



## Animal labor: at the forefront of innovative research

Jocelyne Porcher, Jean Estebanez

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A close-up photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, smiling slightly, holding a large red rooster. The man's face is on the right side of the frame, and the rooster is in the center. The background is a solid green color.

Jocelyne Porcher,  
Jean Estebanez (eds.)

# Animal Labor

A New Perspective on  
Human-Animal Relations

[transcript]

Human-Animal Studies

## From:

*Jocelyne Porcher, Jean Estebanez (eds.)*

### **Animal Labor**

### **A New Perspective on Human-Animal Relations**

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Do animals work? Is it possible to work with animals without exploiting them? Might animals even be empowered through work? This provocative collection offers original answers to these questions and allows readers to think about human relationships with domestic animals beyond the well-trodden tropes of domination or animal welfare. To study animal work means to look at animals in new ways and to discover in them unsuspected skills and knowledge that open up new ethical and political horizons.

**Jocelyne Porcher**, born 1956, research director at the INRA (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique), defended her thesis in 2001. She has published many books on labour relations between humans and animals. Before she worked as a secretary, a dairy sheep farmer, in an industrial pork factory, and as a technician in organic farming.

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# 1. Animal labor

## At the forefront of innovative research

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*Jocelyne Porcher and Jean Estebanez*

In only the past ten years, animal rights have engulfed the media, science and politics in many industrialized countries. It has been taken up as a cause by a growing number of universities and campaign groups, whose shared objective is to impose what is for the most part an abolitionist interpretation on our work relations with animals. Of these relationships, livestock farming has been singled out, and blamed for destroying the environment, reducing biodiversity, damaging human health and bringing suffering to animals. The primary cause of this disaster is given as the domestication of animals, the “monstrous history of human and animal cohabitation” (Sloterdijk 2000), from which every evil stems. Humans have appropriated animals in order to reduce them to slavery; the aim of the animal rights movement, following in the footsteps of civil rights and women’s rights, is to free animals from their bondage (Singer 1975). However, animal husbandry is a work relationship with animals that is thousands of years old, and has multiple motivating factors, the most important of which is relational. The livestock industry, on the other hand, grew out of the industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century, and has only one motive: the pursuit of profit. It is therefore important to distinguish between animal husbandry and the livestock industry, as the criticisms aimed at livestock farming do not concern the former – that is, the production systems for animal materials such as meat, milk and eggs (Porcher 2017a). It is therefore essential to draw attention to these complexities when considering our relations with animals, as there are different contexts which cannot be conflated into a universal moral code.

Animal rights also covers the question of “animal welfare”, even though after more than 30 years of research into it, the living conditions of animals in the livestock industry have not changed. At best, they have been margin-

ally improved in areas such as “enriching the environment”, “comfort” or “pain management”. At worst, violence is part of the everyday organization of work, as is exemplified by the productive performance demanded of the animals. The livestock industry remains the principal supplier of animal products such as dairy produce, eggs and meat, and the violence against animals and workers, caused by the organization of work, seeps out from behind the firmly sealed walls of the production units. For many consumers and members of the public, violence against animals is not necessary; they generally want farm animals to be well cared for (Eurogroup 2016). However, there seems to be no middle ground between welfarism (the improvement of industrial farms) and abolitionism (the end of farming animals and the severing of domestication ties). Animal husbandry, that ancient work relationship with animals, is lost in this binary approach to the question, as are all our work relations with animals. All our relations with animals, from animal husbandry to zoos, circuses, shows, cinema and even equestrian centers, are considered by animal right activists to be relationships of domination and exploitation, which must be broken.

## Animal studies

The emergence of the study of animal rights in the social sciences can be traced back to the Anglophone world in the 1970s and 1980s, with the publication of *Animal Liberation* (Singer 1975), followed by *The Case for Animal Rights* (Regan 1983). These texts call for justice, and the theorists who follow them study the status of animals in society and consider how they should be treated. In France, the emergence of this school of thought can be dated to the 1990s and 2000s, after Singer’s book was translated in 1993 and animal ethics and anti-speciesist theories were popularized at universities, in the media<sup>1</sup> and by activists.

