and the material and archival force of such structures themselves. What this means for bioethics in the pragmatic sense is that Derrida is of little use in enabling us to formulate new guidelines about particular surgical or experimental procedures that we could then generalize on behalf of more progressive policies. But he is of immense use in forcing us to live with the fact that no matter how such policies are drawn, the distinction between human and animal should be of no use in drawing them.

4 "Animal Studies," Disciplinarity, and the (Post)Humanities

What began in the early to mid-1990s as a smattering of work in various fields on human-animal relations and their representation in various endeavors—literary, artistic, scientific—has, as we reach the end of the new millennium's first decade, galvanized into a vibrant emergent field of interdisciplinary inquiry called animal studies or sometimes human-animal studies. In what follows, I want to suggest that both rubrics are problematic in light of the broader context in which they must be confronted—the context of posthumanism. More specifically, I hope to make it clear that the questions that occupy (human-)animal studies can be addressed adequately only if we confront them on not just one level but two: not just the level of content, themes, and the object of knowledge (the "animal" studied by animal studies) but also the level of theoretical and methodological approach (how animal studies studies "the animal"). Just because we direct our attention to the study of nonhuman animals, and even if we do so with the aim of exposing how they have been misunderstood and exploited, that does not mean that we are not continuing to be humanist—and therefore, by definition, anthropocentric. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of humanism—and even more specifically that kind of humanism called liberalism—is its penchant for that kind of pluralism, in which the sphere of attention and consideration (intellectual or ethical) is broadened and extended to previously marginalized groups, but without in the least destabilizing or throwing into radical question the schema of the human who undertakes such pluralization. In that event, pluralism becomes incorporation, and the projects of humanism (intellectually) and liberalism (politically) are extended, and indeed extended in a rather classic sort of way.

To put it this way—in terms of the ideological stakes of disciplinarity—is to signal that there are multiple contexts within which the
question of animal studies, disciplinarity, and the humanities might be discussed had we world enough and time—contexts toward which I can only rapidly gesture here. One of these would be the changing status of the humanities themselves—a change sometimes described in the language of crisis—in relation to what used to be called "the public sphere" and the more general questions of the humanities' social, cultural, and political role in a world that appears to need and value humanistic knowledge less and less. One might also—moving outward to larger contexts—situate this question in the context of the changing role and function of the university as an institution, especially as that role has been reshaped by forces associated with the corporatization of social institutions generally. And one might, moreover, explore both those issues—disciplinary change and institutional change—along the lines cultivated by Alan Liu’s discussion of the humanities in terms of the broader context of knowledge work in *The Laws of Cool* (2004). Still farther afield, one might ask after the role and status of animal studies in the context of growing attention to the biopolitical and to questions of biopower that derive at least from the work of the Frankfurt school (and beyond that, Marx’s famous discussion of “species being” in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844), wend their way through Michel Foucault’s later work, and receive contemporary attention from thinkers ranging from Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito to Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, among others. For surely the question of biopower radically changes our view of the “animality” of the human in ways marked, for example, by Agamben’s distinction between bios (which marks “the form or way of life proper to an individual or group”) and zoe (which expresses “the simple fact of living common to all living beings”). For biopolitical theory, the animality of the human becomes a central problem—perhaps the central problem—to be produced, controlled, or regulated for politics in its distinctly modern form.

**Literary and Cultural Studies in the United States: Historicism, Theory, and Disciplinarity**

I want to begin, however, with a more modest focus on the discipline in which I am housed, literary and cultural studies, where the relations between animal studies, the humanities and its mission or missions, and the problem of disciplinarity are being conjugated in an especially energetic and wide-ranging way. In that context, it is all the more important to note that the discipline itself has in recent years reached what feels to many like a crisis of coherence, a disciplinary threshold of some sort. The sharpest symptom, perhaps, is the schism that has been brewing for some time now (to put it schematically) between scholars committed primarily to matters of history and scholars committed primarily to matters of theory (and, in a different register, the relation of form and meaning) in the study of literature and culture. And while historicism, broadly speaking, has no doubt ruled the day for some time now on the strength of the early momentum garnered by innovative works in New Historicism in fields such as early modern and romantic studies, there are signs that this is changing, in part because the dominant modes of historicism being practiced now seem to many a regression to the kind of *old* historicism that New Historicism itself sought to move beyond.

Critiques of the situation from across the intellectual and political spectrum are not hard to find. The romanticist Thomas Pfaus, for example, is among the more strident critics, though he might best be characterized as an intellectual historian. Pfaus observes that this more recent mode of historicism, though it “disavows the strong penchant for ‘grand narrative’ . . . in favor of so many specialized micro-analyses,” cannot achieve “its recurrent quest for ‘local transcendence’” (to borrow Alan Liu’s famous formulation) “without underlying and largely unexamined ideological commitments of its own”—an “implicit framework” that Pfaus pares down the following tacit assumptions:

1. The Axiom of the Archive: that specialized research, understood at the recovery of previously “overlooked” materials and sources, amounts to a mode of knowledge-production whose significance is taken to be self-certifying.
2. The Axiom of Contextualism: that the “new” materials so recovered largely imply their own causal and argumentative force simply by being (materially, biographically, or idiomatically) associated with a contextual “field” whose outline is either being presupposed outright or inferred from the interpretive community (re)currently husbanding it.
3. The Axiom of Pluralism (or “indifferentism”): that the power and
significance of contemporary critique arises from the primitive accumulation of so many disaggregated voices and archival projects, with the further assumption that critical knowledge will spontaneously arise from the open-market interaction of (presumptively) equivalent/indifferent perspectives.

4. The Axiom of Retroactive Liberation (or “secularization”): that an institutional, professional, and transactional mode of critique will eventually liberate historical meanings from their alleged past entrapment in religious or ideological norms and values and, in doing so, will restore for us their temporarily “missed” yet always “intended” authentic (secular) core.

5. The Axiom of Critique as a Guarantor of Historical Progress: that the transactionalism of modern, institutional knowledge effects a teleological progression towards a hypostatized Liberal community envisioned as a wholly transparent, inclusive, tolerant, and exhaustively informed. Crucially, though, this telos can only be articulated in a language of permanent deferral and (in what constitutes a diachronical reversal of Aristotelian thought) is being defined by the absence of any specific norms or contents rather than by the practical acknowledgment of their supra-personal authority.

Pfäus’ quarrel with this mode of historicism, as you will have already gathered, is not just methodological—not just, for example, with the “self-imposed restriction of recent models of inquiry to tightly localized and circumscribed chronotypes (biographically conceived time spans, the punctum of this or that local “event,” dates of publication, etc.)” (7). It is also ideological, insofar as such an approach “ultimately reproduces a decisive—albeit unexamined and doubtful—axiom that underwrites . . . the political and economic projects of classical Liberalism and their subsidiary rhetoric of emancipation, progress, growth, and political ‘rights’” (7). Given the extensive discussion in the last chapter, it hardly needs saying that this linkage between methodology and ideology has particular resonance in the context of animal studies, where the same concept of rights—namely, in the form of “animal rights”—has been crucial to the emergence and consolidation of the very field that now is eager to move beyond that paradigm.

