

## Chinese Dogs and French Scapegoats: An Essay in Zoonomastics

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Il paraît que la vérité vient doucement, à pas de colombe. La force, elle, laisse sur la terre des griffes de sa course. Michel Foucault, "*La force de fuir*" (1973)

### 1. LeDogue, Foucault's virtually invisible dog

I am prepared to swear on Mao Zedong's head that Michel Foucault did not live with a dog. Had he been living with a canine companion in the 1960s, when he wrote his chapter-length analysis of Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas*, he might have read it less anthropocentrically. "Might have" because many of us, Foucault readers, art lovers and academics, who did not live with a dog in the 1970s and even 1980s, also did not then read much into the presence of a dog in the Velasquez painting. Foucault lists and describes eight characters (*personnages*), in the foreground and middle ground of the painting.<sup>1</sup> In fact, there are clearly nine, and the ninth is the mastiff who lies in the forefront of all of the others. Today, as the human-animal relationship has come front and centre in academic, as well as mainstream discourse, it is hard to believe that in the numerous threes, trios, triples, triangles and trilogies emerging from Foucault's analysis of *Las Meninas*, the dog is totally excluded. Eagle-eyed and expert decoder that he was, Foucault wrote page upon page on the representation of representation, on the visible and the invisible, on the multiple gazes and perspectives in this painting... all without acknowledging the dog's role.

Laura Hobgood-Oster first noted Foucault's blindness to the dog.<sup>2</sup> She quotes the short passage regarding the dog in Foucault's chapter:

The entire picture is looking out at a scene for which it is itself a scene. A condition of pure reciprocity manifested by the observing and observed mirror, the two stages of which are uncoupled at the lower corners of the picture: on the left canvas with its back to us, by means of which the exterior point is made into pure spectacle; *to the right the dog lying on the floor, the only element in the picture that is neither looking at anything nor moving, because it is not intended, with its deep reliefs and the light playing on its silky hair, to be anything but an object to be seen.*<sup>3</sup>

Hobgood-Oster aptly comments that "[t]hough "man" is a recent invention, "animals" must still be the consummate other and always remain object."<sup>4</sup> She does not pursue the matter further, except to say that she disagrees with Foucault's

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<sup>1</sup> In "Les suivantes," *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines*, 27. "*Las Meninas*," *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 12.

<sup>2</sup> In *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition*, 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*,12. Italics are mine.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*,13.

interpretation precisely because the dog is not given a role. Ironically, there are two mistakes in her very brief Foucault passage, which reenacts the virtual invisibility of the dog in Foucault's own analysis. First, Hobgood-Oster states that the dog "happens to be taking a nap," but he is sitting upright, therefore more likely awake and looking at something outside the frame; and, secondly, the text reads: "the image would be incomplete *with* the "animal." Here a typo seems to have eluded both the critic and her editors; the text should read "*without* the 'animal'."<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Hobgood-Oster ignores two admittedly brief mentions of the dog in Foucault's chapter. He writes that, on the bottom left of the painting, it is the corner of the canvas that forms the tip of the perspectival figure X in the first plane and, on the right, the dwarf, to which he adds parenthetically: "(whose shoe is placed on the dog's back)."<sup>6</sup> Today, awakened to the animal in us, one glance at the painting corrects this glaring mistake. It is obvious to us now that the dog, not the dwarf, acts as counterpoint. The second mention of the dog is equally mystifying: Foucault states that the princess is surrounded "by a swirl of courtiers, attendants, *animals and buffoons*."<sup>7</sup> No matter how much I zoom in on and scan the painting, I see only a single non-human animal: the mastiff.

Because Foucault is the Foucault whose attention to detail is legendary, I/we cannot attribute the quasi invisibility of the dog, its lack of agency and of singularity, to Foucault's inattentiveness. I believe that what precludes him from including the dog in his analysis of the painting is language. Categories, as Foucault so clearly demonstrated, are created in language, appearing and disappearing with the discursive formations of a particular historical period. Foucault's "man" in "l'homme' est une invention récente" is historically datable to writings before the 1970s, where "man/l'homme" was meant to include "woman/la femme." In English, "[t]he use of "person" to replace the suffix "-man" in word compounds, in order to avoid sexist connotations, is first recorded in 1971 (chairperson)."<sup>8</sup> Even today, French-(men) continue to use "l'homme" as referring to an all-encompassing: "Être humain (*sans considération de sexe*)."<sup>9</sup> Foucault was writing within a discursive formation that also opposed man to animal. Hence, the painting's eight "*personnages*"; he cannot see nine. A *personnage* is a person who holds a certain position in a particular situation, including important people and characters in a theatrical representation. Foucault's choice of that term is correct but limiting. In English, "personage" also exists as the "body of a person," and was originally just a longer word for "person" which came from Old French, and which is no longer in use. Hence, in the English translation, *personnages* are rendered as "figures," "characters,"

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>6</sup> "Les suivantes," 28.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Translation and italics are mine.

<sup>8</sup> Online Etymological Dictionary, [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com). All the following etymological explanations for English words come from this source.

<sup>9</sup> Centre national de ressources textuelles et lexicales, [www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie](http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie). All the following etymological explanations for French words come from this source.

and, in the case of royals, as “personages.”<sup>10</sup> Had Foucault written his analysis in English and chosen the more encompassing term “figures” or “characters,” he might have counted up to nine figures or nine characters and increased his ‘threesomes’ exponentially.

