

Entangled Existence: A Posthumanist Perspective on Biopolitics and Human-Animal Subjectivity

Swapnajeet Das  

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Abstract

The paper employs a posthumanist perspective to deconstruct traditional humanist discourses that have legitimized the subjugation of nonhuman animals and deprived them of ethical consideration by denying them subjectivity. These traditional humanist discourses are not only speciesist but also ableist and racist. They have created not only the categories of human and animal, but also human and subhuman. This raises important questions: What does it mean to be an animal? Does it imply being subhuman or something entirely opposed to being human? What does it mean to be subhuman? Does it equate to being an animal or something different? Underscoring these concerns, the paper seeks to provide a posthumanist perspective on biopolitics, which transcends the conventional anthropocentric understanding of the concept. It focuses on the biopolitical condition of animals. However, by doing so, it does not disregard human issues. Instead, it aims to illustrate an entanglement of animal issues with human issues, in order to advance the conception of a post-anthropocentric and posthumanist continuum of entanglement in which humans could be viewed as sharing common traits of vulnerability with nonhuman animals. Furthermore, the paper discusses how biopolitics directed at humans differs from biopolitics directed at animals. The distinction does not create division and difference but highlights a continuum of continuities, as the mechanisms deployed in the biopolitical management of human lives influence and, in turn, are influenced by those deployed in the biopolitical management of animal lives. Ultimately, it offers a nuanced understanding of biopolitics by redefining bio-*zoe* relations, which encourages humans to reflect on their own biopolitical condition by speculating on the biopolitical conditions of nonhuman animals.

Keywords: Animal Studies; Posthumanism; Subjectivity; Biopolitics; Human-Animal Interconnections



Introduction

Engaging with philosophical debates on ‘human exceptionalism’ and animal subjectivity, the study investigates how the biopolitical exploration of the ‘animal question’ significantly contributes to the posthumanist milieu, making it more inclusive, dynamic, and multifaceted. This inquiry necessitates theoretical frameworks that trace the convergence of posthumanism and animal studies, which will provide a critique of speciesism, racism, and ableism and their interwoven dynamics by problematizing the notion of an essential human nature. Cary Wolfe, in the introduction to his influential work *What is Posthumanism?* (2010), addresses this aspect by ascertaining how “the ‘animal question’ is part of the larger question of posthumanism” (xxii). By focusing on how embodiment, embeddedness, and materiality shape and, in turn, are shaped by mind and consciousness, he indicates the material and embodied nature of the evolution of species in which homo sapiens is not ontologically separate from other living creatures (120). In a similar vein, Donna Haraway, in *When Species Meet* (2012), asserts, “to be one is always to become with many” (4), emphasizing that humans are not autonomous beings who encounter nonhuman animals as separate species; instead, humans and nonhuman animals are companion species who have co-evolved with and have been co-constituted by each other within an enmeshed, entwined, and entangled network. These perspectives suggest that the field of critical posthumanism is closely intertwined with animal studies, as both seek to challenge and deconstruct the ideals of anthropocentrism that have legitimized human superiority through asserting human exceptionalism while relegating other species to subordinate categories, and reinforced the binaries of human and nonhuman animal, which have historically dominated human epistemological frameworks. These epistemological frameworks have made the mistreatment of animals so normalized that humans do not see “the violence (against animals) as violence, the torture as torture, the killing (of them) as killing, or the exploitation as exploitation” (Weisberg 218). What critical posthumanism emphasizes is that human beings, in the contemporary era of entangled social, political, economic, environmental, and technological dimensions, need to rethink, reimagine, and

reconceptualize their relationship with all the nonhuman beings and entities they share their world with, and to reconsider how to strive for a co-evolution through ethics-driven co-existence. The evolutionary interconnection between humans and nonhuman animals is extremely essential, yet it often falls short of fostering this sense of co-existence. This failure stems from the prevailing belief that humans, having co-evolved with nonhuman animals in symbiosis over the millennia, have somehow transcended their counterparts, with whom they no longer share any affinity. The perception not only undermines the importance of human-animal interconnectedness but also perpetuates a dangerous hierarchical system that diminishes the intrinsic value of nonhuman life.

In *The Open* (2004), Agamben challenges this hierarchical system by revealing the very constructed nature of the human and by contending that the very distinction between human and animal is produced and maintained as a ‘physio-political’ operation, which constitutes a constant tension between humanity and animality, through the animalization of the human—act of rendering one as animal and thereby depriving them of human status, and the humanization of the animal—act of rendering one as human, who needs to keep eradicating all traces of the animal. For Agamben,

Man is not a biologically defined species, nor is he a substance given once and for all; he is, rather, a field of dialectical tensions always already cut by internal caesurae that every time separates—at least virtually—‘anthropophorous’ animality and the humanity which takes bodily form in it. (12)

This tension between animality and humanity, according to him, results in a fracture, which, however, occurs not between different species but within humans themselves, creating an internal division between the ‘man-animal’ and the ‘animal-man’. Through this division, humans separate themselves from the ‘animal’—more than a separate species from the human, but rather the nonhuman part of the human, the unexplored zone or archaic phase of life (Esposito 155). This infers that it is only humans (in a state of constantly becoming), ‘non-animal’ beings, who can lose their

bios (political life)—which defines their humanity, and may be reduced to *zoe* (bare life), “an inhuman status of extreme vulnerability, bordering on extinction” (Braidotti, “Posthuman Affirmative Politics”)—which is emblematic of animal existence. The gap between *bios* and *zoe* is internal to human existence, which puts humans at the perennial risk of degenerating into an animal being. Unlike humans, animals, nonhuman beings, already exist as *zoe* without *bios*, and therefore, the reduction of their *bios* is deemed not possible in the first place. Although this view is anti-anthropocentric, which considers humans not as superior beings but as manufactured products of power, it fails to provide a truly posthumanist perspective that offers the idea of an inter-species entanglement. It mainly focuses on the mechanisms that constrain and reduce humans by controlling their *bios*, but overlooks the mechanisms that contribute to the subjectivation and subjugation of animals, which involve elevating them from mere *zoe* to *bios*. In this regard, an investigation of how the reduction of *bios* to *zoe* and the elevation of *zoe* to *bios* are interconnected within a complex animalizing-humanizing biopolitical matrix offers a more profound posthumanist perspective. It will show the permeable boundaries between humans and animals, emphasizing their interrelation in terms of how they face a shared vulnerability imposed by “familiar (as well as distinctive) patterns of exclusion, exploitation and oppression” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 96), which facilitates a more provocative evocation of the importance of ethics-driven co-existence. To perceive this sense of co-existence in a critical way, the study aims to deconstruct and re-evaluate some predominant anthropocentric views embedded in traditional humanist discourses, which have constituted and consolidated ontological and epistemological, political and biological rifts between humans and nonhuman animals, and provide a biopolitical understanding of subjectivity, which confronts these established rifts.