What also drops out in many manifestations of contemporary literary historicism, if we believe Ellen Rooney, Susan Wolfson, and others who contributed to the special MLQ issue of 2000 on “The New Formalism,” is the question—one might even say the very disciplinarity—of reading (and not just in the narrow sense of reading literary forms such as the sonnet or the novel). As Rooney puts it:

The effects of the attenuation of the category of form include the reduction of every text to its ideological or historical context, or to an exemplar of a prior theory (content) . . . and the generalization of reading-as-paraphrase, which robs cultural and literary studies of the power to make any essential contribution to critical work already moving confidently ahead in history, sociology, anthropology, and communications. These are all disciplines that have long since mastered the art of reading-as-summary, reading sans form. 6

Admittedly, we would do well here to keep in mind Marjorie Levinson’s reminder that it is useful in such cases to distinguish between “new historicism” and “new historicism”—between many of the founding, first-generation texts of New Historicism by Stephen Greenblatt, Jerome McGann, and others (which were, she argues, quite demonstrably concerned not just with the articulation of form and historical content but also with questions of the aesthetic and of pleasure [560–61]) and the work of “those hapless ‘followers’ and mere practitioners” (560), as one critic puts it, which treats the text—any text, be it poem, novel, Supreme Court ruling, political speech, or advertisement—as merely a site for mining content, an alibi “sufficient to get the machinery of ‘archaeology’ and archive-churning” up and running (561).

Surely Rooney is right that the real issue here is “not to transcend the New Historicism, poststructuralism, cultural materialism,” or “any of the other critical interventions marking literary studies in the late twentieth century” (18)—it’s not about picking your favorite brand name and taking sides, in other words—but to engage the question of disciplinarity in literary and cultural studies: what they can contribute, specifically, that could not be handled just as well (or better) by other fields such as history or sociology or philosophy. As she puts it, “for a critical reader bereft of the category of form, the subject matter of literary and cultural analysis loses all standing as a theoretical object, an object situated and at work in a critical or disciplinary field” (18–19).

To raise the question of cultural studies in this context, though, only brings the problem into sharper focus, for as Rooney points out,
that field is "perhaps even more intractably caught than literary criticism in the dilemma of defining its own proper form"; it is "a welter of competing (and even incompatible) methods, and a (quasi-)disciplinary form increasingly difficult to defend, intellectually or politically" (21). Indeed, if we believe Tilottama Rajan, cultural studies isn't part of the solution, it's part of the problem, and (like the historicism criticized by Pfaus) it is one with identifiable ideological contours. In Rajan's view, in fact, cultural studies in the United States and North America (the United Kingdom and Australia would require somewhat different analyses, as she rightly notes) has evolved from a site of "decentering innovation" into "a symbiosis with globalization" and the New World Order, in which "its dereferentialization is what makes it dangerous to some of its original components"—an ambivalent situation discussed in similar terms recently by Gayatri Spivak in Death of a Discipline. In Rajan's view, the "inclusive vagueness" (69) that for Rooney plagues cultural studies is precisely what has enabled it early on to garner new territory, but this inclusiveness masks the fact that it is also subtly, and predictably, selective; it includes postcolonialism (but not Homi Bhabha), gender studies (but not Hélène Cixous or French feminism); it rewrites the entire field of psychoanalysis as "essentialist," and privileges "Benjaminian storytelling, autobiography, and subjective experience, ostensibly to insist on local knowledge, but really to reinstat self-expression and identity politics" (71).

As "a soft sell for, and a personalization of, the social sciences" (74), the effect of academically mainstreamed cultural studies is, Rajan suggests, "to simulate the preservation of civil society after the permutation of the classical public sphere" into an essentially market and consumerist logic of "representation" (69–70). It meets the demand that "all sectors be economically represented in the curriculum, which is most efficiently managed by reducing texts to cultural soundbites" (75). For such an ideological project, she notes, it should come as no surprise that "the social is now the unquestioned ground of the humanities. Nor do the humanities even want to claim a way of thinking the social from the outside" (74)—an observation that echoes Pfaus's insistence on the need to retain a critical dimension for the humanities in the face of the historicist principle of "immanence." Drawing on the work of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, she amplifies Rooney's observations on historian's text-as-paraphrase by observing that the teleology of the new cultural studies, under the guise of "pluralism," is "of absolute self-transparency" based on total communicability." Cultural studies thus involves a repurposing of reading and thinking; it is "a pragmatic use of the humanities within a modular structure that appears to promote dissidence" by its pluralism of content and identities but instead "interpellates minority identities and localisms into a disciplinary complex" (77). Thus, for example, Bhabha's concepts of "alterity" and "migrancy," rather than exerting a critical force that is radically heterogeneous to—radically other than—the liberal society and its ruling protocols, instead become recontextualized as pluralism by cultural studies' normalizing ideological function for civil society: "Though civil society contains diverse subgroups, it mediates their antagonisms, holding together different classes and interests by providing their members with recognition" (76). And hence, Rajan argues, disciplines of "slow thought" committed to the nontransparency of these relationships become relegated to the margins of cultural studies ("symptomatically reflected in the turn away from poetry" in literary and cultural studies, as she shrewdy notes); they are therefore seen as an active, even pernicious, impediment to the liberal project of incorporation and "recognition" that is an expression of, not a critique of, globalization. As she notes, reflecting on the special 2001 issue of PMLA titled "Globalizing Literary Studies," the idea of "heterogeneous global audiences" that is so taken for granted in contemporary cultural studies "is an oxymoron that conceals a deep contradiction in claiming the synchronicity of the unique and the universal, and the global reach of Western notions of "heterogeneity"" (75). All these critics, as you might guess, see a crucial role for theoretical reflection in addressing the intellectual miasma that is contemporary literary and cultural studies—not because theory is a specialized obsession, but precisely because it isn't. As Rooney notes, the issue is "not nostalgia for theory as a master discourse but anxiety over the status of theoretical debate as a moving force that articulates disciplinary forms... . Neither literary nor cultural studies can proceed in the absence of such an arena: it is a necessary disciplinary effect, even as it fosters the transformation and denaturalization of disciplinary practices." And in the absence of such theoretical reflection—to
put an even finer point on it—the disciplinary hegemony of historicism becomes nothing more (or less) than an exercise in the very pretense that historicists routinely lay at the doorstep of theory. Indeed, as Rooney observes, one result of this lack of theoretical reflection by the dominant modes of historicism is that, ironically enough, they become an unwitting “echo of the earliest epoch of literary studies,” in that “thematic analysis has become virtually the sole mode of ‘formal’ analysis effectively at work in literary and cultural studies” (28).

Does this mean that there is no such thing as “good” historicism? Of course not, as Levinson’s careful distinction between “new historicism” and “new historicism” ought to make clear. But it does mean that any historicism needs to confront the difference between historicity and historicism—that is to say, the difference between the material, institutional forces it is interested in and the modes and protocols of knowledge by which those materials are disciplined, by which they are given form: protocols that are, by definition, always already reductive, not just in the strict epistemological sense of being selective but also in the empirical terms favored by historicism itself. Indeed, as none other than Franco Moretti has pointed out with regard to the project of literary history, “the majority of books disappear forever—and ‘majority’ actually misses the point: if we set today’s canon of nineteenth-century British novels at two hundred titles (which is a very high figure), they would still be only about 0.5 percent of all published novels.” As Moretti notes, to take account of this fact—99.5 percent, “the others, nothing. Gone”—is to change our very idea of what literary history is, and to change it in ways that, say, the Annales school and Fernand Braudel were keenly interested in, ways that only further sharpen the question of whether the dominant forms of current historicisms in literary and cultural studies—namely, narrative, paraphrase, and the linear, biographical, and generational chronotopes noted by Pfaus—are, in fact, historicism at all, rather than simply a domestication of the very problem and force of historicity itself. In short, historicism has to be aware of the historicity of its own modes of disciplinary practice, its own forms. And it can’t do that without theory.