Foucault, undeniably a lover of the *mot juste*, enjoys assigning the correct terms to things. He refers to everyone in the painting, including the dwarves and the attendants, by name and position, even though he tells us that naming each *personnage* in this way is but a reassuring identification of the individuals and certainly not a way of explaining away the painting. Given that the dog is in his eyes an object, it is not surprising that it has no proper name.<sup>11</sup> Slightly disconcerting is the fact that Foucault does not even give this particular dog, a tan-coloured hound, a more specific identity than “dog.” In French, Foucault could have used the term “mastiff,” or “molosse” or “dogue,” all terms that refer to large, solidly-built dogs instead of his non-committal “chien” or worse, “animal.” His lack of vocabulary here may indicate his indifference to certain beings. Chances are that the mastiff in the painting had a given name; he appears in another portrait as the hunting companion beside a King Felipe IV in hunting gear and on horseback. It is recorded that the King cherished his numerous dogs, large, medium and small, and that Diego Velasquez, his beloved court painter, shared with him this affection.<sup>12</sup> Having a proper name individuates, makes one, if not a person, at least a character. Let’s call that figure in the painting LeDogue.

Nicolasito Pertusato, who is indiscriminately called by Foucault “the Italian buffoon,” or “the dwarf”<sup>13</sup> has one foot on LeDogue’s back. He seems to be attempting some kind of balancing act and he is the only figure in the painting to look at the dog. One can imagine that he is attempting to amuse himself or the others by playing with LeDogue; or that he is nudging LeDogue to make him/her more attentive. Foucault repeatedly employs the term “attentive” in describing his personages. The dog is the only figure not paying attention to the other personages, in or out of the painting. Yet

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<sup>10</sup> *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage, 1994. No translator named but on the Web, Alan Sheridan is credited as the translator. He lists it as his: <http://alansheridanauthor.com/translation-philosophy.html>.

<sup>11</sup> I have not been able to find the name given to King Felipe IV’s dog in French or English texts. Perhaps it is mentioned in Spanish texts. But maybe not: the Spaniards, like the French and the English, have only recently paid much attention to non-human companions in biographies and historical records.

<sup>12</sup> The king and Velázquez shared common interests in *horses, dogs and art*, and in private formed an easy, relaxed relationship over the years. R. A. M. Stevenson, *Velazquez*. London: G. Bell Sons (1912), p. 7. From Wikipedia page of King Felipe IV: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip\\_IV\\_of\\_Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_IV_of_Spain). Italics are mine.

<sup>13</sup> In both the French and English version, Nicolasito Pertusato has been further diminished by a drop of two letters in French, Nicolaso (p.25) and three in English, Nicolas (p.9). His role in the painting is attributed barely more significance than Ledogue’s.

LeDogue is extremely attentive. LeDogue is intently looking down at something outside the painting, precisely what we will never know. What/who is being scrutinized by LeDogue is far more of a mystery than the reflection in the mirror in the background that has excited art historians and theoreticians for so long. LeDogue is indifferent to the other characters' looking games. On one point regarding the dog in the passage quoted above, Foucault is right: LeDogue is not moving.

That stillness should not turn LeDogue into an object strictly to be seen. LeDogue is acting as a dog: keeping still, watching, until movement is required and opportune. In French, this notion of the still dog is not a typical representation of canines. Dogs in French connote motion. In a group, they are not, as in English, a reified "pack,"<sup>14</sup> but an active *meute*, a term that comes from the Latin *movere* in its past participle, *movitus*, or "moving." The same etymology applies to "riot, uprising, mutiny," which in French are *émeutes*. From the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the word *meute*, a pack of dogs, also meant "uprising, riot, expedition." The one-letter prefix *é* has since erased the connection between dogs and rebellious upheavals. The *meute* has been muted. In Foucault's analysis of *Las Meninas*, the idea of canine agency is not even a moot point.

## 2. Foucault's disembodied Cynics

Almost twenty years after the publication of *The Order of Things*, in 1983, Foucault delivered six lectures in English that were posthumously compiled under the splendid title *Fearless Speech*. The lectures deal with the concept of truth, or *parrhesia* in Greek.<sup>15</sup> The fifth lecture focuses on the Cynics as heroic practitioners of truth. Of course, a classically trained scholar like Foucault does not fail to note that the origin of the word "cynic" is Greek and means "dog-like" (*kynikoi*); he also points out that the most representative Cynic philosopher, Diogenes of Sinope, was called "The Dog" by none other than Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*.<sup>16</sup> But here Foucault abandons canine references. Throughout the lecture, the dog is left outside the room, out of the discussion. Is this omission what Paola Cavalieri calls a "missed opportunity"<sup>17</sup>; or is it a willed defiance to state the obvious? Foucault fails even to provide the Greek word for dog: *kuōn*. Diogenes was nicknamed Dog, "*kuōn*," which is not 'dog-like,' "*kynikoi*," but dog *tout court*. Having airbrushed LeDogue out of the painting, Foucault now brushes aside not only superficial but more profound links between the canines and the philosophers called the Cynics.

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<sup>14</sup> It is noteworthy that the term "pack" for a group of animals is only used for dogs and wolves. The far more encompassing term is "herd." More on this topic in Section 5.

<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault. *Fearless Speech*. Los Angeles : Semiotext(e) 2001, 115-133.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> Paola Cavalieri, "A Missed Opportunity: Humanism, Anti-humanism and the Animal Question," *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World*, edited by Jodey Castricano (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008) 97-123.

And yet, Foucault knows these philosophers well. He knows that their practice of truth is a practice of embodying it, not of speaking or writing about it: “[...] Even though Cynic philosophers wrote books just like other philosophers, they were far more interested in choosing and practicing a certain way of life.”<sup>18</sup> He tells us that their way of life was outdoors, or in the liminal indoor/outdoor space of the agora. In a style unusual for him, Foucault strings together several adjectives: “[The Cynics] thought that their teachings had to consist in a very public, visible, spectacular, provocative, and sometimes scandalous way of life.”<sup>19</sup> Other adjectives Foucault uses frequently in this lecture on the Cynics’ life-style and attitudes are “radical,” “natural” and, several more times, “scandalous.”

