

Jacques Derrida

The Beast and the Sovereign. First session December 12, 2001

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FIRST SESSION
December 12, 2001¹



Feminine . . . masculine [*La . . . le*].

Let me recall the title proposed for this year's seminar: the beast [feminine: *la bête*] and the sovereign [masculine: *le souverain*]. *La, le*.

Naturally I shall try to justify this title as I go along, step by step, perhaps stealthily, like a wolf [*peut-être à pas de loup*]. Those of you who followed the last few years' seminars on the death penalty know that the huge and formidable question of sovereignty was central to them. So this inexhaustible question will provide for a certain continuity between the previous seminars and what still remains untrodden from this new approach, by the turn or at the turning of the seminar to come.

The question of the animal was also, here and elsewhere, one of our permanent concerns. But the beast is not exactly the animal, and it was only after the fact, after having chosen this title, the literal formulation of this title, the [feminine] beast and the [masculine] sovereign, that I understood

1. This session was published, almost in its entirety, in the proceedings of the 2002 Cerisy conference, *La démocratie à venir*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (Paris: Galilée, 2004), pp. 433–56. With some variants and additions, it was again given as a lecture at the 2003 Coimbra conference (*La souveraineté: Critique, déconstruction, apories: Autour de la pensée de Jacques Derrida*), and published, first separately in a bilingual edition, under the title *Le souverain Bien / O soberano Bem* (Portuguese translation by Fernanda Bernardo [Viseu: Palimage Editores, 2004]), and then in the proceedings of the conference *Jacques Derrida à Coimbra / Derrida em Coimbra* (ed. Fernanda Bernardo [Viseu, Palimage Editores, 2005], pp. 75–105), under the title “Le souverain Bien, ou Être en mal de souveraineté” [The Sovereign Good, or Being Wanting Sovereignty]. Finally, preceded by a quite long introduction, the Coimbra text was used again (with some further variants and additions) for the last lecture Jacques Derrida gave in France, in 2004 at Strasbourg, published by Joseph Cohen in the journal *Cités*, special issue, *Derrida politique — La déconstruction de la souveraineté (puissance et droit)*, no. 30 (2007): 103–40, under the title: “Le souverain bien—ou l’Europe en mal de souveraineté: La conférence de Strasbourg du 8 juin 2004.”

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one at least of the lines of force or one of the silent but insistent connotations in what seemed to me to impose the very letter, down to my unconscious, down to the title's unconscious, "La bête et le souverain," namely the sexual difference marked in the grammar of the definite articles, *la, le* (feminine, masculine), as if we were naming in it, ahead of time, a certain couple, a certain coupling, a plot involving alliance or hostility, war or peace, marriage or divorce—not only between two types of living beings (animal and human) but between two sexes which, already in the title, and in a certain language—French—*se font une scène*, are going at each other, are making a scene.

What scene?

"We're shortly going to show it" [*Nous l'allons montrer tout à l'heure*: literally, "We are going to show it in a moment"].² (Board)

Stealthy as a wolf. Imagine a seminar that began thus, *stealthy as a wolf*:

"We're shortly going to show it."

What? What are we going to show shortly? Well, "We're shortly going to show it."

Imagine a seminar that began thus, saying almost nothing, with a "We're shortly going to show it." "What? What are we going to show shortly?" Well, "We're shortly going to show it."

Why would one say of such a seminar that it moves *stealthy as a wolf*?

21 This is, however, what I'm saying. Stealthy as a wolf. I'm saying it with reference to the [French] proverbial expression *à pas de loup*, which in general signifies a sort of introduction, a discreet intrusion or even an unobtrusive effraction, without show, all but secret, clandestine, an entrance that does all it can to go unnoticed and especially not to be stopped, intercepted, or interrupted. To move *à pas de loup* is to walk without making a noise, to arrive without warning, to proceed discreetly, silently, invisibly, almost inaudibly and imperceptibly, as though to surprise a prey, to take it by surprising what is in sight but does not see coming the one that is already seeing it, already getting ready to take it by surprise, to grasp it by surprise. Speech (for we are dealing with silent speech here)—speech proceeding *à pas de loup* would not be proceeding *à pas de colombe*, dove-footed, according to what a great philosophical tradition says of the dove, of the all but unnoticeable procedure or proceeding of truth advancing in history like one thiev-

2. [Translator's note:] In La Fontaine's classical French, "tout à l'heure" means "forthwith," rather than, as in modern French, "later on."

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ing or else flying [*comme un voleur ou encore en volant*] (remember,³ while we're in the columbarium of philosophy, what Kant already said about it in the Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, about the light dove [*die leichte Taube*]⁴ which, in its flight, does not feel the resistance of the air and imagines it would be still better in empty space. And especially Zarathustra, in the book that is one of the richest bestiaries in the Western philosophical library. A political bestiary, what is more, rich in animal figures as figures of the political. A dove crosses a song at the very end of the second part of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, "Die stillste Stunde," "The Hour of Supreme Silence" ([The stillest hour] that's the title of the song). This hour of supreme silence speaks, speaks to me, addresses me, and it is mine, it is *my* hour, it spoke to me yesterday, he says, it murmurs in my ear, it is closest to me, as though in me, like the voice of the other in me, like my voice of the other, and its name, the name of this hour of silence, *my* hour of silence, is the name of a fearsome sovereign mistress [soveraine]: "*Gestern gen Abend sprach zu mir meine stillste Stunde: das ist der Name meiner furchtbaren Herrin*" [Last night my hour of supreme silence (my hour of the greatest silence, of sovereign silence) spoke to me: this is the name of my terrifying sovereign mistress: "*das ist der Name meiner furchtbaren Herrin.*"]⁵ (Commentary: the hour, my hour, the hour of my sovereign silence speaks to me, and its name, the name of this absolutely silent one, is that of my most fearsome mistress, the one who speaks to me in silence, who commands me in silence, whispering through the silence, who orders me in silence, as silence.) So what is she going to say to him, *to me*, during this song I'm leaving you to read? After saying to him (to me, says Zarathustra), "what is the most unpardonable thing about you [*dein Unverzeihliches*] is that you have the power [*Macht*] and you do not want to reign [*du willst nicht herrschen*]," you have the power and you do not want to be sovereign. Zarathustra's reply, again convoking sovereign power and beast: "For all command I lack the lion's voice." At that moment, his most silent voice tells him, as though in a whisper: "*Da sprach es wieder wie ein Flüstern zu mir*): *Die stillsten Worte sind es, welche den Sturm bringen. Gedanken, die mit Taubenfüßen kommen, lenken die Welt.*" ["It is the stillest

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3. The parenthesis opened here does not close in the typescript.

4. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A5/B8.

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, tome 6, vol. 1, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), p. 183. Derrida's own translation. [Translator's note: For the sake of consistency, I have translated these passages with an eye to Derrida's French version, as well as to the original German.]

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words that bring the storm. Thoughts that come with dove's footsteps guide the world.”]

Read what follows: a still small voice, one might say in a parody of the biblical book of Kings [1 Kings 19:12], the silent voice commands him to command,⁶ but to command in silence, to become sovereign, to learn how to command, to give orders (*befehlen*), and to learn to command in silence by learning that it is silence, the silent order that commands and leads the world. With dove's footsteps, on dove's feet.

23 Now, where were we just now? Not like a dove, we were saying, and above all not on dove's feet, but “stealthy like a wolf,” on wolf's feet. Which also means, although quite differently than in the case of dove's feet: silently, discreetly and unobtrusively. What the dove's footsteps and the wolf's footsteps have in common is that one scarcely hears them. But the one announces war, the war chief, the sovereign who orders war, the other silently orders peace. These are two major figures in the great zoopolitics that is preoccupying us here, which will not cease to occupy us and is already occupying us in advance. These two figures *preoccupy* our space. One cannot imagine animals more different, even antagonistic, than the dove and the wolf, the one rather allegorizing peace, from Noah's Ark, which ensures the future the safety of humanity and its animals, the other, the wolf, just as much as the falcon, allegorizing hunting and warfare, prey and predation.

A great number of idiomatic and quasi-proverbial expressions feature the wolf (“howl among wolves,” “cry wolf,” “have a wolf in one's stomach,” “cold enough for a wolf,” “between dog and wolf,” “a young wolf,” “the big bad wolf,” etc.).⁷ These expressions are idiomatic [in French]. They are not all translatable from one language or culture to another, or even from one territory or geography to another — there are not wolves everywhere, and one does not have the same experience of the wolf in Alaska or in the Alps, in the Middle Ages or today. These idiomatic expressions and these figures of the wolf, these fables or fantasies vary from one place and one historical moment to another; the figures of the wolf thus encounter, and pose for us, thorny frontier questions. Without asking permission, real wolves cross humankind's national and institutional frontiers, and his sovereign nation-states; wolves out in nature [*dans la nature*] as we say, real wolves,

6. The typescript has “lui commande de commander de commander” [commands him to command to command], apparently a typing error.