In this context, it is telling that both Rooney and Wolfson (on behalf of formalism, no less) note that a major lacuna in current modes of historicism in U.S. literary and cultural studies is Marxist aesthetics. Marxism grappled as no other contemporary body of thought has with precisely the questions that occupy literary and cultural historicists today, particularly those who think of themselves as politically progressive: namely, the ideological and political function of culture in relation to economic infrastructures, civil society, and the relations of national and international contexts, both geopolitical and economic, as they bear on those questions. This is not to say, of course, that figures such as Lukács, Brecht, Adorno, Macherey, Althusser, Bloch, Mannheim, and others agreed at all on these issues. Rather, it is to remind us that the dubious practices of paraphrase, reading for theme, privileging the biographical and the generational chronotope, the local context, and so on—and, most importantly, the instrumentalization of cultural forms as a mere vehicle for sociological or historical content—that plague contemporary literary and cultural studies received intensive scrutiny for decades in Marxist theory’s debates over socialist realism, the ideological and political character of modernism and its formal experimentation (as in the so-called Brecht/Lukács debate), and much else besides. And yet this remarkable body of work does not inform the landscape of current historicist practice in literary and cultural studies in the United States in any fundamental way.

Rajan sees the role of theory in the current context in rather different terms but likewise finds its signal value in “denaturalizing” disciplinary formations, its ability to exercise a destabilizing, antisytemic force in relation to disciplinarity in general—a kind of “asystasis,” to use a term she borrows from Schelling, that unworks the Idealism (and imperialism) of any practice, including “theory” itself (80). She finds this project of “an asystatic deployment of fields of knowledge to unsettle one another” inherited and sustained by Michel Foucault in his early work, but in a historically specific articulation, one that prevents the gesture toward theory from becoming a master discourse. As she reminds us, The Order of Things denaturalizes and decenters disciplines not only in response to the crisis of the university as a culture and institution in late 1960s France (one whose disciplinary forms hamstringed its ability to respond to the social crisis at hand); it also “culminates in a criticism of the ‘human sciences’: the modern academy’s bridging of the humanities and social sciences under the form of a corporate
merger” (81). Foucault’s analysis of the emergence of the disciplines is, in a word, anti-ideological.

What Are Disciplines?

I want to supplement Rajan’s account of Foucault’s work on disciplinarity with John Rajchman’s to make a slightly different point, one whose stakes will only gradually come into focus in the remainder of the chapter. A crucial emphasis of Foucault’s early work is this: if we take the question of disciplinarity seriously, we have to first of all admit that disciplines do not derive their constitutive protocols from their objects of attention. Quite the contrary, disciplines constitute their objects through their practices, theoretical commitments, and methodological procedures—and they do so quite selectively. This is a seemingly simple point, but it is one, as we shall see, with far-reaching consequences.

From the early 1960s to the late 1970s, in The Order of Things, The Archaeology of Knowledge, and Discipline and Punish, Foucault undertakes what Rajchman calls “nominalist histories”—not “histories of things, but of the terms, categories, and techniques through which certain things become at certain times the focus of a whole configuration of discussion and procedure.” He thus seeks “to challenge the universal, objective, and progressive image of unified science inherited from the Enlightenment” and instead embarks on an “attempt to discover an irreducible plurality of ‘territories’ and ‘objects’ of knowledge, characterized by anonymous tacit procedures,” an account that emphasizes “the relative autonomy of discourses” (53). Two further and very important consequences flow from this commitment. First, this means that there is no such thing as “society as a whole” (55), since the idea of “a whole and universal society” has now been “dispersed” into a range of different practices, discourses, and disciplines (59). Second—since one of Foucault’s great objects of analysis is “the group of techniques, terms, and categories that concern the subject”—this means that Foucault’s work continues and indeed intensifies twentieth-century challenges, such as Heidegger’s or Wittgenstein’s, to “the post-Cartesian philosophy of the subject” (52). In scrutinizing the “various kinds of systems through which people have come
to identify themselves as subjects,” Foucault, in short, undertakes a trenchant posthumanism on the terrain of the subject to match his anti-universalism in the domain of the object.16

We can extend and sharpen Foucault’s account of disciplinary formations with Niklas Luhmann’s more recent work on social systems. In doing so, I hope to make some headway on what James Chandler has recently characterized as the “need to rearticulate the disciplinary system after three decades of ‘add-on’ fields and programs.” To do so, Chandler suggests, we must “work toward a better understanding of how the scheme of the disciplines might be said to compose a system”—a project that he likewise finds powerfully initiated in Foucault’s work.17 Like Foucault, Luhmann does not make individuals the fundamental, constitutive elements of society; like Foucault, he is therefore “suspicious of the universalist vocation of the intellectual” —not because (as in Foucault) such an understanding would mitigate against “our capacity to find alternatives to the particular forms of discourse that define us” by “uncovering the particularity and contingency of our knowledge and our practices” (60), but because, for Luhmann, such universalism (desirable though it may be) is actually impossible under modernity, now understood as a process of “functional differentiation.” For Luhmann as for Foucault, then, “society as a whole” cannot be said to exist—nor can, by extension, the public sphere in anything like the classical sense—but what Luhmann is able to articulate more clearly and at the same time more radically is how these twin claims (no social holism, no universal intellectual) do not amount to “rejecting science as such or criticizing all rational discourse” (59). Rather, it means for Luhmann that the form of rationality itself under modernity is paradoxical—and paradoxical in ways that produce precisely what Rajan calls the “asystasy” in and through which disciplines destabilize and expose each other.

Now it may seem odd to invoke systems theory in this context, given that both Pfau and Rajan, despite their vast intellectual differences, think of the idea of system (and its companion idea, information) as the apotheosis of everything their accounts of disciplinarity aim to critique. This is so, I think, because both are operating with a concept of “system” (and of adjacent terms such as “information”) that is markedly out of date, one that would apply to the first-order systems
theory of the 1950s (Norbert Wiener, for example), but not to the work in second-order systems theory of Maturana and Varela, Heinz von Foerster, Luhmann, and others. Indeed, for these thinkers, the concept of system might best be described (to use a concept from Adorno to which both Pfau and Rajan would be amenable) as an effort to think "de-totalized totality." In fact, as Dirk Baecker puts it in a passage I invoked in the opening chapter, systems theory after the second-order turn may best be understood "as an attempt to do away with any usual notion of system, the theory in a way being the deconstruction of its central term." To put it this way—and I will amplify the point in chapters 8 through 10—is simply to remember why Luhmann's work is particularly interested in the core problematic of romanticism formulated by Kant and Hegel that occupies both Pfau and Rajan—a problematic it attempts to redescribe in a context well articulated by Derrida's observation that

the critique of historicism in all its forms seems to me indispensable.

The issue would be: can one criticize historicism in the name of something other than truth and science (the value of universality, omnitemporality, the infinity of value, etc.), and what happens to science when the metaphysical value of truth has been put into question, etc.? How are the effects of science of and truth to be reinscribed?