Foucault is not known for an excessive use of adjectives. Perhaps, in this case, he is refusing to give in to the obvious and widely used metaphorization of humans into canines by piling on modifiers to qualify his description. His exceptional sense of logic is certainly at work as he discerns three forms, or techniques of *parrhesia* or bold speech used by the Cynics. 1) The inversion of roles: Alexander the Great is ordered by Diogenes to step out of his sun ray; 2) the displacing or transposing of rules to make them arbitrary: Diogenes crowns himself, and also a horse during an athletic competition; 3) the universalizing of rules to absurd ends: if eating is fine in public, then masturbation, also a satisfying of bodily needs, can be done in public.<sup>20</sup>

These performative actions on the part of the Cynics clearly have more impact than their speeches. They are obviously meant as transgressions of social and political orders. But they are also imitating the behavioral patterns of canines. Who has not observed the way a dog basking contentedly in the sun will not be budged by anyone. Here I would like to introduce three Chinese proverbs involving dogs, which can be used to describe the Cynical situations or techniques identified by Foucault. The first *parrhesia*, the inversion of roles, might be evoked in the proverb 跽狗吠堯 (Zhi’s dog barks at Yao).<sup>21</sup> The dog shows no respect for anyone other than his master Zhi, going so far as to bark at the legendary emperor-sage Yao. The second proverb, 狗拿耗子多管閒事 (A dog that catches mice is meddling in others’ affairs, or is not minding its own business), describes a dog displacing the role of the family cat. The third proverb, “狗改不了吃屎” (A dog will always eat shit), is usually used to describe a deviant sexual habit, something transgressing the social norms of human behaviour.

I have given Chinese examples here because Chinese, the oldest still-extant language and civilization, was from very early on extremely knowledgeable about the ways and traits that are common to both canines and humans. Humankind’s very first Other was the dog. In the Chinese written system, the dog has a special status unlike any other animal, with the exception of the human. The most striking

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.115.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> Opus cit., p. 120-122.

<sup>21</sup> For Chinese proverbs see 汉典 <http://www.zdic.net/>

word for dog, *quan* (coincidentally very similar phonetically to the ancient Greek word for dog, *kuon*) is identical to that for human, except for the addition in the top right-hand quadrant of a dot. The character for human is 大 and that for dog, 犬. A human can also be written thus: 人 or tilted sideways as 亻. One character combines the character for man 亻 with that for dog 犬 to form 伏, an extremely polyvalent word that can refer to many actions, including to bend over, to fall, to subside, or to tame, none of which are more human than animal. It is a word that indicates the absolute interdependence of these two species from the very beginning of civilization. It comes therefore as no surprise that this particular written character is also the first syllable in the name of the legendary founder of Chinese polity, Fu Xi 伏羲.

It should come as no surprise that in Western philosophy the dog also occupies a position of preeminence among the non-human animals. Most histories of Western philosophy cite Plato as the first to invoke the figure of the dog, forgetting that the Cynics did so before him. Accounts of dogs in early philosophy tend to dwell on the rationality of the hunting dog, Chrysippus' calculating dog, or again offering an anthropomorphized image of the loyal dog.<sup>22</sup> But the Cynics came first, and they not only spoke of, but acted like dogs. They did not boast ownership of a smart dog; rather, they lived with the dogs. They laughed and scorned humans, and were in turn laughed at and scorned like dogs, and finally brushed aside into the margins of history.

Like dogs, the Cynics lived a liminal existence, either outdoors, or in the marketplace. They had no property. They were the first western pariahs. It is interesting to note that the term "pariah," which comes from the Tamil word *parai*, literally meaning "to say or tell something," applies to both humans and dogs as outcasts or lower caste.

Foucault mentions, if only briefly, another link between the Cynics and Asian philosophies. Although he supports Farrand Sayre's hypothesis that the Cynics were in a sense a consequence of expanding conquests of the Macedonian empire, which exposed Greeks to various Indian philosophies, including the Gymnosophists and other ascetic groups, Foucault elaborates no further. A number of details would have given more weight to this suggested Asian connection. For example, the fact that the Gymnosophists were called the "naked philosophers" because they scorned

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<sup>22</sup> Plato speaks of the philosophical dog: "The dog changes his behaviour towards man depending on whether he knows him or not, thus he acts on the basis of knowledge and 'shows a true love of wisdom.'" *Republic* II, 375a-376c, Greek ed. with Eng. tr. by P. Shorey (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1930) vol. I, 173. According to Olympiodorus, Socrates himself used the oath "by the dog" because of the rationality of the animal. The above quoted by Luciano Floridi in *Scepticism, Animal Rationality and the Fortune of Chrysippus' Dog*, (1997:5) online pdf: <http://www.philosophyofinformation.net>.

food and clothes. Although the Cynics vociferously called for the satisfying of bodily needs, they were generally clothed in rags and, like feral dogs, had to make do with what was tossed their way. What is noteworthy and common to both Gymnosophists and the Cynics is the importance accorded to the body as a vital ground for philosophy, and also the view of the human as an integral part of nature rather than separate and superior to it. Asian philosophies, whether Indian or Chinese, seek unity with nature. The Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi declared that there is nowhere where the Dao is not. When pressed to locate the Dao, he answered, "in shit and piss."<sup>23</sup>

In his lecture, Foucault strangely disembodies the Cynics, and insists on incorporating them within the tradition of Greek logocentric philosophy: "The Cynic attitude [...] is an extremely radical version of the *very Greek* conception of the relationship between one's way of life and knowledge of the truth."<sup>24</sup> His Cynics seem meek, their "fearless speech," timid. Foucault's inability to see the Cynics' affirmation of the body and their resistance to anthropomorphism as critically important to his philosophical enquiry may be symptomatic of what he himself calls an "unproblematic field of experience, or a set of practices, which "[are] accepted without question, which [are] familiar and "silent," out of [the] discussion."<sup>25</sup>

The truth of the matter is that the Cynics' contribution to 'our' world may be situational humor, a humor of a kind that does not fear salaciousness, vulgarity, self-deprecation. Indeed, being Cynical is not merely having a low (Cynics would say a realistic) opinion of humanity; the Cynic makes fun of humanity, with him or herself as the first target. Cynicism brings humans down from their pedestal. Such a philosophy would perceive humans less like gods and more like dogs.

