed to the deer by the hunting archive calls for a reassessing not only of what an animal is but also, no less vitally, of what counts as a gift. What gives?

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It will have escaped few readers that *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (*L'Animal que donc je suis*) is, from beginning to end, informed by the motif of the hunt, starting with the homonymy—and subverted intransitivity—at play in the title's "*je suis*" which, as Derrida reminds us repeatedly, conceals the "transitive interest" of an "I follow"—that is, I pursue, I chase,

I hunt (100/69). The pace and argument of the seminar indeed conspire in a (self-)portrait of the philosopher as a hunter: "This formula [*l'animal que donc je suis*] should not depict the immobile representation of a self-portrait but rather set me racing breathless after a round of traces, engaged in a kinetics or cynegetics, the cinematography of a persecution, a chase in pursuit of this animal that therefore I am or that I am supposed to be following as I relate my experiences" (78). But if *auto-bio-graphy* assumes the forms here of an interminable, non-masterable (self-)chase, it serves more seriously to expose, by contrast, the constitutive (if disavowed) violence toward the animal shaping Western humanist thought since at least Plato (40). From Aristotle to Kant, Heidegger to Lacan, the philosophers Derrida revisits appear to have gone after the animal only to better chase it out of their world. These pursuits would form the very chargesheet of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*: revisiting the moves that in each case have conditioned the omission of the animal or the compulsion to other and exile it, Derrida makes manifest a veritable "war of the species" underpinning philosophy's humanistic bias. Descartes' mechanistic analogy, Heidegger's privative ontology, Lacan's irresponsible or unpretending animality: in each instance the animal is made to play a pivotal role in the instatement of the *anthropos*, as precisely that which no sooner in view is subjected or made to vanish from the scene.

Spurred by Derrida's insight, we might return to a founding crime scene where the animal first vanished (so to speak) behind philosophy's ontological pursuits even while perhaps, by the same move, giving philosophy its *method*.[7] This scene is that of Plato's *Phaedo*, which stages Socrates' last dialogue. Perorating on how the "senses are untrustworthy guides" that "mislead the soul in search for the truth," Socrates declares:

> so long as we have the body, and the soul is contaminated by such an evil, we shall never attain completely what we desire, that is, the truth. For the body keeps us constantly busy by reason of its need of sustenance; and moreover, if diseases come upon it they hinder our pursuit of the truth [*tou ontos theran*]. (229-231)

Plato resorts to the same imagery a few lines earlier when he explains that the philosopher must "go after each thing" [*thereuein ton onton*] by means of "absolute reason in [an] attempt to search out the pure, absolute essence of things" and after having "removed himself, so far as possible, from eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body, because he feels that its companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom" (227). Apropos the verb "*thereuein*" (to hunt), used here to describe the pursuit of the truth, classicist John Burnet remarks in his 1911 commentary that it is "the favorite metaphor of Socrates" (65). Therein lies the animal, in the very verb Plato chooses to describe the

philosophical enterprise (which *ideally* one should practice without one's body): in *thereuein* is contained *thér*, which would give the German *Tier*, which in turn would yield the English cognate *deer*, the hunted animal *par excellence*. Hunting here is a metaphor for the pursuit of truth. It is thus, as metaphor, that it has generally been understood by Plato's readers. And it is doubtless thus, as metaphor, that it ought to be understood. But what would it mean to take Plato at his word?[8] To insist on the lapsed meaning of *donner le change* is to remember this forgotten literality of the animal, the chased animal, and to return to memory that riddle by which being (or truth) *as the animal* might give us something of itself (itself or its likeness) in spite of how, or precisely inasmuch as, catachrestically, it slips away.

Now, if, as Derrida had suspected, "thinking concerning the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry" (*The Animal* 7), there may be yet another scene of vanishing to investigate, a literary crime scene as it were, yielding other clues to what, in our readings and tellings, has tended to happen to the animal, and to its capacity to "give the change."

