

On the Origins of Animalist Marxism: Rereading Ted Benton and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

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In human-animal studies and critical animal studies, the most influential treatment of animalist Marxism and Marxist animalism has been developed by Ted Benton on the basis of his interpretation of Karl Marx's work. Benton is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, England, and an organic intellectual of the so-called new social movements, particularly of the ecological movement. Theoretically, he stands as one of the "first-stage ecosocialists," who "sought to highlight the presumed ecological failings of Marx, and proceeded to graft Green theory onto Marxism (or in some cases to graft Marxism onto Green theory) as part of a process of *The Greening of Marxism*."¹

Benton was part of a group of scholars who tried to build bridges, though at times fragile ones, between Marxists and ecologists. In the late 1980s and in the 1990s, he also became a pioneer in promoting a mutual rapprochement between Marxists and animal-rights/animal-liberation advocates.² For instance, Benton initiated a symposium on "Animal Wrongs and Rights" to discuss animal rights from an eco-Marxist perspective. His introductory contribution, the lecture and debate from the symposium, were later published in the ecosocialist journal *Capitalism Nature Socialism*.³ In it, Benton's central theoretical effort was to develop an animal-rights position within his "loosely Marxian" framework.⁴ This included defending the idea of assigning moral and legal rights to animals while criticizing rights-based approaches, particularly Tom Regan's, on the basis of Marxist, feminist, and other critiques of bourgeois rights.⁵ Unfortunately, until today, such attempts at establishing

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dialogue between ecosocialists and animal liberationists have been the exception rather than the rule.

In 1993, Benton published his main work on animals and social justice, *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice*.⁶ Ever since, it has been the standard reference when it comes to Marx and animals, and Benton has evolved into the number one Marxist among human-animal scholars. In *Natural Relations*, Benton published a revised version of his essay “Humanism = Speciesism: Marx on Humans and Animals,” which originally appeared in 1988 in *Radical Philosophy*, whose editorial group Benton belonged to in those days.⁷ Renamed “Marx on Humans and Animals: Humanism or Naturalism,” the essay has gained particular importance as an outlier in the context of otherwise relatively weak discourse on Marxism and animal liberation over the last decades.⁸ It launched the animalist reading and reception of Marx’s works, which until today dominates. In the piece, Benton analyzes how Marx portrays the human-animal relation in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, hereafter referred to as the *Paris Manuscripts* or simply the *Manuscripts*.⁹

Although Benton’s broader ecosocialist arguments have been criticized, an in-depth discussion of his positions on animals and his accusations levelled against young Marx has been missing.¹⁰ Animal-studies scholars have broadly adopted Benton’s key interpretations and results – or shared them – even though not all of them agree with everything.¹¹ Only a minority of thinkers have raised fundamental objections, though not rigorously reasoned.¹² Other authors, such as Bradley J. Macdonald, have been ambivalent toward Benton’s interpretations.¹³

In this piece, I attempt to demonstrate how Benton’s reading of the *Paris Manuscripts* with regard to the human-animal differentiation is fundamentally flawed. In contradiction to Benton’s central theses, Marx neither makes use of species being nor a human-animal dualism to establish the concept of estrangement, nor does he ground his critique of capitalism in such an ideological distinction. Furthermore, it is unfounded to accuse Marx’s sketch of historical development and, particularly, of emancipation (and a communist society) of being a Promethian, productivist account of human domination of nature. Thus, in contrast to Benton, I argue that there is no reason to consider the young Marx an anthropocentric species narcissist or to read him as a continuation of mainstream Western philosophy.

The second objective of this article is to offer an alternative interpretation of the *Paris Manuscripts* with respect to animals and, particularly, to the human-animal differentiation. In this vein, the keys to grasping this particular work by Marx are: (1) to view it in terms of a dialectical

understanding of the relation between humans and animals; and (2) to explore the connection between Marx's writings in this respect and how these same issues manifested themselves in his mature critique of political economy. The close relation between Marx's early and more mature writings with regard to the status of animals is clearly evident, despite the philosophical terminology Marx adopted from Ludwig Feuerbach and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and still retained in the *Paris Manuscripts*.

To conclude the piece, I argue that there are not two Marxs in the *Paris Manuscripts*—a bad humanist one and a good naturalist one—as Benton assumes, but a single Marx.

Benton's Interpretation of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

In his chapter "Marx on Humans and Animals: Humanism or Naturalism," Benton detects major problems in the *Paris Manuscripts*, which he considers "Marx's account of human nature" and the "deepest, but also most puzzling of Marx's writings."¹⁴

First, Benton is convinced that Marx's "central organizing concepts in the *Manuscripts*—species being and estrangement—are developed in terms of a fundamental opposition between human and animal nature."¹⁵ According to him, estrangement, or alienation, is based on a capitalist form of labor that reduces humans to the condition of animals and, thus, prevents humans from realizing their historical and social potential as a species being. Second, Marx supposes that this species being is uniquely human. For Marx, Benton suggests, other animals "are characterized by a certain fixity in their mode of life," transforming nature only "in accordance with a definite 'standard,' characteristic of their species, and their activity is oriented to the meeting of their individual needs (also fixed, and characteristic for each species) and those of their offspring." "By contrast," he continues, "human beings act upon the external world in a way which is free, self-conscious and socially coordinated."¹⁶ In fact, following Benton, Marx only depicts humans as coordinated in their labor species-wide. However, Benton's point is that estranged labor thrusts humans into the conditions of animals in so far as their labor is reduced to animal production. In a regime of estranged labor, humans only work as animals do, merely satisfying their basic needs.