### 3. Canine Wisdom

It is uncertain to what degree Cynicism came to Greece from Asian sources back along the route of the latter's imperialist expansion. What is now more certain, thanks to recent scientific revelations, is that the origin of the canine species is Chinese. Recent mitochondrial DNA research indicates that those pariah dogs with whom the Cynics hung out originally came from China (not, as previously thought, from India, or from multiple sites in Asia and Africa). China, according to this latest research, may be the sole originating center of dogs.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore not surprising that canine knowledge is solidly imbedded in Chinese writing. What may surprise

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<sup>23</sup> "在屎溺。" *Zhuangzi*, Section XXII.

<http://www.xiaoshuoze.com/files/article/books/1/1143/215512.html>

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, 117. My italics.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

<sup>26</sup> Jun-Feng Pang, Cornelya Kluetsch, et al., "mtDNA Data Indicate a Single Origin for Dogs south of Yangtze River, Less than 16,300 years Ago, from Numerous Wolves" *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, (2009), 2849-2864: <http://mbe.oxfordjournals.org>.

some is that, in the structure of the written Chinese language, dogs are not scapegoats, but rather active partners of the human, and oftentimes stand-ins for us. Although silenced, when it is not completely erased, the dog as metonymical figure for the human can be deciphered in Chinese writing, which dates back to the latter half of the second millennium B.C.E.. It is certainly true that several recent Chinese studies about dogs and their cultural status admit (in some cases, one is tempted to say, “sheepishly”) that Chinese, in comparison to other languages, contains the greatest number of derogatory terms for the dog. Many Chinese social commentators also deplore the fact that dogs are still eaten by some people in China. However, a closer examination of Chinese reveals a more nuanced reality.

In Chinese, a written character consists of one or more components, most frequently a semantic component and a phonetic one. I’ve mentioned above the similarity between the characters for human and dog.<sup>27</sup> Here I would like to dwell briefly on words containing the semantic component ‘dog,’<sup>28</sup> to show the range of abilities and attributes assigned to the human through the use of the semantic component for ‘dog.’

The word 獨 means “alone, individual, solo,” sometimes also “sovereign.” China’s first dictionary, the *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字 (2<sup>nd</sup> c. C.E.) explains the presence of the “dog” component in that word by explaining that the dog acts as an individual, in contrast to herded cattle.<sup>29</sup> The dog is the shepherd.

The Chinese word for “self” is the character for “nose”: 自. This is not surprising. In many cultures, it is customary to point to one’s own nose to refer to oneself. Dogs also point with their nose, although not to themselves. The nose is not exclusively human; it is, if not originally, essentially canine. The character for “to smell” is composed of “nose” and “dog” 臭, acknowledging the dog’s indisputably superior sense of smell.

The primary sense in Western philosophy, the gaze, was also constructed in Chinese with the components ‘dog’ and ‘eye’: 臭. This is the sovereign fixating look, where the dog or the human looks but is not looked at, or cares not if it is looked at. To be fair, this character is now rare, almost obsolete. It is nevertheless an attestation that the eye and the act of looking in Chinese is not solely a human property. And that the dog possesses that ability. Think here of Foucault’s and Velasquez’s *LeDogue*.

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<sup>27</sup> 犬. There are many more words for “dog” in Chinese. See last section.

<sup>28</sup> Depending on the position of the radical in the character, it can appear as the character itself, 犬 or turned sideways: 犭.

<sup>29</sup> My source for the Chinese etymology is primarily the online etymological dictionary which gives the most authoritative works through history, from the *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字 to the Kangxi 康熙字典: <http://www.zdic.net/>



The mouth, in Chinese, is also combined with a dog component: two mouths 口口 along with a dog 犬 comprises the word “to cry”: 哭. Originally the word meant “to howl,” but nowadays it refers to that action considered until recently to be the sole property of humans: “to weep.” That the dog would figure in many words related to noise, such as barking, yelping, snarling is easily understandable, but here the dog is associated with this human, all too human expression of sorrow.

We should not be surprised if, in the near future, the Chinese decide to erase the dot that differentiates human from dog in the word “to cry.” They have already done so for other words with a dog component, such as “to laugh” or “smile:” 笑; “to reward,” or “a prize:” 奖. But it will be trickier to rid the Chinese written language of many terms that carry the dog radical and connote thinking processes or actions that humans are not always ready to claim as theirs alone: to guess: 猜; to plot: 猷; to hesitate: 犹; to violate, transgress: 犯; to feign: 装; to be mad: 狂; cunning: 猾; obscene: 狃; in other words, a long registry of behavioural patterns. The Chinese language experts might prefer to leave these agencies to the dogs... Nevertheless, these are all actions and behaviours humans share with dogs.

Returning to French and English, we can distribute the qualities and behaviours ascribed to dogs (and to humans) into two camps: on the one hand, the Greek-philosopher dogs who are calculating — they will adopt an attitude of servility out of self-interest, for example —; and on the other, the Cynics and their entourage of dogs who, in a sovereign fashion, ignore rules — in other words, the deviants.

#### 4. French /English Scapegoats

The deviants Foucault studied — the lepers, the mad, the insane, the diseased, the criminals, and always somewhere included with them, the homosexuals — are in fact scapegoats, personages oppressed in a particular situation, in a particular period. For their deviance and defiance, they are reined in, treated as dogs, exhibited as zoo animals, chained beasts. Foucault employs terms usually reserved for non-human animals as they are used in historical records. That is particularly the case in Chapter 5, “Les Insensés “ (The Insane) of his *History of Madness*.<sup>30</sup>

Foucault often uses the term “*animalité*” in a way that actually maintains its original meaning in Latin, and in Old French, from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century onward: “the set of faculties which characterize the living being.”<sup>31</sup> In this early definition, the term includes the human being. However, by 1778, as attested in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s work, the term meant “the set of characteristics of the animal (as opposed to those of man [sic]).” And by 1788, with Buffon, it referred to “the animal part of man, as opposed to his soul.” While “*animalité*” comes from the

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<sup>30</sup> *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. 1972. *History of Madness*. 2006. Translated by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa.