This is precisely the project, I would argue, that Luhmann undertakes in his later work, which becomes more and more "philosophical," if you like, in both of the senses invoked by Pfau and Rajan: as a universalizing discourse (Pfau) that retotalizes differentiation, seriality, specialization, and so on in terms of a kind of normativity and systematicity produced by modernity as fundamentally a form of functional differentiation; and as a theory of the contingency and constructedness of knowledge that de-totalizes philosophy's idealism and imperialism in the terms described by Rajan. Hans Georg Moeller summarizes this quite well:

Luhmann's relation to philosophy can... be compared to Hegel's relation to religion (as expressed in the Phenomenology of Spirit). For Hegel, religion was, with respect to its highest purpose, a thing of the past... Neither its semantics nor its general structure could be fully accepted any longer... Its "essence" had to be expressed in a more self-reflective way, in a language and in a form that represented a higher understanding.

Similarly, for Luhmann, "philosophy had become with respect to its highest purpose, a thing of the past," and so what Luhmann unabashedly calls a "supertheory" of society, a theory of "universal relevance," can no longer be housed in philosophy, given philosophy's disciplinary norms and protocols. Hegel's Aufhebung from religion to philosophy now becomes Luhmann's from philosophy to theory—and this movement is driven, as Luhmann repeatedly insists, by historical forces. Like Hegel's scheme, Moeller writes, Luhmann's "claims to be thoroughly conceptualized and to return to its beginning—in other words, a coherent whole instead of a linear argument." Unlike Hegel's, however, Luhmann's theory acknowledges its own contingency—that is, it acknowledges its modernity, that it is itself a product of functional differentiation. Or as Moeller observes, "What a supertheory says has to make general sense to it. But this sense itself is not general, it is contingent on the theory that is constructing this horizon of sense in the first place."

With this background in mind, we can now move to investigate in more detail Luhmann's radicalization of the analysis of disciplinarity carried out in Foucault's early work—one made possible by Luhmann's crucial turn, in his middle and late work, to the theory of autopoiesis as key to understanding social systems. As we saw in the opening chapter, Luhmann appropriates the concept from the work in biology of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela to make sense of the seemingly paradoxical fact that systems are both open and closed; to exist and reproduce themselves, they must maintain their boundaries and integrity through a process of self-referential closure; and it is only on the basis of this closure that they can then engage in "structural coupling" with their environment. Like neurophysiological autopoietic systems, their fundamental logic is "recursive"; they use their own outputs as inputs in an ongoing process of "self-making" or "self-production," and they constantly (re)produce the elements that in turn produce them.

In Luhmann's scheme, disciplinary formations would, strictly speaking, be viewed as elements of the social system called "education," but I believe they may be profitably thought of as subsystems that follow the same systemic logic, which both produce and depend on their own elements for their autopoiesis (journals, conferences, research
groups, protocols of advancement and recognition, etc.). From this vantage, disciplines would deploy the distinction that is fundamental to all systems—the distinction “system/environment”—but would articulate it in their own specific form, thus (and this is a basic postulate of systems theory) using it to reduce and process the overwhelming complexity of an environment that is by definition always already exponentially more complex than any particular system itself. As we saw earlier, this selectivity does not, however, indicate solipsism. Quite the contrary, for as Luhmann puts it in Social Systems, self-referential closure “does not contradict the system’s openness to the environment.” Instead, in the self-referential mode of operation, closure is a form of broadening possible environmental contacts; closure increases, by constituting elements more capable of being determined, the complexity of the environment that is possible for the system.” (37).

As we saw in chapter 1, the adaptive pressure to develop a highly selective code—a pressure generated by the system’s inferiority in complexity in comparison with the environment—leads, in turn, to an increasing internal differentiation within the system itself. The system/environment distinction is then repeated internally in the system, so that, for example, the entire legal system now becomes the environment for the various legal subsystems, which must themselves respond to (or achieve “resonance” with) the broader changes in the legal system itself. In building up their own internal complexity through increased internal differentiation, systems are able to enhance their ability to respond to a rapidly changing environment by, in a sense, slowing it down. Increased selectivity buys time. But in doing so—in increasing their environmental resonance by building up their own internal complexity, by simply “doing what they do”—social systems create more complexity in the environment of other systems even as they try to reduce it for themselves (177), hence the nearly paradigmatic situation associated with “postmodernity”: hypercomplexity.28

For Luhmann, then, as we know from our earlier discussions, all observations, whether by the legal system, the economic system, or any other, are contingent and selective constructions and reductions of an environment that cannot be grasped holistically or in any totalizing fashion. This means that there is no “given” environment “out there” that can be cognitively approached or “represented” in its total-

ity. What this means is not only that all systems and all observations are self-referential; it also means that, paradoxically, the difference between self-reference and external reference (or “hetero-reference”) is itself a product of self-reference, in the same way that the “outside” of the environment is always the outside of a specific “inside.” This fact, however, cannot be observed by the system that, at the same time, wants to use that distinction to carry out its operations. That observation can only be made by a second-order observer, using a different code (in this case, education), which likewise must remain “blind” to the paradoxical nature of its constitutive distinction, which can only be disclosed by another observer, and so on and so forth. As Luhmann points out, “The designations that usually register this state of affairs are relativism, conventionalism, constructivism. One can summarize the meaning of these concepts in the thesis of a loss of reference.” But if this is to be taken as a (again paradigmatic) “critique” of postmodernity, such a critique assumes a position of totalization that is by definition no longer available in the context of modernity understood as functional differentiation. “This thesis marks their negative content,” Luhmann continues. “Its negativity, however, only arises in a historical comparison with the premises of ontological metaphysics, with its religious safeguards, its cosmos of essences, and its normative concept of nature.”30

Several important consequences may now be drawn from Luhmann’s analysis. First, as was already clear in Foucault’s work, disciplines take their specificity not from the objects of their attention but from the specific protocols of their discourses (Foucault), their communications and observations (Luhmann). Or as Luhmann puts it in somewhat different terms, “a first step toward the comprehension of modernity therefore consists in the distinction between problems of reference and problems of truth.”30 The disarticulation of reference and truth thus helps us understand, in turn, a crucial second point: how the object of disciplinary knowledge is not therefore “lost” under modernity’s “loss of reference” but is rather, in a very real sense, greatly enhanced. As Luhmann puts it in the introductory chapter to Social Systems:

One can now distinguish the system/environment difference as seen from the perspective of an observer (e.g., that of a scientist) from the system/environment difference as it is used within the system itself,
the observer, in turn, being conceivable himself only as a self-referential system. Reflexive relationships of this type don't just revolutionize the classical subject-object epistemology... they also produce a very much more complex understanding of their objects via a very much more complex theory design. (9)

In a process that Luhmann calls "semantic overburdening," the system being observed is covered over with a procedure of reproducing and increasing its complexity that is impossible for it. In its analysis science uses conceptual abstractions that do not do justice to the observed system's concrete knowledge of its milieu or to its ongoing self-experience. On the basis of such reductions—and this is what justifies them—more complexity becomes visible than is accessible to the observed system itself... In this sense it overburdens its object's self-referential order... This overburdening is immanent in every observation" (56). To put it another way, it is not just unavoidable, but crucial and immensely productive, to keep open the difference between first- and second-order observation, to insist on a nonreductive relation of problems of reference and problems of truth: to remember, with Maturana, that the internal mechanisms of an observed phenomenon and a second-order observation of them "intrinsically take place in independent and non-intersecting phenomenal domains." All observations, then, may be carried out only on the basis of self-referential closure, but that closure, because it produces both environmental complexity and semantic overburdening, produces more possibilities for connection, more openness.