Thus, Benton assumes that "in grounding his ethical critique of the capitalist mode of life," Marx draws on "an absolute and universal, not a provisional and historically transcendable opposition between the human and the animal" as a labor regime of private property.¹⁷

Furthermore, Benton argues that the young Marx conceives of human emancipation as progressing through steadily increasing domination of nature to the benefit of humans, who thereby fulfill their mission as a species being. The “historical-developmental process, peculiar to the human species, consists in an augmentation of our transformative powers *vis-à-vis* nature, amounting to a residueless ‘humanization’ of nature.”¹⁸ If what is wrong with these capitalist societies, as Benton argues, “is that humans are reduced to the condition of animals, then the transcendence of capitalism, in restoring humanity to [the] human, simultaneously restores the differentiation between the human and the animal.”¹⁹

Since domination of nature implies animals, Benton comes to the conclusion that, in his early writing, Marx’s vision of emancipation is not only “anthropocentric” but also “a quite fantastic species narcissism.”²⁰ In this respect, “Marx’s attempt...to provide an account of human nature in terms of a thorough-going opposition between the human and the animal is very much in line with the mainstream of modern Western philosophy.”²¹

Taking into consideration this roughly summarized interpretation of the *Paris Manuscripts*, it is surprising that Benton goes on to also argue that “there are fundamental ambiguities and tensions in the overall philosophical position by the early Marx.”²² Actually, the British sociologist assumes that “even in his pre-Darwinian days” Marx does not only hold a humanist discourse but a naturalistic one, too.²³ Both “co-exist in unresolved tension with one another.”²⁴ In other words, according to Benton, there is a humanist young Marx who builds his argument on a human-animal dualism and, at the same time, a naturalistic young Marx who has already overcome the dualism and who is committed to “human/animal continuism.”²⁵ This naturalistic Marx, Benton suggests, finally comes to the surface with Marx’s much-appreciated reading and adoption of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* after 1859.²⁶ Therefore, Benton considers the *Paris Manuscripts* to be “an unstable and evidently transitional discourse,” which is “riven by internal contradictions.”²⁷

Before I discuss Benton’s argument, I want to make a few preliminary remarks. First, the *Paris Manuscripts* that Marx wrote in Paris between May and August 1844, at the age of twenty-six, are not an integral whole. Not only do they consist of excerpts, notebooks, and sketches, but not all of the text has survived. Actually, it is established by now that the text we commonly know as the *Paris Manuscripts* is part of a broader body of texts written by Marx based on research he conducted in Paris. This collection, published only after Marx’s death, was originally comprised of different excerpts of the economic literature that predominated in those days,

such as work by John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Friedrich List, John Ramsay McCulloch, and Jean-Baptiste Say.²⁸ These excerpts, however, were not integrated in the *Paris Manuscripts* as we know them.²⁹ The selected *Paris Manuscripts* were first published in 1932, in their original language of German. Two different versions were published – one by social democrats Siegfried Landshut and Jacob-Peter Mayer, and the other by the Soviet editors of the first Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA). The content of the *Paris Manuscripts* is a mixture of philosophical and political economic terms and analyses, which lack a coherent line of argumentation. Nevertheless, it has become one of the most influential series of texts in Marxist debate, especially after the Second World War.³⁰

Second, the *Manuscripts* were written at a time in which Marx was shifting from philosophy in the form of anthropological materialism to political economy based on a theoretical framework built on historical and socio-practical materialism. Against this particular background, Benton is right to state that one can find “an unstable and evidently transitional discourse” in the work.³¹ However, this is not true for Marx’s interpretation of human-nature and human-animal relations.

Third, as the title indicates and Benton remarks, the *Paris Manuscripts* were written long before Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace published their path-breaking findings on evolution. It is this historical constellation in which Marx’s formulations about the difference and commonalities between humans and animals have to be read.

The Birth of Historical Materialist Political Economy

Benton’s basic evaluation that Marx makes use of a human-animal dualism as a “central device” in his critique of estranged labor and of capitalism only makes sense if we accept two main assumptions.³² First, that the *Paris Manuscripts* are a philosophical work with a “philosophical anthropology.”³³ Second, that Marx’s argument is based on a philosophical “ontology” or, at least, that his thoughts are built on an “ontological basis.”³⁴

Unquestionably, one may find a lot of Marx’s political-economic thoughts wrapped up in philosophical terminology. There is the critique of Hegel’s philosophy and the references to philosophy even in the explicitly political-economic parts of the *Paris Manuscripts*. Marx also makes use of various concepts borrowed from Feuerbach’s anthropological materialism, but clearly imbues the philosophical terms with new meaning. Benton acknowledges this, such as in the case of the term *species being*.³⁵ But he neglects this in his overall reading of the *Manuscripts*, interpreting them exclusively as philosophical discourse about “human nature” and an “*ethical* [my italics] critique of the capitalist mode of life.”³⁶ But,

influenced by Frederick Engels's *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx describes and analyzes a political-economic subject and not a primarily philosophical one, though he employs notions that are indeed insufficient or partly undeveloped.³⁷ Even though most of Marx's notes mainly revolve around economic issues – in fact, the *Paris Manuscripts* are one of the first expressions of his nascent interest in political economics – this is overall unaccounted for in Benton's interpretation of Marx's concept of human-animal differentiation.³⁸

According to my own interpretation of the *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx does attempt to conceptualize the contemporary specific relations between humans on the one hand, and humans and nature on the other, i.e., the capitalist organization of social labor.³⁹ In contrast to his analysis in *Capital*, the focus here is predominantly on the social relations and the relations between humans and nature as they appear in the sphere of production.⁴⁰ In his treatment of capitalism in the *Manuscripts*, the issue of the market relation between humans is broadly precluded, even though Marx already expresses, however embryonically, the commodity form of labor (power).⁴¹ In addition, Benton does not realize or fully acknowledge that Marx takes decisive first steps toward historical materialism through political economics and his critique of Hegelian philosophy in the *Paris Manuscripts*.⁴² Thus, Marx distances himself from any assumption of "fictitious primordial condition," historicizes humans and nature, criticizes the naturalization of political economy, and discloses capitalism as human-made.⁴³ It is against this backdrop that Marx's differentiation between humans and animals has to be understood.

To illustrate this, take the example of Marx, in Feuerbachian rhetoric, calling social labor "the essence of present-day labour itself" and tracing the misery of workers in contemporary society to the exploitation of human labor under capitalism.⁴⁴ Despite the terminology of "essence," Marx does not refer to a transhistorical feature of human labor expected from a philosophical reading, but to a specific form of labor that exists at a specific time and place in social history. Another instance of Marx's historical-materialist, political-economic approach in the *Paris Manuscripts* is his differentiation between feudal and capitalist land property. He realizes that, with the transition from feudalism to capitalism, land itself becomes a commodity and private property, so that "the marriage of convenience" takes "the place of the marriage of honour with the land." Due to this historical change, the soil itself sinks "to the status of a commercial value, like man."⁴⁵ Thus, Marx not only considers the new form of land property, but also points to the potentially alarming results of the historically particular capitalist property relations for humans and nature. In

the face of such remarks, it is reductionist and negligent to analyze the human-animal relation in the *Paris Manuscripts* predominantly through the lens of Hegelian and Feuerbachian philosophy.