The collective inter-disciplinary theoretical corpus of *Human-Animal Studies* (DeMello 2012) and *Animal Studies* (Kalof 2017) includes university research in the fields of philosophy, law and sociology. Human-Animal Studies (HAS) has today a more welfarist approach which is appealing to the vet-

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1 Since 2015, the huge presence of abolitionists and promotion of veganism in the French media has been out of all proportion with the number of people concerned.

erinary sciences and ethology, and it is certain to be taught at universities or published in specialized journals.<sup>2</sup>

Animal Studies (AS) brings together HAS research and theoretical research into all subjects that cover animals, and it can be highly political and militant, for example Critical Animal Studies (CAS) in the USA (Hribal 2010). These bring together the theories produced by the universities and militant activism (Michalon et al. 2016). CAS explicitly associates itself with the struggle for civil rights and equal rights for women, and propounds the argument that there is a convergence between these struggles and the cause of animal rights, fighting against a common oppressor.

The predominance of US research in these fields explains the importance of abolitionist theories. In almost all of the research, the condition of animals that is criticized by animalists applies to intensive industrialized farming. However, this model is far from being universal and monolithic, even in developed countries. The fact that millions of farmers in the US, as well as in Europe, Asia and Africa, practice animal husbandry, that ancient work tie with animals, is ignored by these theorists. The result is that the majority of universities and activists, knowing little of the complexities of the countryside, reduce our interactions with farm animals to relations based on violence and economic interest. As a consequence, proposed alternatives overlook the possibility of constructing other work relationships with animals in different goods or services production systems.

Lastly, a great many articles published in Anglophone sociology adopt the actor-network theory (Latour 2005), which depoliticizes relations between humans and animals. There are no actors, but rather a collection of agents, and agency is attributed without differentiating between very different entities, from objects up to animals. Our belief is that, notwithstanding the concepts, such as agency, that can be applied to the acts of animals, this theoretical framework, by obscuring the concrete ties between humans and animals, work, material production, affectivity, pleasure and suffering, reduces the existence of animals, de facto “non-humans”, to being like any other conceptual artifact, which in turn hastens the rupture between humans and animals.

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2 For example, the American journal *Society and Animals*, edited since 1992 by the eponymous association and Brill.



One book, *Zoopolis* (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011), is worth particular attention because of the influence it has had in scientific and activist fields since its publication, and because it very briefly mentions the question of work. Contrary to the abolitionist theories that they oppose, the authors put forward a policy for our relations with animals, in the form of the ties that we maintain with them. There are, according to the authors, unalienable rights (in particular the right not to be killed), and this places them in the anti-speciesist camp, following on from the founding principle of putting an end to the exploitation of animals, and of killing our animal *neighbors*. Seeing animals as *neighbors* is the cornerstone of the ban on killing in *Zoopolis*, as it is in other abolitionist works. Unlike the many animals in the animal kingdom which are in predation ties, human beings, because they see other animals as beings like themselves, must stop killing them. Whether acknowledged or not, this moral rule of not killing your neighbor, which is essentially religious, is central to animal rights theories such as are found in *Zoopolis*, but it is never explained. The opening chapter of the book closes down the debate on a number of subjects from the outset, including putting animals down, which is dismissed on principle in three lines. The problem is, however, to establish what is a neighbor, and how others can become neighbors. This is a question that *Zoopolis* does not even consider, as it is presented as a fact that an animal is a neighbor.