Descartes-Derrida Dimensions: Transition from Traditional Humanist to Posthumanist Perspective on Animals

It is often found that those living beings who are denied and deprived of subjectivity become exposed to the most systematic and extreme forms of violence

(Stanescu 183). Traditional humanist discourses, which see subjectivity as exclusive only to humans and propound that all nonhuman animals lack it, have led to the inconsiderate suppression of animals and the justification of their mistreatment. Nonhuman animals have been deprived of subjectivity by claims such as—animals are external to themselves, and so far, are ‘things’, their souls have as their object not itself but something external (Hegel 56–58); for animals, life activity is their existence, and they do not possess any conscious will to separate their being from it (Marx 73); animals are ‘poor’ in the world, and they cannot die ‘properly,’ they merely cease to exist (Heidegger 267). In opposing these views that deprive nonhuman animals of subjectivity, Tom Regan argues that animals, like humans, are “subjects-of-a-life” who possess beliefs and desires, memories and perception, a sense of the future and the past, which enable them to have an emotional life imbued with feelings of pleasure and pain (243). Regan’s view indicates that it is imperative to employ non-anthropocentric “practices of storytelling, representation, visualization, communication, and, meaning-making [...]” (Karkulehto et al. 6) to explore the complex attributes of nonhuman animals, which critique the belief that humans and nonhuman animals differ not only in degree but also in kind and instead, suggest that they have a lot of ontological, biological, and psychological similarities despite their morphological differences. This view challenges the binary conceptions of the human/animal distinction endorsed by the ‘Cartesian philosophy of subjecthood’, which have contributed to the structured practices of exempting nonhuman animals from ethical consideration.

René Descartes, who introduced the doctrine of mind-body dualism that human beings are largely divided into two distinct realms—the “thinking thing” (*res cogitans*) and the “extended thing” (*res extensa*), proposed a mechanistic view of nonhuman animals as ‘non-rational’ and ‘quite-not sentient’ beings. He upholds the proposition that animals are essentially ‘material automata’. This implies that although animals are alive and capable of sensations, they are essentially indistinguishable from machines (Calarco 9) and their acts are determined by the mere disposition of their organs (Thomas 1010). Additionally, he also argues that animals lack not only reason

but also sensory consciousness and sensitive souls (Thomas 1001). He contrasts animals with humans, describing the latter's soul as entirely independent of the body, which is not bound to die with it, because of their preoccupation with the immaterial power of reasoning (Hatfield 407). This reliance on reasoning as a criterion for possessing a soul posits problematic implications for the humanist perspective on humans as well. For instance, a person with cognitive impairments who is unable to do reasoning might be considered devoid of a soul—which contradicts the notion of the immortality of the human soul. Considering this, the treatment of nonhuman animals could be seen as paralleled with that of humans who are viewed as lesser, weaker, subordinate, or substandard (Karkulehto et al. 3). It establishes a close link between the relationships humans have with nonhuman animals and issues such as ableism, slavery, sexism, and racism. This is noted by Peter Singer in *Animal Liberation or Animal Rights?* (2014), “[n]or can we say that all human beings have rights just because they are members of the species *homo sapiens*—that is speciesism, a form of favouritism for our own that is unjustifiable as racism” (4).

Descartes's strong emphasis on reason as a 'universal instrument' that functions as a determining factor for subjectivity shows a prevailing preference for the cognitive immaterial faculties in accessing the corporeal material aspects over the corporeal material faculties in forming the cognitive immaterial dimension. In other words, he gives too much importance to understanding how the body is 'embrained', while ignoring how the mind is embodied. He views human beings as composites of both the cognitive and the corporeal. In contrast, he claims that animals possess only the corporeal, suggesting that their behaviours during injury are merely automatic physical reactions rather than indications of genuine feelings. This leads to the conjecture that animals do not experience pain in the same way that human beings do. Animals' inability to articulate their experiences through words, signs, or symbols, like humans (Erdenk 205), leads Descartes to conclude that they do not possess sentience, minds, or exhibit reason or intellect (Hatfield 419). Descartes's mechanistic conception of animals, which reduces nonhuman creatures to 'objects just with motion' devoid of interiority, is not only anthropocentric but also ableist, as it denies

both nonhuman animals and human beings with cognitive deformities the capacity for feelings and experiences. In this context, Matthew Calarco in *Thinking Through Animals* (2015) observes that if possessing language, rationality, or moral agency becomes a quintessential characteristic of humans, then those humans who lack such capabilities will not be seen as differently human but rather as less than human (38).

The transition from the dominance of the Cartesian doctrine, to a posthuman philosophy concerning nonhuman animals necessitates the recognition that human beings have not been able to fully comprehend animals in their diversity and complexity. Hence, it is essential to redefine nonhuman animals, emphasizing their agency, autonomy, and attributes, without reducing them to entities subservient to humans. Derrida's deconstructive engagement with the 'animal question' provides a posthumanist theoretical hinge through which humanist epistemologies of species difference collapse. In his work *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), Derrida addresses the 'animal question,' stressing the need to recognize their agency and subjectivity, which have often been overlooked or rejected in traditional humanist discourses. He engages in exploring whether animals can gaze at humans the way humans gaze at animals, and how humans, while 'naked,' would feel if they came to discover themselves being seen by the eyes of an animal 'other'. In this case, a "discomfiture of specularity" occurs where the human-beholder of the initial gaze loses their composure as s/he feels a "reflex of shame" (Boisseron 106), while appearing "in front of the insistent gaze of the animal" (Derrida 4). This gaze unveils a penetrating yet perplexing intelligence of animals, which is uninterpretable and unreadable, and can unsettle humans, exposing their own animality. Derrida's deconstructive approach here reverses the traditional relationship of human dominance of animal 'other' by mechanisms of speculation and speech through recognizing the capacity of (counter)speculation and the strength of 'speechlessness' in animals.