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A "case" that most aptly illustrates what is at stake in *donner le change* is Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Have we yet drawn the fullest implications of the fact that the brilliant chain of inductions, in this story generally credited with inaugurating the genre of detective fiction, leads not to a human murderer but to an animal? Recall that in Poe's story, the narrator and his friend Auguste Dupin closely follow the police investigation into the puzzling and gruesome murders of Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye behind the closed doors of a fourth-story Paris apartment. Drawing on a seemingly incoherent tangle of clues, Dupin, an amateur detective, takes it upon himself to elucidate the mystery through a process of elimination. First, given that the belongings of the wealthy widow had been scattered across the floor, but nothing was taken, financial gain hardly seems a plausible motive for the gruesome deeds. Second, as he reminds the narrator, the voice of the perpetrator—its gender, its language—remained *positively unassignable* despite a gaggle of witnesses representing nationalities from across Europe. Third, he points at the near-*preternatural* agility and strength the intruder would have needed to enter and to kill as they did. Fourth, most crucially, Dupin asserts that one of the two windows *must* have served as the means of egress, however impossible this may seem, and proceeds thereafter to deconstruct the mechanism by which the windows "have the powers of fastening themselves." After a lengthy and meandering explanation, he concludes that there "*must* be something wrong…about the nail" (259), that is, one of the two nails assuring (respectively) the

fastening of the (two) windows. And as if his words possessed incantatory powers, the nail in question reveals itself to be fissured (although "the fissure was invisible").

These "clews"—recalling subtly the French for nails (*clous*)—would conspire, indeed, to suggest the work of a nonhuman actor. After reading a passage from *Le Règne animal* in which French naturalist Georges Cuvier profiles the species, Dupin would rightly identify the perpetrator as an orangutan, thus rendering the animal retrospectively *legible*, if at no point actually visible or representable in the story. The offending orangutan belonged to a sailor who had brought it from Borneo, hoping to sell it. The puzzle is pieced together, the sailor is tricked (by an advertisement suggesting that his orangutan has been found, when it has not) into a confession, and the animal, once recaptured, lives the rest of its days behind bars at the menagerie of the *Jardin des Plantes*. Dupin alone is able to "[read] the entire riddle" (255) —yet one of the questions Poe's story raises and that would have seemed to be overlooked is: has an animal here been found or lost?

To read for the "*don de change*" is to sniff out those places where an animal may be vanishing and offering something else in its place, and to read such substitutions both for how they found our texts and for how abyssally they may ruin their calculus. It is to think of the great fragility of this gift, which from the beginning, in a sense, has sustained itself only through being misread. We may remember that Charles Baudelaire had recognized in Poe a kindred spirit, a fellow Romantic stranded in a brash, materialist America where he could only be misunderstood. Yet Baudelaire would do his own share of misunderstanding as "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," brimming as it was with references to France, attempted a "return" to where it had never been in the first place. To catch this misreading we need to return to a critical point of Dupin's demonstration, where he relates his discovery of the two nails not being so identical after all, due to one of them being cracked, as a result of which a difference masquerades as identity:

> To use a sporting phrase, I had not been once "at fault." The scent had never for an insant been lost. There was no flaw in any link of the chain. I had traced the secret to its ultimate result, – and that result was the nail. (258-259)

The quotation marks around *at fault* were a clear indicator, within the original text, that an *other* lexicon was being invoked here, namely that of "sporting," that is, hunting. It is probable (if difficult to determine in all certainty) that this use of "at fault" in English had initially come into use as a translation of the French phrase "*en défaut*," which was in common recorded usage since the mid-16th century and likely used since the late

middle ages. "*[E]n défaut*," Buffon had noted in his *Natural History*, "*c'est lorsque les chiens ont perdu la voie du cerf*," that is, when the dogs have lost the scent of the deer.[9] The OED for its part lists several instances from the late 1500s [Shakespeare uses the phrase in *Venus and Adonis* (1593)] to the late 1880s of this use of "at fault" in English, the elided form of "at a fault," that is, to be faced with a *break* in the line of scent, and in fact to *overrun* it owing to its irregularity. In Poe's story, Dupin distinguishes himself clearly from the Paris police who are "at fault," because, like dogs thrown off the scent, they have lost track of the prey, and even over-reached it (namely, by assuming they are dealing with a human murderer). Yet, in Baudelaire's translation, if Dupin seems to expertly follow the trail, he *literally loses the scent*:

> *Pour me servir d'un terme de jeu, je n'avais pas commis une seule faute ; je n'avais pas perdu la piste un seul instant ; il n'y avait pas une lacune d'un anneau à la chaîne. J'avais suivi le secret jusque dans sa dernière phase, et cette phase, c'était le clou*. (31)
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> To use a gaming term, I had not committed a single fault/mistake; I had not lost the path for a single instant; there was no gap in any link of the chain. I had followed the secret till its last phase, and this phase was the nail. (our translation of Baudelaire's translation)

There is dark irony in the way the words "*at fault*" stand unrecognized upon arrival at their "proper" place—that is, France, where the practice and semiotics of *chasse à courre* had been well established since at least the 1500s. Granted, America of the mid-1800s thrived visibly on horse racing and gambling, so that Baudelaire had reason to assume this was the implied context of Poe's words. The consequence nonetheless—in addition to the appearance of an unaccountable (presumed moral) "fault" in Baudelaire's text—is that the dramaturgy of the hunt recedes from view, odor is deliteralized, and the hunting animal, always liable to chase false prey, is brought to vanish, leaving at the scene only that impeccable inductive reasoning on which Dupin prides himself. The subtext of scent and "fault" in the Poe story had in fact testified to the ambiguity of the position of Dupin who, even as he boasted the powers of reasoning, in fact had proceeded like a hunter—tracking, sniffing out, flushing out his prey, falling back on the nonsystematic, experiential type of intelligence the Greeks called the *mètis*.[10] In other words, what in Poe's text was an acknowledging of the complicated supplementarity and the possibility of ontological straying at the heart of the pursuit, comes to be buried, in Baudelaire's translation, under the new seamlessness of a calculating sovereignty, of a would-be mastery over lapses.

"Owing to the influence of [James Fenimore] Cooper," Benjamin had written in *The Arcades Project*, "it becomes possible for the novelist in an

urban setting to give scope to the experiences of the hunter." For Benjamin, this hunterly dimension had "a bearing on the rise of the detective story" (439). We see with the translation of the Poe story how easily this origin is forgotten, or repressed. Such a forgetting lends itself in turn to being read in the terms of *donner le change* in at least two ways—precisely inasmuch as "*le change*" here is both a principle at work *within* a text and one that can be seen to perform *on* the text, as an effect of reading. For one, by dissimulating or disavowing the hunt, a human subject (or an anthropocentric reading) *se donne le change* (gives itself the change). That is, in the pronominal, reflexive, figurative sense, it substitutes for its own sake a narrative of reason and abstract mastery for something that in its intimate workings remains dramatically un-mastered and in fact continually indebted to or at the mercy of other—mediating or diverting—agencies. A second way to read the loss of the subtext of scent, dog and prey would be to suggest that the loss is the work of the animal "itself," which succeeds in tricking us into allowing it to vanish. Here might be a sort of meta-*don de change*, where the animal gives us something—a kind of ghost of itself, in the shape of an odorless orangutan—while in a more fundamental sense withdrawing further from view.

Between these two readings—one that reads from the place of the human and another that reads from that of an utterly abstracted animal—something like the vanishing animal of every text—may still stand a more literal reading, attuned to the fact that, in subtextually forgoing his dogs (that is, in moving from scent to unfailing induction), Dupin no longer allows his prey the ability—on which is premised every hunt—to escape, giving up another in its stead. In this sense, in the rewriting of the scene so that it is no longer the sentient chase of a prey, the animal is denied the capacity to trick its chasers, to feign, to substitute, to turn, to split, to *change*. Thus the animal's gift is interrupted or disabled, and the animal is no longer what gives (or withholds) itself (or another) but simply something given, and waiting to be taken.