This analysis helps us understand, in turn, a third crucial point: that disciplinary differentiation (or "specialization") is not something to be lamented, avoided, or overcome; rather "universalization can be achieved only through specification." This is the tenor in which I would like to hear Immanuel Wallerstein and his coauthors in the recent report Open the Social Sciences when they write:

The claim to universality, however qualified... is inherent in the justification of all academic disciplines. That is part of the requirement for their institutionalization. The justification may be made on moral, practical, aesthetic, or political grounds, or some combination thereof, but all institutionalized knowledge proceeds on the presumption that the lessons of the case at hand have significant bearing on the next case, and that the list of potential cases is, for all practical purposes, endless.33

When Wallerstein and his coauthors say "universalizing," the reading I want to suggest is not "totalizing" (which is likely Wallerstein's own) but the sense voiced in Rajchman's reading of Foucault when he suggests that "history doesn't exist" for Foucault—not because it's not real, but because "there is no one thing all our histories are about, even though there may seem nothing about which we cannot write a history."44

Fourth and finally, given everything we have just said, it is clear that just as disciplinary formations are not constituted by objects but by communications (Foucault's "discourses"), neither are they constituted by persons. For Luhmann—and this seems less counterintuitive after revisiting Foucault—the fundamental elements of social systems are not people but communications. In fact, as Dietrich Schwanitz suggests, "The individual human being belongs to each of these functionally differentiated subsystems for only short periods of time with only limited aspects of his person depending on his respective role as a voter, pupil, reader, patient, or litigant. It is his fundamental exclusion from society that allows the occasional re-entry of the individual under particular circumstances... Modern society develops a semantics of individuality that regards the individual as alien, unfamiliar, unpredictable, and free." This means we can say that people can participate in interdisciplinarity even if disciplines can't, only if we are willing to give up the traditional notion of "person." Only, that is, if we become posthumanist.

Locating the Animal of Animal Studies, or Posthumanism

So how does all of this affect our view of animal studies in relation to the question of disciplinarity, especially the disciplinarity of literary and cultural studies? In my view, it means that we should not try to imagine some super-interdiscipline called "animal studies" (an understandable desire, of course, for all who work on cultural studies of nonhuman animals), but rather recognize that it is only in and through our disciplinary specificity that we have something specific and irrepeable to contribute to this "question of the animal" that has recently captured the attention of so many different disciplines: not something accurate to contribute but something specific (and there is a world of difference
between those two claims). What we need, then, is not interdisciplinarity but *multidisciplinarity* or perhaps *transdisciplinarity*—but a transdisciplinarity understood not (to take one recent formulation) as "a critical evaluation of terms, concepts, and methods that transgresses disciplinary boundaries" as a means to a "higher level of reflexivity," one that "accepts the task of making itself transparent by thematizing the conditions of its own speech." Rather, we need to understand transdisciplinarity as a kind of distributed reflexivity necessitated, as we have just seen, by the fact that (by definition) no discourse, no discipline, can make transparent the conditions of its own observations.

In this sense, transdisciplinarity means a distributed network of first- and second-order observers (disciplines) that, precisely by "doing what they do," call into question—and are called into question by—other disciplinary formations. Such is the case, as we saw in the last chapter, in Cora Diamond's suggestion that literature confronts philosophy with the degree to which philosophy's characteristic modes of thinking about our moral responsibilities to animals are in fact evasions or deflections of a traumatic question that in some profound sense defies thought—a trauma that philosophy attempts to mitigate by turning it into a problem of propositional argumentation. Or to take another example, as I argued in chapter 2, literary studies has an important role to play in showing how the theory of language typically relied on in cognitive science—and how that theory is typically related to questions of consciousness and cognition—smuggles back into the category of subjectivity the very Cartesianism that cognitive science says it wants to overcome by means of its resolutely functional mode of analysis.

To say that an object of study will actually be enriched by the ongoing differentiation of disciplines is not, however, to invoke a tepid pluralism—far from it. As Luhmann points out—and here he defines in a nutshell the incoherent epistemological and ideological core of much work in contemporary cultural studies—"the laziest of all compromises, is to agree on 'pluralism.' This both begins and avoids the deconstruction of the distinction between subject and object. We concede to each subject its own way of seeing, its own worldview, its own interpretation, as with the reader of Wolfgang Iser, but only in a framework that at the same time allows for the 'objective' world, text, and so forth." Instead, a better way to imagine some ever more complete or thorough representation of nonhuman animals via interdisciplinatory practice is to recognize, as I have been suggesting, that the enrichment of the object of study via "semantic overburdening" can only happen by means of disciplinarity and its differences. This may be what is (falsely) called "relativism," but it is also what, under the conditions of modernity, is called "knowledge."

Crucial to a posthumanist understanding of disciplinarity, then—and to posthumanism in general, I would argue—is the fundamental principle of "openness from closure" that Luhmann's work helps us theorize: that taking seriously the phenomena of self-reference and autopoietic closure in disciplinary systems leads not to solipsism but, quite the contrary, to the ability for the system to increase environmental contacts and, in the process, produce more environmental complexity for other systems, which in turn challenges other disciplines to change and evolve if they want to remain resonant with their changing environment. This marks an entirely different—because posthumanist—valence from a fundamental assumption endemic to many contemporary discussions of (inter)disciplinarity: that even if disciplines can't transcend disciplinary closure, people can. As one critic writes on behalf of interdisciplinarity and a fairly standard set of desires associated with it, disciplinary practice "becomes a productive rather than a reproductive environment" when, "in the spirit of critical reflection meanings and values of traditional pedagogy can be scrutinized. . . . The intersubjectivity of meaning can be exposed," he continues, "and educational institutions, the classroom, the discipline, and the university can be seen to construct and condition knowledge. In this way literary study, as the study of textuality. . . . reveals the epistemological structures that organize how we know, how our knowledge gets transmitted and accepted, and why and how students receive it."

But as Foucault would surely be the first to point out—and here he would follow in the footsteps of his teacher Louis Althusser's critique of Antonio Gramsci's humanism—such a picture, appealing as it may be, relies on the fantasy of a subject who escapes the constitutive blindness (that is, the contingency and selectivity) that in fact makes knowledge possible. "Critical reflection," in other words, names the ability to pick up and put down disciplinary discourses at will without
being bound by them, to master without being mastered by the finitude of knowledge—all, ironically enough, in the services of ostensibly identifying various forms of finitude that overdetermine disciplinary practice. In reinscribing the familiar figure of the human as the subject of reflection, such a view reproduces an entire set of assumptions and protocols that are not just intellectually but also ideologically specific, as both Pfaul and Rajan (among many others) have pointed out. In so doing, it constitutes the reverse of what I have been trying to derive from the Foucault/Luhmann account of disciplinarity: not the openness from closure that results from taking the self-reference and autopoiesis of disciplinarity seriously, but rather closure from openness (or rather, apparent openness) in the reproduction of a liberal humanist subject who then, on the basis of “reflection,” undertakes various forms of pluralism.