Derrida also has a problem with the word 'animal'. According to him, "the Animal" is a homogenizing term invented by humans, which suggests as if "all nonhuman living things" that "man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbours,

or his brothers” might be “grouped within the common sense of this ‘commonsense’” (34). Dissatisfied with the homogenizing effect of the concept ‘animal,’ Derrida has coined the portmanteau word “*animot*,”¹ which resists the homogenization of animal ‘other’ into a generic living species through the act of naming, and insists on the presence of their plurality that defies “the single figure of an animality that is simply opposed to humanity” (Derrida 47). By deconstructing the very category of ‘animal,’ and revealing its instability, and providing the theory of ‘animal gaze,’² Derrida has gestured towards a more dynamic conceptualization of animals and their complex subjectivity. The recognition of the gaze obliges humans to respond to the animal’s address, putting their self-definition as the only species that can look, think, and speak into question. In this way, Derrida’s approach towards nonhuman animals has thickened, deepened, and complicated the simplified distinction between humans and animals, by unveiling the constructed nature of the animal category that has been constituted over centuries by representations made by humanist discourses, which, in turn, have naturalized several types of exploitative mechanisms of the disciplinary and regulatory anthropocentric political system. However, within this anthropocentric system, it is not only nonhuman animals—victims of speciesism, but also human ‘others’—victims of racism, sexism, and ableism, who become subjected to subjugation. As Derrida contends, “traditional forms of treatment of the animal have been turned upside down by the joint developments of zoological, ethological, biological, and genetic forms of knowledge” (25). The “Genetic experimentation, artificial insemination, manipulations of the genome, and industrial meat production” that have been causing hormonal, genetic, chemical, physiognomic, and mechanical violence to animal life for the past two centuries (26) have also posed threats to human life and may pose more severe threats in the future. This shared situation of subjection of both humans and animals to the powerful dispositives of modernity advances a posthumanist reconceptualization of biopolitics as a multispecies apparatus of governance, which offers critical insights into the complexities of human-animal interconnections.

Posthumanist Perspective on Biopolitics and Human-Animal Interconnections

Humans have often been understood in comparison to animals, yet the intricate interrelations between them are frequently overlooked and underestimated. The complexity of how human lives and those of nonhuman animals are interconnected in intricate ways is overshadowed by the overemphasis on what sets them apart. Aristotle, in his book *Politics*, addresses both these aspects, namely, what connects humans and animals and what distinguishes them, though he focuses more elaborately on the latter. He famously states that “man by nature is a political animal” (5), which prompts a critical consideration: if man is a political animal, then what would the analogical status of nonhuman animals be like? Aristotle’s framing leads us to question whether nonhuman animals could be non-political biological beings. In other words, he implies whether *bios* is a way of living proper only to humans, which enables them to engage in sophisticated political substance and transcend *zoe*, the simple biological act of existing, while nonhuman animals exist as mere *zoe* and lead an absolutely biological-natural life devoid of political relevance. In this regard, the fact that biology is not separate from politics but is inseparably intertwined with it makes the complete separation of *bios* from *zoe* impossible. The simple, bare life actually emerges from the beginning as formed by politics that pushes it beyond and beneath itself (Esposito 44). Life and politics essentially evolve as two inseparable, mutually constitutive components of an indivisible whole, gaining significance from their interrelationships (Esposito 45). Concerned with this insight, Aristotle maintains the similarity between humans and animals by proposing that the political is a biological feature humans share with animals. But, at the same time, he elevates the status of humans to a ‘higher degree’ by equating their faculty of language with the ability of reasoning that equips them with the sensibility to make distinctions between good and evil, just and unjust (6). In this way, Aristotle treats humans not as transcendent beings completely separated from animals; instead, he considers the capacity of reasoning or ‘logos’ through language as an attribute unique to humans, which does not disconnect but rather elevates them from animals. In essence, he foregrounds that biological features constitute both humans and animals as political beings, but

humans' additional capacity of speech makes them 'more political' than nonhuman animals. This is why Aristotle seems to posit that "man is more of a political animal" than "any other gregarious animals" (5). What it implies is a graded scale of political engagement rather than a binary divide between political and non-political beings. This less emphasized aspect of Aristotle's argument suggests that the *bios* of humans is elevated from yet also embedded in *zoe*, and the *zoe* of animals is not excluded from the realm of politics. Both humans and nonhuman animals are biological beings, and their biological qualities are pervaded, grasped, and penetrated by politics. This raises the question, 'What does it mean for humans and nonhuman animals to have a body or be a body that is governed by politics?' According to Cora Diamond, the awareness of being a living body evokes a sense of being exposed to vulnerability that humans share with nonhuman animals (22). It directs the present discussion to a posthumanist understanding of biopolitics, which focuses on how the lives of humans and those of nonhuman animals are entangled with each other within a complex web of dissymmetrical yet negotiable power-knowledge relations (Chrulew 235).

With the rise of modernity and the predominance of modern mechanisms, the distinction between biological life (*zoe*) and political life (*bios*) collapses more evidently than ever, and politics merges with biology and becomes what Michel Foucault has called 'biopolitics'. Foucault has developed the concepts of biopolitics and biopower to illustrate how the process of deploying polite yet pervasive technologies of power, including managing and regulating the actions of individuals and optimizing and extorting their capacities, is endorsed by 'modern' governing systems to establish their control over the 'human' population that becomes both "an object of analysis" and "a target of intervention" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 26). It is observed that while for Aristotle, man's additional capacity for a political existence separates him from animals; for Foucault, 'modern' man is reducible to the status of animals as biopolitics "places his existence as a living being in question" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 143). In other words, humans who had been considered 'political beings' and given higher status in the Aristotelian ethos can now be seen as 'biopolitical beings' who are reducible to the state of animals in the Foucauldian doctrine. Foucault