<sup>31</sup> CNRTL, op. cit. “*animalité*” entry.

Latin word “animalitas,” Rousseau and Buffon’s use of the term as excluding humans has no basis in Latin and probably evolved from the French term “animal.”<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, the English word for “*animalité*,” “animality” did not travel the same route as the French: it was borrowed directly from the French, not the Latin, and at a late date, some time in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by which time the term had already bifurcated into animal versus human. This explains why the English term, which appears synonymous to the French, is not its equivalent: it more exclusively opposes animals to humans. Undoubtedly this explains why the English translation of Foucault’s “*animalité*” varies throughout the chapter. The single French word is lost in its translation as “bestiality,” more frequently adjectivally as “animal,” or as a syntagm such as “animal violence,” “animal world,” and twice only, as “animality.” None of these English solutions preserve the French etymological force that Foucault implies in his use of “*animalité*.” His “*animalité*” does not refer to the animal versus human “world” or “nature”; nor to bestial versus civilized beings. It is inherently part of humanity, part of us, and carries in none of its occurrences a negative connotation. “Animalité” is instead infused with the power of manifestation, of demonstration, which comes from a fierce will. Foucault seems to suggest that the will to power is that “*animalité*.” This is not obvious in English.

The natural fury of the insane is a testimony of the immediate (non mediated) violence of “*animalité*” (the immediate animal violence) (197; 147).<sup>33</sup> The insane are violent and have outbursts of fury, which is rendered in English as “the insane, in their moments of frenzy” (198 ; 147-8). Foucault also frequently uses the term “*fureur*,” which is weakened in English by translating it as “frenzy.” “*Frénésie*” means furious delirium and Foucault’s vocabulary is cautiously non psychological. He never uses the term passion, either. “*Fureur*” is, to use a cliché, a force of nature, such as the furor of waters unleashed in Corneille’s *Cinna*.<sup>34</sup> “Unleashing,” “*déchaînement*,” is actually a term Foucault’s employs frequently, as in “le *déchaînement* de leur *fureur* [...] imaginé sous les espèces d’une liberté animale,” which the English translation conveys as : “these fits of madness are seen as a kind of animal freedom”(198; 148).<sup>35</sup> Again here, the translation reduces the infinitive power of the terms: “fits” instead of “unleashing,” “kind,” as in ‘sort of,’ instead of a “species” as in ‘biology.’ The term “*liberté*” is also used liberally by Foucault; most often, it is translated in English as a behavioural “liberty,” never as the “freedom of”

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<sup>32</sup> This latter term, “animal” also included humans, from its Latin inception onward, whether in French or in English. It meant: a living being, being which breathes; “animal” itself came from the Latin “anima”, that is “breath, soul.”

<sup>33</sup> The first page number is the French pagination; the second, the English.

<sup>34</sup> Online CNRTL: “*fureur*” entry

<sup>35</sup> To be fair, the translators use the term “unleashing” once for Foucault’s pet term “*déchaînement*.” However, when they do, the term “frenzy” again weakens the assertion: “a space of unpredictable liberty where frenzy was unleashed” (un espace d’imprévisible liberté où se déchaîne la *fureur*.” (150; 201)

expression, association, or freedom *tout court*. In the above English version, animal freedom is mitigated by the phrase “kind of,” that modifies it. Indeed, the English translation opts for a psychologizing vocabulary most of the time: “*dérangement de moeurs*” becomes “behavioural disturbances” (141; 190); “*dérèglement*,” a mechanistic “unhinging” (137;185).

Applying Foucault’s grammatical method of analysis to the translation, the “*animalité*” words have lost their substantial substantive force in English (156;209);<sup>36</sup> they have been turned into meek adjectives, or worse, tropes (as in ‘kind of’). “*La force de scandale*” becomes “such scandalous force” (142; 191) rather than “the force of scandal”; “*le scandale toujours possible*,” “the scandalous possibility” (155;207) rather than “the still (or always) possible scandal”. Foucault uses forceful language, very close to its etymology, as in this case: the noun “*scandale*” (which he uses repeatedly in his speech on the Cynics) carries its etymological meaning of “bad noise.” Scandal here is not moral, or if anything Foucault uses it to defy moralist interpretations.

Foucault places a great deal of weight on his words, for example, on the substantive “will.” “That individual power of man [sic] which is [his] will (185)<sup>37</sup> is decodable as ‘animal.’” When humans are their own sole referents, what lies at degree zero is our “*animalité*”:

L’animal en l’homme n’a plus *valeur d’indice* pour un au-delà; il est devenu sa folie, sans rapport à rien d’autre qu’à elle-même: sa folie à l’état de nature. L’animalité qui fait rage dans la folie dépossède l’homme [sic] de ce qu’il peut y avoir d’humain en lui ; mais non pour le livrer à d’autres *puissances*, pour l’établir seulement *au degré zéro de sa propre nature*. (The animal in man no longer has the indexical value of a beyond, but has become his madness, with no link to anything other than itself, his madness in a natural state. The animality that rages in madness dispossesses man of what human element may be in him; not so that he might be delivered to other powers, *but rather to simply set him at the degree zero of his own nature.*)<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> When Foucault discusses the loss of the noun “*déraison*” and its vestigial presence as an adjective. In the chapter under discussion, he uses the obsolete noun several times.