7. [Translator's note:] These are the idioms in French: “hurler avec les loups,” “crier au loup,” “une faim de loup,” “un froid de loup,” “entre chien et loup” [the twilight hour], “un jeune loup” [“a young Turk”], “le grand méchant loup.”

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are the same on this side or the other side of the Pyrenees or the Alps;⁸ but the figures of the wolf belong to cultures, nations, languages, myths, fables, fantasies, histories.

If I chose the expression that names the wolf's "step" in the *pas de loup*, it was no doubt because the wolf itself is there named *in absentia*, as it were; the wolf is named where you don't yet see or hear it coming; it is still absent, save for its name. It is looming, an object of apprehension; it is named, referred to, even called by its name; one imagines it or projects toward it an image, a trope, a figure, a myth, a fable, a fantasy, but always by reference to someone who, advancing *à pas de loup*, is not there, not yet there, someone who is not yet present or represented; you can't even see its tail; as another proverb says: "When you speak of the wolf, you see its tail," meaning that someone, a human this time, shows up just when you are talking about him or her. Here you don't yet see or hear anything of what is advancing *à pas de loup*, when at the beginning of a seminar I might say: "We're shortly going to show it." 24

For one of the reasons—they are many, too many, I won't get through enumerating them, and I will in fact be devoting the whole seminar to them—one of the many reasons why I chose, in this bunch of proverbs, the one which forms the syntagm *pas de loup*, is precisely that the absence of the wolf is also expressed in it in the silent operation of the *pas*, the word *pas* which implies, but without any noise, the savage intrusion of the adverb of negation (*pas*, *pas de loup*, *il n'y a pas de loup* [there is no wolf], *il n'y a pas le loup* ["the wolf is not here," perhaps even "there is no such thing as the wolf"])—the clandestine intrusion, then, of the adverb of negation (*pas*) in the noun, in *le pas de loup*. An adverb haunts a noun. The adverb *pas* has slipped in silently, stealthy as a wolf, *à pas de loup*, into the noun *pas* [step].

Which is to say that where things are looming *à pas de loup*, the wolf is not there yet, no real wolf, no so-called natural wolf, no literal wolf. There is no wolf yet when things are looming *à pas de loup*. There is only a word, a spoken word, a fable, a fable-wolf, a fabulous animal, or even a fantasy (*fantasma* in the sense of a revenant, in Greek; or fantasy in the enigmatic sense of psychoanalysis, in the sense, for example, that a totem corresponds to a fantasy); there is only another "wolf" that figures something else—something or somebody else, the other that the fabulous figure of the wolf, like

8. [Translator's note:] French readers would perceive the allusion to Pascal's remark about truths on one side of the Pyrenees being errors on the other. See *Pensées*, 60 (in Blaise Pascal, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. L. Lafuma [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963]); (Brunschvicg ed., p. 294; see n. 12 below).

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a metonymic substitute or supplement, would come both to announce and conceal, to manifest and mask.

25 And do not forget that in French we also call *loup* the black velvet mask that used to be worn, that women especially, “ladies” more often than men, used to wear at one time, in certain milieux, and especially at masked balls. The so-called *loup* allowed them to see sovereignly without being seen, to identify without allowing themselves to be identified. This woman in the *loup* would be the feminine figure of what I once called a “visor effect,” the upper part of the armor played on by the father or spectral king in *Hamlet*, who sees without being seen when he puts down his visor.⁹ This time, in the case of the *loup*, the mask nicknamed *loup*, the visor effect would play especially, or at least most often, on the feminine side.

Why this *loup*, why *loup*-woman rather than the *loup*-man, in this masked unobtrusiveness, whereas in the proverb “When you speak of the wolf, you see its tail,” we seem to be taken more toward the masculine side of sexual difference?

In both cases, in any case, of sexual difference, *pas de loup* signifies the absence, the literal non-presentation of the wolf itself in response to its name, and so an evocation that is only figural, tropic, fabulous, phantasmic, connotative: there is no wolf, there is *pas de loup*. And the absence of this wolf, ungraspable in person other than according to the words of a fable—this absence bespeaks at the same time power, resource, force, cunning, ruse of war, stratagem or strategy, operation of mastery. The wolf is all the stronger, the meaning of its power is all the more terrorizing, armed, threatening, virtually predatory for the fact that in these appellations, these turns of phrase, these sayings, the wolf does not yet appear in person but only in the theatrical *persona* of a mask, a simulacrum or a piece of language, i.e. a fable or a fantasy. The strength of the wolf is all the stronger, sovereign even, is all the more all-conquering [*a raison de tout*] for the fact that the wolf is not there, that there is not the wolf itself, were it not for a *pas de loup*, except for a *pas de loup*, save a *pas de loup*, only a *pas de loup*.

26 I would say that this force of the *insensible* wolf (*insensible* because one neither sees nor hears it coming, because it is invisible and inaudible, and therefore nonsensible, but also insensible because it is all the crueller for this, impassive, indifferent to the suffering of its virtual victims)—that the force of this insensible beast seems then to overcome [*avoir raison de*] everything because through that other untranslatable idiomatic expression (*avoir raison*

9. See Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), especially pp. 26–27; trans. Peggy Kamuf as *Spectres of Marx* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 5–6.

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de, to overcome, to win out over, to be the strongest), the question of reason comes up, the question of zoological reason, political reason, rationality in general: What is reason? What is a reason? A good or a bad reason? And you can see that already when I move from the question “What is reason?” to the question “What is a reason?” a good or a bad reason, the sense of the word “reason” has changed. And it changes again when I move from “to be right” [*avoir raison*] (and so to have a good reason to bring forward in a debate or a combat, a good reason against a bad reason, a just reason against an unjust reason), the word “reason” changes again, then, when I move from *avoir raison* in a reasonable or rational discussion, to *avoir raison de* [to overcome] in a power relation [*rapport de force*], a war of conquest, hunting, or even a fight to the death.

“We’re shortly going to show it,” I was saying.

Imagine a seminar, I was also saying, that began thus, *à pas de loup*:

“‘We’re shortly going to show it.’ What? Well, ‘We’re shortly going to show it.’”

Now, it’s high time, you had already recognized the quotation.

It is the second line of a fable by La Fontaine that puts on stage one of those wolves we’ll be talking about a lot: here, then, the wolf from the fable *The Wolf and the Lamb*. Here are its first two lines; the fable begins with the moral, this time, before the story, before the narrative moment which is thus, somewhat unusually, deferred.

The reason of the strongest is always the best;
As we shall shortly show.¹⁰

Let me point you at once to a fine chapter that my colleague and friend Louis Marin devoted to this fable by La Fontaine, in his book entitled *La*

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10. Jean de La Fontaine, “Le loup et l’agneau” [“The Wolf and the Lamb”], Livre premier, fable X, in *Fables*, ed. Marc Fumaroli (Paris: Le livre de poche, 1985), p. 51. [Translator’s note: This famous fable, known to every French schoolchild, has of course been variously translated into English, giving, for example, “Might is right: the verdict goes to the strong. / To prove the point won’t take me very long” (Michie); “The strongest argue best and always win. / Read on: you’ll find the proof thereof herein” (Schapiro). In their translation of Derrida’s *Voyous* (Paris: Galilée, 2003) [*Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005)], in which these two lines appear as an epigraph, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas use the translation by Norman B. Spector: “The strong are always best at proving they’re right. / Witness the case we’re now going to cite.” Given Derrida’s attention to the letter of the opening lines, I have preferred to offer a more literal and prosaic rendition here.]

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parole mangée, et autres essais théologico-politiques.¹¹ This chapter of Marin's book is, moreover, entitled "La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure" [The reason of the strongest is always the best] and it is preceded by a brief chapter entitled "L'animal-fable" [the fable-animal]. Although the path we're going down is not exactly the same, we'll often be crossing this analysis of Marin's, which I therefore strongly recommend that you read. One of the many interesting things about Marin's approach is that it proposes a historical articulation between several exactly contemporary texts: this fable of La Fontaine's, then the Port-Royal *General Grammar* and *Art of Thinking*, and finally a famous *Pensée* of Pascal's on the relation between justice and force, a *Pensée* to which Marin often returned, and the logic of which is very important to us here. I'm referring to what Pascal places under the title "Reason of effects," and I'll read the whole fragment, even though we'll have to come back to it in more detail later, because interpreting it requires whole treasure-houses of attention and vigilance (298 in Brunschvicg's classification, 103 in Lafuma's):

Justice, force. It is just that what is just be followed; it is necessary that what is strongest be followed. Justice without force is impotent; force without justice is tyrannical. Justice without force is contradicted, because there are always bad people; force without justice stands accused. So justice and force must be put together; and to do so make what is just, strong and what is strong, just.