The book adds rights defined as “relational” to the right not to be killed; its support for Tom Regan’s theory of relational rights as an extension of the absolute rights of animals is clearly stated. These relational rights do not depend on a taxonomy of species, but rather on the degree and type of interactions between animals and humans. The authors apply a different type of sovereignty and citizenship to each of the three following categories that they define: wild animals, liminal (or commensal) animals and domestic animals. Although Donaldson and Kymlicka retain the idea of separate territories for wild animals, they nevertheless provide rigid definitions of their social relations and their locations, given as *elsewhere*, *on the fringes* and *here*. In *Zoopolis*, each citizenship is closely tied to the location in which it applies, and this may well lead to questions such as what happens when an animal thought of as wild leaves their “elsewhere” to come “here” (as happens very often with elephants or grizzly bears)? Most anti-speciesist theories and movements argue that there is separate development tied to geographic space. Does this

not, however, contradict the tradition of the struggle for civil and women's rights on which their approach is based?

Donaldson and Kymlicka's project is thus a reinvention of the ancient relationship of animal husbandry ties, but with work and death removed. Where animal husbandry is conducted in a universe of finite resources where when animals are born, others must die, *Zoopolis* proposes a shared life, without work, and without death.

This simplicity explains the book's success with animalist militants, complete with its aporias: a drastic reduction in the number of domestic animals and the disappearance of herds in favor of a few individuals (and the risk that this entails: that genetic stock would rapidly lose variety); the question of end-of-life care for animals (palliative care for an elderly sheep that has lost its teeth or has cancer?).

The writers, in common with abolitionist authors, hold that all productive work is the result of exploitation, except when it can be demonstrated that animals are free to do the work or not to do it. This leads to attempts to define what work is, and what it is not. For example, a sheep that grazes "freely" in a meadow and cuts the grass at the same time is not being exploited. Shearing this sheep, on condition that the wool is not sold, does not exploit the sheep. Is it exploitation, however, if the wool is used by the sheep's "non-owner"? Further, must we leave the rams and ewes together in the meadow, and plan to move their lambs to "other communities"?

Can animal husbandry do away with work and death? The only solution that *Zoopolis* offers is that of sterilizing the animals and, by these means, condemning them to eventual extinction. This is not the authors' strongest claim to anti-speciesism. Companion animals escape extinction, since it is thought that they should benefit from a privileged status, as dogs and cats are not considered as being at work and, therefore, as exploited. This gulf between farm animals and pet animals shapes their respective statuses for these authors, even though all are domestic animals with which we have worked and kept company for 10,000 years.

These propositions take very little real account of what builds relations between humans and animals, namely, work. It is because we work together that we live together. Furthermore, representations of animal freedom are based on a fictional view of nature, or of our ties to it. Cows, sheep and goats live in groups, more often than not with a hierarchy, and in these groups, where theorists tell us that all the animals are supposedly equal, in actual

fact, some are much less free than others, as farmers who observe their animals will testify. We should without doubt resist the idea that all instrumentalization between humans and animals can only come from a necessary relationship of objectification and oppression (Haraway 2008: 73). Social relations between animals on a farm are constructed by attachment and friendship, but also by power and domination (Porcher et al. 2004). Furthermore, as is the case with the majority of research in the field of AS, writers make no distinction between animal husbandry and the livestock industry, between breeding and producing (Porcher 2017a). This leads to a desire to throw out the baby with the bathwater, or animal husbandry with the livestock industry.

## **Animal studies and work**

My suspicion is that we might nurture responsibility with and for other animals better by plumbing the category of work more than the category of right with its evitable preoccupation with similarity, analogy, calculation, and honorary membership in the expanded abstraction of the Human. (Haraway 2008: 73)

While animal rights has become the mantra of Animal Studies, Donna Haraway, like us, has suggested redirecting analysis toward the question of work. Although she does not go to the root of this proposition, she makes it part of her global project to rethink the value of our relations with animals. Going beyond the way they are implicated in value-added tax, which very often sends them to the slaughterhouse, Haraway suggests adding to the Marxist concepts of exchange value and use value the concept of:

Encounter value as the under-analyzed axis of lively capital and its “biotechnologies in circulation” – in the form of commodities, consumers, models, technologies, workers, kin, and knowledges – we can see how something more than the reproduction of the same and its deadly logics-in-the-flesh of exploitation might be going on in what I call “making companions.” (Haraway 2008: 65)