suggests that the linguistic privilege of humans does not indicate their sovereignty but rather only condemns them infinitely (Chrulew 224). It means that within the biopolitical framework, humans are governed at the level of the body, despite their association with abstraction. As a result, humans seem to be put in a perpetual process of proving themselves distinguishable from animals by exhibiting attributes that are ‘apparently’ absent in animals, through which they can gain and maintain their ‘human’ subjectivity. ‘Animal’ instinct in humans becomes an emblem for their subjugation and descent into the state of animals. In order to be considered ‘human,’ humans have to be willing to risk their own lives, consciously choose the possibility of their own death, and cut the animal essence from within themselves (Stanescu 180). Only by transcending and transforming the ‘anthropophorous animal’ that supports them, humans become capable of terminating their own animality (Agamben 12). What it suggests is that the absence/presence of animality lies at the very core of biopolitics, and the discourse of animality is a powerful mechanism of biopower, through which it can (re)establish a connection between humans and animals (who are generally considered mere naked, unprotected *zoe* and thus ‘killable’), and differentiate between ‘killable’ humans and ‘non-killable’ humans, and organize the killing of those ‘killable’ human individuals or communities accordingly, without being held accountable. Importantly, the status of ‘killable’ and ‘non-killable’ subjects is not fixed; it varies depending on specific contexts, and thus, every subject remains vulnerable to being categorized as ‘killable’. Interestingly, despite possessing the right to kill and eradicate life, biopower always presents itself as “a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 137). In effect, biopower engages with the deployment of violence but institutionalizes and normalizes it to the point of making it invisible to all but the victims (Weisberg 219). Underscoring this paradoxical logic of biopower, which ensures its subjects’ continued existence by making them ‘categorizable’ as ‘extinguishable,’ Foucault asks, “[h]ow could [bio]power exercise its highest prerogatives by putting people to death, when its main role was to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order?”

(138). The question helps us understand that the potential of biopolitics lies in explicitly shaping lives through the implicit threat of taking lives.

Foucault discusses this ‘Janus-faced’ nature of biopower more elaborately in “Society Must Be Defended” (1976). He argues that biopower intends to both “make live” and “let die” to create a “homeostasis” that requires the multiplicity of the population to be “dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and, if needed, be punished” and eliminated (241–242), and individuals to be conglomerated into a population whose ratio of births to deaths, rate of reproduction, and fertility efficiency are measured and controlled (243). It shows that biopower works through a dialectical process of ‘individualizing the masses’ that “centres on the body, produces individualizing effects, and manipulates the body as a source of forces that have been rendered both useful and docile” (249) and ‘massifying the individuals’ that “brings together the mass effects characteristic of a population, which tries to control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass” (249). Though biopower seems to be more focused on “making live”, Foucault’s intriguing question, “[h]ow [...] is it possible for [...] [biopower] to kill, to call for deaths, to demand deaths, to give the order to kill [...]?” (254) indicates its potency of “letting die”. This “letting die” aspect of biopolitics is not just about passively letting certain individuals or groups die, but is an organized, structured means of oppression and violence that actively participates in the extermination of those who are unfit for ‘care’ or misfit beyond control. In this way, by constructing death as the mechanism for life’s contrastive reproduction, biopolitics continually hovers on the threatening verge of transitioning into ‘thanatopolitics’³ (Esposito 39, 98).

Contemporary regimes of neoliberal biopower function through the logic of “making live” and “letting die” for both human and animal lives alike (Vint 452). This highlights the dual nature of biopolitics, which aims to enhance lives while simultaneously exposing them to the point of being deemed disposable or dead. Thus, in the present time, every living being, including humans and nonhuman animals alike, situated within socio-political governmental systems, can be seen as a subject within the purview of biopolitics, whose lives are “shaped and controlled by modes

of biopower that designate ways of living and dying” (Vint 444). The framework of biopolitics governs its subjects through the paradoxical principles of ‘care’ and control, where this ‘care’ is not an innocent means of just ensuring well-being but a disguised form of control that operates through regulation, instrumentalization, and domination. At times, care and control function simultaneously, and at other times, control may eliminate care. This implies that those who are capable of control are cared for, and those who are incapable of control are castigated or eliminated. The way biopolitics treats its human subjects seems quite comparable to how animals are treated under human governance. Thus, it can be stated that biopolitics actually renders the status of human subjects to that of animals. Cary Wolfe, in *Before the Law* (2013), observes, “[t]he practices of modern biopolitics have forged themselves in the common subjection and management of both human and animal bodies” (45). For him,

To live under biopolitics is to live in a situation in which we are all always already (potential) ‘animals’ before the law—not just nonhuman animals according to zoological classification, but any group of living beings that is so framed. (10)

What Wolfe’s view suggests is that biopolitics cuts across species borders and intersects multi-species bodies. As a result, all subjects within the ambit of biopolitics could be seen as ‘biopolitical animals’. It not only inflicts a blow to species supremacy, but also destabilizes the notion of essentially exceptional and exceptionally essential human nature—*bios*, as decisively distinguished from the life of nonhuman animals—*zoe* (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 65). The *zoe/bios* dialectics of biopolitical animals move beyond the simple human/animal divide and place both humans and animals in an ever-shifting transposition. In the case of human subjects, they seem to descend from ‘political animals’ to ‘biopolitical animals’. But, in the case of animals, they seem to ‘apparently’ ascend from ‘biological beings’ to ‘biopolitical beings’. Although both humans and nonhuman animals alike are ‘biopolitical animals’ within the biopolitical sphere, the distinction between how biopower is directed at human subjects and how it is directed at nonhuman animals is a crucial concern from a posthumanist

perspective because it challenges the traditional understanding of biopolitics itself, which delineates the complex condition of humans as governable subjects, while avoids focusing on animals by relegating them to mere manageable objects. In other words, while the traditional biopolitical understanding is limited to analyzing how every human subject is a potential animal, a posthumanist biopolitical perspective also encourages an exploration of how every animal is a potential ‘human-like-subject’.