Justice is subject to dispute; force is easy to recognize and indisputable. And so one could not give force to justice, because force contradicted justice and said that it was unjust, and said that it was force that was just. And thus not being able to make what is just, strong; one made what is strong, just.¹²

28 Apart from Marin's, I refer you, among the texts that are one way or another devoted to this fragment, to my little book *Force de loi*¹³ and the remarkable chapter that Geoffrey Bennington devotes to Paul de Man in *Legislations: The Politics of Deconstruction*.¹⁴

11. Louis Marin, *La parole mangée, et autres essais théologico-politiques* (Paris: Méridiens/Klincksieck, 1986).

12. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées et opuscules*, ed. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris: Hachette, 1946), no. 298, p. 470.

13. Jacques Derrida, *Force de loi* (Paris: Galilée, 1994); trans. Mary Quaintance, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. G. Anidjar (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 230–98.

14. Geoffrey Bennington, "Aberrations: de Man (and) the Machine," in *Legislations: The Politics of Deconstruction* (London: Verso Books, 1994), pp. 137–51.

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Many wolves will, then, be crossing the stage of this seminar. We are going to show in a moment that one cannot be interested in the relations of beast and sovereign, and all the questions of the animal and the political, of the politics of the animal, of man and beast in the context of the state, the *polis*, the city, the republic, the social body, the law in general, war and peace, terror and terrorism, national or international terrorism, etc., without recognizing some privilege to the figure of the “wolf”; and not only in the direction of a certain Hobbes and that fantastic, phantasmic, insistent, recurrent altercation between man and wolf, between the two of them, the wolf *for* man, man *for* the wolf, man *as* wolf *for* man, man as humankind, this time, beyond sexual difference, man and woman (*homo homini lupus*, this dative making clear that it is also a way for man, within his human space, to give himself, to represent or recount to himself this wolf story, to hunt the wolf by making it come, tracking it (in French this wolf hunt is called *louveterie*) [it is just as much a way for man, within his human space, to give himself, to represent or recount to himself this wolf story, to hunt the wolf] in a fantasy, a narrative, a mytheme, a fable, a trope, a rhetorical turn, where man tells himself the story of politics, the story of the origin of society, the story of the social contract, etc.: *for* man, man is a wolf).

When I say wolf, you mustn't forget the she-wolf. What counts here is no longer the sexual difference between the wolf as real animal and the mask [*loup*] worn by the woman. Here we are not dealing with this double wolf, this “twin” word, masculine in both cases, the natural wolf, the real wolf and its mask *le loup*, its simulacrum, but indeed with the she-wolf, often a symbol of sexuality or even of sexual debauchery or fecundity, of the she-wolf mother of other twins, for example the she-wolf that, at the foundation of Rome, suckled turn by turn, each in turn or both at once, the twins Remus and Romulus. And while we're on twins¹⁵ and myths of originary foundation, it is frequent among North American Indians—for we have also been in America for a moment—for two twins to fight over their mother's breast; and among the Ojibwa, in certain variants of the story, the hero Manabozho (who most of the time gets on well with his brother) either remains inconsolable at his death or else kills him himself; and his brother, dead or killed by him, is a Wolf: the Wolf. His brother is the wolf, his next of kin is the wolf. For this man, the twin brother is a wolf: a friendly wolf, a friendly brother whose death leaves him inconsolable, beyond all possible

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15. [Translator's note:] In all three occurrences in this sentence, Derrida supplies the English word “twins” as well as the French word “jumeaux.”

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work of mourning; or else an enemy wolf, an enemy brother, a twin he will have killed, and whom he will not have mourned here either. Those close to me, brothers, friendly or enemy brothers are wolves who are my kind and my brothers.

And then, given that the pack of mythical wolves is without number, remember Wotan among the German gods (Wotan or Odin in the North). Wotan is a warrior god, a god of warlike fury (cf. *wüten* in modern German: to be in a fury, to ravage through warfare), and Wotan decides as Sovereign King, as war chief. Sovereignty is his very essence. When he sits on the throne, he is flanked by two wolves, who are like the insignia of his majesty, living coats of arms, the living heraldry of his sovereignty, two wolves to whom he gives everything anyone hands him to eat, for he himself does not eat, he only drinks, especially mead. What is more, Odin Wotan also had the gift of being able to change himself at will into a wild animal, into a bird, fish, or serpent.

30 We will keep trying to think through this becoming-beast, this becoming-animal of a sovereign who is above all a war chief, and is determined as sovereign or as animal faced with the enemy. He is instituted as sovereign by the possibility of the enemy, by that hostility in which Schmitt claimed to recognize, along with the possibility of the political, the very possibility of the sovereign, of sovereign decision and exception. In the legend of Thor, son of Odin (or Wotan) and of Iord, the Earth, we can also find a terrible wolf story. The giant wolf Fenrir plays an important part on the day of the twilight of the gods. Just to say a word about a long and complicated story (that I am leaving you to piece together for yourselves), I recall that the gods, threatened by this sinister and voracious, yes voracious, wolf, lay for him a highly ingenious trap that the wolf discovers, and to which he agrees to subject himself on one condition; once the condition is met, he ends up closing his jaws around the wrist of the god Tyr, who was to place him in the trap, according to the contract. After which the god Tyr, who had accepted a mutilated hand in order to respect the contract and redeem the disloyal trial proposed to the wolf, becomes the jurist god, the god of justice and oaths, fixing the code and the rules of what was called the *Thing* (*Ding*, read Heidegger), the Thing, the Cause, that is, the place of assemblies, debates, common deliberations, conflicts and litigations and decisions of justice. The god of the Thing, of the Cause, of justice, of oaths had his hand devoured, cut off at the wrist by the wolf, in the wolf's mouth.

And then, but the list would be too long, think of Akela, the sovereign

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chief of the wolves and the father of the wolf cubs who protect and raise Mowgli.

Now, about this she-wolf or all these wolf-men, about the foundation of the town or the city, the origin of the political, the originary social contract and sovereignty, let me quickly recall a well-known fact. That is, that Rousseau will oppose a certain fantastics or phantasmaties of the wolf-man or Plautus's *homo homini lupus* in his comedy *Asinaria*: "Lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom qualis sit non novit" ("When one does not know him, man is not a man but a wolf for man"),¹⁶ a phrase the proverbial nucleus of which was taken up, reinterpreted, reinvested, and mediated by so many others: Rabelais, Montaigne, Bacon, especially Hobbes. And it is, as you know, against the *homo homini lupus* of Hobbes or equally against Grotius that Rousseau thinks and writes the *Social Contract*. As for the man—wolf for man in Plautus and especially Montaigne and Hobbes—we will come back to him only at the end of next week's session, after a certain detour the necessity of which must be put to the test in the meantime.

Back to Rousseau. As early as chapter 2 of the *Social Contract* ("On the First Societies"), on the threshold, then, of the immediately following chapter, which seems to be responding to La Fontaine in that it is entitled "Of the Right of the Stronger"—as early as chapter 2, then, Rousseau opposes Grotius and Hobbes as theorists of the political, of the foundation of the political, who reduce citizen to beast, and the originary community of men to an animal community. An animal community the chief of which would be, all in all, a kind of wolf, like the wolf-tyrant, the tyrant turned wolf in Plato's *Republic* (book 8, to which we shall return later, along with everything I would call the *lycology* of Platonic politics, politics as discourse about the wolf, *lukos*) in any case, to come back to Rousseau, a sovereign who would be simply stronger and thereby capable of devouring those he commands, namely *cattle*. Rousseau had, however, written somewhere, I don't remember where, "I was living like a real werewolf" (we shall return at length to the werewolf, which is something else). Here in the *Social Contract* (chapter 2), Rousseau is, then, opposing a certain animalization of the origins of the political in Grotius and Hobbes, when he writes:

It is doubtful, then, according to Grotius, whether the human race belongs to a hundred or so men, or if that hundred or so men belong to the human race: and throughout his book he seems to lean toward the former opinion: this is also Hobbes's feeling. So, here we have the human race

16. Plautus, *Asinaria*, line 495.

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divided into herds of cattle, each one with its chief who keeps it in order to devour it.¹⁷ [reread]

- 32 [Notice the “in order to devour it”: don’t forget this word “devour”: he, the chief, does not keep the beast *by devouring* it, while devouring the beast (and we are already in the space of *Totem and Taboo* and the scenes of devouring cruelty that are unleashed in it, put down, repressed in it and therefore displaced in it into symptoms; and the devouring wolf is not far away, the big bad wolf, the wolf’s mouth, the big teeth of Little Red Riding Hood’s Grandmother-Wolf (“Grandmother, what big teeth you have”), as well as the devouring wolf in the Rig Veda, etc., or Kronos appearing with the face of Anubis devouring time itself) — notice, then, the “in order to devour it” in Rousseau’s text (“So, here we have the human race divided into herds of cattle, each one with its chief who keeps it in order to devour it”): he, the chief, does not keep the beast *by devouring* it, he does not first keep the cattle and then, subsequently, devour said cattle, no, he keeps the cattle *with a view to devouring it*, he only keeps the cattle *in order to* devour it, *so as to* devour it savagely and gluttonously, tearing at it with his teeth, violently, he keeps it for himself the way one keeps for oneself (in what is a larder) but with a view to keeping even more completely for oneself by devouring, i.e. by putting to death and destroying, as one annihilates what one wants to keep for oneself—and Rousseau does say “cattle,” i.e. an animality not domesticated (which would be something else again), but already defined and dominated by man *in view of* man, an animality that is already destined, in its reproduction organized by man, to become either an enslaved instrument of work or else animal nourishment (horse, ox, lamb, sheep, etc.: animals, let us note, that can become the victims or the prey of the wolf).