In this story of a disabling of the gift is glimpsed, then, what we propose to call the *cynegetic unconscious* of thinking, remembering that the term "cynegetics," in use at least since Xenophon, has its roots in the Greek *kuôn* + *agein*: to lead the dogs. Hunting dogs have long been called "auxiliary" animals in French. Mediating the hunt as pursuers and/or retrievers, they have a supplementary function not entirely easy to account for, repairing or supplying as they do the olfactive dimension that eludes the human. Interestingly, we have no word to designate the loss or absence of the sense of smell. How would we name our incapacity to smell the other, whether predator or prey? If there were a word to describe our "unsmelling," it would supply an ironic and wistful little definition

of the human. Dupin as hunter, before Baudelaire rids him of his flair, is in fact Nietzschean *avant la lettre*: "It is my fate," wrote Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo*, "that I have to be the first *decent* human being;. . .I was first to experience lies as lies – *smelling* them out. – My genius is in my *nostrils*" (*Ecce Homo* 144).

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Recalling the well known Heraclitean phrase *phusis kruptesthai philei* ("nature likes to hide"—"*physis* has a tendency to encrypt [itself]," in Derrida's rendition ["Fors" xiv])—Jean-Christophe Bailly has argued for the crypted texture of the visible, writing in *Le Visible est le caché,* that to live, for animals, has always meant to traverse the expanse of the visible by hiding within it, and that to this extent each territory should be seen as not only a space of dwelling, wandering, prowling, of self-baring, but also and perhaps primarily one of knowing where and how to hide (14-16). Whence the overly *meta*-physicality, perhaps, of the notion of *the Open*,[11] which imagines an unfoldedness of the visible where the animal dwells rather in its constitutive folds.

Therein lies another version of a misrecognition, which in "White Mythology" (1971) Derrida had imputed to Aristotle. At the beginning of *Poetics,* Aristotle had initially posed *mimesis* as "a possibility proper to *physis*" (237), that is, he had made clear that mimesis does not bring an additional or unnatural fold or unfolding from the outside but rather that it "belongs to *physis*" which, for its part, "includes its own exteriority and its double" (237). Yet Aristotle would go on to confine this "naturality" of *mimesis* to human speech, to the extent of making it a capacity "*proper* to man" (237). In response, Derrida would offer, as we recall, an unsettling reading of metaphor, the paradigmatic mimetic operation, premised on likeness, which for Aristotle was the condition for all mimetic truth (truth as the unveiling by *mimesis* of *physis*). Derrida describes the metaphor as "[m]arking the moment of the turn or of the detour [*du tour ou du détour*] during which the meaning of a name, instead of designating the thing which the name habitually must designate, carries itself elsewhere" (287/241, trans. modified). The metaphor, he writes, is "the *wandering* of the semantic," in other words a displacing power that both undergirds *and* unhinges any theory of truth or plenitude by which language "would say the thing such as it is in itself, […] properly." The furthest-reaching implication here is, of course, that there are instances where a substitution, a detour, a wandering, improper speech, may be the only way of naming or thinking something, the irreducible form in which something gives itself to be named or thought. Such is the case, memorably, with the *catachreses* Derrida shows to be at work in foundational philosophical concepts, in what is one of the most consequential propositions of "White Mythology."

Now, this essay was also, and importantly, as Derrida would recall more than 25 years later, an early "prowling around animal language," its subtext a pitting of Aristotle against Nietzsche precisely on the matter of the animal's relation to concepts, metaphor and truth (*The Animal* 58/35). Indeed, it seems uncannily fitting, in Derrida's description of metaphor as "the moment of the detour in which the truth might still be lost," or that instance wherein "meaning has appeared, but when truth still might be missed," that his words equally describe what happens when an animal, offering up its likeness in its place, effects a "*tour*" or "*détour*," that is, something that is at the same time a turn, a turning away, a trope, a trick, a detour, a diversion, a conversion, the place of a displacement and an improperty in representation's capture of nature, which in turn would appear to betray the *improper* origins of all possibility of property or propriety (241). In metaphor, Derrida maintains at the end of "White Mythology," "nature always finds its own analogy, its own resemblance to itself, takes increase only from itself. Nature *gives* itself in metaphor" (244/291, trans. modified — *elle s'y donne*).