Most of the accounts that attempt to underscore the lives of nonhuman animals generally demonstrate them as merely vulnerable, mechanized, objectified, and subjugated bodies that become targets of human violence (Chrulew 223). Though there can be no objection to this argument with respect to several cases, the status of animals, however, is not that simple but is quite more complex than it appears to be. According to Rosi Braidotti, “[a]nimals are caught in a double bind: on the one hand, they are more than ever the object of inhuman exploitation; on the other hand, they benefit from residual forms of reparative humanization” (*The Posthuman* 76). It means that while animals are subjected to modern mechanistic systems of hyper-exploitation that treat them as mere resources or commodities, they also receive selective forms of care aimed at mitigating their ‘unnecessary’ suffering, which is crucial for aggravating their productive value. This paradoxical situation of animals reflects both a promise and a peril for a multi-species management within the new biopolitical order, as it confirms that biopolitics can simultaneously produce subjectivity and death, and can decisively objectify the subject by making them its own object (Esposito 32). The consideration of animals, not as merely manageable objects but as complex governable subjects, can be viewed as a foundational aspect of biopolitics. The very apparatuses of biopower, in fact, have emerged from the proliferation of what Foucault refers to as ‘pastoral power’. Foucault identifies pastoral power as the historical basis for biopower, delineating its deployment in the practices of ecclesiastical institutions and its eventual integration into neoliberal governmental systems. Pastoral power, in a more rudimentary sense, means a set of subtle, vigilant, and persistent technologies used by a shepherd to manage his flock, both individually and collectively. This kind of power carefully ensures the well-being

of each individual animal within the flock, while at the same time, establishes its control over the entire flock by submitting all of the members to greater degrees of discipline, domination, and regulation (Pandian 89). This concept of power is quite similar to biopower, which relates to intervening systems of knowledge and strategies that are focused on regulating and altering the indispensable characteristics of human bodies (Holloway and Morris 241), and offers human subjects a sense of security while subjecting them to modern mechanisms of surveillance and subjugation. It draws parallels between how a shepherd manages his flock and how the state governs its 'human' population, highlighting an entanglement of the idea of docile cattle with the notion of 'good' citizens. The relationship between pastoral power and biopower demonstrates that biopower, which is directed towards the governance of humans by the state, has evolved from pastoral power, which was directed towards the governance of animals by humans. In 'modern' times, we can observe that this evolved biopower, which is primarily directed towards the governance of humans, has been redirected towards the governance of animals themselves. In other words, the intricate system of human governance, which developed from the simpler method of governing animals, has also made the governance of animals intricately sophisticated. Consequently, it can be argued that biopower is now directed towards the governance of both humans and animals with its apparatuses of care and control that are simultaneously inclusionary, empowering, and protective, on the one hand, and, exclusionary, disciplinary, and exploitative, on the other. As the biopolitical management of one species becomes stronger and subtler, so does the biopolitical management of another species. Although the mechanisms deployed in subjugating humans and nonhuman animals to the discipline of biopower and the relationships between humans and nonhuman animals are fundamental to understanding the essence of biopolitics itself (Cimatti and Salzani 4) as "[it] permeates every detail of the life of the population" by regulating "the relations of men among themselves, and men with other species, wielding for one and the other the same techniques of subjugation and control" (Saïd Chebili, qtd. in Chrulew 224), most accounts of biopolitics are concerned only with how humans are reduced to the state of animals

and largely ignore animals themselves. The lack of concern for nonhuman animals in the discourse of biopolitics, however, does not imply any integral deficiency in the prospective underpinnings of Foucault's theorization but rather highlights the paradigm of politics itself that has excluded nonhuman animals from agency as political beings (Wadiwal 66). Therefore, including nonhuman animals as biopolitical subjects within the discourse of biopolitics can be viewed as a posthumanist approach, as it introduces a new dynamic to the traditionally anthropocentric focus of biopolitical discourse, which has primarily examined the 'animalization/dehumanization' of humans, but has often remained silent on the 'bio/politicization' of animals. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the posthumanist perspective on biopolitics does not abandon human issues but rather offers us a way to explore how what biopolitics does to animals both resembles and goes beyond what it does to humans, and encourages us to think about the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals in terms of division and difference, which inherently fosters a continuum of connections and continuities (Vint 444). To understand this aspect, we need to focus on how the corollary apparatuses—'care'/control and violence/elimination, of biopolitics work distinctively for humans and nonhuman animals.

The contradictory functioning of biopolitics towards humans and nonhuman animals, according to David Redmalm and Erica von Essen, is:

While biopolitics is exerted by subjecting people to the impending threat of turning them into mere resources for governing, the lives of nonhuman animals rarely transcend a status of mere resources and thus cannot be bereaved of such an elevated position [...] [Furthermore] while humans are governed biopolitically through an optimization of life— a governing where violence is the exception— for animals, in contrast, violence is the rule and an elevated status is the exception. (152)

What their argument suggests is that violence against humans is essentially rare, whereas violence against animals is the 'norm'. This implies that the "making live"

mechanism of biopower is more prominent than its counterpart, the “letting die” force, in the case of managing humans, whereas the “letting die” force is more prevalent than the “making live” mechanism in the management of animals. In other words, biopolitics, in general, deploys techniques of care/control to foster the lives of humans and techniques of violence to slaughter the bodies of animals. Some thinkers, including Derrida, have suggested that though the function of biopolitics regarding humans is manifold, its function regarding animals is predominantly governed by the rationale of ruthlessness and violence. For instance, Derrida has argued that “our relationships to animals [...] are still governed by the logic and structure of sovereign violence” (Derrida qtd. in Chrulew 231). However, it is found that biopolitics regarding animals is as complex as it is regarding humans. Keeping in mind Derrida’s notion of ‘*animot*,’ which refers to the heterogeneity of animals, discussed previously, we can argue that for some animals (I am particularly referring to livestock animals) whose instrumental values are significantly great, biopolitics can display care more efficiently than it does for humans; the bodies of these animals are shaped by nutritional and medical regimes of biopower more prudently and meticulously than even those of humans. For instance, it has been estimated that North Carolina and Iowa, two states in the US, use three million pounds of antibiotics as feed additives for livestock animals annually; the quantity is almost equivalent to the amount of antibiotics used for the medical treatment of humans nationwide (Florini et al. 2). This aspect highlights that biopolitics, in certain cases, can prioritize the well-being of animals by putting even the well-being of humans at stake. However, the reality is that biopolitics leverages components of care for animals to optimize their biological capacities so they can be put to potential use, even if it has to make a compromise to human lives. The primary objective of biopolitics concerning animals is not genuine care for them, but rather the utilization of their instrumental values to serve capitalistic interests. There are several practices biopolitics deploys on animals—domestication, training, taming (non-invasive), and selective breeding, genetic modification (invasive)—which affect their biological constitution and make their bodies docile and more reproductive. In this regard, it is