Rousseau continues, and we are still in the order of *analogy* (“analogy” is Rousseau’s word, as you’ll see), we are in the order of the figure, of the “like” of metaphor or comparison, or even fable:]

- 33 As a shepherd is of a nature superior to that of his herd, the shepherds of men, who are their chiefs, are also of a nature superior to that of their peoples. This is, according to Philon, how Caligula reasoned, correctly concluding from this *analogy* [my emphasis] that kings were gods, or that peoples were beasts.

The reasoning of this Caligula . . .¹⁸

17. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1954), p. 237. [Translator’s note: My translation.]

18. *Du contrat social*, p. 237. Derrida’s emphasis.

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[And this is indeed the reasoning of a sovereign, the reason given by a sovereign, let us not forget that: Rousseau is certainly marking the fact that this discourse, this “reasoning,” was signed, and signed not by a philosopher or a political scientist but by a chief, an emperor, and therefore by a sovereign himself situated by analogy and in the “animal” analogy that he thus accredits, an analogy from which man has in the end disappeared, between god and beast: “kings were gods, peoples were beasts.” The sovereign says, the emperor Caligula proclaims, he edicts, speaking thus of sovereignty from sovereignty, from the place of the sovereign, he says: there are gods and there are beasts, there is, there is only, the zoological, and in the theo-anthropo-zoological, man is caught, evanescent, disappearing, at the very most a simple mediation, a hyphen between the sovereign and the beast, between God and cattle. Taking up the thread of the quotation again:]

The reasoning of this Caligula comes down to the same thing as in Hobbes and Grotius. Aristotle, before any of them, had also said that men are not naturally equal, but that some were born for slavery and others for domination.

Aristotle was right [*avait raison*: reason again! This time in the syntagm “avoir raison” the point is not to *avoir raison de* but just to *avoir raison*, to be just or right]; but he took the effect for the cause. Any man born into slavery is born for slavery, nothing is more certain. Slaves lose everything in their irons, even the desire to be free of them; they love their enslavement as Odysseus’s companions loved their brutishness. So if there are slaves by nature, this is because there have been slaves against nature. Force made the first slaves.¹⁹

Rousseau’s thesis is thus both that “the reason of the strongest” is *in fact* the best, that it has prevailed and prevails in fact (the stronger has reason of the weaker, the wolf of the lamb), but that if *in fact* the reason of the stronger wins out, *by right* the reason of the strongest is not the best, ought not to be, ought not to have been the best, ought not to have been right, and everything will turn around the semantic pivot of the word “reason” in the fable: when the fable says “the reason of the strongest is always the best,” is it reason itself, the good reason, the most just reason, true reason, or the reason given, alleged by the stronger (Caligula or the sovereign or the wolf in the fable) which is the best? And “best” can still mean two radically hetero-

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19. *Ibid.*, p. 237. This last sentence of Rousseau ends thus: “Force made the first slaves, their cowardice perpetuated their slavery.”

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geneous things: either the reason that prevails in fact or else, on the contrary, the reason that ought to prevail by right and according to justice.

If I'm already quoting Rousseau at some length and insistently, while asking you to read what precedes and follows in the *Social Contract*, this is, precisely, for several reasons.

1. The first is that we have just seen, in the warp of a few sentences, a crossing of most of the lines of force of our future problematic, beginning with this insistent "analogy," this multiple and overdetermined analogy that, as we shall see, through so many figures, now brings man close to the animal, inscribing them both in a relation of proportion, and now brings man and animal close in order to oppose them: heterogeneity, disproportion between the authentic *homo politicus* and the apparently political animal, the sovereign and the strongest animal, etc. Of course, the word "analogy" designates for us the place of a question rather than that of an answer. However one understands the word, an analogy is always a reason, a *logos*, a reasoning, or even a calculus that moves back up toward a relation of production, or resemblance, or comparability in which identity and difference coexist.

35

Here, whenever we speak of the beast and the sovereign, we shall have in view an analogy between two current representations (current and therefore problematical, suspect, to be interrogated) between this type of animality or living being that is called the "beast" or that is represented as bestiality, on the one hand, and on the other a sovereignty that is most often represented as human or divine, in truth anthropo-theological. But cultivating this analogy, clearing or plowing its territory, does not mean either accrediting it or simply traveling in it in only one direction, for example by reducing sovereignty (political or social or individual—and these are already different and terribly problematical dimensions), as it is most often situated in the human order, [reducing it, then] to prefigurations said to be zoological, biological, animal or bestial (four concepts—the zoological, the biological, the animal, the bestial—that we shall also, prudently, have to tell apart).

We should never be content to say, in spite of temptations, something like: the social, the political, and in them the value or exercise of sovereignty are merely disguised manifestations of animal force, or conflicts of pure force, the truth of which is given to us by zoology, that is to say at bottom bestiality or barbarity or inhuman cruelty. It would and will be possible to quote a thousand and one statements that rely on this schema, a whole archive or a worldwide library. We could also invert the sense of the analogy and recognize, on the contrary, not that political man is still animal but that the animal is already political, and exhibit, as is easy to do, in many ex-

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amples of what are called animal societies, the appearance of refined, complicated organizations, with hierarchical structures, attributes of authority and power, phenomena of symbolic credit, so many things that are so often attributed to and so naïvely reserved for so-called human *culture*, in opposition to *nature*. For example — to cite only this sign, which has interested me for a long time and touches on what so many philosophers and anthropologists hold to be proper to man and human law — the interdiction of incest. Among all that modern primatology has taught us, and among all the features that — forgive me for recalling this — I have been emphasizing wherever (i.e. just about everywhere) I have been interested in the great question of the animal and what is proper to man, as everything I nicknamed *carno-phallogocentrism* (among the most recent and the most recapitulatory texts I permit myself, for simple reasons of economy in order to gain time in this seminar, to refer to: *Of Spirit*, “Eating Well” in *Points . . .*, “The animal that therefore I am,” in *L’animal autobiographique*, and *For What Tomorrow . . .*, read, and follow up the references given in all the texts in *L’animal autobiographique*),²⁰ for some time now I have been emphasizing the fragility and porosity of this limit between nature and culture, and the fact that there is also avoidance of incest in some societies of so-called great apes — the limit between avoidance and interdiction will always be difficult to recognize — just as there is also, in human societies, some inevitability about incest, if one looks closely, in the very place where incest appears forbidden. The only rule that for the moment I believe we should give ourselves in this seminar is no more to rely on commonly accredited oppositional limits between what is called nature and culture, nature/law, *physis/nomos*, God, man, and animal or concerning what is “proper to man” [no more to rely on commonly accredited oppositional limits] than to muddle everything and

36

20. *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question* (Paris: Galilée, 1987); trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby as *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); “Il faut bien manger, ou le calcul du sujet,” in *Points de suspension* (Paris: Galilée, 1992), pp. 269–301; trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell as “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject,” in *Points . . . : Interviews 1974–1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 255–87; “L’animal que donc je suis (à suivre),” in M-L Mallet, ed., *L’animal autobiographique: Autour de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1999), pp. 251–301. Subsequently published in Jacques Derrida, *L’animal que donc je suis*, ed. M-L. Mallet (Paris: Galilée, 2006), pp. 15–77; trans. David Wills as *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 1–51; Jacques Derrida and Elizabeth Roudinesco, “Violences contre les animaux,” in *De quoi demain: Dialogue* (Paris: Fayard/Galilée, 2001), pp. 105–27; trans. Jeff Fort as *For What Tomorrow . . .* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 62–76.