Even so, in Aristotle's redistribution of givings, "nature gives (itself) more to some than to others." Nature is sewn in resemblances, and power belongs to the agency that can discern such resemblances. Who would attribute this power to animals? Who could bear to remember, while immemorially taking animals and taking from them, that there was, that there might be, a first giving that could not be taken from them? "To be a master of metaphor," Aristotle wrote in *Poetics*, "is the one thing that cannot be taken from another and it indicates a natural gift" (244/292, trans. modified—*dons naturels*). Derrida would respond to this as if speaking on behalf of the deer: "what cannot be taken is certainly the knack for perceiving a hidden resemblance, but also, consequently, the capacity to substitute one term for another. The genius of *mimesis*, thus, can give rise to a language, a code of regulated substitutions […], to the mastery of what cannot be taken. Henceforth am I certain that everything can be taken from me except the power to replace?" (244-245/292, trans. modified).

The power to replace. *Le pouvoir de remplacer.* In and by the animal's power to replace and, in replacing, to give, the human as *pouvoir* is haunted by an other, from whose agency, or lack thereof, it may not, for a moment, or *depuis le temps* (since time, to use the operative term of *The Animal*), be able to clearly differentiate itself, let alone remove itself. *Pouvoir remplacer, pouvoir donner, pouvoir.* The importance of the latter infinitive for Derrida as reader of Heidegger is well known. In *Of Spirit* (1987), he had analyzed the apparent contradictions of Heidegger's thesis regarding animals as being poor in world in the precise terms of a secret agency of *pouvoir.* The animal is deprived of world, he wrote, *because it can have world—parce qu'il*

peut avoir un monde (50/64). Not-having-world in the animal appeared to be a mode of being-able-to-have-world, and this evidence of poverty, in turn, as a complicated converging of a "being able to have" and a "not having," enabled Derrida to raise what would become a two-pronged charge against all theses of animal deprivation. On the one hand, is it at all clear that animals have no world and, if it is, what does this mean for what world itself might be? (Behind the severity of thinking animals with no world, appeared the obstinacy, fantasy or prophesy of a world with no animals.) On the other hand, if indeed animals do not have world, or being, or death, *as such*, is it at all clear that humans have world, or being, or death, *as such*? On both ends *pouvoir* as a clue led to the exposing of a paradox in the axiology of "*le propre de l'homme*," or what is proper to the human (56/69). Property complicated, as it were, by always possible poverty.

It is a remarkably similar move that Derrida would perform in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, as he took up Bentham's question, "can animals suffer?"—"*les animaux peuvent-ils souffrir?*," rephrased it in all rigor as "*peuvent-ils ne pas pouvoir?*" (in Wills' translation, "Can they not be able?" [28/48]), and located precisely in this "possibility without power," this "nonpower at the heart of power" (28), the space of vulnerability and mortality the human shares with the animal. If we return to this much-commented passage of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, it is to draw attention to the work on *pouvoir* as not just a verb signifying "to be able to" and a noun signifying "ability" or "power" but also, crucially, as a grammatical *auxiliary*, mediating and potentially compromising or complicating such ability. The auxiliary is what supports or enhances (from the Latin *augere,* to increase), what enables; it is, by a *change* in this very capacity, also what can *dis*able. In this sense, it marks the potential, always, of a deprivation, a dispossession, even an auto-contradiction at the heart of action, calculus, intention. Where "the word *can* changes sense and sign" (27) a pursuit may be diverted or, to use a sporting phrase, *at fault*, turning into its contrary, a failing, a missing. There is thus a kind of *logic of sense* in *pouvoir* as auxiliary, as if "pouvoir" (or "can") were sufficiently indifferent to what it enabled as to be susceptible, in certain conditions, of running *counter* to itself. The auxiliary is, one could say, the place of a hetero-affection, an interception of agency at that point where it is not yet primarily one's own, and where its direction is most vulnerable.