important to note, especially in the case of livestock animals in agricultural settings, that not only the corporeal aspects of animals but also their emotional, behavioural, and pathological traits are measured for the maximization of their productivity. In this context, biopolitics is exercised on animals through temporarily elevating them to the political status (Redmalm and Essen 166), which might grant them a relatively 'human-like subjectivity'. It is a scenario where animals appear to transcend their status of mere *zoe* and are attributed with *bios*. It shows that the strategies of biopolitics are deployed not only in reducing animals to mere objects and commodities but also in elevating their status through providing them with limited subjectivity. This 'subjectification' of animals is endorsed, along with human interventions, as a means of enabling them to achieve maximum productivity to satiate human demands (Srinivasan 114). Though biopolitical care seems more prevalent initially, it must not be forgotten that biopolitical violence has not been abandoned. Biopolitics can use its mechanisms of "making live" and "letting die" for the same subjects at different points of time. In the case of livestock animals, when they are nurtured, biopolitical care seems to be in function. When they gain optimal weight or lose their (re)productivity, biopolitical violence comes into action. Importantly, biopolitical violence that leads to the killing of animals may impose certain rules and laws meant for the restriction of 'inhuman' violence against them. Although the effectiveness of these measures is quite questionable and the very idea that there can be a 'humane' way of killing is itself inherently oxymoronic, they seem to provide at least some protection for animals against 'unnecessary' suffering till the point they are killed.

The logic of biopolitical violence, which is primarily applied to animals, especially at the time of their slaughter, can be seen as being directed at racialized, marginalized, human 'others'. It appears that these humans have been 'animalized' and are increasingly being treated as animals by biopower. This aspect shows that the orchestration of biopolitical violence towards animals is linked with the orchestration of biopolitical violence towards human 'others'. According to Cary Wolf, "[t]he violence of sacrifice for which the distinction between human and animal has historically been bedrock" provides for the law "the 'foundation' for its exclusions that

the law cannot provide for itself" (*Before the Law* 9). It implies that the law legalizes biopolitical violence on racialized, marginalized human 'others', based on the extra-legal, metaphysical, and cultural logic that treats animals and those 'animalized' as killable. However, what is important to note here is that for these humans, who have been rendered bereft of their political status and every legal protection, biopolitics may deploy more violent and brutal mechanisms than it does for animals, since it poses no objection to their suffering but rather reinforces laws that ensue and legitimize 'inhuman' violence against them. In this regard, we may think of the distinction between the treatment of Jews and that of animals in the Nazi regime. That the Nazis treated Jews with extreme brutality is a well-documented and much-discussed event in human history. But the fact that the Nazis passed laws to protect animals and diminish harm to them is quite underrecognized. The Nazis had contempt for Jews and were indifferent to their suffering, but they showed great compassion for animals and sympathy for their pain. They introduced laws to regulate the slaughtering of animals and to partially ban experiments on them. Cats, dogs, apes, and horses were selected for special protection, and crabs and lobsters were prevented from being put alive into boiling water (Arluke and Sax 7-8). The paradoxical nature of the Nazi regime is that the laws enforced by the Nazis ordered the merciless genocide of Jews, while reinforcing the prevention of the 'unnecessary' sufferings of animals. This raises the question: how could the Nazis have been interested in decreasing the cruelty towards animals while they treated humans with increasing brutality? Arnold Arluke and Boria Sax have noted that for the Nazis, "it was possible to increase the moral status of animals and decrease the moral status of some humans by blurring the boundaries between humans and animals" (7). This enabled them to 'humanize' (partially) animals and elevate them to a 'higher' position, where violence was reduced, and 'dehumanize' Jews and degrade them to a 'lower' position, where violence was reinforced. Roberto Esposito has pointed out that the Jewish victims who were persecuted were not simply considered 'animals'; had they been "considered to be only animals, they would have been saved" (130). It suggests that biopolitical violence of the Nazi regime was exercised on Jews not simply by

‘animalizing’ them but by reformulating the definition of ‘human,’ which consisted of ‘superior’ or ‘pure’ humans—Germans and ‘inferior’ or ‘contaminated’ humans or ‘subhumans’—Jews. The existence of these ‘inferior’ Jews was considered a threat not only to the ‘superior’ Germans but also to animals. Importantly, what is noteworthy here is that the Nazis’ reformulation of ‘human’ was also closely linked to their definition of ‘animal’. The Nazis distinguished between ‘lower’ animals and ‘higher’ animals. They associated themselves with ‘higher’ animals and propounded that they should be reproduced extensively. In contrast, they equated Jews with ‘lower’ animals, such as rodents or pests, and proposed that it was necessary to annihilate them entirely lest they might contaminate everyone and everything. This indicates that the ‘animalization’ of both Germans and Jews took place in the Nazi regime. While Germans were subjected to biopolitical care, with special focus on their “meticulous improvement” through the protection of their ‘purity’ and the enhancement of their reproduction, Jews were subjected to biopolitical violence, with special emphasis on their “total annihilation,” which led to their persecution and extermination in the Holocaust.