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37 rush, by analogism, toward resemblances and identities. Every time one puts an oppositional limit in question, far from concluding that there is identity, we must on the contrary multiply attention to differences, refine the analysis in a restructured field. To take only this example, very close to our seminar, it will not be enough to take into account this hardly contestable fact that there are *animal societies*, animal organizations that are refined and complicated in the organization of family relations and social relations in general, in the distribution of work and wealth, in architecture, in the inheritance of things acquired, of goods or non-innate abilities, in the conduct of war and peace, in the hierarchy of powers, in the institution of an absolute chief (by consensus or force, if one can distinguish them), of an absolute chief who has the right of life and death over the others, with the possibility of revolts, reconciliations, pardons granted, etc. — it will not suffice to take into account these scarcely contestable facts to conclude from them that there is *politics* and especially *sovereignty* in communities of non-human living beings. “Social animal” does not necessarily mean political animal; every *law* is not necessarily ethical, juridical, or political. So it is the concept of *law*, and with it that of contract, authority, credit, and therefore many, many others that will be at the heart of our reflections. Is the law that reigns (in a way that is moreover differentiated and heterogeneous) in all the so-called animal societies a law of the same nature as what we understand by law in human right and human politics? And is the complex, although relatively short, history of the concept of sovereignty in the West (a concept that is itself an institution that we shall try to study as well as we can) the history of a law, or is it not, the structure of which is or is not, also to be found in the laws that organize the hierarchized relations of authority, hegemony, force, power, power of life and death in so-called animal societies? The question is all the more obscure and necessary for the fact that the minimal feature that must be recognized in the position of sovereignty, at this scarcely even preliminary stage, is, as we insisted these last few years with respect to Schmitt,²¹ a certain power to *give*, to *make*, but also to *suspend* the law; it is the exceptional right to place oneself above right, the right to non-right,²² if I can say this, which both runs the risk of carrying the human sovereign above the human, toward divine omnipotence (which will more-

38 over most often have grounded the principle of sovereignty in its sacred and

21. See among others the unpublished seminar “Politics of Friendship” (1988–89), and *Politics of Friendship*.

22. [Translator’s note:] “Droit” in French can correspond to both “law” (in the general sense: “le droit civil” is civil law), and “right.”

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theological origin) and, because of this arbitrary suspension or rupture of right, runs the risk of making the sovereign look like the most brutal beast who respects nothing, scorns the law, immediately situates himself above the law, at a distance from the law. For the current representation, to which we are referring for a start, sovereign and beast seem to have in common their being-outside-the-law. It is as though both of them were situated by definition at a distance from or above the laws, in nonrespect for the absolute law, the absolute law that they make or that they are but that they do not have to respect. Being-outside-the-law can, no doubt, on the one hand (and this is the figure of sovereignty), take the form of being-above-the-laws, and therefore take the form of the Law itself, of the origin of laws, the guarantor of laws, as though the Law, with a capital L, the condition of the law, were before, above, and therefore outside the law, external or even heterogeneous to the law; but being-outside-the-law can also, on the other hand (and this is the figure of what is most often understood by animality or bestiality), [being-outside-the-law can also] situate the place where the law does not appear, or is not respected, or gets violated. These modes of being-outside-the-law (be it the mode of what is called the beast, be it that of the criminal, even of that grand criminal we were talking about last year and of whom Benjamin said that he fascinates the crowd, even when he is condemned and executed, because, along with the law, he defies the sovereignty of the state as monopoly of violence; be it the being-outside-the-law of the sovereign himself) — these different modes of being-outside-the-law can seem to be heterogeneous among themselves, or even apparently heterogeneous to the law, but the fact remains, sharing this common being-outside-the-law, beast, criminal, and sovereign have a troubling resemblance: they call on each other and recall each other, from one to the other; there is between sovereign, criminal, and beast a sort of obscure and fascinating complicity, or even a worrying mutual attraction, a worrying familiarity, an *unheimlich*, uncanny²³ reciprocal haunting. Both of them, all three of them, the animal, the criminal, and the sovereign, are outside the law, at a distance from or above the laws: criminal, beast, and sovereign strangely resemble each other while seeming to be situated at the antipodes, at each other's antipodes. It happens, moreover — brief reappearance of the wolf — that the nickname “wolf” is given to a head of state as Father of the Nation. Mustapha Kemal who had given himself the name Atatürk (Father of the Turks) was called the “gray wolf” by his partisans, in memory of the mythical ancestor Genghis Khan, the “blue wolf.”

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23. [Translator's note:] “Uncanny” is in English in the text.

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I believe that this troubling resemblance, this worrying superposition of these two beings-outside-the-law or “without laws” or “above the laws” that beast and sovereign both are when viewed from a certain angle—I believe that this resemblance explains and engenders a sort of hypnotic fascination or irresistible hallucination, which makes us see, project, perceive, as in a X-ray, the face of the beast under the features of the sovereign; or conversely, if you prefer, it is as though, through the maw of the untamable beast, a figure of the sovereign were to appear. As in those games where one figure has to be identified through another. In the vertigo of this *unheimlich*, uncanny²⁴ hallucination, one would be as though prey to a haunting, or rather the spectacle of a spectrality: haunting of the sovereign by the beast and the beast by the sovereign, the one inhabiting or housing the other, the one becoming the intimate host of the other, the animal becoming the *hôte* (host and guest),²⁵ the hostage too, of a sovereign of whom we also know that he can be very stupid [*très bête*] without that at all affecting the all-powerfulness ensured by his function or, if you like, by one of the “king’s two bodies.”²⁶ In the metamorphic covering-over of the two figures, the beast and the sovereign, one therefore has a presentiment that a profound and essential ontological copula is at work on this couple: it is like a coupling, an ontological, onto-zoo-anthropo-theologico-political copulation: the beast becomes the sovereign who becomes the beast; there is the beast *and* [*et*] the sovereign (conjunction), but also the beast *is* [*est*] the sovereign, the sovereign *is* [*est*] the beast.²⁷

40

Whence—and this will be one of the major foci of our reflection, its most current political focus—whence the accusation so often made today in the rhetoric of politicians against sovereign states that do not respect international law or right, and which are called “rogue states” [*États voyous*], i.e. delinquent states, criminal states, states that behave like brigands, like highway robbers or like vulgar rascallions who just do as they feel, do not respect international right, stay in the margins of international civility, violate property, frontiers, rules and good international manners, including the laws of war (terrorism being one of the classic forms of this delinquency, according to the rhetoric of heads of sovereign states who for their part

24. [Translator’s note:] “Uncanny” is in English in the text.

25. [Translator’s note:] “Host” and “guest” are in English in the text, to specify the ambiguity of the French word “*hôte*.”

26. See Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

27. [Translator’s note:] Derrida spells out the copula *est* (e-s-t), which is a homophone of the conjunction *et*.

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claim to respect international right). Now *État voyou* is a translation of the English *rogue*, rogue state (in German, *Schurke* which can also mean “rascal,” bounder, cheat, crook, rabble, blackguard, criminal, is the word also used to translate *rogue*). “Rogue state” in English seems to be the first name (*voyou* and *Schurke* are merely translations, I think), for the accusation was first formulated in English, by the United States. Now we shall see, when we go in this direction and study the uses, the pragmatics, and the semantics of the word *rogue*, very frequent in Shakespeare, what it also tells us about animality or bestiality. The “rogue,” be it to do with elephant, tiger, lion, or hippopotamus (and more generally carnivorous animals), [the “rogue”] is the individual who does not even respect the law of the animal community, of the pack, the horde, of its kind. By its savage or indocile behavior, it stays or goes away from the society to which it belongs. As you know, the states that are accused of being and behaving as rogue states often turn the accusation back against the prosecutor and claim in their turn that the true rogue states are the sovereign, powerful, and hegemonic nation-states that begin by not respecting the law or international right to which they claim to be referring, and have long practiced state terrorism, which is merely another form of international terrorism. The first accused-accuser in this debate is the United States of America. The United States is accused of practicing a state terrorism and regularly violating the decisions of the UN or the agencies of international right that they are so quick to accuse the others, the so-called rogue states, of violating. We shall return at length to this problematic zone. There is even a book by Noam Chomsky entitled *Rogue States: The Rule of Force in World Affairs*,²⁸ a book the principal aim of which, supported by a great number of facts and evidence from the geopolitical history of the last decades, is to support an accusation made against the United States. The United States, which is so ready to accuse other states of being rogue states, is in fact allegedly the most rogue of all, the one that most often violates international right, even as it enjoins other states (often by force, when it suits it) to respect the international right that it does not itself respect whenever it suits it not to. Its use of the expression “rogue state” would be the most hypocritical rhetorical stratagem, the most pernicious or perverse or cynical armed trick of its permanent resort to the greater force, the most inhuman brutality. To take, provisionally, only one example from the overwhelming case made by Chomsky in *Rogue States*, and selecting within it the bestiality lexicon that is important to us here, I shall invoke

28. Noam Chomsky, *Rogue States: The Rule of Force in World Affairs* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000).