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Derrida's lesson, ultimately—this is our hypothesis—lay in unnerving our auxiliaries, lifting them into view. In a study of the structure of auxiliary relations, Emile Benveniste had laid out as one of three rules

the principle of the non-reflexivity of the auxiliary function, whereby "no auxiliary can serve as auxiliary to itself" (our translation). As examples he evoked the impossibility of phrases such as "'**il doit devoir*'" (he has to have to), and "'**il peut pouvoir*'" (he is able to be able to—he can be able to) (*Problèmes de linguistique 2,* 192). It is a highly significant rule of course—we guess easily what it protects language and ontology from (e.g., *la double feinte*; see below). The haunting power of Derrida's "*pouvoir ne pas pouvoir*" as the shared space of the human and the animal has something crucial to do with the infringement of this rule of non-reflexivity of the auxiliary. Revealed to be capable not only of enabling and disabling but of itself being enabled and disabled from the inside (by itself or its double), the auxiliary, if allowed to multiply, opens up something abyssal, an infinite receding of the self-evidence or originary reason or premise of ability and action. Interestingly, the auxiliary proves capable of doubling up, that is, of *reflexivity*, only in the negative. Derrida does not contest Benveniste's rule, does not try to say "*il peut pouvoir*," however he does say "*peuvent-ils ne pas pouvoir?*" and thereby (like with his "*une lettre peut toujours ne pas arriver à destination*"), reveals an extreme susceptibility of the auxiliary "*pouvoir*" which stands to be irreparably hollowed out by any negation affecting the principal verb.

In this micro-syntactico-fabulous drama is illustrated the slippage by which a movement or act of immunity, as Derrida writes in *The Animal*, "is always threatened with becoming auto-immunizing" (47/72), with turning on or away from itself. In this auxiliary that can at any moment run *counter*, one could suggest, is what Derrida *does* rigorously accept and take to radical lengths in the Heideggerian "median thesis" (the animal is poor in world)—that is, a poverty which, once it is premised as possible, and thus a possible dimension of all "*pouvoir*," cannot be stopped from spreading all the way down, or up, to affect, first and last of all, the "I"—as ability to say or be "I." "An 'I can I' [*je peux je*] as an 'I think' […] accompanies every representation," writes Derrida (93/130), discussing the Kantian "I" which essentially shares with the "I"s of Descartes, Heidegger, Lévinas and Lacan the disavowal of the confidence it rests upon an auxiliary, and the forgetting of the fact that the power to be an "I" is always obscurely predicated on a "power over the animal" (ibid.).

In literal, almost science-fictional, terms, it is the animal that I am/follow (myself as animal) that gives me my "I" as precisely the change. That is, in offering up something else (the ability to think, to speak, to say "I") in its stead, it tricks me into accepting this substitute as my self, and itself (as the unconscious, as what lives ["*le vivant*"], as the animal) recedes from view. Admittedly Lacan had understood something of this, when he described the "I" as structurally duplicitous, a sort of "*faire croire*" or *as*

if—a movement itself always "*en défaut*" or *at (a) fault* ("The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire" 694/819). The *cogito*, Lacan saw, is premised on a deceptive transparency: it presents consciousness or the "I" as immediate and transparent when in fact it emerges forth from something complicated (the obscure laws of the unconscious—that is, of the signifier and of its unregulatable limits and folds, of pretending to pretend, etc.) which, not able to own it, it pretends to transcend. But at this point, Lacan had reinstated the privilege of the human subject by affirming that he alone could perceive that he is being given the change regarding his consciousness: "the subject is confirmed in the eminence of its power by being subverted and brought back to its own lack [*le reconduisant à son défaut*]," writes Derrida, "meaning that animality [ironically] is on the side of the conscious *ego*, whereas the humanity of the human subject is on the side of the unconscious, the law of the signifier, Speech, the pretended pretense, etc." (*The Animal* 137-138/188).

