

Appropriation: A Tale of Being Animal and Poor in World

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Abstract

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This paper undertakes a comparative study of various 18th and 19th century planning regulations to argue that the relocation of non-human animals outside city boundaries served to reinscribe the city as a secular space for citizens-as-humans (as opposed to citizens-as-legal persons). I argue that the process of industrialization and urban purification enabled humans to imagine their labour as separable from their material bodies while retaining a connection to their figurative bodies (which have an essential humanness). Non-human animal labour, on the other hand, is conceived from the 18th century onwards as being merely an extension of animal bodies and thus inseparable from them, thus leading to the claim that humans are able to have property, while animals cannot. I conclude that international law, in addressing humans as cosmopolites (citizens of world as opposed to dwellers of a particular expiatory space), opens up the possibility of rethinking the human/animal dichotomy. In describing the humans relation to world, Martin Heidegger describes the animal as being sad and poor in world. I propose that sadness accrues not to the animal as such, but to our entrapment within the political economy of the city and to our loss of life that could become without maintaining the ontological tension of human existence.