42 only from the beginning of the book the example of the long and complex history of the relations between the USA and Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Certainly, Chomsky has no indulgence for Saddam Hussein or for Iraq, which he describes, relying on a number of well-known facts, as a "leading criminal state" (p. 24, read all the pages around this). But if Saddam's Iraq indeed comes in at the top of the list of criminal states, if, as US diplomacy has been reminding us regularly for ten years, Saddam is guilty of using weapons of mass destruction against his neighbors and his own people, Chomsky has no difficulty recalling that for a very long time Saddam was well treated by the USA, as an ally and a client. This treatment only came to an end, leading to a terrible biological war whose Iraqi victims are counted by the thousands (malnutrition, illness, five thousand children dying every month according to UNICEF quoted by Chomsky, etc.)—this treatment of Saddam as respected ally and client only came to an end, then, when Saddam stopped following the political and military-economic strategy of the USA (and one could say the same about the Taliban). Only at that moment did Iraq, ceasing to be an ally, an accomplice, or a docile client, become a *rogue state* and only then did one begin to speak of Saddam Hussein, the leader of a rogue state, as a beast, "the beast of Baghdad."²⁹ I make this remark to announce the fact that we will no doubt be talking a lot, later in this seminar, about what has become known as "September 11."

That, said too briefly and in pure anticipation, is the obscure place toward which we are directed by the word, itself obscure, "analogy," analogy between the political sovereign and the beast. This word *analogy* is not only obscure, like a word whose concept or theorem, whose theoretical tenor, is invisible or inaccessible: it is obscure and dark and black, this word *analogy*, like the reality of a frightening cloud that announces and carries within it the threat of thunder, of lightning, of tempest and hurricane; it is dark because it is heavy with all the (actual and virtual) violences and nameless historical ravages, disasters we won't (already don't) have a name for, when the names of right (national or international), war, civil war or international war, terrorism (national or international) lose their most elementary credit.

43 2. The second reason why I quote these first chapters of the *Social Contract* is that we already see cited in them philosophers and philosophemes, political philosophies, that ought to occupy us as a first priority: for example, as you heard, Aristotle, Grotius, and Hobbes. Rousseau here inscribes all three of them rather quickly into the same tradition, neglecting the massive fact that it was in order to break with Aristotle, and with the consequences

29. Ibid., p. 28. [Translator's note: Derrida quotes Chomsky here in English.]

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that Aristotle draws from his famous but still just as enigmatic definition of man as political creature or animal (*politikon zōon*), that Hobbes wrote his *Leviathan* and his *De Cive*, and developed a theory of sovereignty that will interest us later. Naturally we shall have to read or reread these texts.

3. The third reason why I refer to these first chapters of the *Social Contract* is that in the lines I have just quoted, Rousseau adds a footnote to the word “brutishness” [*abrutissement*] (“they love their enslavement as Odysseus’s companions loved their brutishness”). The note refers to Plutarch. It says, “See a little treatise by Plutarch, entitled: *That Beasts Have Reason*.” You will find this fascinating text by Plutarch [*Bruta Animalia ratione uti*], translated [into French] by Amyot, in the collection published and prefaced by Élisabeth de Fontenay, *Trois traités pour les animaux*.³⁰ The treatise to which Rousseau refers is found there under the title “That brute beasts use reason.” The word “brute” will often be very important to us, where it seems to connote not only animality but a certain bestiality of the animal. I cannot recommend too strongly that you read these texts, which could detain us for a long time. In “That brute beasts use reason,” the first words of a philosophical discussion with several voices already or again convoke the figure of the wolf, the analogy and the quasi-metamorphosis that organizes the passage between man and wolf (but also lion). The discussion begins, then, with this metamorphic analogy: “I think I’ve understood what you’re saying, Circe, and I’ll bear it in mind. But please could you tell me whether there are any Greeks among the people you’ve turned into wolves and lions?”³¹

Read what follows and notice too that in praising a certain virtue of the animal, one of the participants in the discussion, Gryllus, places, precisely, this animal virtue above or at a distance from the law. Let me read this ethical and political praise of the animal, whose moral and social, even political, virtue goes above or before the law—a bit *like* (a “like” that carries the whole charge of the question of an analogy), a bit “like” the sovereign:

You can see, however, that when animals fight with one another or with you humans, they do not employ tricks and stratagems: they rely in their battles on blatant bare bravery backed up by real prowess. *They don’t need a law to be passed* [my emphasis] to summon them to battle, and they don’t fight because they’re afraid of being court-martialled for desertion: they see

30. Plutarque, *Trois traités pour les animaux*, ed. Élisabeth de Fontenay (Paris: P.O.L., 1992); “On the Use of Reason by ‘Irrational’ Animals,” in Plutarch, *Essays*, trans. Robin Waterfield (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 383–99.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 125 [p. 383].

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the fight through to the bitter end and refuse to give in because they instinctively loathe defeat. [Read what follows; and, further on:]

[...] You don't find animals begging or pleading for mercy or admitting defeat [error of Plutarch's: comment]. Cowardice never led a lion to become enslaved to another lion, or a horse to another horse, as it does human beings, who readily welcome the condition which is named after cowardice. Suppose humans trap or trick animals into captivity: if the animals are mature, they choose to reject food, reject thirst and choose to bring about and embrace death rather than accept enslavement.³² [Comment.]

45 If we wanted to place this note in the *Social Contract* referring to Plutarch's plea for animal reason into a network, a Rousseauist network, we should have to study closely, in *Émile* (book 2) a very long quotation (more than three pages) from the opening of the first of Plutarch's *Three Treatises* . . . ("If It Is Permissible to Eat Flesh" [*De esu carnium*]). Before quoting Plutarch, the one who speaks to Émile, the imaginary pupil, warns him against eating meat. Children are naturally vegetarian, and it is important "not to turn them [...] into meat eaters." Both for their health and for their character. For, the master says:

It is certain that great meat eaters are in general more cruel and ferocious than other men: this observation is for all places and times. The barbarity of the English is well known. [...] All savages are cruel; and their customs do not lead them to be so: this cruelty comes from their food [comment: cruelty and without,³³ cruelty and death sentence]. They go to war as they go to the hunt, and treat men *like* bears [my emphasis: always this "like" of the anthropo-zoological analogy]. In England even butchers are not allowed to bear witness, and no more are surgeons. Great criminals harden themselves for murder by drinking blood.³⁴

(Rousseau adds a note here, because of a scruple, because his translator pointed out to him, and translators are always the most vigilant and formidable readers, that in fact English butchers and surgeons did have the right to bear witness and that only butchers, and not surgeons, were refused the right to sit as jurors in criminal trials.) Read what follows, and the very long quotations from Plutarch's plea or indictment, one of the most eloquent in

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 129–30 [p. 387, very slightly modified].

33. "Cruauté et sans" in the typescript: perhaps a typing error for "cruauté et sang" [cruelty and blood].

34. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), pp. 196–97. [Translator's note: My translation.]

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history in the trial of carnivorous culture and its “cruel delights” (“You do not eat these carnivorous animals, you imitate them; you hunger only for the innocent and gentle beasts who do no harm to anyone, who are attached to you, who serve you, and that you *devour* [my emphasis] as a reward for their services.”)

You have no doubt already noticed the recurrence of the lexicon of devourment (“devour,” “devouring”): the beast is on this account devouring, and man devours the beast. Devourment and voracity. *Devoro, vorax, vorator*. It’s about mouth, teeth, tongue, and the violent rush to bite, engulf, swallow the other, to take the other into oneself too, to kill it or mourn it. Might sovereignty be devouring? Might its force, its power, its greatest force, its absolute potency be, in essence and always in the last instance, a power of devourment (mouth, teeth, tongue, violent rush to bite, engulf, swallow the other, to take the other into oneself too, to kill it or mourn it)? But what goes via interiorizing devourment, i.e. via orality, via the mouth, the maw, teeth, throat, glottis, and tongue — which are also the sites of cry and speech, of language — that very thing can also inhabit that other site of the visage or the face, i.e. the ears, the auricular attributes, the visible and therefore audiovisual forms of what allows one not only to speak but also to hear and listen. “Grandmother, what big ears you have,” she says to the wolf. The place of *devourment* is also the place of what carries the voice, the *topos* of the *porte-voix* [megaphone, literally “voice-carrier”], in a word, the place of *vociferation*. Devourment, vociferation, there, in the figure of the figure,³⁵ in the face, smack in the mouth, but also in the figure as trope, there’s the figure of figure, vociferating devourment or devouring vociferation. The one, vociferation, exteriorizes what is eaten, devoured, or interiorized: the other, conversely or simultaneously, i.e. devourment, interiorizes what is exteriorized or proffered. And on this subject of devouring, proffering, eating, speaking, and therefore listening, of obeying in receiving within through the ears, on the subject of the beast and the sovereign, I leave you to muse on the ass’s ears of King Midas that Apollo inflicted on him because he had preferred his rival in a musical competition. The ass is thought, unfairly, to be the most stupid of beasts [*la plus bête des bêtes*]. Midas hid these ass’s ears under his crown, and when his hairdresser denounced him and divulged his secret to the earth, the rushes, Ovid tells us, murmured in the wind, “King Midas has ass’s ears!” And then in *Tristan and Yseult*, another king, another animal’s ears, the horse’s ears of King Mark.

35. [Translator’s note:] “Figure” in French means both “figure” and “face.”