Estrangement of Labor, Species Being, and the Critique of Capitalism

The concept of estranged labor is the centerpiece of the *Paris Manuscripts*, and is thus the focus of this piece as well. Marx's intention is to determine the specific form human labor takes under capitalism in order to explain how the laws of capitalist political economy "arise from the very nature of private property."⁴⁶ He does so because the bourgeois scholars of political economy are unable to explain "private property" and "its laws" given that they are considered natural facts.⁴⁷

In the *Paris Manuscripts*, it is also in the part on estranged labor that Marx elaborates on the estrangement of human labor in comparison with animal production, as well as on the differences and commonalities between the species being of humans and the species characters of other animal species. It consequently contains most of the contested statements regarding species being, estrangement, and the critique of capitalism that Benton draws on to substantiate his assumptions of Marx's human-animal dualism.

As is well-known, Marx outlines the estrangement, under capitalist social relations, of laborers from the products of their work, production, their species being and nature, and society and other humans.⁴⁸ Without directly referring to animals, he analyzes the estrangement of the laborers from their products, describing that, under capitalist conditions, the products of labor do not belong to the producers but to someone else. However, Marx makes an analogy to animal production in order to explain the estrangement from labor as humans' process of production. He points out that labor under the conditions of private property is "forced labour," because the labor process is also "someone else's...it does not belong to him...in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another."⁴⁹

Therefore, in the process of production, the worker "only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal." Marx immediately acknowledges that "eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But taken abstractly, separated from the sphere of all other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions."⁵⁰

What Marx explains here is that human laborers in capitalist production do not determine their labor or the production process. They are only able to control the kinds of products and production processes that they share with animals (eating, drinking, and the like) and that are not directly included in the process of capitalist commodity production. These remaining “functions” are externalized from the specifically human socioeconomic relations and are banned to the sphere of consumption and, thus, to the sphere of society relatively independent from the economy.⁵¹ Accordingly, Marx does not reduce humans to generic animals, nor does he downgrade animals. He does not even assess animals or humans. If there is a reduction of the human laborer to animals or the human labor process to an animal-like one, as Benton implies, this is a result of capitalist relations of production, not of Marx’s assumptions. Instead, he outlines the rift within the continuum of different forms of human production processes, due to which humans cannot produce according to their capacities and opportunities.

Building on this, Marx analyzes another type of estrangement, the third considered in the *Manuscripts*: the alienation of humans from species and nature. Therewith, he expands the argument. First, he argues that “man is a species being.”⁵² Humans’ special species being is based on a commonality between humans and animals. They both have a species life: “The life of the species, both in man and in animals, consists physically in the fact that man (like the animal) lives on inorganic nature.” Humans live on the products of nature, “whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling, etc.” Therefore, Marx states,

Nature is man’s inorganic body – nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself human body. Man lives on nature – means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man’s physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.⁵³

Since the “whole character of a species,” i.e., the character of *every* species, “is contained in the character of its life activity,” there are differences among the species and their species characters. These develop due to the species’ varying “standards” of life activities, i.e., their labor processes.⁵⁴ In other words: Marx realizes that there are various life activities in nature that have led, and lead, to differences between species. The difference between animals and humans within their natural unity (both are natural beings who must enter a metabolic process with the rest of nature) is that humans have developed their own specific form of species character through their social labor, which they have practiced as a species.

Marx assumes that “free, conscious activity is man’s species-character,” while the “animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity.” An animal does “produce,” Marx says, but only “what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally.”⁵⁵ Humans make “all nature” their “inorganic body.”⁵⁶ Finally, Marx supposes,

An animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature.... An animal forms objects only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object.⁵⁷

To condense his differentiation between animal and human labor processes, he states: “Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity.”⁵⁸

It is indisputable that Marx exaggerates the difference between humans and animals regarding the respective species’ labor processes or species-nature relations. In light of biological insights in general and ethological scientific knowledge in particular, generated since 1844, it is obvious that animals do not per se work unconsciously or only produce what they need immediately.⁵⁹ Furthermore, humans – even today – are not able to apply “everywhere the inherent standard to the object” and they do not reproduce “the whole of nature.” Nevertheless, the capitalist class seems to strive for total control of nature and its remaking according to capital’s need in the passionate hunt for profit (and some post-modernists seem to dream of the same thing when they declare nature to be society’s real enemy).

Importantly, however, none of these critiques justify Benton’s allegation of a human-animal dualism. It is not Marx’s goal, in epistemological terms, to downplay the capacities of animals or their life activity, nor does he seek to overstate human abilities and their life activity in order to define humans and animals. His aims are very different.

First, Marx wants to point out that estranged labor under capitalism is *human-made*. He explains that it is constructed under certain human social relations, so as to stress that human labor does not have to be organized this way. He does not yet fully grasp the meaning of human social labor under capitalism because he concentrates on the sphere of production. But he anticipates that animals (as well as nature in general) do not take part in constructing and reproducing capitalist social relations, and therefore do not have the same possibilities as humans to adapt their cohabitation and their social life activity.⁶⁰

Second, understanding that estranged labor is a contingent yet temporary form of human labor, it is still necessary to show how exactly labor is alienated in a specific historical and social constellation, in this case capitalism. For this reason, Marx has to demonstrate how humans are alienated from their *species being*, which serves to distinguish them from the species character, and thus the species life, of other animal species. Humans are alienated from their species being because, under capitalism, this is reduced to a mere means for individual existence. Due to the capitalist form of human social labor, humans cannot live up to their manifold practical, social, spiritual-intellectual, moral, artistic, and other capabilities as a collective. Even worse, the majority of humans have to suppress needs, neglect abilities, and deny rational relations to other humans, animals, and nature. Therefore, humans are also estranged from their bodies, external nature, and their spiritual aspect.⁶¹

Third, Marx outlines the historical social potential humans have in comparison to other animals in the actual natural-historical landscape. This is especially important from the standpoint of a liberated, i.e., communist society. Humans have the special capacity to change their social praxis in a scope and quality that allows them to get rid of the constraining form of their political-economic relations, i.e., capitalist labor relations. This is not to deny animals' developmental potentials, as Benton suggests.⁶² For example, in the *Paris Manuscripts*, over a decade before Darwin published his main works, Marx explicitly acknowledges the independent history of nature, which includes animals, as a process of self-generation. He understands this view as "the only practical refutation of the theory of creation."⁶³

Thus, what Marx draws out is what all animal rights and liberation activists instinctively or consciously know from the very beginning of their activism: that animals do not intend and are not practically able to establish relations that produce estranged labor in the capitalist sense. They are not capable of reconciling nature with society as they cannot destroy the earth and its existing global ecosystem. So far, this has been a human privilege of the capitalist class.⁶⁴ Thus, capitalist estranged labor or private property can only be explained by humans' social labor – not by relations established by any other species. In other words, Marx has to concentrate on human labor and human social relations – in differentiation from other species' labor – because this is how he can tackle the specific problem of capitalist estranged labor.

