# Heidegger and the Herringbone Cowshed

**Laurence Simmons**



Figure 1: Herringbone Cowshed (Diagram showing 'angle-parking')

…and already the knowing animals are aware that we are not really at home in our interpreted world.
　　—Rainer Maria Rilke, "Duino Elegies"

…technology is the mastery not of nature but mastery of the relation between nature and humanity.
　　—Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street"

To render inoperative the machine that governs our conception of man will therefore mean no longer to seek new—more effective and more authentic—articulations, but rather to show the central emptiness, the hiatus that—within man—separates man and animal, and to risk ourselves in this emptiness.
　　—Giorgio Agamben, *The Open*

**I**

My paper is dedicated to Ron Sharp, who died last year. Ron Sharp was a Waikato dairy farmer who in 1952 changed his 12 bail walk-through milking shed to a design of his own, now known worldwide as the herring-bone cowshed. Sharp's design was a direct result of a knee problem, and designed to resolve the recurrent difficulty of having to stoop while milk-ing. One estimate had a person milking for a season stooping 2,400 times for each cow—that is, 240,000 times for a 100-cow herd.

As with all good ideas, the basics of the herringbone shed were simple. It included a pit for the milker to stand in down the middle of the shed and raised platforms for the cows, which were 'angle-parked' with their udders within easy reach and at a convenient height for the milker [Figure 1]. The angle-parking idea came to Roy after observing cars angle-parked in Victoria Street, Hamilton's main thoroughfare. Cows in the herringbone shed could be milked in batches, rather than being let in one at a time. As each batch finished milking it was released to walk out the other end of the shed. The Sharp cowshed could handle up to 90 cows an hour, com-pared with 30 in the traditional milking set-up. It was also calculated that the Sharp system saved the milker around 225 kilometres of walking each dairy season. Initially the herringbone design won little support from the dairy industry, but by 1964, ten years after its invention, there were thou-sands of herringbone cowsheds around the world, including India and the Soviet Union [Figure 2]. The herringbone cowshed was later acclaimed by many as the greatest innovation in the dairy industry since the invention of the milking machine. By all accounts Roy was a modest man who had no secondary education, having left school after primary school to help on the family farm during the Depression of the 1930s. He never applied for a patent for his design, and never made any money from it.

**II**

I am going to revisit, rework, and re-worry the bone of Giorgio Agam-ben's careful re-reading in his book *The Open* of Martin Heidegger's attempt to distinguish animal life from human life. I want to explore the question of the animal, within the context of Heidegger's critical retrieval and trans-formation of the philosophical foundations of our technological concep-tion of the world, and through Jacques Derrida's and Giorgio Agamben's re-reading of Heidegger's 'empty interval' between man and animal. To the extent that modernity formulates an understanding of the animal in terms of the mechanical paradigm this will involve me, among other things, in a shift from hand-milking [Figure 3] to the herringbone cowshed. Although it has been increasingly urgent to think the animal beyond the mechanical paradigm, I want to suggest that it may be equally crucial to venture an investigation of the mechanical component in the human: to explore, that is, the necessities and automatisms at the physical as well as psychological level; to investigate the blurring of the lines between human, animal and machine; and to open up questions of prosthetic subjectivity. Or, to follow Derrida, I intend to explore how "my guiding threads lace together in this knot: the *question*, the *animal*, *technology*" (1987: 57).

An exploration of this knot may be necessary and crucial if we wish to stop the 'anthropological machine' of Western thought that operates by

creating an absolute difference between man and animal: a difference that, on the one hand, elevates the human above the animal and its environment and, on the other, places animality outside of what Heidegger described as the human's 'openness' to the world. Heidegger's foundational stance in thinking the question of the animal is a fundamental, and a fundamentally correct, one. It is radically non-anthropocentric in that it attempts to understand the animal's relation to world on the animal's own terms rather than from the perspective of the human. It is this 'biocentrism', in contrast to anthropocentrism, that has led subsequent commentators to use Heidegger's thought to justify a radical ecological critique of technological modernity and to see him as a forerunner of radical environmentalism. Deep ecologists, who represent one branch of the radical ecology movement, have used Heidegger to argue that nature, and the animal, has an intrinsic value apart from its usefulness to human beings, and that all life forms should be allowed to flourish and fulfill their evolutionary destinies (see Naess, 1989 and Zimmerman, 1993). Nevertheless, it is clear that Heidegger cannot avoid falling back on oppositional distinctions between animal and human, and is thus unable to overcome the anthropocentrism of the metaphysical tradition; he is unable to speak of 'the open' with respect to animal and human in a non-contradictory way. What inhibits him from achieving this overcoming, but also offers him the possibility of overcoming, I shall argue, is his reliance on a certain notion of technology.