<sup>37</sup> The English translation is a grammatical contortion, implying the opposite of agency: “the individual power given to man in his will.”(137)

<sup>38</sup> The English translator chose the past tense for this passage. I believe that goes counter to Foucault’s intemporal present, ongoing present. “The animal in man was no longer the indicator of a beyond, but had become in itself his madness, with no reference to anything other than itself, his madness in a natural state. The animality that raged in madness dispossessed man of his humanity, not so that he might fall prey to other powers, but rather to fix him at the degree zero of his own nature.” (198; 148)

The animal, the madness are here indicators of a will, that is human, *because it is animal agency*. The powers are not powers that be, they are powers of our *animalité*, our common denominator, which is also our degree zero.

*Animalité* as part of the human was clear to the Cynics, and remains embedded in the Latin, English and French languages' common roots. Foucault uncovers, dusts off these animal roots. "It was probably essential for Western culture to link its perception of madness to imaginary relations between men and animals. *It was never absolutely clear that animals were part of the fullness of nature, its wisdom and [good] order; [...] maybe not yet today.*" (151) Had Foucault lived two more decades, he might have written *The Birth of the Kennel*.<sup>39</sup>

Foucault, in his at times terse manner, states that Western philosophy became anthropology (203;151). He is claiming that Western philosophy has been focusing on the strictly human, on human remains and has not remained a philosophy encompassing all living beings, something to which most Asian philosophies aspire. He ends his chapter with allusions to Nietzsche and Freud who have opened up what is human, all to human, especially to 'the animal in us'. "We would have to wait for Nietzsche for scandal to regain its power of manifestation" (152-3). "[...]Contemporary man [sic], since Nietzsche and Freud, finds within himself a black spot that threatens all truth, and is able to read *the signs of fragility* from where unreason threatens[....] (157).

In the footsteps of Nietzsche and Freud, Foucault adds that man is a passing postulate.<sup>40</sup> Whatever was previously conceivable as strictly human does not exist. Individual will is an animal agency. Foucault unfortunately died before post-humanist studies emerged.

## 5. The Howling Hound

Foucault is regarded as "plausibly the most authoritative French heir to the Nietzschean tradition."<sup>41</sup> And yet, unlike Nietzsche, Foucault has no "bestiary." We have seen that Foucault does not consider relations between species and even less, breeds. Although Foucault is, like Nietzsche, interested in potentialities, in power relations, he works in a totally different register. He weighs words, their sounds, their etymology and their rhetorical use, but never plays with them like the German philosopher-philologist, Nietzsche.

Nietzsche deploys his characters, including the "I," to perform, to act out roles. The non-human animal players are not divided, as has so often been argued

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<sup>39</sup> Donna Haraway's tongue-in-cheek addition to Foucault's list of "Birth of" books (clinic, prison, bio-politics) in her homage to Foucault in her lecture of the same name, delivered in August 2000: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/donna-haraway/articles/birth-of-the-kennel/>

<sup>40</sup> L'absence d'oeuvre, annexe to *Histoire de la folie*, 582.

<sup>41</sup> Paola Cavalieri, *op. cit.*, 98.

that it has become a cliché, into a binary of the “wild” versus the “herd.” For Nietzsche, the dog, very much like the human, is an example of a being with the potential to be both wild and part of the herd; either in turn or at the same time, the tail-wagging sycophant and the howling wolf hound. Indeed, the dog is also always more than that: the dog is an integral part of the human experience. “I have given a name to my pain and call [it/him] ‘Dog.’ [He] is just as faithful, just as obtrusive and shameless, just as entertaining, just as clever as any other dog — and I can scold [him] and vent my bad mood on [him], as others do with their dogs, servants and wives.”<sup>42</sup> This tongue-in-cheek declaration offers a sampling of the dog’s cognitive abilities, and also presents the dog as the scapegoat one beats into docility. It also recognizes the dog as an inseparable companion of the human experience.

It is perhaps, in *Zarathustra*, that the dog is most prominent.<sup>43</sup> Here, the dog is contrasted with the wolf, as the slavish person is to the Super person: “Virtue for [the bedwarfed] is what maketh modest and tame: therewith have they made the wolf a dog, and [the hu]man himself [the hu]man’s best domestic animal.”<sup>44</sup>

But Nietzsche’s dogs are most often markers of the life force itself, a *force de la nature*. “Is the wind not a dog? It whineth, it barketh, it howleth. Ha! Ha!”<sup>45</sup> This Nietzschean dog is a Chinese dog. In Chinese writing, two dogs together refers to noisy quarreling: 狔2; three dogs running together means anything that is sudden: a gush, a gust of wind: 犽 biao1. In Chinese, dogs are noisy creatures, like Nietzsche’s howling hound, the “*heulende hund*.”

In Foucault’s language use, one can say that dogs, like the Cynics, are the force of *scandale* which, at root, is noise. It is fair to say that Nietzsche and Foucault share an affinity with the unleashed, the creatures who transgress conventions. In Chinese, the idea of transgression contains the ‘dog’ root: 犽. Foucault also constructs ideas and concepts with words that have maintained something of their etymology. He does not care for rhetorical images.

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<sup>42</sup> This is Gary Shapiro’s translation of Aphorism 312 of *Gay Science* in “Dogs, Domestication, and the Ego,” *A Nietzschean Bestiary: Becoming Animal Beyond Docile and Brutal*, ed. by C. D. Acampora and R. R. Acampora, Rowman & Oxford: Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 53-60. (p. 55). I have switched the neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> person to the masculine because a dog, “Hund” in German, like the word “pain,” “Schmerz,” is masculine. Nietzsche’s works online in German can be found at:

<http://www.textlog.de/nietzsche.html>

<sup>43</sup> So claims Gary Shapiro in his article, *op. cit.* Although I am taking a different track, I remain indebted to this scholarly article and consider that I am following his lead.

<sup>44</sup> *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, part III, 49, Two. Translation by Thomas Common (1850-1919), online at:

<http://www.davemckay.co.uk/philosophy/nietzsche/nietzsche.php?name=nietzsche.1883.zarathustra.common.part3.49>. I have substituted the word “man” for “human” and “person,” which corresponds to the German “Mensch.”