While comparisons between the Holocaust, in which millions of Jews were persecuted and exterminated, and modern factory farming, in which billions of animals are slaughtered, are fraught with ethical risk, they enrich the posthumanist understanding of biopolitics. David Sztybel, in “Can the Treatment of Animals be Compared to the Holocaust?” has meticulously outlined thirty-nine similarities between the ways Jews were treated in the Nazi regime and the ways animals are treated in factory farms in the present. He states that just as experiments are conducted on animals, the Nazis conducted experiments on a number of Jews (107); just as violence against animals is sanctioned through institutionalized, bureaucratized means, the Nazis passed laws against Jews that legitimized institutionalized violence against them (113). One might be interested in looking up all thirty-nine comparisons in the paper. However, apart from providing comparisons, Sztybel has also conceded that there are many relevant differences between these two instances of mass-mutilation. He has noted that Jews suffered discrimination due to

their religious and ethnic identity, which is obviously not applicable in the case of nonhuman animals (125). He has further argued that Jews have been freed from the annihilatory Holocaust (although the world is still suffering from racism), whereas the ‘livestock’ animals are in no way to be liberated from slaughtering (125). In this regard, the examination of the biopolitical logics of “making live” and “letting die” may help us draw more nuanced distinctions between the treatment of Jews in the Nazi regime and that of animals in factory farming. Although biopower seems to be more focused on “the management of life” than on “the menace of death” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 147), it does not mean that biopolitics is merely about the ‘optimization of life’; biopolitics can deploy both facilitative resources to foster life and machineries of violence to ‘disallow life’ (Wadiwal 122). In the case of Jews in the Nazi regime, biopolitical care was replaced by biopolitical violence. The Nazis aimed to eradicate the entire Jewish population to protect the purity of the ‘Aryan’ race from contamination. Rapidity was considered to be an essential factor in the process. That the faster Jews could be disposed of, the better it would be, was thought of by the Nazis. At Auschwitz, six thousand victims a day were being gassed in gas chambers (Shirer 870). The ‘Final Solution’ issued by the Nazi regime shows that they planned to annihilate all Jews in Europe through institutionalized genocide. Jews (though they had been facing Anti-Semitism since the ancient time), who had been members of the human community and had been governed by the biopolitical logic of “management of life” rather than “menace of death,” like other human communities, were stripped of ‘human’ status, and were considered ‘subhuman’ and ‘lower animal’ in the Nazi regime. Subsequently, biopolitical care was eliminated, and biopolitical violence was directed at them to subject them to “total annihilation”. In contrast to Jews in the Nazi regime, who came to be deprived of biopolitical care and were to become victims of the “total annihilation” of biopolitical violence, animals in factory farms are subjected to a different kind of biopolitical treatment. They are not deprived of “meticulous improvement” of “making live,” nor do they become victims of “total annihilation” of “letting die”. It means that in the case of ‘livestock’ animals in factory farming, biopolitical violence, which leads to their slaughtering, is preceded

by biopolitical ‘care’, and their total annihilation is not a desirable goal here. They are kept under the governance of great ‘care’. Here, the word ‘care,’ however, must not be taken as a quite positive term; it is not guided by humanitarian values but by utilitarian motifs. The mechanisms of care may recognize their autonomy, behaviour, and subjective experience, but recognizing these essentials does not cease and eliminate their biopolitical management, and instead, works as the biologically knowable means of intensification and optimization of their corporeal growth and reproduction (Chrulew 232). It may also have harmful effects on their minds and involve physical harm, when necessary. This ‘care’ is intrinsically linked to ‘capital’; it is deployed to generate maximum profit by managing the lives of ‘livestock’ animals and protecting them from external harms that might affect their (re)productivity or endanger their lives before they reach their optimal weight. Unlike Jews in the Nazi regime, who became subjected to the “total annihilation” programme of biopolitical violence that was not to be followed by the ‘reproduction’ of biopolitical “making live”, animals within the biopolitical framework of factory farming are not deprived of ‘care’ and do not become subjects of “total annihilation”. Instead, they are perennially caught in a cycle of ‘anthropocentric’ biopolitics that involves both ‘care’ and violence. Animals, within this paradigm, become subjects of the utility-driven care when they are ‘nurtured’, and then subjected to extreme violence when their deaths are deemed ‘necessary’ from the point of view of utility. They are, in essence, produced and ‘cared’ for to be eventually slaughtered for human interests. In this context, J.M. Coetzee’s observation in *The Lives of Animals* (1999) is quite intriguing:

We are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing which rivals anything the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing [...] livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them. (21)

Breeding lives and bringing them up with the intention of butchering them after a certain duration is something that is not part of biopolitics directed at humans. Though racialized, marginalized human ‘others’ have been ‘animalized’; their political status and rights to legal protection have been taken away; they have been reduced to

disposable bodies, it has not been found that they have ever been biopolitically mass-produced in order to be eventually slaughtered.

However, it is essential to note that the knowledge of something that has not happened does not ensure that it will not happen in the future. In the present era of advancing bio-technological developments that extensively manipulate the lives of nonhuman animals genetically and industrially, humans might enter into a new political paradigm, where they could become both the subject and the object of a different kind of biopolitics that has emerged from the managerial manipulation not of human life, but of what is its other or is after (Esposito 109). Kazuo Ishiguro, in his novel *Never Let Me Go*, portrays cloned humans (one might be reminded of Dolly⁴, the cloned sheep) who are artificially produced for organ harvesting. They are beings with feelings, emotions, and intellect, just like humans. They grow up in a boarding institution called 'Hailsham,' where they play games, make art, study, and enjoy a seemingly 'normal,' sheltered life. But, similar to livestock animals, who are cared for yet ultimately slaughtered for human consumption of meat, these cloned humans are predestined to be organ donors for humans' need for vital organs. Hailsham has drawn comparisons to concentration camps due to its role in disposing of the lives of the cloned humans (see Black 2009). Nevertheless, Hailsham would more appropriately be likened to a livestock farming system. The cloned humans, like livestock animals, are subjected to biopolitical management and biopolitical menace. They are educated, cared for, but ultimately are denied subjectivity and transformed into expendable resources. A more disturbing and 'dehumanizing' scenario is found in Piers Anthony's story "In the Barn," which depicts a parallel planet similar to Earth, known as 'Counter-Earth #772,' where humans are treated 'exactly' (emphasis intended) like livestock animals. Most male human babies are killed because they lack utility value, with only a few of them being kept alive for breeding and labour purposes. In contrast, young women with enormously large breasts, who have been selectively bred, are kept in the barns, and milk is extracted from them. When they remain no longer productive, they are likely to be slaughtered like dairy animals in industrial farms. The literary texts suggest that biotechnological and biopolitical interventions in the

lives of animals may contribute to the emergence of certain human ‘others’ who will be treated in ways similar to how animals are treated by humans. This aspect is reverberated in Cary Wolfe’s stark observation in *Animal Rites* (2003):

as long as it is institutionally taken for granted that it is all right to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species, then the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social other of whatever species – or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference. (8)

It suggests that biopolitical violence against animals by humans is linked to biopolitical violence against some humans by other humans. Thus, the ethical treatment of animals seems essential not only for animals but also for the entirety of species, including humans. This leads to the imagination of a ‘posthumanist politics’ in which humans are ‘posthuman’—beings who are not epistemologically considered as ontologically ‘superior’ to animals, and animals are ‘post-animal’—beings who are no longer constituted as conceptual contradictions to humans but are viewed as equally important members of an ‘interspecies continuum’.