**III**

I will proceed according to four axes, each of which lead—separately and in tandem—to my conclusion on the relation between the technical and the animal. Each axis or 'question' starts from a modality of 'the animal', as it is explored by Heidegger, but I also follow through a critique of Heidegger's position using the ideas and responses of Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben and Bernard Stiegler.
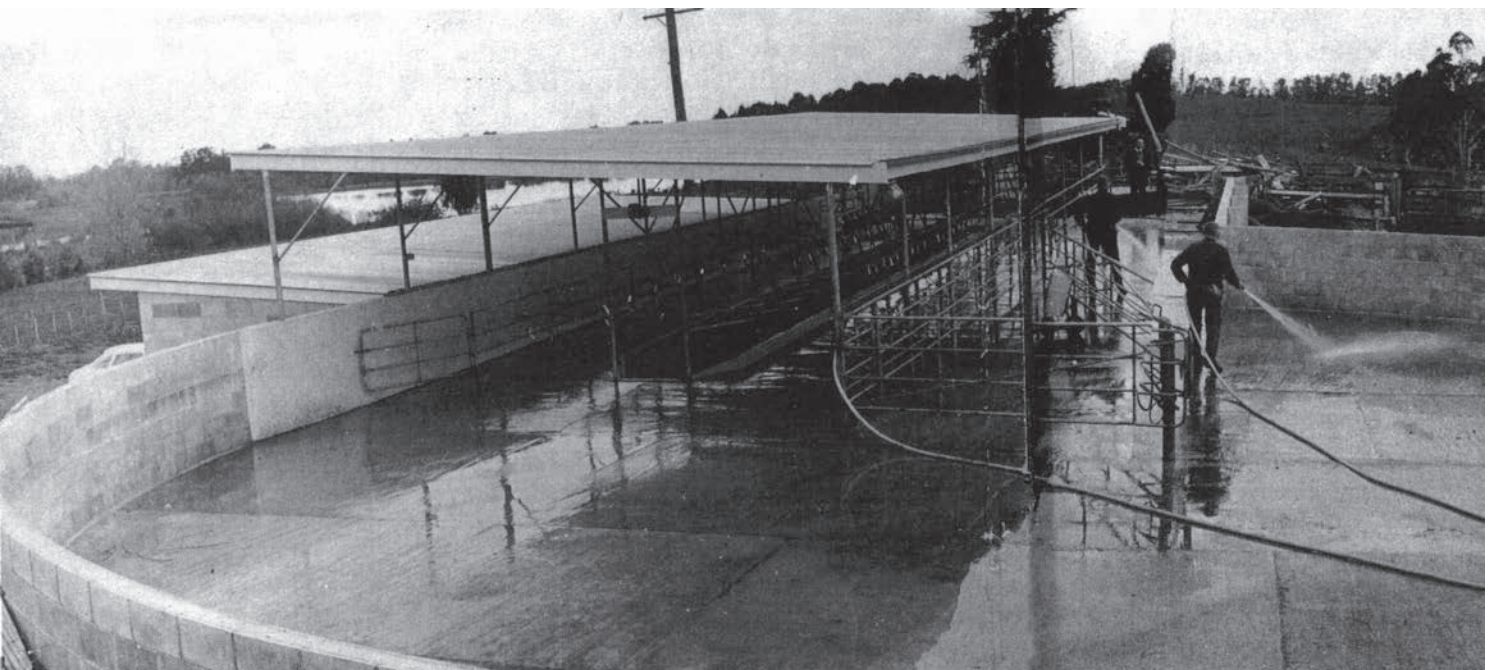
Figure 3: Heidegger hand milking (photocollage)

*The question of language*

Because plants and animals are lodged in their respective environments but are never placed freely into the clearing of being which alone is 'world,' they lack language. But in being denied language, they are not thereby suspended worldlessly in their environment. Still, in this word 'environment' converges all that is puzzling about living creatures. (Heidegger, 1998: 248)

Heidegger argues that animals lack a specific relation to language because they lack 'world'. By world Heidegger does not simply mean nature or environment, but intends the capability for standing in what he elsewhere calls 'the clearing of being', where being comes into presence and leaves. Plants and animals do not exist outside of themselves in the clearing of being; rather, they live enclosed within their surrounding environments. This means simply that plants and animals cannot access beings beyond themselves in the way that human beings with language and world are able to do. The human body, on this account, is what belongs to the realm of the animal, and the human capacity for language and reason are specific marks of the human beyond the animal. Heidegger here takes the Cartesian (but also Aristotelian in its origin) definition of the human as *animal rationale* (that which sets the human apart as the single and sole living creature with the capacity for language), and he insists that this capacity for language *cannot* be seen as arising from the human's animal nature. Language is not just one among a number of things added on to the essence of the human; "[r]ather", says Heidegger, "language is the house of being in which the human being exists by dwelling" (1998: 254). As this passage suggests—and Derrida notes it clearly (Derrida, 1989: 48)—Heidegger's questioning of the metaphysical definition of the human as *animal rationale* simply displaces one form of humanism *in the name of another, more exacting humanism*. Heidegger opens up the question of the animal to existence, he shifts the question to a different register, but ultimately he offers nothing by way of critique of the traditional oppositional line drawn between human beings and animals; and so he closes the question down again. It is also important that for Heidegger this line of division—of language—bears an essential relation to death.