<sup>45</sup> *Zarathustra*, Part iv, 79, Eight. *Op. cit.*

Nietzsche, on the other hand, revels in figures of speech, from the metaphor to the allegory; he does not fear anthropomorphizing. This notwithstanding, I would like to show how, in Nietzsche, the dog is always both metonymically human and a figure of speech. This dual positioning is enacted in “The Vision and The Enigma” of *Zarathustra*.<sup>46</sup> Here we encounter an “I” speaking softly, then suddenly hearing a dog howling nearby. This sends the “I” back to relive a childhood memory, also about a dog howling. At that time, the dog had seen a ghost and been terrified. The “I” tells us that this elicited his commiseration. And now the dog howling again elicits the “I”’s commiseration once more. After wondering whether he is dreaming or not, the “I” then discovers there is also a man there. It is unclear where “there” is, but dream or not, the dog, the man and the “I” are together in this scene. At this point, we realize that the man is a shepherd. We now have an alliterative trio: the Hirt (shepherd) has joined with the Hund (hound) and the Herr (man). But, once the latter is identified as a shepherd, the dog disappears. Why?

Perhaps the dog has become the shepherd, the one who controls the herd (Heerde, same word in English), who wills others to move on. The dog disappears as the one who howls and joins the other leaders of the pack, not as a member of the herd but as a Held (a hero). The letter “H” has been at the heart of this enigmatic passage, wherein canines and humans become interchangeable.

The shepherd as dog and as human, becomes more obvious as the rebus-like story unfolds. Another feature of the canine is the bite. The “I” tells the shepherd to bite; the shepherd bites as instructed: “No longer shepherd, no longer [hu]man – a transfigured being, a light-surrounded being, that laughed! [...] I heard a laughter which was no human laughter, — and now gnaweth thirst at me, a longing that is never allayed. My longing for that laughter gnaweth at me; oh, how can I still endure to live! And how could I endure to die at present!” The commonality of the human-animal in its *animalité* is manifest here. Even more so, when one considers that, in German, there are two words for the action of eating, “essen” and “fressen,” and the latter with its additional fricative is usually reserved for non-human animals. It is *fressen* that Nietzsche employs in the quote above. In English, *fressen* has been aptly translated by “to gnaw.”

In his article on Nietzsche and dogs, Gary Shapiro concludes: “And the shepherd, in his superhuman laughter, becomes something other than a shepherd. He will no longer be either domesticated or domesticator, for reflection on the canine condition reveals that these are two sides of the same coin.”<sup>47</sup> This yin and yang, heads or tail image is on the mark. One might read the canine-human complementarity more radically: without the canine, there is no human, and vice versa. Nietzsche’s enigma reveals the fiction of the fixity, singularity and exclusivity of the agent or of the single individual. What is enacted is a radical individualism, a sovereignty of the individual that is dynamic and shared. The will to live, the *force de*

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<sup>46</sup> *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, part III, 46, Two. *Op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Shapiro, 59.

*la nature*, the *force de scandale*, is animal in its all-encompassing meaning. That is made clear in Foucault's text for an exhibition of dogs behind bars entitled "Prisoners:"<sup>48</sup> the French word *force* is repeatedly used in connection with dogs and human prisoners in their will to access verticality and power, to stand up and howl.

In Chinese, the dog is Nietzsche's howling hound and wind and is also Foucault's will-to-power that he refers to as "animalité." Indeed, the dog, "quan" 犬 and also "gou" 狗 embody even in their names those life force qualities: the dog "gou" is so named because it can bark, "kou: 叩." Similarly, for the other generic word for "dog," one could use homonyms such as "maverick: *quan* 全" and "powerful: *quan* 权."<sup>49</sup> Actually, the above homonyms all denote the same: potential, capacity, *force*.

Hence my bewilderment to discover scholars reading Foucault's *animalité* as inextricably linked with madness and/or wildness;<sup>50</sup> or linking Nietzsche's human to "animals" in general.<sup>51</sup> The German language differs from the French (and the English) when it comes to naming animals and naming that condition or potentiality Foucault speaks of at length, *animalité*. Unlike English, German has no similar sounding noun. The German for animals is *Tieren*. Nietzsche refers to specific animals, such as the hound. Nietzsche's choice of species may be motivated by a desire to use the masculine, and not the neutral. No animal in French is neutral. But in German, the "animal," *Tier* is neutral, whereas dog for instance, *Hund*, is masculine. In Aphorism 215, the word "animal" is nowhere to be found, except in the title that is "*Opfertiere*," which means "sacrificial animal."<sup>52</sup> In the online translation, this is translated as "victim." Perhaps, in order to retain the interchangeability of human and animal so dear to Nietzsche's heart, "scapegoat" would be a more fitting rendering.

Foucault, who read German, did not adopt the word *animalité* from Nietzsche, who was partial to particular animals for particular situations. Yet, Foucault's *animalité* is closer to the German word for *animality*: *Tierhaftigkeit* or *Tierischheit*. In the French language, the suffix *-ité*, indicating concepts is the equivalent of the suffix *heit/keit* in German. English words ending in *-ity* often originate from the French, and then take on another meaning. Foucault wrote from within his own language's logic, etymology and grammar. Writing and reading across languages can help bring to the fore coincidences, forgotten etymologies, but also *faux amis*,

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<sup>48</sup> "La force de fuir," a text for the exhibition "Prisonniers" of Paul Rebeyrolle's paintings, which represent dogs behind fences. *Derrière le miroir*, no 202, March 1973, pp. 1-8.

<sup>49</sup> Ancient Chinese dictionaries apposed like-sounding words, in lieu of a definition.

<sup>50</sup> See Clare Palmer's article "Madness and Animality," in *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*, edited by Peter Atteron and Matthew Calarco (New York: Continuum, 2004), 72-84.

<sup>51</sup> See Paola Cavalieri, "A Missed Opportunity", *op. cit.*, 99-100 and Note 10, 114.