Conclusion

What the posthumanist perspective on biopolitics shows is that biopolitics can follow similar as well as distinctive patterns to capture humans and nonhuman animals (Calarco, “Turning Back to Nature” 26). Although biopolitics captures humans and animals distinctively in certain regards, the strategies involved in the biopolitical process of managing human lives influence and, in turn, are influenced by those involved in the biopolitical process of managing animal lives. Therefore, the exploration of how biopolitics captures them distinctively does not create division but rather a continuum in which humans are led to conceive their own biopolitical condition by looking at the biopolitical conditions of nonhuman animals. Despite

certain fundamental distinctions between how biopolitics functions towards humans and how it functions towards animals, the common point we find is that biopolitics simultaneously engenders care for life and control over life, and has the potential to allow and affirm life, and neglect and negate life. It turns its subjects, both humans and animals, into liminal beings who are led to live a precarious life. This view makes us realize that although ‘we are not one and the same,’ ‘we are in this complex animalizing-humanizing biopolitical matrix together’ (Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*).

Biopolitical subjects exist in a constant tension between the care of “making live” that sustains and optimizes lives, and the violence of “letting die” that shatters and obliterates lives. Put differently, *bios* and *zoe* are distinguishable, but they are not disconnected from each other. Biopolitics directed at *bios* always risks violently subjecting it to *zoe*. In this way, biopolitics makes biopolitical subjects remain “closer to the regions of *zoe* than to that of *bios*” (Esposito 57). This creates consciousness about the precarious nature of life, based on its susceptibility to being reduced to *zoe*, which leads to a tension between existence and extinction, indicating a transition from the state of estrangement to one of entanglement, in which humans could be seen as sharing common traits of vulnerability with nonhuman animals. The awareness of this shared vulnerability entails a sense of empathy and association, and invokes the possibility of new ethical and political potentialities, disrupting the divide between the ‘human’ and the ‘animal’. It encourages a shift from “self-centred individualism,” induced by human exceptionalism, to an “enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others, including nonhuman others” (Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*). It prompts us to conceive humans as creatures, not of the sky, who fly alone, but as creatures of the mud, who strive to survive along with nonhuman animals, co-evolving with them symbiotically (Haraway 3, 31).

The vulnerability, based on the embeddedness into *zoe*, heals some of the epistemological and ontological fractures that exist within and among human and animal life by viewing the joint biopolitical capture of humans and animals as both a

challenge to encounter and an opportunity to think about a more expansive and inclusive ethical dimension (Calarco, “Turning Back to Nature” 27). The interconnection, emerging from this *zoe*-centric vulnerability, fosters a sensibility that aims at transcending the anthropocentric confinement to achieve a post-anthropocentric and posthumanist continuum. Within this post-anthropocentric and posthumanist continuum, the age-old hierarchy that places humans in a ‘higher’ position disintegrates, and both humans and nonhuman animals are construed as constituting and being constituted by the interlocking, intersecting, and intermingling patterns of entanglement.

Notes

1. Through the concept of *animot* (a combination of the English word ‘animal’ and the French word ‘mot’ that means word) in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida emphasizes the importance of distinguishing one animal from others (34). Tom Regan in *The Case of Animal Rights* imagines a hypothetical situation in which there is a lifeboat that can carry only four individuals, but there are five—four humans and a dog. It is a situation where either four of them would survive, or all of them would die. In this case, Regan asserts that the dog would always be chosen for the sacrifice. He further adds that even if the choice had to be made between saving four humans and saving a million dogs, the lives of four humans would have been saved at the cost of the lives of a million dogs. Regan’s suggestion that human lives are always considered more valuable than animal lives is challenged by Cary Wolfe’s observation in *Before the Law* that the lives of individuals belonging to rare and endangered species are essentially viewed as more valuable than the lives of those that are more commonly available. According to him, if one is given an option to save either a human child or a California condor, a rare animal, they will be obliged to choose the latter.

2. Derrida’s concept of ‘animal gaze’ provides a deconstructive approach to radicalize human-animal subjectivity. He deals with the gaze of his pet cat. He argues that the cat’s gaze creates discomfort when he sees that his naked state is being seen by it. For Derrida, the cat is not

an automaton that is thought of by humans, but rather a subject who is imbued with the capacity of thinking. Its gaze may function as a mechanism in which humans are objects. Derrida does not find much interest in understanding whether or not animals can use language in the way humans use it. Instead, he is intrigued by the cat's gaze, which must not be identified as a mere reaction but as a response that is stimulated by an uninterpretable intelligence.

3. Thanatopolitics is not oppositional to biopolitics, but is a supplementary understanding of how life can be organized and obliterated in certain situations under neoliberal global capitalism.

4. Dolly was the first cloned mammal, produced at the Roslin Institute, Scotland, who lived from 1996 to 2003. When her 'artificial' birth was announced, it led to debates about the possible misuses of the mammalian cloning process.

Author's Bio:

Swapnajeet Das is an Independent Researcher who holds an M.A. in English from Rabindra Bharati University and a B.A. in English from the University of Calcutta. He has worked as a Guest Lecturer at Vivekananda College, Thakurpukur. He has qualified UGC NET-JRF and WB SET. He has completed post-graduation certificate courses on 'Digital Humanities' and 'Editing & Publishing' from the School of Cultural Texts and Records, Jadavpur University. He has completed an NPTEL course on 'Posthumanism: An Introduction' from IIT Madras. He has participated in and presented papers at national and international seminars and conferences. His research papers have been published in journals. His research interests are Posthumanism, Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis, Biopolitics, Anthropocene Studies.

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