Marx states that "man is directly a natural being" and, as such, "he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants" and "an active natural being."⁶⁵ However, a human is not merely a natural

being, but also a “species-being.”⁶⁶ “[T]hrough human labour,” humans create themselves, their social relations, and their relationship with nature, so that human history evolves as part of natural history.⁶⁷ This means that humans separate themselves, through their specific species-social form of labor, from nature in general and from animal species and their forms of labor in particular. This is the political, economic, historical-materialist substance of the concept of species being in the *Paris Manuscripts*.

In brief, Marx’s differentiation of humans and animals is based on the varying historical paths of the socio-natural, i.e., species’ forms of social labor. This is a completely legitimate differentiation, especially because it is embedded in a recognition of animals’ historical life activity, and not the ontological idealist distinction insinuated by Benton.⁶⁸ On these grounds, I agree with Lawrence Wilde that observing a difference between animals and humans at a specific historical conjuncture and acknowledging the different forms of production neither implies a normative valuation in one direction or another, nor is it a theoretical or political problem.⁶⁹

In sum, Marx’s early critique of capitalism, which is based on his analysis of estranged labor, does not rely on a human-animal dualism. Rather, Marx uses the animal analogy to point out the human-made character of capitalist estrangement of labor. He maps the historically specific character of estrangement, particularly of the labor process and of species being, within capitalist social relations. Finally, he shows that human capabilities and possibilities, especially to reconcile with other humans and nature (including animals), are constrained by the capitalist alienation of labor. In doing so, he acknowledges that animals have their historically specific life activities, too. Nevertheless, over the course of time, these life activities have taken different forms than human ones have.

History and Communism as the Equalization of Humanism and Naturalism

In the *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx outlines, in broad strokes, what is to be done in order to overcome capitalism and its core, estranged labor, as well as to fully realize ourselves as a species being. As Italian animal-liberation philosopher Marco Maurizi rightfully argues, Benton misreads Marx one-sidedly and suggests that Marx’s conception of history is an augmentation of human domination over nature, with communism being the culminating point of human history, at which subsumption of nature by humans is complete.⁷⁰ By totally subsuming nature, Benton, in his interpretation of Marx, assumes that the human-animal difference,

inverted by capitalist estranged labor, would be restored to its proper dualist state.

As outlined above, Marx states clearly that humans create themselves by means of their labor.⁷¹ He gets this notion from Hegel, but he uses it having displaced its idealism.⁷² Since labor entails metabolism with nature, the relation between humans and nature is part of human self-genesis and a transhistorical condition of existence. Humans' dependence on nature is thus undeniable for the young Marx. Human production "can create nothing without nature, without the sensuous external world. It is the material on which his labour is realised, in which it is active, from which and by means of which it produces."⁷³

The development of the human-nature metabolism over time must be considered from two sides. According to Marx, the history of humans, their relation to nature, and the liberation from estranged labor imply what Benton calls "the humanization of nature."⁷⁴ Humans have to appropriate nature, develop productive forces, and impose their will on nature in order to survive. They have already constructed and are hopefully going to build – with the help of nature – new social, individual, and technological productive forces that allow them, first, to spend less time producing the necessary viands and, second, to produce in ways that are ecologically sound and do not use animals.⁷⁵

But this is not where Marx's story ends. Human history, as conceived in the *Paris Manuscripts*, cannot be reduced to human domination of nature or to the development of productive forces as ends in themselves. The subsumption of nature is not depicted as the royal road to communism like Benton suggests. Even less does Marx conceptualize the communist human society as one that unconditionally appropriates nature for human need and self-realization. On the contrary, Marx repeatedly describes a possible double shift in the transition from capitalism to communism. On the one hand, there is a change in human relations from estranged labor and private property to freely associated labor and collective management by the producers. On the other hand, this social change includes a fundamental change in the relation between humans and nature, including animals, opening up the possibility to produce with respect for animals and the ecosystem. It is not only the humanization of nature but also the naturalization of humans that is to be realized by humans on the path to communism.

Communism as the positive transcendence of private property as human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being – a return accomplished consciously and embracing the entire wealth of previous development. This

communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man.⁷⁶

The establishment of communism is thus a dialectical process in which both human society and nature come into their own. The labor-led “emancipation of society from private property” does not only imply abolishing private property in nature, exemplified by Marx with respect to the soil and landownership.⁷⁷ It also comprises the setting up a human-nature relation “now on a rational basis” and reestablishing “the intimate ties of man with the earth, since the earth ceases to be an object of huckstering.”⁷⁸

This is neither meant to be a restoration of an original “human nature” in a philosophical sense, nor a primitivist call to go “back to nature.” The naturalization of humans would mean that they, for the first time in history, could rationally and collectively control their own relations to each other and to nature, and therefore have relations with each other in which everyone is treated as social and natural beings and not as antagonistic classes. By doing so, they can develop their full individual and social potentials, and act in accordance with nature and animals. The social mode of production of humans will no longer be a self-made impediment. Instead, it will promote manifold individual, social, and natural development and the human species being will be meaningfully realized for the first time. The dissolution of capitalist social and human-nature relations also creates the opportunity for a recognition and integration of non-human others, like nature and animals, on the ground of real social commonalities. This is possible because there would no longer be mediation by socially constructed relationships that abstract from different qualities in nature.⁷⁹ Thus, communism does not imply a restoration of a human-animal divide, which presumably was turned upside down by estranged labor, as Benton insinuates.⁸⁰ As the young Marx maintains, a communist “society is the complete unity of man with nature – the true resurrection of nature – the accomplished naturalism of man and the accomplished humanism of nature.”⁸¹

The Dialectical Human-Animal Differentiation and Marx’s Early Class Approach

In the *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx’s dialectical human-animal differentiation is based on his concepts of estranged labor, species being, critique of capitalism, history, and communism with respect to the human-animal relation.