Indeed, work, which has shaped our sense of our relations with animals and the dynamics of domestication for ten millennia, is very much absent from Animal Studies. The rare research that raises the question of work relates it to slavery and Marxist concepts of exploitation and alienation (Murray 2011; Peggs 2012; Noske 1997), and sees domination as the only lens through which the process of domestication can be viewed. They omit, however, something that is extremely powerful in Marx ([1867] 1976), and that is the emancipating character of work. When work is studied, it is human work that is considered, as well as the engagements we have with animals in different work sectors such as the livestock industry, in refuges and in show business (Hamilton and Taylor 2013), and the animal's engagement in the work is not really considered. The dominant idea in the rare research that does explore the contribution made by animals to work is that they are tools, or biotechnologies. In Clay McShane and Joel Tarr (2007) and in Ann Greene (2008), the authors, who all highlight the major role of animals in urban production, adopt a mechanistic approach to animals' role in work. They produce energy, manure and food, but they are no more than living instruments. In an article on the livestock industry in the United States, William Boyd (2001) concludes that chickens have become a biotechnology, as experimentation has transformed them into machines for producing meat. In the same way, Russell (2004) thinks that living organisms become tools from the moment they are used for human ends. Capture, domestication training, animal husbandry and genetic engineering are therefore some of the means by which animals become biotechnology.

As Jason Hribal (2010) laments, although CAS has largely developed around the question of animal agency and the domination relations which entrap animals, the resulting developments are very speculative. He therefore suggests that animals are not only thought of as tools, biotechnologies or beings controlled by capitalist thinking, but as workers, or members of the working class. However, this is equally speculative, as the author does not explain further what this work that animals do is. There is no analysis of what animals concretely *do* at work and how they must invest in it to reach their fixed objectives. Some research, even that as important as Nicole Shukin's *Animal Capital* (2009), states that it is essential to give consideration to animals and be attentive to the context, producing what is at base a criticism of capitalism, and the individual animals that are involved in its effective operation are forgotten in the detail of the argument.

Further, Jonathan Clark (2014) asks if laboratory animals can be thought of as workers. After a long discussion of Marx's definitions of work as well as Ingold's – an interesting digression – in the end the author tells us nothing about what animals do. Beyond speculation, it is therefore impossible to decide whether or not lab animals are workers.

Maan Barua (2016, 2018), in this project of re-examination of the “production of nature” thesis, analyses the role of lively capital, animal labor and encounter value. He shows how capitalist accumulation is developed through vital processes and nonhuman agency.

Kendra Coulter (2016) uses the concept of animal work as an organizational framework to study work done with, by and for animals in order to demonstrate interspecific solidarity. This research is mostly concerned with work with horses and references class and gender relations. Coulter is interested in the materiality of work with and by animals, in the context of interspecific relations, without really going into the intersubjectivity of human-animal relations.

The intersubjectivity of relations is precisely the point of our research: an approach led by qualitative surveys which allow us to access the black box of work, or, more precisely, of *working* (work in the process of being accomplished), and find what makes it possible (training, coordination, or even an interspecific collaboration, the subjective investment of animals in work, the need for recognition). Animal work, in these conditions, can become the key to thinking about our relations with animals, but also to rethinking work itself.

## **The sense and ambivalence of work**

Today, in common understanding, work seems to have been conflated with employment, and is defined as a contractual and remunerative activity. This definition of work is primarily the result of the industrial, capitalist and urban revolution, which created a work market that commodified, measured, quantified, organized, divided and hierarchized it.