*The question of death*

> Mortals are they who can experience death as death. The animal cannot do so. But the animal cannot speak either. The essential relation between language and death flashes up before us, but remains still unthought. (Heidegger, 1971b: 107)

It is only the human that is capable of dying in the sense of complete, irreducible, untold loss taking place in/with the death of an individual. And it is given to humans to relate to their own death as that which uniquely individuates each of them. By contrast, the animal lacks memory; lacks the ability to repeat. In its absolute singularity, in its 'losing itself at every moment', it lacks presence and a substantive, continuing stability. Heidegger writes elsewhere: "To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies. The animal perishes. It has death neither ahead of itself nor behind it" (1971a: 178).

Thus Heidegger distinguishes between the 'biological-ontological' death of animals and plants—deaths measured in 'longevity, propagation and growth'—and the ontological death of Dasein. While denying the relation between death, language and the animal, Heidegger does not explicitly explore how the relation between death and language separates the human from the animal. Derrida writes:

> Against or without Heidegger, one could point to a thousand signs that show that animals also die. Although the innumerable structural differences that separate one 'species' from another should make us vigilant about any discourse on animality and bestiality in general, one can say that animals have a very significant relation to death, to murder and to war (hence, to borders), to mourning and to hospitality, and so forth, even if they have neither a relation to death nor to the 'name' of death as such, nor, by the same token, to the other as such. (1993: 75-6)

Derrida's point is neither does "man as Dasein" have a relationship to "death as such, but only to perishing" (76). Thus the paradox of Heidegger's position is that since the animal is purely resolved into the species, its death ends up being a matter of that which may be repeated without loss. Because of this, the animal (the labour of metabolic survival and reproduction of life that the animal names) is 'undying'—it indicates life's seamless continuum.

*The question of poverty*

Man is not merely a *part of the world* but is also master and servant of the world in the sense of '*having*' world. Man has world. But then what about the other beings which, like man, are also part of the world: the animals and plants, the material things like the stone, for example? Are they merely parts of the world, as distinct from man who in addition *has* world? Or does the animal too have world, and if so, in what way? In the same way as man, or in some

other way? And how would we grasp this otherness? And what about the stone? However crudely, certain distinctions immediately manifest themselves here. We can formulate these distinctions in the following three theses: [1.] the stone (material object) is *worldless* [*weltlos*]; [2.] the animal is *poor in world* [*weltarm*]; [3.] man is *world-forming* [*weltbildend*]. (Heidegger, 1995: 177)

The stone is described as '*weltlos*' or 'without world, worldless'. The stone has no experience, no world: one cannot even say of a stone, employing some form of anthropomorphism, that it is indifferent to Being. Human beings are characterized as '*weltbildend*' (translated as 'world-forming' or 'world-picturing'). The human has access to entities and so 'has a world', and this access is the openness that is characteristic of Dasein. We see the objects in the world as they are. For Heidegger this capacity of a human being to grasp something as something is not due to the human possession of language, the fact that it can name things. In fact, in the radical nature of Heidegger's ontology it is the reverse: human beings have the facility of language because of the kind of Being-in-the-world they are—that is, open to entities. In *Being and Time* he writes:

> We do not so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is 'present-at-hand', rather when something within-the-world is encountered *as such* the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world. (1987: 150)

Animals are '*weltarm*', 'poor in world'. Again, that they 'lack language' does not explain why animals are deprived in this context. In contrast to the stone, the animal is not absolutely without access to entities, and in this sense it can be said to have a world. However, in comparison to human beings, the animal is impoverished: its mode of having a world is in the form of not having a world as such. Heidegger's statement concerning the world-poverty of animals is meant to indicate a simultaneous having and not-having of the world, the assumption being that human beings are not simply part of the world but also in some sense have world. In the 1929/30 lectures Heidegger explains this relationship in terms of how the biological drives that characterize the animal organism are 'disinhibited' by external factors, how a circle is put around them: "the animal, when it comes into a relation with something else, can only come upon the sort of entity that '*affects*' or initiates capability in some way. Nothing else can ever penetrate the ring around the animal" (1995: 254).

In his book *Of Spirit* (1989) Derrida has three related objections to Heidegger's account. First of all, he says, Heidegger assumes 'animality' is one thing, that there is "one homogeneous type of entity which is called animality in general" (1989: 57). Heidegger does not speak, or seem to think of, the domesticated animal when he writes (his examples are lizards, bees, moths, worms, amoebas, and so on). That is, he passes over the possibility that a different animal—say, one I live with or alongside—might be in different respects 'another like myself'.

Derrida's second objection is that Heidegger's thesis is circular. How can the essence of animality be determined by a process of exclusion if

one does not have an essential knowledge of what constitutes inclusion in the category animal? "The logical contradiction between the two propositions (the animal does and does not have a world) would mean simply that we have not yet sufficiently elucidated the concept of world" (1989: 51). Heidegger's account of the animal placed somewhere between the stone and man, Derrida claims, has simply left no category of existence *for* the animal.

Derrida's third objection is that the concept of privation or poverty that informs Heidegger's account of animal existence "cannot avoid a certain anthropocentric or even humanist teleology" (1989: 55). That, even though Heidegger wishes to avoid it, "the words 'poverty' and 'privation' imply hierarchy and evaluation" (56). The problem lies with the term 'poor': the animal is 'poor in world' is not to be understood in terms of hierarchical value; the animal is 'poor' does not mean to say in comparison that the human is 'rich' in having world. According to Heidegger, the animal is poor in the world on its own terms, poor in the sense of being deprived.