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The reason of the strongest is always the best
As we shall shortly show.

In a sense, no seminar should begin that way. And yet every seminar does begin that way, anticipating and deferring in some manner the monstration or demonstration. Every seminar begins with some fabulous “As we shall shortly show.”

What is a fable?

We could, to begin, ask ourselves (yes, “ask ourselves,” but what are we doing when we ask ourselves? When one asks *something* of oneself? When one poses oneself a question, when one interrogates oneself on this or that subject or, which is something different, when one asks *for* oneself? When one asks oneself for oneself as if that were possible or as if it were an other)—we could, to begin, before even beginning, ask ourselves what relation there can be between a seminar and a fable, between a seminar and the mode of fiction, simulacrum, fictive speech, “once upon a time” and “as if” narration that we call a fable. Especially if said fable stages some fabulous beast, the lamb, the wolf, the great aquatic monsters created by God in Genesis (1:21), or the four beasts in Daniel’s dream or vision (which I leave you to read, starting at Daniel 7:2: and “These great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings, *which* shall arise out of the earth” (7:17), i.e. four bestial figures of historico-political sovereignty); or again, and especially, all the beasts from John’s *Revelation*, which clearly present themselves as political or polemological figures, the reading of which would merit more than one seminar on its own; or again Behemoth or Leviathan, the name of that apocalyptic marine monster, that political dragon renamed by God in almost his last address to Job (40:15),³⁶ which I invite you to reread: “Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength *is* in his loins . . . ,” and, just a little further on, just afterward in the Book of Job:

¹Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord *which* thou lettest down? ²Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? [. . .] or his head with fish spears? ⁸Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. ⁹Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not *one* be cast down even at the sight of him? ¹⁰None

36. [Translator’s note:] I have normalized all biblical references to correspond to the chapter and verse numbers of the King James version.

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is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me? [. . .]

¹²I will not conceal his parts. (Job 41:1–12)

Read what follows, but remember this “I will not conceal his parts.” Read too Isaiah (27:1): “In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.”

Or else read Psalms (74:13, 14), and you will find that it is always addressed to a God capable of destroying, putting to death, the hideous, powerful, and repugnant beast, the Leviathan:

¹³Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. ¹⁴Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

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Just where the animal realm is so often opposed to the human realm as the realm of the nonpolitical to the realm of the political, and just where it has seemed possible to define man as a political animal or living being, a living being that is, on top of that, a “political” being, there too the essence of the political and, in particular of the state and sovereignty has often been represented in the formless form of animal monstrosity, in the figure without figure of a mythological, fabulous, and non-natural monstrosity, an artificial monstrosity of the animal.

Among all the questions that we shall have to unfold in all directions, among all the things that we shall have to ask ourselves, there would, then, be this figuration of man as “political animal” or “political living being” (*zōon politikōn*, according to Aristotle’s so well-known and so enigmatic formula (*Politics* 1.1253a3). It is obvious, says Aristotle, that the *polis* forms part of the things of nature (*tōn physei*) and that man is by nature a political being (*καὶ οὗτος ἀνθρώπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον*); from which he concludes, after having strongly insisted (contrary to what is sometimes understood or read) in the same text, in the same pages, and again just before this, on living and life as, ζῆν (*zēn*), and not as βίος (*bios*), on the εὖ ζῆν (*eu zēn*), living well (we shall have to come back to this too)—he concludes, then, that a being without a city, ἀπολις (*apolis*), an apolitical being, is, by nature and not by chance (*διὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐ διὰ τύχην*), either much worse (*phaulos*) or much better than man, superior to man (*κρείττον ἢ ἀνθρώπος*)³⁷—which clearly marks the fact that politiccity, the being-political of the living being called man, is an intermediate between those two other living beings that are beast

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37. For the whole passage, see Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b 27–1253a 4.

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and god, which, each in its own way, would be “apolitical”)—so, to return to our point, among all the questions that we shall have to unfold, among all the things we shall have to ask ourselves, there would, then, be this figuration of man as “political animal” or “political being,” but also a double and contradictory figuration (and figuration is always the beginning of a fabulation or an affabulation), the double and contradictory figuration of political man as *on the one hand* superior, in his very sovereignty, to the beast that he masters, enslaves, dominates, domesticates, or kills, so that his sovereignty consists in raising himself above the animal and appropriating it, having its life at his disposal, but *on the other hand* (contradictorily) a figuration of the political man, and especially of the sovereign state *as animality*, or even as bestiality (we shall also distinguish between these two values), either a normal bestiality or a monstrous bestiality itself mythological or fabulous. Political man as superior to animality and political man as animality.

Whence the most abstract and general form of what we shall have to ask ourselves: Why is political sovereignty, the sovereign or the state or the people, figured sometimes as what rises, through the law of reason, above the beast, above the natural life of the animal, and sometimes (or simultaneously) as the manifestation of bestiality or human animality, i.e. human naturality? I leave these questions as they are for the moment. But the principle of a reply (I shall call it prosthetic or prostatic or prosthetic, i.e. following the technical or prosthetic logic of a supplement that supplements nature by adding to it an artificial organ, here the state) seems to come to us from what is no doubt the most arresting example (the one that is most present to our memory, and we shall return to it) of this figuration of the political, of the state and sovereignty in the allegory or the fable of the monstrous animal, and precisely the dragon called Leviathan in the Book of Job: I am referring to Hobbes’s book *Leviathan* (1651).³⁸ Right from its Introduction, and in an opposition to Aristotle that we shall have to specify later, Hobbes’s *Leviathan* inscribes human art in the logic of an imitation of divine art. Nature is the art of God when he creates and governs the world, i.e. when, by an art of life, a genius of life, he produces the living and thus commands the living. Well, man, who is the most eminent living creation of God, the art of man that is the most excellent replica of the art of God, the art of this living being, man, imitates the art of God but, being unable to *create, fabricates* and, being unable to engender a natural animal, fabricates an artificial animal. Art goes so far as to imitate this excellent life-form that

38. [Derrida quotes from] *Leviathan*, Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Interpretations, ed. Richard E. Flathman and David Johnston (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 9.

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is man, and I quote: “*Art* goes yet further, imitating that Rationall and most excellent work of Nature, *Man*. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN” (the frontispiece of the book represents this gigantic and monstrous man who dominates the city, and Hobbes cites in Latin, in this frontispiece, a passage of Job (41:33), “Upon earth there is not his like,” words followed in the text by “He beholdeth all high *things*: he *is* a king over all the children of pride.”)³⁹

Once again, I leave you to read or reread, I invite and urge you to do so, these two or three pages, which describe, in God’s words, the monster Leviathan. Let me pick up again my quotation from Hobbes’s Introduction to *Leviathan*: “*Art* goes yet further, imitating that Rationall and most excellent work of Nature, *Man*. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN, called a COMMON-WEALTH OF STATE, (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended” (p. 9). [So Leviathan is the state and political man himself, the artificial man, the man of art and institution, man producer and product of his own art, which imitates the art of God. Art is here, like the institution itself, like artificiality, like the technical supplement, a sort of animal and monstrous naturality. And Hobbes will analyze, describe in detail, “not conceal his parts,” as it says in Job, detail the members of the monstrous body of this animal, this Leviathan, produced as political man by man. And he begins with sovereignty, which is both absolute and indivisible (we shall return to this—and Hobbes no doubt had read Bodin, the first great theorist of political sovereignty); but this absolute sovereignty is, as we shall also see, anything but natural; it is the product of a mechanical artificiality, a product of man, an artifact; and this is why its animality is that of a monster as prosthetic and artificial animal, like something made in the laboratory; and by the same token, I would say, leaving the genre of commentary for that of interpretation, i.e. following the consequence of what Hobbes says beyond his own explicit intention: if sovereignty, as artificial animal, as prosthetic monstrosity, as Leviathan, is a human artifact, if it is not natural, it is deconstructible, it is historical; and as historical, subject to infinite transformation, it is at once precarious, mortal, and perfectible. Let me return to my quotation and continue it:]

39. [Translator’s note:] I here quote the King James version: “Children of pride” corresponds in the French translation used by Derrida (*Le Livre de Job*, trans. Pierre Alferi and Jean-Pierre Prévost, in *La Bible*, nouvelle traduction [Paris: Bayard, 2001]) simply to “fauves” (“wild beasts”); another French translation, by Louis Segond, has “les plus fiers animaux” (“the proudest animals”). The Vulgate has “filios superbiae.”

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Art goes yet further, imitating that Rationall and most excellent work of Nature, *Man*. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN, called a COMMONWEALTH OF STATE, (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which, the *Sovereignty* is an Artificiall Soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; The *Magistrates*, and other *Officers* of Judicature and Execution, artificiall *Joynts*; *Reward* and *Punishment* (by which fastned to the seate of the Sovereignty, every joint and member is moved to performe his duty) are the *Nerves*.