In contrast to the Western philosophical tradition, which is based on human-animal dualism, Marx implicitly lays the foundation for a historical-materialist, socio-practical concept of the human-animal relationship in the

Manuscripts. This is more explicitly outlined in the *German Ideology* and then reappears in volume one of *Capital*.⁸² With the help of this concept, it is possible not only to leave *philosophical* dualisms behind, but also to solve the controversy on continuity and difference between humans and animals, on socio-practical, socio-relational, and historical-materialist grounds.

Traditionally, there have been two positions regarding human-animal differentiation, which Benton calls “humanist” and “naturalistic,” although there are many terms for them.⁸³ Both standpoints prioritize differences and commonalities between animals and humans. Representatives of the humanist position acknowledge the biological and social continuities and commonalities, but privilege one or more decisive differences between humans and animals. Jacques Derrida, for example, argues that “philosophers and theoreticians, from Aristotle to Lacan” consider animals as unable to respond.⁸⁴ Advocates of the naturalistic position are convinced that, despite all the differences, which they acknowledge, the commonalities between humans and animals are decisive. Benton himself supports such an argument. According to Benton, the good Marx in the *Paris Manuscripts* is the one who presents the common ground between animals and humans, and offers a “naturalistic, but still not reductionist view of human nature.”⁸⁵ This is in contrast to the bad humanist Marx who, presumably, builds his theory on a human-animal dualism and the humanization of nature. For Benton, what is important is that the differentiating and elaborating of “our specific features” have to be based on “an *initial* [my italics] recognition of the common core of ‘natural being’ which we share with other living creatures.”⁸⁶

Although I sympathize with the gradualism Benton proposes as a discursive strategy against idealistically setting arbitrary differences, it remains reductionist to disallow a conceptualization of qualitative differences between animals and humans. If such differences did not exist, we would not be able to reflect on the wrongs of capitalism, which affect the majority of humans, animals, and nature. We could not act upon the insight that these wrongs have their roots in our socio-practical relations and strive for a communist society. Despite this, the differences between humans and animals are also not absolute. There is no clear demarcation between humans and the rest of animals. This human-animal difference is not a philosophical or epistemological construction to begin with. Rather, it is a dialectical difference that has been evolving with the socio-natural praxis of humans and other animals throughout history and has always differed in time and space.⁸⁷

Dialectical, in this case, means that the difference between humans and all other species is a socio-natural difference of historical praxis

within a common socio-natural unity. As Darwin indicates, one can find related forms of every human trait in other species – among them, perhaps one of the most politically important ones, is the ability to suffer.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, while they are natural creatures, humans have organized their social labor in a species-specific way that has opened up a path of relatively independent human development, which is unlike the specific ways other species develop. In this process, humans have developed capacities as individuals and as a collective, which have led to further extension and intensification of human development. Vice versa, if we want to understand other animal species, we have to understand and conceptualize them according to their relative socio-natural specificity and their historical developmental paths. This cannot be done by using human standards and classifying the absence of human traits as deficiencies.

Indeed, the early Marx realizes a special feature of human society in relation to other animals and nature under capitalism. He deduces that under capitalist conditions “the labour and the product of labour belongs [to the person] in whose service labour is done and for whose benefit the product of labour is provided.”⁸⁹ This person is not the worker themselves. In fact, Marx remarks, “the relationship of the worker to labour creates the relation to it of the capitalist (or whatever one chooses to call the master of labour).”⁹⁰ In the *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx comes to a similar insight, remarking that “the character of private property is expressed by labour, capital, and the relations between these two.”⁹¹

Marx grasps that capital and labor have different positions in relation to the means of production, to the labor process, and its products. Since, under capitalism, nature and animals are means of production that can be used as free gifts by the capitalist class, capitalists and laborers also maintain different positions toward nature, be it inorganic matter such as coal or oil, or living and suffering creatures like pigs, cows, or chickens. As a result, there is no *human* relation to nature or to animals, which are treated primarily as private property. Rather, under capitalist social relations, the capitalist class determines the relationship to animals. If this is to change, the social relationship to animals has to become an object of class struggle from below.⁹²

Against Benton’s Dualism of the Humanist and Naturalist Marx

As mentioned already, Benton’s analysis leads him to conclude that there are two Marxs in the *Paris Manuscripts*: a humanist Marx who makes use of human-animal dualism and favors the domination of nature, and a naturalistic Marx who highlights the gradual difference between humans

and animals and argues for the reconciliation of nature and human society. For Benton, this distinction results in Marx's text being riven with "internal contradictions," as well as "ambiguities" and "tensions."⁹³ He therefore characterizes the *Manuscripts* as "unstable and evidently transitional discourse," in which "discourses of humanism and naturalism coexist in unresolved tension with one another."⁹⁴

This is not to deny unclarities, misleading terms, or exaggerations – it would be surprising if they did not exist given that the *Manuscripts* were part of Marx's process of self-clarification.⁹⁵ However, at his core, Marx is not ambiguous, tense, or contradictory with respect to the human-animal differentiation. Almost from the very beginning of his work, and even in pre-Darwinian times, Marx conceptualizes humans, animals, and their relation in a historical-materialist, socio-practical, and dialectical fashion. Thus, he treats the human-animal differentiation in the same way as he begins to treat the rest of political-economic issues, paving the way for a new understanding of the human-animal relationship. Even if he has not elaborated on the matter in detail, he has developed the building blocks for the most advanced approach to deal with this problem, especially considering Marx's early class differentiation and the rest of his oeuvre.

However, the human-animal differentiation is certainly not the main subject in the *Paris Manuscripts*. Instead, Marx uses it to excavate the form of capitalist estranged labor constructed by human action in historically specific relations. Thus, these can only be overcome by humans – more specifically, the working class – by tearing down capitalist social relations and establishing new communist ones. It is for this reason that Marx emphasizes differences between humans and animals.