More important for the topic at hand, such a picture of critical consciousness and its ability to rise above disciplinary and discursive finitude actually closes off the human from the nonhuman and thus reinstates the human/animal divide in a far less visible but far more fundamental way, while ostensibly gesturing (but only gesturing) beyond humanism itself.40 And it is the status, structure, and tacit govern-governing set of assumptions of that form of subjectivity—and not just the range of its content and its interests, however putatively progressive, multicultural, or anti-anthropocentric—that must be fully examined. To use Derrida’s terms, it is a question, as we saw in the last chapter, of the precise nature of the “auto-” of the “autobiographical animal,” the concept of “the human” that the human falsely “gives to itself” to then enable its recognition—from a safe ontological distance, as it were—of the nonhuman other in a gesture of self-flattering “benevolence” wholly characteristic of liberal humanism.

As I argued in detail there, equally important for understanding the relationship of disciplinarity to subjectivity that I have been discussing—and this is the point usually overlooked in Derrida’s later work on “the question of the animal”—is that there are two kinds of finitude here under which the “man” of the humanities labors; and, moreover, that the first type (physical vulnerability, embodiment, and eventually mortality) is paradoxically made unavailable, inappropriately, to us by the very thing that makes it available: namely, a second type of “not

being able,” a second type of finitude that we experience in our subject to the radically ahuman technicity of language (understood in the broadest sense of any semiotic system). This last fact, as we have seen, has profound consequences for what we too hastily think of as “our” concepts, our readings, our histories, which are therefore in an important sense not ours at all. If literary and cultural studies are interested in sign systems of all kinds in their formal, material, and semantic aspects (as one would presume them to be), then they must, I am arguing, confront the enormous implications of this fact for their disciplinarity.

What Derrida enables us to formulate—but so does Luhmann, in a different register—is that yes, it is true that what we think of as personhood, knowledge, and so on is inseparable from who “we” are, from our culture, discourses, and disciplines; but at the same time, we are not we; we are not that “auto-” of autobiography that humanism “gives to itself.” As we saw in the previous chapter, equally important for the topic of animal studies is Derrida’s insistence that this second type of finitude—the estranging prostheticity and exteriority of communication—is shared by humans and nonhumans the moment they begin to respond to each other by means of any semiotic system in the most rudimentary sense—an assertion also clearly shared by Luhmann’s unequivocal postulate that problems of autopoietic self-reference do not apply to humans, or to consciousness, or even to biological or organic systems, alone.41

In different registers and with different objectives, then, Derrida, Luhmann, and Foucault help us clarify the point—and the ethical stakes of the point, if we believe Derrida—that many of the confusions surrounding the question of interdisciplinarity stem from the fact that we continue to think the question in terms of persons and “a subject-centered semantics,” that is, precisely, in terms of humanism. The virtue of paying attention to the thinkers I have been discussing is not only do they make it clear that disciplines aren’t persons; they also make it clear that persons aren’t persons, in the sense of the definition of “person” that humanism “gives to itself.” And it is here, at this precise juncture, that animal studies becomes a subset of the larger problematic of posthumanism.

All the foregoing helps to clarify, I hope, two crucial and often misunderstood aspects of posthumanism as I use the term: first, that it
of consciousness and mentation associated with it, but remains tied (as in body language, kinesics, and more general forms of symbolic semiology) to an evolutionary substrate that continues to express itself in human interaction.41

And yet everything I have just said would not be possible—would be literally unthinkable—without readily identifiable models, concepts, terms, and so on (disciplinary developments in information theory, cognitive ethology, semiology, to name just a few) that are distinctly modern disciplinary products with their own particular histories and developments of the sort described by Foucault in _The Order of Things_. Thus we find ourselves in a strange but inescapable loop, in which our ability to understand—more fully and more thickly than humanism—the human depends on "posthumanist" theoretical and methodological innovations that end up revealing, to paraphrase Lyotard, that the posthuman comes both after (chronologically) and before (as its robust material, embodied, and evolutionary condition of possibility) the human of humanism.44 What we find "after" humanism as it were, is what we might call, turning Adorno's famous phrase upside down, not the "preponderance of the object" but the "preponderance of the subject." What I want to locate here, then, is a second crucial and indeed determinative dimension in which the question of posthumanism is central. It is not just, as Neil Badminton and others have rightly observed, that "the 'post' of posthumanism does not (and, moreover, cannot) mark or make an absolute break from the legacy of humanism."45 It also means that while we may share Hayles's view that various visions and versions of the triumphantly disembodied posthuman, such as Hans Moravec's, continue to rely on (indeed imperialize) "a liberal humanist view of the self,"46 we must also recognize that there are liberal humanist ways of engaging in this very critique.

Does this mean, then, that "posthumanism" as I am using the term is simply a thinly veiled synonym for "systems theory" or "deconstruction?" Not at all, as the signal impact of that discipline called science in the context of animal studies ought to make clear. But it does mean (as the quotation from Derrida's "Eating Well" on "scientific knowledge" earlier suggests) that science, though it appears to eschew a subject-centered semantics, can avoid its own form of idealism only if it confronts the fact, as Luhmann puts it, that "science can
no longer comprehend itself as a representation of the world as it is, and must therefore retract its claim of instructing others about the world. It achieves an exploration of possible constructions that can be inscribed in the world and, in so doing, function as forms. This does not mean, of course, that the knowledge thereby produced is worthless or cannot have operational value; on the contrary—as Bruno Latour, for instance, would be the first to suggest—it can have operational value and effectivity only because it is such a reduction of complexity. This means, in turn, that "the break between transcendental idealism and radical constructivism" (67) recognizes the fact of "polycontexturality," to use Gotthard Gunther's term: that is, that the distinctions "true/untrue" and "self-reference/external reference" are not only to be distinguished but also, as Luhmann puts it, "are located at right angles to each other. They have no mutually unbalancing effects" (65).

From this vantage, then, posthumanism can be defined quite specifically as the necessity for any discourse or critical procedure to take account of the constitutive (and constitutively paradoxical) nature of its own distinctions, forms, and procedures—and take account of them in ways that may be distinguished from the reflection and introspection associated with the critical subject of humanism. The "post-" of posthumanism thus marks the space in which the one using those distinctions and forms is not the one who can reflect on their latencies and blind spots while at the same time deploying them. That can only be done, as we have already seen, by another observer, using a different set of distinctions—and that observer, within the general economy of autopoiesis and iterability, need not be human (indeed, from this vantage, never was "human"). It is only on this basis (which is not, strictly speaking, a "basis" at all, but a nonplace, a form of difference) that a first-order observer (the "subject" in humanist parlance) is opened, and unavoidably so, to the alterity of the other: not by "taking thought" or by benevolent reflection but by the very conditions of cognition and communication, conditions that, in their constitutive "blindness," generate the necessity of the other.

This is why even though animal studies may be viewed as in one sense "just another" field, it is, in the sense I have just described, not just another field. On the one hand, it could certainly be seen as what James Chandler calls the latest incarnation of a "subdisciplinary field," one of "a whole array of academic fields and practices" that since the 1970s "have come to be called studies: gender studies, race studies, and cultural studies, of course, but also film studies, media studies, jazz studies"; the list is virtually endless. But for the reasons I have been outlining, I think we must also see animal studies as not just another in the long list of "fill-in-the-blank studies" itemized by Chandler. It's not just that I want to resist the homogenizing force of such a designation, which suggests that what are radically different problems, constituencies, and formations are somehow equivalent; nor is it only because of all the reservations (some of which I noted earlier) that the designation "studies" invites. Rather, the point I want to emphasize—and it is one obscured by the generic moniker of "studies," which occludes the crucial link between the two forms of finitude we examined a moment ago that reside at the heart of animal studies in a uniquely determining way—is that one can engage in a humanist or a posthumanist practice of a discipline, and that fact is crucial to what a discipline can contribute to the field of animal studies.