There are, however, a number of activities that this limited primary definition does not take into account, but which are surely other forms of exploitation through the appropriation of another's activity. These occur throughout human history, in other contexts or in parallel with a system of

salaried work. They include slavery, serfdom, different types of forced or regimented labor (Castel 2002), domestic work and reproduction (Bidet-Mordel et al. 2016; Delphy and Leonard 2007) and subsistence<sup>3</sup> (Mies 1988; Rosa Bonheur 2017). A crucial issue for the feminist movement has been to draw attention to the invisibilization of domestic and subsistence work, which was not considered to be work. The naturalization of skills that allow care to be given at home, to children or to senior citizens, by seeing it as maternal instinct (Cresson and Gadrey 2004) and not as a series of tasks which require apprenticeship and investment, is a powerful means of devaluing it.

Some writers, however, consider that there are few tasks that are not work, and these include activities in families and in associations, performed by the employed, unemployed or retirees (Clasquin and Friot 2013). It is therefore very clear that work is not salaried employment, or even simply employment, but that it takes many forms.

Work is central to all human society. This preponderance of work comes with a profound ambivalence: it can be a means of alienation, or it can be an opportunity for emancipation. Work is above all tied to the necessary struggle against the physical world to obtain the means to live (to feed, clothe and house ourselves). Work is also the realm of social constraint. If some do not work – those who possess the power and means of production – it is because others do the work for them. Work seems therefore to be a world of competition and individualism, but also an essential motor of inequality and discrimination, in particular in the building of socio-professional hierarchies. Finally, work can be a source of fatigue, weakening, sickness and accidents, and sometimes death.

At the same time, work is seen as a means of reproducing our material conditions of existence and is therefore a source of use and exchange values. It also has a major social dimension: work is where forms of cooperation, sociability, value judgments are developed, as well as joy, pleasure and autonomy. It is therefore a potential vehicle for the realization of self, and a central element in our individual and collective identity – our social position.

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3 Subsistence work is defined by the collective Rosa Bonheur (2017) as “the orientation of daily life towards tasks and activities necessary for the satisfaction of needs, access to resources and protection, performed by the working classes in a historical context of precarious salaries, and obscured by social, class, sex and race relations” (translated from the French).

Work, then, is evidentially central to ties, and thus central to our social relations, in all their ambivalence.

It makes sense that human and social sciences make work an essential focus, as they developed alongside industrialization, the world of capitalist production and the pay relationship which developed with it. It is equally a central theme in sociology, where it is not limited to researchers inspired by Marxism, as emphasized in Durkheim's thesis on the division of social work. Indeed, the sociology of work has been the principal specialty in French sociology since its renaissance after the Second World War. Social history is also in part built on the subjects of work and the movements of the laboring class, in particular syndicalism.

In geography, there is very little research on the subject of work, even though there were calls for it as well as the beginning of an implementation in the 1950s and particularly in the 1960s on the part of geographers who wanted a social and sociological geography as in Renée Rochefort's study on work in Sicily (1961). While a kind of geography of labor existed in the late 1970s (Peck 2018) as a subfield of economic geography around the concept of spatial division of labor (Storper and Walker 1983), it emerged as a distinctive label in the 1990s. The central issue became the active role of workers and their organizations "an effort to see the making of the economic geography of capitalism through the eyes of labour" (Herod 1997: 3). Analyses of the labor movement (Wills 2001), the work of reproduction and care economies (McDowell 2014) have also connected labor geography to gender studies and political science.

Work is not only analyzed on a macro-level or through the social relationships it weaves, it is also studied through what it does to individuals and how they must invest in it. In an era which championed technical progress, in *The Anatomy of Work* (1961), the sociologist George Friedman considered the effects that the loss of the sense of work had on individuals, owing to the extreme fragmentation of tasks caused by Taylorism and, later, by the scientific organization of work. The fatigue, demotivation and boredom felt by workers, expressed through absenteeism and an increased turnover of staff, could only be ameliorated by the recomposition of tasks and, at minimum, a rotation between different posts.