<sup>52</sup> Paola Cavalieri, *op. cit.* where she quotes, therefore, validates a 1997 translation by R.J. Hollingdale of Nietzsche's *Daybreak*, Aphorism 215.

false cognates, which are rampant in French and English abstract terms. A translingual practice<sup>53</sup> may prove to be useful in deciphering what is translated and not translated in philosophical texts (among others), as well as what is translatable and untranslatable.

6. *C'est du chinois*. AHAHAHAHAH! 哈哈! Ha Ha!

One onomatopoeia would be common to most languages: and that is the “Ha ha” of laughter. Nietzsche laughs with the dog and Zarathustra. Foucault laughs with Borges. In his preface to *The Order of Things*, he admits, thrice, that Borges’ Chinese encyclopedia makes him laugh. It’s not Nietzsche’s frank roaring, but an uneasy laugh. He’s laughing at a French translation of a Spanish rendering of the “animal” entry in a so-called Chinese encyclopedia.

What makes him laugh is the stark impossibility to think this. In French, one would say: *c'est du chinois*. The equivalent in English: it’s Greek to me. Both expressions refer to incomprehensible speech by comparing it to a written system that is not the Latin alphabet and cannot be deciphered. Foucault laughs because the entry is not a logical or grammatical definition. The reassuring Linnaean classification that orders and hierarchizes living beings is absent. Instead, a list containing heterogeneous entities, some actions, some things, some beings, that are sometimes repeated, and that exclude or include; it is an “atlas of the impossible” which gives both this and that, which lacks the little “is”, has no locators, and no common denominator. That “animal” entry is transgressive.

Foucault however admits that our Western way of ordering may not be the only one possible, or the best. Language is the grid upon which categories are deployed, language determines what is the same and what is different. Foucault notes that people with aphasia, for whom words are difficult to put in sequence, also cannot string together things in their “proper” way. They are grammatical deviants. Foucault studies and roots for liminal creatures, those who act fiercely, and unconventionally.

Near the end of the preface, and again at the very end of *The Order of Things*, Foucault insists that “man” (sic) is Western culture’s invention and that it may very well be just a fold in our knowledge, a passing thing, “as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form.” (xxiii; 398)

Foucault is opening the door to other cultures and languages. To languages that classify things in ways that we can only understand if we think translingually. François Jullien, a French sinologist and comparative philosopher, wrote a book a

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<sup>53</sup> “Translingual Practice” is a term coined and used by Lydia H. Liu to present the complex network of adoption, rejection and adaptation of other cultures and languages at the onset of modern China. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity-- China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995, 474p).



decade or so after Foucault's death, entitled *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*, in which he discusses the fundamental differences between Chinese and Greek thinking. His criticism of Western (Greek) thought is its insularity: "And yet, as consumed as it to surpass itself, Western philosophy continues to question itself only from within."<sup>54</sup> This accords with Foucault's "already encoded gaze" (12), which prevents us from deciphering the so-called Chinese encyclopedia, and also with his critique of philosophy as being a critique of the Same.

Jullien's analysis of Chinese ways of ordering things, or of Chinese philosophy *tout court*, makes it at times antipodal to Western thinking: "rather than be revelatory, [Chinese philosophy] seeks to indicate." (471). However, most of the time, Jullien shows that this other order is not absent in Western philosophy, but has been brushed aside: the list. "A type of enunciation that is particularly concise and bare of logical articulation [...] the simple list [...] works as an aphorism, it constitutes an autonomous and complete development like an anecdote, a maxim or a dialogue (270-1). That the open rubric does not offer the homogeneity we expect, that instead of being leveled and reducing itself to a continuous alignment, the series knows rupture and turning, should not for all that lead us to believe that this chosen procedure ignores all systematization (that it might be whimsical: that lovely disorder we so willingly grant to those "Orientals" ...) [...] instead of attempting to erect a general point of view, a theory that would embrace all diversity, under the planning gaze of reason, [it] follows a logic of the *itinerary*; instead of opening onto a panorama, it signposts a particular circuit. Via twists and turns, it opens up the greatest number of possible lookouts" ( 272).

A definition, as Nietzsche pointed out disparagingly, has universality as its criterion; in a dictionary, an entry is defined with an example. The little word "is" makes us believe in equivalences, if not synonyms. Contrastingly, in China, the first Chinese dictionaries used homonymy instead of a definition; and an indication of a situation, not an example, was provided.

"Gou" (dog) "kou" (barking) ye (indeed). 狗吠也。

What we have here is almost a rebus. And almost a tautology. Nothing is explained.

The time has come to conclude on a playful note. The following enumeration consists of words that, like "quan" and "gou" also signified "dog" in the very first Chinese written records. Some of these words are now obsolete, some have become breed names (獒 the Tibetan mastiff for example), many have become pejorative

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<sup>54</sup> François Jullien, *Le détour et l'accès : stratégies du sens en Chine, en Grèce*. Paris: Éd. Bernard Grasset, 1995 (Seuil, Essais, Points): "Néanmoins, si éprise qu'elle soit de son dépassement, la philosophie occidentale ne s'interroge toujours que du dedans." (p. 467). My translation. This work has been translated in English by Sophie Hawkes. New York: Zone Books, 2000.

terms for humans, and for most of them, the nominal or infinitive value has been effaced. But these words still carry, some of their original meaning. The list, once translated into English, echoes Borges' "animal" entry. I like to think that it would also have delighted Foucault: 盧 a black hunting dog; 莽 a dog which catches rabbits in the grass; 搜 a hunting dog; 獫 a big dog; 獨 a dog to roast or smoke; 獬 a short-legged dog; 猗 a castrated dog; 犮子 a puppy, a dwarf dog; 尪 a hairy dog; 獬 a dog that knows the human heart; 獬 a fierce dog; 狮子 a dog with a big mane, a lion; 犴 a precious, small dog that looks like a fox; 狄 a red dog; 獬 a surprised dog who barks; 獫 a long-snouted dog; 犴 a healthy dog...