For example, just because a historian devotes attention to the topic of nonhuman animals—let's say, the awful plight of horses used in combat operations during World War I—doesn't mean that humanism and anthropocentrism aren't being maintained and reproduced in his or her disciplinary practice insofar as the disciplinary subject doing the history remains isolated from the "viral" effects of the second form of finitude, and all its implications, that I discussed earlier. And insofar as that is the case, that disciplinary practice undermines on a second level what looks like an anti-anthropocentric endeavor, because its form of disciplinary subjectivity is founded on a constitutive repression of a less visible—but for that very reason all the more fundamental—bond between human and nonhuman animals as beings who not only live and die as embodied beings, but also communicate with each other in and through a second form of finitude that encompasses the human/animal difference, forming a bond that is all the more powerful because it is "unthinking" and in a fundamental sense unthinkable. So even though—to return to our historian example—your concept of the discipline's external relations to its larger environment is posthumanist in taking seriously the existence of nonhuman subjects and the consequent compulsion to make the discipline respond to the question of nonhuman animals foisted on
it by changes in the discipline's environment, your internal disciplinarity may remain humanist through and through.

We may now, then—to move toward a conclusion—suggest a more overarching schema in which such a procedure might be called "humanist posthumanism," locating itself at one corner of a plane, in which the Y axis denotes external relations (−/+ humanism/anthropocentrism) and the X axis denotes internal disciplinarity (−/+ humanism/anthropocentrism). Such a schema is not meant to be exhaustive, of course, merely indicative; nor does it preclude recognizing that the desirability of a given position in such a schema must be contextualized. (I suggest, for example, that if you are interviewing with the local newspaper about animal overpopulation in your community and you want to win over readers to your point of view, you would do well to gravitate toward the internal disciplinary discourse that characterizes the humanist end of the spectrum.) In this view, the designation "humanist posthumanism" would apply as well, as I have argued elsewhere, to the Kantian animal rights philosophy of Tom Regan, the utilitarian animal liberation position of Peter Singer, or the capabilities approach of Martha Nussbaum in *Frontiers of Justice.* Meanwhile, at the diagonally opposed corner of this schema, "posthumanist humanism" would consist of being posthumanist in internal disciplinarity, but humanist in the continued external insistence on the ethical and, broadly speaking, ontological efficacy of the human/animal divide. Here—to stay for the moment only with figures about whom I have written—one might think of the work of a Richard Rorty or a Slavoj Žižek. For example, Rorty's strident antifoundationalism, his critique of both philosophical realism and idealism as shared forms of "representationalism," his rejection of the view of philosophy as "the mirror of nature," surely kicks the props out from under the humanist subject of knowledge in its disciplinary practice. Yet Rorty's liberalism finds in such a deconstruction of philosophical representationalism no charge to rethink the hierarchy of human/animal, as animals remain excluded (as anything but, presumably, derivative or "indirect" subjects of justice) from the liberal "conversation" about political ends to which philosophy for Rorty is clearly subordinated.

As for Žižek, his well-known attacks on liberal multiculturalism in general and on neopragmatism in particular (which are surely right as far as they go) would seem to separate him decisively from a figure such as Rorty. Žižek's disciplinary antihumanism would be located not in his antifoundationalism but rather precisely in his *attack* on antifoundationalism's evasion of the more fundamental fact, identified by Lacan, of "truth as contingent"—not as "constructed," or "relative," in the sense associated with neopragmatism but as the radical senselessness of the Lacanian Real, which (as Lacan famously put it) "resists symbolization absolutely." And yet to realize, as I have argued elsewhere, that in Žižek "the animal" is always already simply a metonymy either for the Lacanian Real or, in the case of pets, for the Symbolic, is to realize that although Žižek maintains a resolutely antihumanist account of the relationship between thought, psychic formations, and language or the Symbolic, he is nevertheless humanist and anthropocentric in his inability to rethink what I have called the "distribution" of subjectivity across species lines. As for Foucault, his account of disciplinarity, and his own disciplinary practice, would appear to be posthumanist for reasons I have already discussed at some length. Yet Foucault's external relations to humanism are difficult to assess at this point—not only because of some striking differences between his earlier work (my focus...
here) and his later investigations of "the care of the self" (in which a certain humanism returns to the fore, if we believe Žižek), but also because we are just beginning to be able to understand the full implications of Foucault's concepts of biopower and biopolitics for trans-species relations.

As for the category of humanist humanism, that perhaps needs little elaboration, because nearly all our social and political institutions and most of our public intellectuals take such a formation for granted (I might cite here—again among those I have written about—Habermas, Rawls, and Luc Ferry). And that leaves posthumanist posthumanism, which has to do with understanding—and understanding the consequences of—the very redefinition of what humanistic knowledge is after the disciplinary subjectivity at its core, the notion of the human that it "gives to itself," has been rewritten along the lines I have been exploring here in the work of Derrida and Luhmann (and elsewhere in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, and Maturana and Varela). In short, the external or ahuman forces that historicists and formalists alike in literary and cultural studies presume to constitute the always already post-of their posthumanism (political institutions, economic infrastructures, geopolitical and strategic configurations and events, but also social institutions and conventions such as art forms and their genres and media, modes of domesticity and intersubjectivity, and the like) must always be conjugated within a second kind of externality and ahumanity—a second kind of finitude that, as Derrida helps us see, fatefully binds us to nonhuman being in general, and within that to nonhuman animals, as the very condition of possibility for what we know and for sharing it with another. It is, in other words, a question of locating the "animality" of animal studies—in this case, I would wager, where one might least expect it.

5 Learning from Temple Grandin
Animal Studies, Disability Studies, and Who Comes after the Subject

Of the various contemporary fields of interdisciplinary cultural studies that emerged over the past decade, two of the most philosophically ambitious and ethically challenging are animal studies and disability studies. Both are often taken to be the latest chapters in the academic assimilation of the so-called new social movements (civil rights, feminism, environmentalism, gay and lesbian activism, and so on) that have fundamentally reshaped the study of society and culture over the past thirty years or more. As we saw in some detail in chapter 3, part of what makes animal studies significant (and disability studies is no different in this respect) is that it poses fundamental challenges, as these earlier movements have, to a model of subjectivity and experience drawn from the liberal justice tradition and its central concept of rights, in which ethical standing and civic inclusion are predicated on rationality, autonomy, and agency. That agency, in turn, is taken to be expressive of the intentionality of one who is a member of what Kant called "the community of reasonable beings"—an intentionality that is taken to be more or less transparent to the subject itself.