The psychodynamics of work, which were developed in the 1970s by Christophe Dejours (see Dejours et al. 2018), also put forward a dynamic analysis of the psychic processes mobilized by the confrontation of an indi-

vidual with the realities of work. His interest was in work done by a subject of work, an individual who invests their intelligence, body and affects in work, all of which define *working*, because for there to be work, there must be someone who works. For psychologists of work, work is where the procedures are not – that is to say, in the gap between prescribed work and real work. The psychodynamics of work shows that there must be an investment of intelligence by the individual who works in order for the work to be accomplished, because work implicates the mobilization – even if it is constrained and reduced – of the freedom of a subject and therefore of their subjectivity. One of the principal contributions of the psychodynamics of work is therefore the demonstration that there is a significative relationship between the way that work is organized and the mental health of workers. Pleasure and suffering arise, therefore, at the point of meeting between the subject – a worker – motivated by a performance desire, the construction of identity and accomplishment, and a work situation where the whys and wherefores are, to a great extent, determined outside their will.

Although work is potentially a route to freedom because it creates new competences in order to develop sensibilities that are directed at the task, to the end of cementing our cooperation relations, it can also prove to be alienating. Over and above the injuries and the fatigue of work, there is stress, suffering, sadness, humiliation, and even depression that can lead to suicide (Dejours and Begue 2009).

Work is therefore a process, a living activity in which someone works with the objective of transforming the world (Dejours et al. 2018). It is thus an activity directed by a productive objective, but which is not limited to this. This direction, which is structured by rules and imperatives, is exactly what distinguishes work from games and leisure, which are non-productive activities with the objective of finding pleasure. To this materialistic position, we can add a dimension that reconfigures work and its importance. Work not only produces products, it also produces ties. Work is tied to subjectivity for better (freedom, creation, recognition), or for worse (alienation, loss of self-esteem).



## Is work a human quality?

Work is often seen as defining humans, as what distinguishes us from animals and nature. It can also be a process of transforming nature in order to humanize it and make it useful to humans. It is even, in Marx's view ([1867] 1976), a process by which humans take dominion over nature and the animal kingdom, for the fulfillment of primitive needs. Work is therefore an expression of human life that allows us to free ourselves from nature's enslavement. The father of the sociology of work in France, Georges Friedmann (1961), also stressed that work was a decisive event in the elevation of man over the animal kingdom.

Animal work has accompanied the history of humanity for tens of thousands of years, although little has been written about it. The idea that farms are places where both farmers and animals are productive workers can be found in *The Wealth of Nations* (Smith [1776] 1977): because they produce value, animals are workers in their own right. However, for Marx ([1867] 1976: 284), animals do not work because they do not think about their activity, they obey natural instinct:

A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labor process, a result emerges which had already been conceived. [...] Man not only effects a change in form in the materials of nature; he also realizes his own purpose in those materials.

It is not "working" if there is no investment, inventiveness or deviation from the prescribed task. From this perspective, bees are not architects, but simply tools of the laws of nature by which they have no choice but to reproduce. This position of rupture – where work is expressed as relations between culture/work on the one hand, and nature on the other – has for a long time been the position taken by social sciences, despite Max Weber's hypothesis ([1922] 1978) that a sociology of relations between humans and animals is without doubt possible. Contrary to Marx, Tim Ingold theorized that animals in a state of nature work because their actions are intentional. This conscious activity, according to Ingold, is built on social relations that give it sense.

Human and animal production is an inseparable part of their relations with the world for the entirety of their lives.

Only the activity of equine and bovine beasts of burden was recognized in the past as being at least partially work (Havard et al. 1998). This particular recognition has more to do with the energy brought by draft animals to work (work measured in joules, horsepower), than any consideration of their subjective and intentional investment in work. With the exception perhaps of mine ponies, which were given a work registration number and which benefited, for example in 1936 in France, from “paid leave” – a week at pasture in the open air – just as miners did. Mine ponies’ work was regulated into work time, feeding and shelter.

The proposition that we hope to develop here is, however, that domestic animals do work (Porcher 2017b), and this must lead us to rethink their place in society, as well as to reconsider what work is. We will show that, contrary to what Marx affirmed, animals are intentionally involved in work, because they have been domesticated – that is, have been part of the human world – for thousands of years, and have been engaged since birth. In the light of this, work cannot be limited to a production activity (which is what Marx and Ingold reduce animal work to), because it is built on ties, sense and the conditions of a shared life.