*The question of the hand*

The [human] hand is a peculiar thing. In the common view, the hand is part of our bodily organism. But the hand's essence can never be determined or explained, by its being an organ which can grasp. Apes, for example, have organs that can grasp, but they have no hand. The hand is infinitely different from all grasping organs—paws, claws or fangs—different by an abyss of essence. (Heidegger, 1968: 16)

The sentence at the centre of this quotation is, Derrida says, "Heidegger's most significant, symptomatic, and seriously dogmatic"; it is one, he continues, that risks "compromising the whole force and necessity of the discourse" (Derrida, 1986: 173). "Apes, for example, have organs that can grasp, but they have no hand." This statement, Derrida claims, presupposes a sort of empirical knowledge whose evidence is never shown. Heidegger takes no account of zoological knowledge, and its recent rapid expansion, that is to be included under the word animal, or animality. We read here the inscription of an absolute oppositional limit between a human withdrawn from biologistic determination and an animality enclosed with organico-biologic programmes. As Derrida notes wryly, what Heidegger says of the ape without hand is a clear indication that he has not studied the apes in the Black Forest (174). The result of this discussion of the system of limits within which the human hand takes on sense and value is that the very name of the human, his or her *Geschlecht* ('species being')[1] a becomes problematic itself. The human hand, then, is a thing apart, not as a separable organ but because it is dissimilar from other prehensile organs (paws, claws, talons). The abyss that is reinstated between the human hand and the ape's 'paw' is that of speech and thought. "Only a being who can speak, that is, think", Heidegger writes, "can have the hand and can be handy in achieving works of handicraft" (Heidegger, 1968: 16). Thus for Heidegger the human hand has a complex relation to thought and all work of the hand is rooted in thinking. Derrida continues his critique:

1. This word, with its shifting meanings of 'race', 'species', 'genus', 'gender', 'stock', is the title phrase of a series of essays by Derrida on Heidegger: "*Geschlecht:* Sexual difference, Ontological difference" (1983); "*Geschlecht II:* Heidegger's hand" (1986); and "Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (*Geschlecht IV*)" (1992).

If there is a thought of the hand or hand of thought, as Heidegger gives us to think, it is not of the order of conceptual grasping. Rather this thought of the hand belongs to the essence of the gift, of a giving that would give, if this is possible, without taking hold of anything. If the hand is also, no one can deny this, an organ for gripping (*Greiforgan*), that is not its essence, is not the hand's essence in the human being. (Derrida, 1987: 172-3)

We might say that here that Heidegger's treatment of the animal 'shows his hand'. For Heidegger, the figure of the hand is determined not by a biological or utilitarian function—"does not let itself be determined as a bodily organ of gripping" (173)—but rather can serve as a figure for thought. The essential centre of this meditation opens onto what Derrida describes as "the hand's double vocation". The word vocation describes the way that the hand holds on to speaking and at the same time shows, points out, gives itself as the extended hand. Heidegger writes:

But the work of the hand is richer than we commonly imagine. The hand does not only grasp and catch, or push and pull. The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes—and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hand of the other. The hand holds (*hält*). The hand carries (*trägt*). (Heidegger, 1968: 16, translation modified)

The nerve of the Heideggerian argument, as Derrida points out, seems reducible to the opposition of giving and taking: the human hand "*gives and gives itself, gives* and *is given*", like thinking or what gives itself to be thought, whereas the organ (let's call it that) of the ape as a simple animal can "only *take hold of, grasp, lay hands on the thing*", in that it does not have to deal with the thing as such (1987: 175, Derrida's italics). Can the hand change hands? Is it given or taken? What does it mean to be handed over from human to animal? Then again, as Derrida has repeatedly shown in a clutch of diverse texts, "the distinction between *giving* and *taking*" (176) is never one we may be assured of.[2] Furthermore, the hand for Heidegger, as will be clear from the few quotations I have provided, is a singular thing; that is, Heidegger always thinks the hand in the singular—"as if man did not have two hands but, this monster, one single hand" (182), notes Derrida. The human that speaks and the human that writes uses one hand. The human of the typewriter (today we would say of the computer), and technics in general, uses two hands, as does, let me add, the human who milks the cow. So this is why, Derrida writes, "[t]he hand cannot be spoken about without speaking of technics" (169).

*The question of technics*

However, reading Heidegger on technology immediately invokes a technical problem, the question of translation. With Heidegger, Samuel Weber has written, "what is lost in translation, often without a trace, is a certain practice of language, in which colloquial, idiomatic phrases play a decisive role" (Weber, 1996: 55). The translation of Heidegger's famous

**2.** See, for example, *The gift of death* (1995) and *Given time I. Counterfeit money* (1992).

paper "The Question Concerning Technology" (*Die Frage nach der Technik*, 1953) confronts us with the problem of translation, the problem of conceptual rendition. First of all, the English translation of 'technology' for '*Technik*' loses this trace of the colloquial. It is, as Weber says, both "too narrow" in excluding the meanings of craft and skill and, at the same time, "too theoretical in suggesting that the knowledge involved is a form of applied science" (60). I shall follow Weber and use the term 'technics' which is less theoretical in English but also, unfortunately, less habitual, than 'technology'.