Benton's alleged two Marxs in the *Paris Manuscripts* are not the result of Marx's own thinking and writing, but of Benton's exclusively anthropological-philosophical reading of Marx's early notebooks. Benton is trapped in his search for a stable "ontological basis" for an account on "human nature."⁹⁶ Marx, in contrast, is dedicated to an analysis of historically contingent but temporarily stable socioeconomic relations that impede a reconciled full and manifold development of all humans, animals, and nature.

Moreover, over the course of reading the *Manuscripts*, Benton splits up Marx's statements on differences and commonalities between humans and nature (including animals), overestimating the differences and underestimating the commonalities. For example, Benton concentrates on the difference between the species character of humans and other animals, thus missing Marx's acknowledgment that humans are not the

only ones with a species character determined by social life activity, i.e., social labor. Furthermore, while Benton is obsessed with proving that Marx only attributes a fixed standard of life activity to animal species, he misses that Marx recognizes different standards of life activities among animal species.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Benton misinterprets differences and commonalities as contradictory, instead of understanding them as two poles of a historical materialist and dialectical whole. This is particularly noticeable in his interpretations of communist development and the human-natural relation in history as “humanization of nature,” where he omits the naturalization of humans. Thus, Benton himself sets up a false dualism between “humanism” and “naturalism.”

In human-animal or critical animal studies over the last twenty to twenty-five years, Benton’s reading of a naturalistic Marx, even as a counterweight to a humanist Marx, has almost gotten lost in discourses on Marxist animalism or animalist Marxism.⁹⁸ Benton’s interpretation of the *Paris Manuscripts* as a product of a humanist philosophy by the young Marx, which builds on human-animal dualism, has prevailed and been accepted as the legitimate reading of one of the most influential texts in the history of critical social theory of the nineteenth century. Benton himself has stuck to his interpretation since the end of the 1980s, characterizing the Marx of the *Manuscripts* as predominantly humanist, anthropocentric, and a species narcissist.

No new developments have brought forward a reconsideration of the topic – not the resurgence of Marxism in the wake of the recent crisis, the weaknesses of liberal and postmodernist proanimal theories, or the powerful theoretical tools Marx left us for conceptualizing the treatment of other suffering species under capitalism. The discourse on Marxism and animals, and vice versa, has been narrowed down to and dominated by Benton’s misreading, obstructing further investigation into Marx’s legacy for a critical social theory of animal exploitation and liberation. Thus, we must rid ourselves of these theoretical obstacles to develop an adequate social theory capable of analyzing the current misery of humans, animals, and nature, and lead the struggle for a society without exploitation and with justice for all. As Marx said in another of his early writings, citing Thomas Müntzer: “The creatures, too, must become free.”⁹⁹

Notes

1. John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett, *Marx and the Earth: An Anti-Critique* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), vii, 3. In my opinion, there are further commonalities that unite first-stage ecosocialists, such as their emphasis on the role of social move-

ments as the leading forces of change while diminishing the importance of the working class as the revolutionary subject, as well as the accentuation of new reformist strategies in demarcation of a revolutionary rupture with the rule of the

capitalist class.

2. See Ted Benton, introduction to *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice* (London/New York: Verso, 1993), 1–22; Ted Benton, “Marxism and the Moral Status of Animals,” *Society*