The riddle of *donner le change* is that once one starts to consider that the animal can give another in its stead, there is no limiting of this capacity; it becomes, in Derridean terms, abyssal, much like the question of the feint of which, for Lacan, the animal is capable only in the "first degree."[12] For if the animal can substitute another for itself, if the dogs can be fooled, then can one ever be sure that an animal is not giving another in lieu of itself? Conversely, can we ever be sure that when seeming to give another it is not in fact giving itself? To think the gravest stakes of such *change*, as Catherine Malabou has done in her admirable *Le Change Heidegger*, is to think ontology itself as essentially *metabolic*, that is, it is to think the *originary mutability* of being.[13]

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Does the deer itself know what it does when it "gives the change"? Hunting literature warns of tricks and tactics, the suggestion being that yes, the deer does know. Such an attribution of agency is inevitably a mythology, which serves to justify and animate the practiced techniques and elaborate dramaturgy of the hunt. At the same time, in the suggestion that the deer *knows* is an effort to give bounds to what is otherwise interminable uncertainty. In "giving the change" (or merely in being able to), the deer must know what it is doing, and therefore it must know what *is*, it must know the distinction between sameness and difference—if there is a sense to this distinction, that is, if there is an objectivity, a stability to it. Thus certain founding and fragile ontological wagers are surrendered to the deer. And when the deer "gives the change," it does (at least) two things: on the one hand it assures (or seems to assure) our ontological predicates by signifying with its body and its act the difference between itself and another; on the other hand, it carries away with it, along the line

of its vanishing, that outermost frontier of what can be known or represented, not to say that very point where one might have verified whether the phenomenal "real" really *is* in the final analysis a thing that adds up and can be accounted for, whether it really *is* calculable and masterable. In other words, the deer that "gives the change" both withdraws itself from capture *and* offers as its parting gift a supplement of knowledge—we could call this gift the possibility of calculus, which, as we know from Derrida, is exactly the possibility of the subject.[14]

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Notes

1. This essay attempts a theoretical synthesis of a co-authored book published recently under the title *Donner le change: L'impensé animal* (Paris: Éditions Hermann, 2016). Our special thanks to Réda Bensmaïa, Christian Doumet, Elissa Marder and David Wills for their faith in this project in its early stages.
2. *Donner la mort*, which was not published in French until 1999 (by Galilée), would first appear in its American translation, *The Gift of Death*, in 1995.
3. Our translation and emphasis.
4. Discussing the cryptonymic system elaborated by Torok and Abraham, Derrida shows that it shares something of the sacrificial mechanism at work in *donner le change* – "one word for the other," one animal nickname (the Wolf Man) for a proper name (Sergei Pankejeff), one anasemic, animal "thing-word ("*tier*et") for an unspeakable yet unforgettable event: "Not only, as a supplementary medium, because the documentary material takes the form of stories (notably accounts of dreams), but because the 'event,' the drama it re-counts is itself recognized by the analysts as a story of words, of words exchanged: words exchanged among several subjects in the dream itself, and words *exchanging themselves with one another to lead the analyst astray*, one word for the other from one safe to another [*entre plusieurs sujets dans le rêve même, et entre eux pour donner le change, un mot pour l'autre d'un for à l'autre*]" (*The Wolf Man's Magic Word* xxxvii/54; emphasis ours).
5. "What is common to and what is the connection between 'to give the time' and 'to give a price' (in the sense of the auction bid: 'I will give you so much for it'), between '*donner une facilité*' [to facilitate, as in a facilitated payment plan] and 'give an order,' between 'give information,' 'give a course, a class, and a seminar,' 'give a lesson' (which is something completely different) and 'give chase,' 'give signs,' and so forth?" (49/70). In this passage, "give chase" stands in for "*donner le change*," about which the translator notes: "Derrida's example here is '*donner le change*,' which is a hunting expression that means to decoy or to put off the scent."
6. The first instance occurs when Derrida describes Marx's haunting obsession with chasing (away) the spectrality of exchange-value: "Exorcism conjures away the evil in ways that are also irrational, using magical, mysterious, even mystifying practices. Without excluding, quite to the contrary, analytic procedure and argumentative ratiocination, exorcism consists in repeating in the mode of an incantation that the dead man is really dead. It proceeds by *formulae*, and sometimes theoretical formulae play this role with an efficacity that is all the greater because *they mislead* as to their magical nature, their authoritarian dogmatism, the occult power they share with what they claim to combat" (59, emphasis ours). The second occurrence is found at the beginning of chapter 5, "Apparition of the Inapparent": "An articulation assures the movement of this relentless indictment [against Max Stirner]. It gives some play [*Elle donne du jeu*]. It plays between