A second problem arises with the word 'concerning' in the standard title, "The Question Concerning Technology"; this word again is odd because '*nach*' in German carries the primary meanings of 'towards' and 'after'. Let me quote Weber again: "both meanings will play a significant role in Heidegger's train of thought as it moves towards the question of technics, but only by going (and coming) after it in a certain way" (61). Even the word 'question' ('*Frage*') in Heidegger's title designates something "very different from a mere striving after and answer, in the sense of cognition or information" (62). Rather, it involves a movement of opening oneself up to something else which is worthy of being questioned.[3] Weber proposes that the equivocal title be translated as "Questing after Technics".

In "Questing after Technics" Heidegger's position contests the classically mechanistic understanding of technology. For Heidegger, Western metaphysics has not led to human 'progress', but instead to a technological instrumentalism in which everything—including humankind—stands revealed as raw material for the goal of greater power and security. In contrast, the dynamic sense of technics is ongoing and moves away from the idea of a pure and simple self-identity of technology. This is not in itself technical. Again, to quote Weber: "Heidegger leads his readers in a quest after something that is not simply equivalent to technology, although it is that without which technology would not be" (63). The thinking of technology depends upon philosophical speculation, a presentation of philosophy's constitutive inability to think *technē*, but a speculation that transforms philosophy in the process. The approach to the question, the questing, of technics allows the relation between the technical and the human to appear through past failures to think it.

For Heidegger this speculation starts from the distinction between a traditional and a modern technics. His example of traditional technics is drawn from the sphere of pre-industrial agriculture where nature is worked or tilled ('*bestellt*'). But in the era of industrialization, he argues, nature is no longer worked and cultivated (*bestellt*), it is *gestellt*, literally, placed, 'set up' or 'emplaced'. Technics now has the sense of placing nature on order—a sort of extracting. *Gestell*, we must also remember, comes from '*Stall*', once meaning 'place, position', but now, of course, as it is in English, 'a stable or cowshed'.[4] The notion of 'emplacement' (again I am following Weber in using this 'English' word for *Gestell*, in contrast to the standard English translation and subsequent commentary, where it is rendered as 'enframing') assembles the various ways in which everything, animals and human beings included, is set in place.[5] But as emplacement the questing, the on-going of technics has an ambivalent character: the questing brings to a halt, it sets in place; and yet this placement is a constant 're-placing', it is a dynamic process that opens up. It is in his 1926 essay "Why Poets?"

**3.** See Derrida (1989) for a discussion of "questions opened by Heidegger and open with regard to Heidegger … to the question of the question, to the apparently absolute and long unquestioned privilege of the *Fragen*" (7, 9).

4. Note also the interplay of these terms in Heidegger's 'Why Poets?': "But that which is set up [das Gestellte]—where is it set up [gestellt], and by what? Nature is brought before man by human re-presentation [Vor-stellen]. Man sets up the world as the entirety of objectiveness before himself and himself before the world. Man delivers [stellt zu] the world unto himself and produces [stellt her] Nature for himself. We must think of this production [Herstellen] in its wide and diverse essence. Man tills [bestellt] Nature when it does not satisfy his representation" (2002: 215).

5. Taking up another hint of Heidegger, Weber (1996) also offers the translation of 'skeleton' to encompass the corporeal implications of Gestell.

that Heidegger, following Rilke, reverses his position on animal, being and world and concedes the existence of a community of living beings, "the integral entirety of beings". Heidegger writes in this essay:

> The absolute self-assertion of the deliberate production of the world … is a process that comes out of the hidden essence of technology. Only in the modern era does this begin to develop as a destiny of the truth of beings in their entirety … (Heidegger, 2002: 217)

This is not simply a restatement of the commonplace that we live in a world articulated through increasingly sophisticated technological supports, which, in turn, bring with them a radical transformation of the site of humanity in the world. Nor is it purely a case of a split between the position of an affirmation of the technicization of the world, or simply, in contrast, an affirmation of the human against these very processes of technicization. My argument will be that thinking through the relation between the human and the animal, as begun by Heidegger, will allow us to think through the relation between the human and the technical, in a way that thinks technology without opposing thought to technics. Or, to put this otherwise, my gamble is that it is the question of technics that allows us, *will* allow us, to think the relation between the human and the animal through all the past failures to think it. That will allow us to "take a hint", as Heidegger says, "from the phenomena of advancing technology, a hint in the direction of those regions from where, perhaps, an originary, constructive overcoming of the technical could come" (2002: 217).