- and Animals 11, no. 1 (2003): 73–79; Ted Benton, "Animal Rights and Social Relations," in *Strangers to Nature: Animal Lives and Human Ethics*, ed. Gregory R. Smulewicz-Zucker (Plymouth: Lexington, 2012), 141–56; Ted Benton, "Tierrechte: Ein ökosozialistischer Ansatz," in *Tierethik*, ed. Friederike Schmitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014), 478–511; Ted Benton and Simon Redfearn, "The Politics of Animal Rights—Where is the Left?," *New Left Review* 215 (1996): 43–58.
3. Ted Benton et al., "Symposium: Animal Wrongs and Rights," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 3, no. 2 (1992): 79–127.
 4. Benton, introduction to *Natural Relations*, 5.
 5. See Ted Benton, *Natural Relations*, 99–223; Ted Benton, "Rights and Justice on a Shared Planet: More Rights or New Relations?," *Theoretical Criminology* 2, no. 2 (1998): 162–70; Benton, "Marxism and the Moral Status of Animals," 76–77; Benton, "Animal Rights and Social Relations," 147–51; Benton, "Tierrechte: Ein ökosozialistischer Ansatz," 497. Although I do not agree with Benton's conclusion to hold on to a philosophical and need-based concept of animal rights, his critique of the bourgeois and liberal concept of rights with respect to animals is his main legacy and must be preserved in a critical social theory of animal exploitation and liberation. For Benton's own assessment of his philosophy of rights and critique of liberal rights, see Ted Benton, "Conclusion: Philosophy, Materialism, and Nature—Comments and Reflections," in *Nature, Social Relations and Human Needs: Essays in Honour of Ted Benton*, ed. Sandra Moog and Rob Stones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 208–43.
 6. Benton, *Natural Relations*. For an overview of Benton's impressive and extensive work between 1974 and 2008, which obviously includes more topics than his ecosocialist and pro-animal writings, see Sandra Moog and Rob Stones, eds., *Nature, Social Relations and Human Needs: Essays in Honour of Ted Benton* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 244–51. For an instructive introduction to Benton's work and thinking, see Sandra Moog and Rob Stones, "Introduction: Intricate Webs—Nature, Social Relations, and Human Needs in the Writings of Ted Benton," in *Nature, Social Relations and Human Needs: Essays in Honour of Ted Benton*, ed. Sandra Moog and Rob Stones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1–46.
 7. Ted Benton, "Humanism = Speciesism: Marx on Humans and Animals," *Radical Philosophy* 50 (1988): 4–18.
 8. Ted Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals: Humanism or Naturalism," in *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice* (London/New York: Verso, 1993), 23–57. The essay was reprinted several times in different versions. After the original publication in 1988, it was reprinted at least twice, once in Sean Sayers and Peter Osborne, eds., *Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy: A Radical Philosophy Reader* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), and once more in John Sanbonmatsu, ed., *Critical Theory and Animal Liberation* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011). The revised version was first published in 1993 as the first chapter in Benton's *Natural Relations*. This version was also reprinted at least once in Rhoda Wilkie and David Inglis, eds., *Animals and Society: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002). In the present essay, I refer to this revised and republished version from 1993, which to some extent differs from the original, while maintaining the main arguments.
 9. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 229–348.
 10. For valid critiques of Benton's ecosocialist interpretation of Marx's work, see Paul Burkett, "A Critique of Neo-Malthusian Marxism: Society, Nature, and Population," *Historical Materialism* 2, no. 1 (1998): 118–42; Paul Burkett, *Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999), 38–47, 105–106, 147–258; John Bellamy Foster, "Paul Burkett's *Marx and Nature* Fifteen Years After," *Monthly Review* 66, no. 7 (2014); Foster and Burkett, *Marx and the Earth*.
 11. See Renzo Llorente, "Reflections on the Prospects of a Non-Speciesist Marxism," in *Critical Theory and Animal Liberation*, ed. John Sanbonmatsu (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 121–135; Mary Murray, "The Underdog in History: Serfdom, Slavery and Species in the Creation and Development of Capitalism," in *Theorizing Animals: Re-thinking Human-Animal Relations*, ed. Nik Taylor and Tania Signal (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 99–100; Birgit Mütterich, *Die Problematik der Mensch-Tier-Beziehung in der Soziologie: Weber, Marx und die Frankfurter Schule* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 104–5; Corinne Painter, "Non-Human Animals Within Contemporary Capitalism: A Marxist Account of Non-Human Animal Liberation," *Capital & Class* 40, no. 2 (2016): 328; Katherine Perlo, "Marxism and the Underdog," *Society & Animals* 10, no. 3 (2002): 304–5; John Sanbonmatsu, introduction to *Critical Theory and Animal Liberation* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 17; David Szybel, "Marxism and Animal Rights," *Ethics and Environment* 2, no. 2 (1997); Bob Torres, *Making A Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights* (Oakland/Edinburgh/West Virginia: AK, 2007), 37, 77.
 12. Ryan Gunderson, "Marx's Comments on Animal Welfare," *Rethinking Marxism* 23, no. 4 (2011): 544; Marco Maurizi, "Critical Theory and Animal Liberation," Apes From Utopia: Critical Theory and Animal Liberation blog, 2011, <http://apesfromutopia.blogspot.com>; Lawrence Wilde, "The creatures, too, must become free": Marx and the Animal/Human Distinction," *Capital & Class* 24, no. 3 (2000): 37–53.
 13. Bradley J. Macdonald, "Marx and the Human/Animal Dialectic," in *Political Theory and the Animal/Human Relationship*, ed. Judith Grant and Vincent G. Jungkunz (New York: SUNY Press, 2016), 26–30. While Gunderson rejects the charge that Marx uses a human-animal dualism, Macdonald and Wilde accept it (Gunderson, "Marx's Comments on Animal Welfare," 544). Macdonald accepts it as a heritage of humanism and enlightenment and Wilde as part of a presumed "essentialism" in Marx (Macdonald, "Marx and the Human/Animal Dialectic," 26, 37; Wilde, "The creatures, too, must become free," 38–39). The three authors agree that Marx's differentiation between humans and animals is not directed against animals and does not support animal exploitation. Szybel shares Benton's belief that Marx does use a humanist human-animal differentiation and, among other things, also agrees that Marx's view of nature is instrumental. However, he too acknowledges contradictory statements in this interpretation. Szybel's periodization of Marx's statements is nearly identical to Benton's, as is his philosophical reading of the *Manuscripts*.
 14. Benton, "Conclusion: Philosophy, Materialism, and Nature—Comments and Reflections," 26, 230.
 15. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 23.
 16. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 32.
 17. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 25.
 18. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 32.
 19. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 26.
 20. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 32.
 21. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 33.
 22. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 24.
 23. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 45.
 24. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 23.
 25. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 52f.
 26. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Ani-

mals," 35, 43.

27. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 35. Benton has upheld this basic line of argumentation against the young Marx since 1988, and at least until 2009. See Benton, "Conclusion: Philosophy, Materialism, and Nature—Comments and Reflections," 229–43.

28. See Stefan Kraft and Karl Reitter, "Vorwort," in *Der junge Marx. Philosophische Schriften* (Wien: Promedia, 2007), 19.

29. See Jürgen Rojahn, "Marxismus—Marx—Geschichtswissenschaft: Der Fall der sogenannten 'Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844,'" *International Review of Social History* 28, no. 1 (1983): 2–49; Marcello Musto, "Marx in Paris: Manuskripte und Exzerpthefte aus dem Jahr 1844," *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung* (2007), 178–94.

30. For the genesis of the *Manuscripts* and an instructive and short overview of the emergent reception and debate on the text, see Rojahn, "Marxismus—Marx—Geschichtswissenschaft," 3–13.

31. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 35.

32. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 25.

33. Benton, "Conclusion: Philosophy, Materialism, and Nature—Comments and Reflections," 229.

34. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 25.

35. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 26.

36. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 23, 26.

37. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 231–32, 270, 418–43. Marx, for example, uses the term labor although he means labor power. He does not differentiate between abstract and concrete labor, and omits the dialectic between capitalist property relations and estranged labor as precondition and result of each other, as he conceives private property only as the result of estranged labor.

38. See Marx's own hint in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, part I in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 29 (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 283; Kraft and Reitter, "Vorwort," 8, 14–15. Benton's earlier interpretation of the *Paris Manuscripts* and their political-economic topics as Feuerbachian and Hegelian, his repeated hints to the contrast between the young and the old Marx, and Benton's adoption of Althusser's periodization of the theoretical development within Marx's works suggest that Benton shares Althusser's paradigm of Marx's episte-

mological break (Ted Benton, *The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism: Althusser and His Influence* [New York: Macmillan, 1984]; Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 24, 35). Nevertheless, Benton's appreciative judgment of the *Paris Manuscripts* as the "deepest [...] of Marx's writings" seems to speak against the interpretation that Benton is a hardened Althusserian with respect to Marx's early writings (Benton, "Conclusion: Philosophy, Materialism, and Nature—Comments and Reflections," 230). Benton does not make any explicit comments on the issue in the two versions of his article discussed here.