- 53 Let me interrupt the quotation for a moment to emphasize two points. On the one hand, sovereignty is the artificial soul: the soul, i.e. the principle of life, life, vitality, vivacity of this Leviathan, and so also of the state, of this state monster created and dominated by the art of man, artificial animal monster which is none other than artificial man, says Hobbes, and which lives as a republic, state, commonwealth, *civitas* only through this sovereignty. This sovereignty is like an iron lung, an artificial respiration, an "Artificiall Soul." So the state is a sort of robot, an animal monster, which, in the figure of man, or of man in the figure of the animal monster, is stronger, etc., than natural man. Like a gigantic prosthesis designed to amplify, by objectifying it outside natural man, to amplify the power of the living, the living man that it protects, that it serves, but like a dead machine, or even a machine of death, a machine which is only the mask of the living, like a machine of death can serve the living. But this state and prosthetic machine, let's say prosthetic, this *prosthstate* must also extend, mime, imitate, even reproduce down to the details the living creature that produces it. Which means that, paradoxically, this political discourse of Hobbes's is vitalist, organicist, finalist, and mechanistic. Right down to the detail, the *analogistic* description of the *Leviathan* follows in the body of the state, the Republic, the *Civitas*, the *Commonwealth*, the whole structure of the human body. For example, the nerves are the *penal law*, the reward and punishment by which, says Hobbes, sovereignty, fastening to its service each articulation and each member, puts them in motion in order to fulfill their duty. So it is when talking about penal law that Hobbes, in this physiology of the political, names a sovereignty that is, therefore, the nerve or nervous system of the body politic, which both ensures its articulation and sets it into motion. Wealth and riches are the state's strength, the *salus populi*, or safety, is the state's *business*, the *counselors* are its *memory*, *concord* is its *health*, *sedition* is its *illness*, and finally, a point to which we shall return often, *civil war* is its *death*. Civil war is the death of the Leviathan, the death of the state, and that
- 54 at bottom is the subject of our seminar: What is a war, today, how can we

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tell the difference between a civil war and a war in general? What is the difference between civil war as “war of partisans” (a notion of Schmitt’s, who sees in Hobbes “truly a powerful and systematic political thinker”)⁴⁰ and a war between states? What is the difference between war and terrorism? Between national terrorism and international terrorism? This systematics of Hobbes is inconceivable without this prosthetics (at once zoologicistic, biologicistic, and techno-mechanist) of sovereignty, of sovereignty as animal machine, living machine, and death machine. This prosthetic sovereignty, which Hobbes recalls in [chapter 9 of] the *De Cive*, is indivisible⁴¹—this is a decisive point that will be very important to us—presupposes the right of man over the beasts. This right of man over the beasts is demonstrated in chapter 8 [of the *De Cive*], “Of the right of Masters over slaves,” just before chapter 9, “Of the right of parents over children and on the Patrimonial Kingdom,” during which sovereignty, domination, or sovereign power is said to be *indivisible* (a feature to which we shall return constantly); and Hobbes demonstrates that this sovereignty, within the family, belongs to the father who is, I quote, “a little king in his house” [“un petit roi dans sa maison”],⁴² and not to the mother, although by natural generation, in the state of nature, in which, following Hobbes, “it cannot be known who is a *child’s father*” (an old and tenacious prejudice), it is the mother, the only certain generatrix, who controls the child; when one leaves the state of nature through the civil contract, it is the father who, in a “civill government,” has at his disposal authority and power. And so just before treating “Of the right of parents over children and on the Patrimonial Kingdom” (and therefore *the absolute right of the father in civil society*), at the end of chapter 8, entitled “Of the right of Masters over slaves,” Hobbes posits the right of man over the beasts. So we have here a configuration that is both systematic and hierarchical: at the summit is the sovereign (master, king, husband, father: ipse-

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40. Carl Schmitt, *La notion de politique* [*Der Begriff des Politischen*, 1928], trans. Marie-Louise Steinhauser (Paris: Champs-Flammarion, 1992), p. 109; trans. George Schwab as *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996; expanded edition [but still slightly abridged] 2007), p. 65.

41. Thomas Hobbes, *Le citoyen, ou Les fondements de la politique* [*De Cive*], trans. Samuel Sorbière [1649] (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1982), sec. 2, chap. 9, p. 186; *On the Citizen*, ed. and trans. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 108.

42. [Translator’s note:] This quotation from Sorbière’s 1649 translation does not seem to correspond exactly to the text of the *De Cive*. See however, *On the Citizen*, ed. and trans. Tuck and Silverthorne, p. 102: “For to be a *King* is simply to have *Dominion* over many *persons*, and thus a *kingdom* is a *large family*, and a *family* is a *little kingdom*.”

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ity itself [comment]), and below, subjected to his service, the slave, the beast, the woman, the child. The word “subjection,” the gesture of “subduing” is at the center of the last paragraph of chapter 8, on the right of the master over the slaves, which I’ll read to conclude for today:

Right over non-rational animals is acquired in the same way as over the *persons* of men, that is, by natural strength and powers. In the natural state, because of the war of all against all, any one may legitimately subdue or even kill Men, whenever that seems to be to his advantage; much more will this be the case against animals. That is, one may at discretion reduce to one’s service any animals that can be tamed or made useful, and wage continual war against the rest as harmful, and hunt them down and kill them. Thus *Dominion* over animals has its origin in the *right of nature* not in *Divine positive right*. For if no such right had existed before the publication of holy scripture, no one could rightly have slaughtered animals for food except someone to whom the divine will had been revealed in the holy scriptures; and the condition of mankind would surely have been very hard, since the beasts could devour them in all innocence, while they could not devour the beasts. Since therefore it is by natural right that an animal kills a man, it will be by the same right that a man slaughters an animal.⁴³

Conclusion: the beast *and [et]* the sovereign (couple, coupling, copula), the beast *is [est]* the sovereign, man is the beast for man, *homo homini lupus*, Peter and the wolf, Peter accompanies his grandfather on the wolf hunt, Peter, the grandfather and the wolf, the father is the wolf.

56 In “The Question of Lay Analysis” (*Die Frage der Laienanalyse*, 1926), Freud pretends to be in dialogue, as you know, with an impartial person, and he reminds him that every time a ravenous animal (“like the wolf,” says Freud) enters the scene in a story, “we shall recognize as a disguise of the father.”⁴⁴ And Freud explains that we cannot account for these fables and myths without returning to infantile sexuality. In the series of the devouring father, we will also find, he says, Cronus, who swallows up his children after having emasculated his father Uranus and before being himself emasculated by his son Zeus, saved by his mother’s cunning.

But, on the subject of these zooanthropological *analogies*, or even these

43. *On the Citizen*, pp. 105–6.

44. Sigmund Freud, “The Question of Lay Analysis,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–74), 20:183–258 (p. 211).

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zooanthropotheological tropes of the unconscious—for Freud says in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1929–30) that, thanks to technology and mastery over nature, man has become a “prosthetic God”⁴⁵—Freud, in the same work (at the opening of chapter 7), asks himself the question why, despite the analogies between the state institutions of animal societies and human state institutions, the analogies encounter a limit. The animals are related to us, they are even our brothers, says one French translation,⁴⁶ they are our kin, and there are even animal states, but we humans would not be happy in them, says Freud in sum. Why? The hypothesis he leaves hanging is that these states are arrested in their history. They have no history and no future; and the reason for this arrest, this stabilization, this stasis (and in this sense animal states seems more stable and therefore more statelike than human states), the reason for their relatively a-historical stasis is a relative equilibrium between the environment and their drives. Whereas for man (this is the hypothesis that Freud leaves hanging), it is possible that an excess or relaunching of libido might have provoked a new rebellion on the part of the destructive drive, a new unleashing of the death drive and of cruelty, and therefore a relaunching (be it finite or infinite) of history. That is the question that Freud leaves open for us. (Read Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 123.)

Why do our relatives, the animals, not exhibit any such cultural struggle? We do not know. Very probably some of them—the bees, the ants, the termites—strove for thousands of years before they arrived at the State institutions, the distribution of functions and the restrictions on the individual, for which we admire them to-day. It is a mark of our present condition that we know from our own feelings that we should not think ourselves happy in any of these animal States or in any of the roles assigned in them to the individual. In the case of other animal species it may be that a temporary balance has been reached between the influences of their environment and the mutually contending instincts within them, and that thus a cessation of development has come about. It may be that in primitive man a fresh access of libido kindled a renewed burst of activity on the part of the destructive instinct. There are a great many questions here to which as yet there is no answer.⁴⁷

45. Sigmund Freud, “Civilization and Its Discontents,” in *The Standard Edition*, 21: 64–145 (p. 92).

46. *Le malaise dans la civilisation*, trans. Ch. et J. Ogier (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), p. 79 (“nos frères les animaux”). [Translator’s note: *The Standard Edition* has “our relatives, the animals” (21:123).]

47. *The Standard Edition*, 21:123.