At times Heidegger's treatment of the animal, as I have noted, verges on a Cartesianism (what Derrida calls "the Cartesian tradition of the animal-machine that exists without language and without the ability to respond" [2003: 121]): a position which treats animals as little more than machines. This is most clear in a now notorious passage from an unpublished lecture of 1949, where Heidegger adverted to the Holocaust. Interestingly, the title of this piece was "*Das Gestell*", and it was part of the lecture series upon which "The Question Concerning Technology" was to be based:

> Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry, in essence the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and the extermination camps, the same as the blockade and starvation of nations, the same as the manufacture of atom bombs. ("*Das Gestell*", 1949 lecture cited in Rockmore, 1992: 241)

This comment is perplexing. What was Heidegger thinking when he compared modern methods of farming with the Holocaust? Is this remark a work of deep thought or an obscene comparison? Does it display a shocking insensitivity to the mass murder of the death camps? Which is greater: the scandal of Heidegger's post-war silence on the Shoah or the scandal of this off-hand comment, this sort of throwaway discourse?

*On the one hand*, Roy Sharp's herringbone cowshed functions as an illustration of Heidegger's statement: it employs a technological means to make efficient a mechanical output. Indeed, the phenomenon of modern mechanized agriculture is so momentous for Heidegger that it is comparable to historical events such as the Russian blockade of Berlin and the American

deployment of the atom bomb over Japan.[6] This race for efficiency—in gas chambers or milking sheds ("in essence the same")—reduces being to raw material. But in its way the herringbone cowshed also suggests that the operative distinction is not between human being and animal, as Heidegger ended up maintaining, but between the lived body and the objectified body, as his analogy to the death camps forces us to consider.[7] As Heidegger had already noted in "The Question Concerning Technology", "the essence of technology is by no means anything technological" (Heidegger, 1977: 44). Something deeper is going on in the mechanization of agriculture than first meets the eye. For, *on the other hand*, as Heidegger was to fleetingly argue, the *technē* of Sharp's cowshed is not addressed at making or producing certain things, but at the unlocking of being as such.

## IV

I want to turn now briefly, before returning to this question of 'the unlocking of being', to the work of someone who has tackled the broader immediate cultural and political stakes of this undersubscribed debate on the technical object, Bernard Stiegler. Technics, as Stiegler points out, is the unthought, repressed by philosophy as an object of thought. He writes: "the meaning of modern technics is ambiguous in Heidegger's work. It appears simultaneously as the ultimate obstacle to and as the ultimate possibility of thought" (Stiegler, 1998: 7). My exploration of Stiegler will also return us for a moment to the question of the hand (of the ape). A central section of Stiegler's first volume on *Technics and Time* consists of a discussion of the writings of the French paleontologist André Leroi-Gourhan and his empirical analysis of the process of hominization based upon the evolution of the prosthesis—something not itself living—by which the human is nonetheless defined as a living being. Stiegler elaborates how this account of the origin of man (in terms of the stone implement or tool) refuses to confront, despite having the terms to do so, originary technicity. In his book *Gesture and Speech* (1993), Leroi-Gourhan grants the prehominid (*Australopithecus*) the possibility of speech, but refuses it the possibility of anticipation (memory and foresight), the symbolic, and the thought of death. Leroi-Gourhan thereby maintains that the technics of the prehominid is still of a zoological type. Hence its language is nothing more than the articulation of an animal cry, a language constituted by signals rather than the general and abstract economy of signs. In other words, the prehominid has none of the (later) human qualities (anticipation, language, the symbolic). It is here that Stiegler mobilizes Derrida to argue that any possibility of speech already rests on a movement of idealization without which there would be no language in the first place, and that this idealization rests in turn on the possibility of anticipation. Stiegler writes: "It is in the aporia of the origin of language that the chasm deepens: what will have come first, language for the foundation of society, or society for a decision on language?" (Stiegler, 1998: 127) As a result, the passage from the prehominid to the hominid, which Leroi-Gourhan wishes to sustain, cannot have a simple origin. Rather this passage, and remember we are precisely here at the moment of trying to think the passage from animal to human, demands to be thought in terms of its impossibility, in terms of the aporia of origin. Furthermore, for Leroi-Gourhan's hypothesis what marks the transition is the technical

intelligence in the use of a stone implement, but at the same time what lies beyond the animal is language, a symbolic transcendence of the technical. In his inability to think through the aporia of origin, Leroi-Gourhan's analysis is thus beset by a *non sequitur*. Technical intelligence ends up by being animal and yet it does not mark the specificity of the human.

By refusing the abyss of essence between *logos* and *technē*, Stiegler is both working within the Heideggerian problematic and overturning it. This realignment with the constitutive role of technics has radical consequences for all of Heidegger's themes, methods and articulations. It should not be forgotten that Heidegger's concern was to understand the animal in its otherness, and to let that otherness be. This understanding was to be achieved, he thought, through an imaginative transposition of the human into the animal. In this self-transposition "the other being is precisely supposed to remain *what* it is and *how* it is. Transposing oneself into this being means … being able to go along with the other being while remaining *other* with respect to it" (Heidegger, 1995: 202). "It is not", says Derrida, "that the animal has a lesser relationship, a more limited access to entities, it has an *other* relationship" (1989: 49). The idea of an "*other*" relationship provides a crucial insight into the possibility of an animal world. Derrida moves the question from one of its existence (does the animal have a world?) to that of the relationship by which humanity might discover the animal world (how can one speak of or comprehend an animal world?). In Derrida's critique of Heidegger, the poverty of animal being presupposes, nonetheless, some mode of having, even as it drifts towards 'not-having'. "The animal is deprived of a world because it *can* have a world", says Derrida (1989: 50). Accordingly, animals are neither reticent inhabitants of the human world, nor are they, like stones, impassive to the environment of entities. Rather, the animal inhabits, even if in a negative manner, a world that is at the same time not a world. It is at this point, declares Agamben, that the ontological status of the animal environment can be defined:

> It is *offen* (open) but not *offenbar* (disconcealed; *lit*. openable). For the animal, beings are open but not accessible; that is to say, they are open in an inaccessibility and an opacity—that is, in some way, in a non-relation. This *openness without disconcealment* distinguishes the animal's poverty in the world from the world-forming which characterizes man. (Agamben, 2004: 55)

## V

Giorgio Agamben concludes that from Heidegger's perspective on the 'anthropological machine' of Western thought two scenarios are possible:

> (*a*) posthistorical man no longer preserves his own animality as undisclosable, but rather seeks to take it on and govern it by means of technology; (*b*) man, the shepherd of being, appropriates his own concealedness, his own animality, which neither remains hidden nor is made an object of mastery, but is thought as such, as pure abandonment. (Agamben, 2004: 80)

How are we to understand these projections? And for us they still *are* projections. I will conclude here by trying to get all of my cows out of the Black Forest back into their cowshed. Heidegger's strategy is not simply one of refusal of technology, nor the nostalgia involved in the return to an agrarian condition, but of a new relation of cohabitation and thereby a reconfiguration of humanity itself in relation to being as a whole. For what is most characteristic of 'emplacement' or 'enframing' (*Gestell*), the transformation of the world into a totalized network of resources, is that it is not merely something humans do to an environment, or do with machines but, first and foremost, it is a demand, a requirement they place upon themselves, their transformation into the human resources necessary for total mobilization. This is how the question raised by technics, we might say, points beyond mere technology.

It is in order to describe the face of this 'beyond', and the nature of its 'suspension' of the interval between human and animal, that Agamben turns to two examples to illustrate these two scenarios. First of all, a letter of Walter Benjamin which introduces the enigmatic concept of the 'saved night'.[8] This Agamben elaborates as follows:

> The 'saved night' is the name of this nature that has been given back to itself … The salvation that is at issue here does not concern something that has been lost and must be found again, something that has been forgotten and must be remembered; it concerns, rather, the lost and the forgotten as such—that is, something unsavable. The saved night is a relationship with something unsavable … For modern man the proper place of this relationship is technology [*la tecnica*]. But not, to be sure, a technology conceived, as it commonly is, as man's mastery of nature … The anthropological machine no longer articulates nature and man in order to produce the human through the suspension and capture of the inhuman. The machine is, so to speak, stopped; it is 'at a standstill,' and in the reciprocal suspension of the two terms, something for which we perhaps have no name and which is neither animal nor man settles in between nature and humanity and holds itself in the mastered relation, in the saved night. (82-83)

Agamben's second example is a late work by Titian known as *Nymph and Shepherd* (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1570-75) [Figure 4]. There are two figures in the foreground in a dark country landscape. The shep-

8. It is worth noting that Agamben's term 'bare life' ("life that may be killed but not sacrificed" [1998]) also has its origin in Walter Benjamin's work "Critique of Violence", where the term used by Benjamin—bloßes Leben (1996c: 33)—signifies 'bare life', 'naked life', 'uncovered life' or, as in the Edward Jephcott translation of the piece, "mere life". Rodney Livingstone in the same volume translates Benjamin's *Die gerettete Nacht* as "the redeemed night".

Figure 4: Titian, Nymph and Shepherd (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches m, 1570-75)

herd ('the shepherd of being') facing us has just taken the flute in his hands from his lips. The nymph, naked and viewed from behind, lies stretched next to him on a leopard skin, a traditional symbol of wantonness. She has turned her face towards us and with her left hand lightly caresses her other arm. In the distance is a tree that has been struck by lightning and is now half-bare and half-green. An animal (a goat, according to some commentators) rears up to nibble at the tree's leaves. What are we to make of the exhausted sensuality and subdued melancholy of this landscape? It points, Agamben conjectures, to the existence of a space beyond both the figure of the human and the animal, in which neither openness nor concealedness are constitutive of being. It is an image not limited by the contest between human and animal; an image that allows the animal to exist outside the sphere of being; an image that "let[s] the animal be *outside of being*" (91). Agamben writes:

> Sensual pleasure and love—as the half-bloomed tree bears witness—do not prefigure only death and sin. To be sure, in their fulfillment the lovers learn something of each other that they should not have known—they have lost their mystery—and yet have not become any less impenetrable. But in this mutual disenchantment from their secret, they enter, just as in Benjamin's aphorism, a new and more blessed life, one that is neither animal nor human. It is not nature that is reached in their fulfillment, but rather (as symbolized by the animal that rears up … ) a higher stage beyond both nature and knowledge, beyond concealment and disconcealment … In their fulfillment, the lovers who have lost their mystery contemplate a human nature rendered perfectly inoperative—the inactivity and *desoeuvrement* of the human and of the animal as the supreme and unsavable figure of life. (87)