In Europe and in the world, a huge workforce is employed today in many different production sectors without the wealth of the material and immaterial products it produces being evaluated, or the work done being understood or recognized. This workforce is made up of millions of animals involved in human life, whether it be in the production of edible goods (farm animals), or in public services (transport, assistance, companionship, leisure, show business, the army and police). In this book we focus on domestic animals and tamed individual animals. Working animals today, from farms and equestrian centers to racecourses, zoos, circuses, cinema, animal parks, leisure and pets, are not generally recognized and even less studied, despite the millions employed in the sector, and the generation of billions in wealth.

Without animals, these enterprises, these jobs and this wealth would not exist. For animals are not only involved in human work, they help to make it possible. This shared work, which is a central dimension of our relations with animals, is the issue.

## **Working with animals, a liberating proposition**

It is our hypothesis that work is the primary source of our relations with animals, and the motor that has driven the process of domestication. Our relations with animals are not primarily founded in domination ties, but in the freedom offered by shared work. This idea of animal work also concerns their requalification, their activities and our activities with them. If we think of a pet animal not simply in terms of being a family member or a victim, but as being a worker, we must reconsider the position of each one, and the definition of what goes on. Studying the animal condition through the prism of work is a reversal of the very paradigms of work from which animals are excluded by definition (Porcher 2014).

The workforce made up of domestic animals such as dogs, horses, pigs and buffalo, and tamed non-domestic animals such as elephants, giraffes, bears and dolphins, is in the process of disappearing, or of being replaced in the near future by substitutes or by robots: food substitutes to meat (food guaranteed to be free of animal products), or, in the near future, in vitro meat (guaranteed to be free from suffering or animal death), and robotic substitutes for assistance or companion dogs. These biotechnological and robotic advances (Rifkin 1999), obscure the fact that innovation, and what we think of as progress and modernity, could sustainably involve animals.

It also obscures the more serious fact of the progressive exclusion of animals from social ties through their exclusion from the working world. The promises of biotechnological and robotic progress hide a rapid evolution towards the breaking of our domestic ties with animals, and the now possible construction of a world without animals. This exclusion is happening without the demand or the informed consent of members of the public, although it risks transforming our humanity in a way that we cannot imagine. We do not know what human beings would be if deprived of their animal companions at work and in concrete and symbolic life. These are anthropomorphic uncharted waters.

In the context of this already well-advanced exclusion of animals from the working world in industrial nations, in spite of the professionals who fight to protect their vocations and their knowledge of animals, such as animal husbandry, circuses and zoos, our aim is not to work against technology, or to start to wage a backwards-looking war against science in order to preserve a Neolithic model, based on the domestication of plants and animals, the

creation of human settlements and the development of animal husbandry (Haudricourt 1969). On the contrary, our aim is to understand what ties us to animals from the point of view of work, and to do this before we have irrevocably lost their skills and our ties, without having understood what they bring us with their intelligence and their skills in the workplace. We are not concerned with developing a prophetic vision of the future, but rather with demonstrating a risk in order to provide a means of evaluating it, anticipating the consequences and instituting alternatives.

Do animals work? If so, how can we describe what work is for an animal? What are the social and economic consequences? Above all, what are the epistemological consequences? If not, what do we call what animals *do* at work?

This book's first aim is to document work situations empirically, which has almost never been done, and remains one of the weaknesses in a large proportion of animalist theories, which have essentially been speculative.

This book is firmly rooted in human and social sciences on the question of work, and considers animals as authentic actors in work, with specific characteristics: animals do not talk; they are in asymmetric relationships with humans, tied to the interspecific nature of our relations; animals also offer us choices according to their physiology and cognitive capacities; some animals are part of our food. In work, animals act, make choices, take some initiative, and propose solutions to problems. Without the cooperation of animals in work – and all professionals said the same – work could not be accomplished. The important thing is therefore less the fact that they are animals than the fact that they are actors in work.