39. See Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 279. I agree with scholars like Kohei Saito on their interpretation of the *Paris Manuscripts*, according to which there is, despite all the differences between the young and the old Marx, a continuity in his works with regard to the analysis of social labor, even though it may be called a continuation through development since the scientific concepts have changed partly in their meanings and terms. See Kohei Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism: Capitalism, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017), 27–61.

40. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 35–37, (New York: International Publishers, 1996–98).

41. See endnote 37 for the observation on Marx's not-yet developed understanding of the difference between labor and labor power.

42. Musto, "Marx in Paris," 191–92.

43. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 271.

44. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 241.

45. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 267.

46. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 271, 280–285.

47. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 270.

48. Although Marx often uses the notion of "human" in the chapter on estranged labor, the inner logic of Marx's argument (estranged labor explains private property and its laws), the frequent use of "human" and "worker" as synonyms, and the conclusion Marx draws from his analysis of estranged labor strongly suggest that Marx considers a specific form of labor to be alienating rather than human labor as such. Furthermore, after Marx outlines the different forms of estranged labor, he concludes that the relationship has been considered "only from the standpoint of the worker" (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 279).

49. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*,

vol. 3, 274.

50. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 275.

51. Here, Marx indirectly reminds the reader of the separation between private (economy) and public (politics), and between economy and society, which he already points out in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 [New York: International Publishers, 1975], 3–129).

52. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 275.

53. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 275.

54. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 276.

55. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 276.

56. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 275.

57. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 277.

58. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 276.

59. These exaggerations diminish and a slenderer differentiation takes their place over the course of Marx's and Engels's research. Engels, for example, writes in *Dialectics of Nature*: "It goes without saying that it would not occur to us to dispute the ability of animals to act in a planned, premeditated fashion" (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 25 [New York: International Publishers, 1987], 460.)

60. In fact, animals are not even capable of taking part in the capitalist social relations of production or circulation. Among other things, this is why the bourgeois emancipation of animals, their political economic integration in capitalist formations, and an according political acknowledgment is much more difficult (probably impossible) than to some of the most oppressed humans in society.

61. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 277.

62. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 28–40.

63. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 305.

64. I take into consideration both possibilities (liberation and destruction) here to emphasize that, unlike Benton suggests, the normativity of the socio-historical potential of humans does not play a role for Marx's differentiation between animal and human life activity (Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 40). Furthermore, neither liberation nor destruction are conceived as species projects in the *Paris Manuscripts* or in my reading. Rather, they are projects of certain classes within historically specific modes of so-

cial formation.

65. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 336.
66. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 337.
67. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 305–6, 337.
68. See also Gunderson, "Marx's Comments on Animal Welfare," 544.
69. See Wilde, "'The creatures, too, must become free,'" 42.
70. Maurizi, "Critical Theory and Animal Liberation."
71. See Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 305.
72. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 332–42.
73. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 273.
74. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 30.
75. I am not advocating that the problem of animal exploitation or the destruction of nature be solved by new technology. Both are, in the first place, problems of capitalist social relations and, thus, can only be adequately addressed by changing these social relations.
76. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 296. Benton seems to deny the qualitative, i.e., revolutionary, change from capitalism to socialism or communism, since he considers the necessary "species historical potentials" to be, "to say the least, highly speculative." (Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 40)
77. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 268, 280.
78. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 268. This is consistent with Marx's analysis of estranged labor and the human-nature relation in capitalism, since humans are estranged from nature by their alienating social relations. Thus, if social relations are reshaped, the relation to nature is also reshaped.
79. For the processes of how capitalist social relations abstract from nature and animals, see Christian Stache, *Kapitalismus und Naturzerstörung. Zur kritischen Theorie des gesellschaftlichen Naturverhältnisses* (Opladen/Berlin/Toronto: Budrich UniPress, 2017), 409–534.
80. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 25.
81. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 298.
82. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 31; Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 35, 186–87. According to the continuity of this dialectical differentiation between humans and animals in Marx's work, the charges of anthropocentrism and speciesism are also multiplied with reference to Marx's other mentioned writings. The attacks are launched mostly with less knowledge or acknowledgment of Marx's historical-materialist approach than in Benton's case. See, for example, Aiyana Rosen and Sven Wirth, "Über die Rolle der Kategorie 'Arbeit' in den Grenzziehungspraxen des Mensch-Tier-Dualismus," in *Tiere Bilder Ökonomien. Aktuelle Forschungsfragen der Human-Animal Studies*, ed. Chimaira-Arbeitskreis für Human-Animal Studies (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013), 17–42.; Klaus Petrus, "Arbeit," in *Lexikon der Mensch-Tier-Beziehungen*, ed. Arianna Ferrari and Klaus Petrus (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2015), 39.
83. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 23.
84. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 52.
85. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 45.
86. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 47.
87. Such a conception of difference in unity differs fundamentally from those proposed, for example, by Lawrence Wilde who considers Marx's argument affirmatively as a form of "essentialism" (Wilde, "'The creatures, too, must become free,'" 72–73).
88. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin writes: "[W]e have seen that the mental powers of the higher animals do not differ in kind, though greatly in degree, from the corresponding powers of man.... the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind." He goes even further, writing that "[w]e have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, etc., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals." (Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 1871, available at <http://gutenberg.org>.)
89. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 278.
90. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 279.
91. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 289.
92. This observation is analogous to the one iterated in the debate on the roots of climate warming, in which it is argued that humans as such, or as an anthropological collective, did not cause the high levels of CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere, but capital, particularly "fossil capital," did. See Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London/New York: Verso, 2016). The further, far-reaching theoretical and political implications of this insight cannot be elaborated on here. However, I would like to mention at least that critical social theory has to be extended to analyze the capital-animal relation as the root cause of animal exploitation and killing in today's capitalist world-system. This animal capital is to be explained in clear distinction from post-modern concepts of the term, such as the designs in Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
93. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 24, 35.
94. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 23, 35.
95. See Musto, "Marx in Paris"; Kraft and Reitter, "Vorwort," 18.
96. Benton, "Marx on Humans and Animals," 25, 34, 42.
97. See Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 276f.
98. Obviously, there are exceptions to the rule. But Murray, for example, just mentions Benton's attempt to outline an alternative narrative and Macdonald strongly criticizes Benton's position, accusing him of ignoring Marx's differentiation and implicitly arguing on an idealist basis (Murray, "The Underdog in History," 100; Macdonald, "Marx and the Human/Animal Dialectic," 37–48).
99. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 172.