Part of my aim in this chapter is to extend the argument of chapter 3 to the question of disability, with an eye toward gleaning what animal studies and disability studies have to teach each other about who or what comes "after" the subject as it is modeled in liberal humanism. Both animal studies and disability studies show us something about the limitations of this model and in doing so call on us to rethink questions of ethical and political responsibility within what I have been characterizing as a fundamentally posthumanist set of coordinates. In the wake of this "after," new lines of empathy, affinity, and respect between different forms of life, both human and nonhuman, may be
in the context of the rise of biopower and the entire edifice of "health" under modernity, as Foucault has. But from Derrida's vantage, Foucault's historicism, although it focuses on the production of the subject by external agencies, is not sufficiently aware of the production and nontransparency of his own discourse. To put it another way—and this has direct relevance for the practice of ethics—what is at stake is not only the entanglement of the subject in the means of her own sociohistorical production but the fact that the process remains for Foucault "accountable" (to use Derrida's phrase), hence leading Derrida to repeat in Limited Inc a charge he makes elsewhere: that Foucault's archaeology shares "the metaphysical premises of the Anglo-Saxon—and fundamentally moralist—theory of the performative, of speech acts or discursive events" (39). See also in this connection Derrida's engagement of Scarle's comment in a newspaper article that "Michel Foucault once characterized Derrida's prose style to me as 'obscurantisme terroriste.'" Limited Inc, 158n12.


92. Derrida, Limited Inc, 70.


95. For a brilliant exploration of the technicity and mechanicality of language in relation to prosthetics and the question of technology, see David Wills's Dorsality: Thinking Back through Technology and Politics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), and his earlier volume Prosthesis (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995).


100. Derrida, Limited Inc, 130.

101. Derrida addresses this pointedly in "The Animal That Therefore I Am" when he compares our industrialized and systematized use of animals in factory farming, biomedical research, and much else to "the worst cases of genocide" (394–95).


103. Diamond, "Injustice and Animals," 142.


2. Two well-known studies here are Bill Readings, The University In Ruins; and, even better Gregg Lambert, Report to the Academy.


4. Though it should be noted, as Gerald Graff showed long ago in his invaluable study Professing Literature, that the coherence of the discipline of literary studies in the United States has always been problematic, and it has only been exacerbated, he argues, by the unwillingness to seriously engage the taken-for-granted organization of the field by national literatures and historical periods.


7. Marjorie Levinson, "What Is New Formalism?" PMLA 122, no. 2 (March
of fundamental structures and dynamics already present in and as modernity. See, for example, "Why Does Society Describe Itself as Postmodern?" in Observing Complexity: Systems Theory and Postmodernity, ed. William Rasch and Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 35–49.


30. Ibid., 64.


32. Luhmann, Social Systems, 71.


34. Rajchman, Michel Foucault, 55.


38. Luhmann, Observations on Modernity, 27.


40. Fish's retort in his insightful (and predictably impish) essay "Being Interdisciplinary Is So Very Hard to Do" to the view represented in the Peck quotation is very close to Luhmann's own position. As Fish puts it, the problem with the "strategy of self-consciousness" is this: "Can you simultaneously operate within a practice and be self-consciously in touch with the conditions that enable it? The answer could be yes only if you could achieve a reflective distance from those conditions while still engaging in that practice; but once the conditions enabling a practice become the object of analytic attention... you are engaging in another practice (the practice of reflecting on the conditions of a practice you are not now practicing)" (20). The advantage of Luhmann's theorization of the problem is that it even more rigorously separates disciplinarity from persons, consciousness from communication, and enables us to take the further step discussed earlier of articulating semantic over-burdening and increasing complexity as a motor of disciplinary change—a move that Fish's account of disciplinarity is unable to make. Fish's observations on disciplinarity are extended in his book Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

41. Luhmann contends that if we "define autopoeisis as a formal general system building using self-referential closure, we would have to admit that there are nonliving autopoietic systems." Indeed, this is the key postulate of his later adaptation of the concept of autopoesis to social systems. "The Autopoiesis of Social Systems," in Essays on Self-Reference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 2. Also crucial in this connection is Luhmann's insistence of autopoietic closure and the difference of consciousness and communication, psychic systems and social systems, a detailed discussion of which may be found in my essay "Meaning as Event-Machine, or Systems Theory and 'The Reconstruction of Deconstruction,'" in Emergence and Embodiment: New Essays on Second-Order Systems Theory, ed. Bruce Clarke and Mark Hansen (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008).

42. N. Katherine Hayles, How We Became Posthuman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2.

43. I discuss these issues in some detail in the section "Disarticulating Language and Species: Maturana and Varela (and Derrida)" in "In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion," in Zoologies: The Question of the Animal, ed. Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1–57.


45. Ibid., 21.

46. Hayles, How We Became Posthuman, 287.


48. "Once we understand the crisis of modern science as a becoming-visible of its simplifications, of its technical character, of its functioning without any knowledge of the world," Luhmann writes, "then it is conceivable that this insight could be channeled back into science, to a greater extent that has
hitherto been the case, and become the object of normal research” (71)—as Pierre Bourdieu has attempted to do in the lectures published at the end of his career as Science of Science and Reflexivity, trans. Richard Nice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).


51. For a more detailed discussion of Rorty and the problem of the liberal ethics, see my Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the “Outside” (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), esp. 12–22.

52. One could cite any number of texts in this connection, but see, for example, Slavoj Žižek, Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), “Introduction” and “The Blind Spot of Liberalism,” 211.

53. Žižek, Tarrying with the Negative, 4.

54. Hence Žižek undertakes simply an inversion of the schema of the humanist subject, rather than a fundamental rethink of the schematics of subjectivity along a nonhierarchical, nondialectical, non-anthropocentric plane. The human for Žižek is not the “subject who knows” but rather, in this inversion, *alone* “the subject who does not know”—a non-knowledge, usually explored by Žižek under the themes of trauma, that never arises as a problem or possibility for animals. For a fuller discussion, see Cary Wolfe and Jonathan Ellner, “Subject to Sacrifice: Ideology, Psychoanalysis, and the Discourse of Species in Jonathan Demme’s The Silence of the Lambs,” in Wolfe, Animal Rites, 97–121. Directly relevant here too is Derrida’s discussion of Lacan and the animal in “And Say the Animal Responded?” in Wolfe, Zeontologies, 121–46. For a detailed discussion and critique of Žižek’s notion of “Truth as contingent,” see Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, Contingency, Universality, Hegemony: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left (London: Verso, 2000).


5. Learning from Temple Grandin

1. I refer here and in the chapter’s title to the well-known collection of essays Who Comes After the Subject? ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), which includes Derrida’s semi-

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56. discussion “Eating Well,” which figures prominently in several chapters of this book.

2. See in particular the concluding chapter of Animal Rites, “Postmodern Ethics, the Question of the Animal, and Posthumanist Theory.”

3. I am indebted to Richard Nash for pointing out the link between Robert’s case and disability.


8. One could cite any number of texts in connection with the so-called linguistic turn in twentieth-century philosophy, but the works of Richard Rorty are especially lucid in describing this transition. For a useful overview, see Richard Rorty, ed., The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).


10. As she points out, an even more striking experiment in this regard was one done by NASA involving commercial airline pilots. During simulated landings, 25 percent of the pilots simply did not register a large commercial airplane parked in the middle of the runway, and literally landed right on top of it. As Grandin observes after seeing photographs of the experiment, “What’s interesting is that if you’re not a pilot, the parked plane is obvious. You can’t miss it, and you don’t have to be autistic to see it, either. I’d bet the ranch that the only people who could possibly miss that plane would have to be commercial pilots” (Animals in Translation, 25).

11. It probably goes without saying that Derrida’s point would be that any visual space, in being seen, is also and at the same time constituted by blindness, because any given space is constituted by a semiotic system constituted by difference, the interplay of presence and absence, and so on. In other words: seeing that you didn’t see the woman in the gorilla suit will in no way „despatialize” the visual field.