Titian's lovers present an image of being in a state of suspension. The lesson that Agamben draws from Heidegger here is one of 'letting be'. He conjectures the existence of a space beyond both the figure of the human and the animal, and within this state being is not driven towards the revelation of being, there is only a 'lost mystery' and a suspension of the desire to look further behind the façade of just being (2004: 87). This same movement allows the human to reconfigure its relationship with the animal within itself. As Agamben observes, if humanity defines itself by its capacity to disconnect itself from its animal connection to its disinhibitors, then it should also possess the capacity to allow the animal to exist outside of the sphere of being, to "let the animal be" (Agamben, 2004: 91). Among the many things at stake here, I have tried to suggest, lies the break with instrumentality at the heart of technics: the instrumentality that holds technics is a means to an end. What Heidegger wants is a conception of technics that is extroverted in a relation of indebtedness to and responsibility toward another. Roy Sharp's herringbone cowshed may mechanize milking but it also opens up the animal as a place of spacing, the spacing of body with natural world, of human body to animal body, of animal with animal. It opens up the possibility of thinking the body as a place of clearing.

We understand such things about animals quite instinctively: we gain entry to their bodily space, whenever animals are treated like objects, when

cows are treated with hormones which grossly increase their productivity of milk but cause them great pain, when they are herded into stalls barely large enough to hold them, when they are mercilessly slaughtered (despite a lifetime of service as milk producers) for their hides. We understand this best, and quite instantly, when we cause animals pain. As deep ecologists have argued in the wake of Heidegger, for humanity to realize its genuine potential, and thus to be authentic, human beings must let animals be what they are instead of treating them merely as resources for human ends. This is the realm of posthuman biopolitics, where to allow the animal to exist outside of being is precisely to remove it from the inquiry of human sujectivity, and thus call an end to the continued determination of life that characterizes the conflict between human and animal.

## References

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life* (D. Heller-Roazen, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, G. (2003). *Stato di eccezione*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.

Agamben, G. (2004). *The open: Man and animal* (K. Attell, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Benjamin, W. (1996a). Letter to Florens Christian Rang (December 9, 1923; R. Livingstone, Trans.). In M. Bullock & M.W. Jennings (Eds.), *Selected writings: Vol. 1, 1913-1926*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 389.

Benjamin, W. (1996b). One-way street (E. Jephcott, Trans.). In M. Bullock & M.W. Jennings (Eds.), *Selected writings: Vol. 1, 1913-1926*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Benjamin, W. (1996c). Critique of violence (E. Jephcott, Trans.). In M. Bullock & M.W. Jennings (Eds.), *Selected writings: Vol. 1, 1913-1926*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Derrida, J. (1987). Geschlecht II, Heidegger's hand. In J. Sallis (Ed.), *Deconstruction and philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (1989). *Of spirit: Heidegger and the question* (G. Bennington & R. Bowlby, Trans.). Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Derrida, J. (1992). *Given time: I. Counterfeit money* (P. Kamuf, Trans.). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (1993). *Aporias: Dying—awaiting (one another at) the 'limits of truth'* (T. Dutoit, Trans.). Stanford. Stanford University Press.

Derrida, J. (1995). *The gift of death* (D. Wills, Trans.). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (2003). And say the animal responded (D. Wills, Trans.). In C. Wolfe (Ed.), *Zoontologies: The question of the animal*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1968). *What is called thinking?* (F.D. Wieck & J. Glenn Gray, Trans.). New York: Harper and Row.

Heidegger, M. (1987). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Heidegger, M. (1971a). *Poetry, language, thought* (A. Hofstader, Trans.). New York: Harper and Row.

Heidegger, M. (1971b). *On the way to language* (P.D. Hertz, Trans.). New York: Harper and Row.

Heidegger, M. (1977). *"The question concerning technology" and other essays* (W. Lovitt, Trans.). New York: Harper and Row.

Heiddeger, M. (1995). *The fundamental concepts of metaphysics: World, finitude, solitude* (W. McNeill & N. Walker, Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1998). Letter on Humanism. In W. McNeill (Ed.), *Pathmarks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2002). Why Poets? In J. Young & K. Haynes (Eds. and Trans.), *Off the beaten track*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 200-241.

Leroi-Gourhan, A. (1993). *Gesture and speech* (A. Bostock Berger, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Naess, A. with D. Rothenberg. (1989). *Ecology, community and lifestyle*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rockmore, T. (1992). *On Heidegger's Nazism and philosophy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stiegler, B. (1998). T*echnics and time, 1: The fault of Epimetheus* (R. Beardsworth & G. Collins, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Weber, S. (1996). Upsetting the setup: Remarks on Heidegger's "Questing after technics". In A. Cholodenko (Ed.), *Mass mediauras: Form, technics, media*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 55-75.

Zimmerman, M. (1993). Rethinking the Heidegger-deep ecology relationship. *Environmental Ethics*, 15: 195-224.