the spirit (*Geist*) and the specter (*Gespenst*), between the spirit on the one hand, the ghost or the revenant on the other. This articulation often remains inaccessible, eclipsed in its turn in shadow, where it moves about and *puts one off the trail* [elle y remue et *donne le change*]" (156/201, emphases ours).

7. "Metaphors from hunting are often used by Socrates in speaking of arguments," notes John Burnet, "and the *logos* is regularly the game which is hunted" (Plato, *Phaedo* 25). This metaphor, Burnet continues, has survived in such words as "investigation" (ibid.) and "method": "The verb *meterkomai* (88d9) and its substantive *methodos* furnish another illustration of the metaphor from hunting. The literal sense of *metienai* is 'to go after,' 'to follow up,' especially of going in pursuit of game. As the *logos* is the game in the *thera tou ontos*, the phrase *metienai ton logon* is natural" (69).
8. In her book *Platon et la "chasse de l'être,"* Geneviève Rodis-Lewis notes lucidly that the vocation of Plato's philosopher is, literally, to "hunt being."
9. Buffon writes in a chapter on the fallow deer that because it is nimbler and leaves fewer traces than the stag "*the dogs are less apt to observe the change, or substitution of another animal, and it is more difficult to bring them into the scent when at fault*" [118]). This we quote from the 1785 translation of Buffon by the appropriately named William Smellie.
10. In *Les Ruses de l'intelligence*, Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant recall the importance for the Ancient Greeks of the *mètis*, this modality of knowledge that applies to "fugitive, mobile, disconcerting and ambiguous realities that do not lend themselves to precise measurement, exact calculations, or rigorous reasonings" (10, our translation). Neglected by historians and philosophers in favor of the Platonic *epistémē*, which promotes a "logic of identity, a metaphysics of being and of the immutable" (56), the *métis* is foremost a practical form of intelligence associated with the cunning of the trickster, the pragmatism of the politician, the perspicacity of the warrior, and, above all, the sagacity of the hunter. Crucially, the *mètis* is not the preserve of the human – Ulysses and the octopus are both paragons of *mètis* (39) – and thereby threatens, for Aristotle, the "radical separation" between "reasonable beings" and beings without reason (*áloga zôia*) (303).
11. See Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*; Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*; and Giorgio Agamben, *The Open*.
12. The animal would have "the capacity to trace, to leave a track and to track, but not to distract the tracking or lead the tracker astray by *erasing* its trace or covering its tracks," whereas "the 'subject of the signifier,' within the human order, would possess such a power and, better still, would emerge as subject, instituting itself and coming to itself as subject *by virtue of this power*, a second-degree reflexive power, a power that is *conscious* of deceiving by pretending to pretend" (*The Animal* 128).
13. Even as Malabou cites as the last of several meanings of "change" that of animal substitution in "*vénerie*" or hunting, she does not return to it – nor, fascinatingly for our purposes, does she appear to suspect that in that meaning is most vividly choreographed that "secret," "hypoconceptual," "fantastic" scene that she describes wherein "being is nothing… but its mutability" (270/344).
14. "To put it rather abruptly, I would say that, among other things, the subject is also a principle of calculability" ("Eating Well" 108/287).

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