To this end, most of the chapters in this book cover the ethnography of the process of professionalization and the sequence of work in a wide range of locations (including India and France) and professions (transportation, cinema, managing flocks, dog-handling teams in the army and the police, assistance training). This ethnography relies on observations of animals at work with humans, conducted over long periods of time (sometimes over several months). Video recordings were widely made so that the analysis could take in the full wealth of sounds, gestures and glances exchanged in the course of interaction between humans and nonhumans. Furthermore, video allows subsequent attention to be given to details and reactions that are difficult to capture in the instant. Individual and collective interviews were also conducted with human workers on the subject of bodily adjust-

ments, behavior at work, the process of achieving it, and the overlapping career paths of humans and animals.

Our second aim is to show that animal work does not depend on instinct but on social competences acquired during the process of professionalization. From the starting hypothesis that animals are social beings that are capable of being trained, we aim to demonstrate that there is a prerequisite work training, which is generally ongoing throughout the career of an animal, and that there are rules of work, known to the animals, in relation to which they position themselves. After selection and training, work is punctuated by breaks and periods spent out of work, after which a path is offered to leaving the world of work; this can take the form of retirement or discharge. Professionally, animals are retrained and they become very different from animals of the same species that are not professionals. They are completely immersed in the human world, where their careers are intertwined, and the human/animal skill-sets are tied to each other. We also aim to show that, far from being unvarying, there are very different styles and methods of being in work, depending on the functions and the profession. From operant conditioning and social isolation as the means of focalization in the police world for patrol dogs, to the long process of socialization in a village accompanied by imitation of more experienced animals by elephants in northeast India, it seems that there is not only one type of work, but a series of types of work depending on the specific situation.

The third theme in this book is the demonstration that work is the result of a subjective investment on the part of animals, as it is for humans; in other words, there is such a thing as animal working. The shared experience and interlinking knowledge of animals and the humans with whom they make up a team has been shown to be essential to accomplishing the tasks. Different elements support the hypothesis that humans and animals are not generally content to coordinate their actions mechanically: autonomy and taking the initiative are important elements on which their relationship is based, and are central to achieving the prescribed tasks. Without utilizing bodies and intelligence, without diligence and investment, the tasks mentioned above cannot be effectively achieved, as the prescribed task is very different from the real task. This gap requires interpretation and the mobilization of a form of liberty and subjectivity, even if it is constrained. This investment, which allows the work to be done well, is closely tied to the presence and efforts of the human partner, whom the animal tries to satisfy and to whom they try

to give pleasure. Animal work is not always recognized, but its recognition is central. We should not give way to a “naturalistic” interpretation, where animal behavior is molded by pre-existing biological and ecological patterns, but rather we should demonstrate the animal’s capacities for following specific instructions in a social context. In light of all this, it is therefore evident that we can no longer think of animals as passive beings, used at the will of humans, but rather as living subjects, at least partly conscious of their acts. Along with a range of research done in the field of Animal Studies (Kalof 2017), this research into work is able to confirm empirically that animals have agency.

Our final aim, in association with the others mentioned above, is to show that work is one of the central modalities in the life that humans and animals share, thanks to cooperation. Cooperation necessitates reciprocity between workers: without the participation of one, the other will not cooperate. If individual tasks are accomplished with the aid of coordination, cooperation is collective, and rests on the will of each to share and deliberate over the task to be completed together (Dejours et al. 2018). Although of course not all tasks are suited for cooperation, there are some, such as the work of sheep dog, sheep and shepherd, or mahout, his assistants and elephant, which rely on mutual help. Each one therefore has the power to act in the task that is being performed. Further, these are not simple domination relationships, within which the strongest applies force on the others (this would be difficult with a five-ton elephant), but are driven by a shared objective. It is on these asymmetrical yet reciprocal relationships that interspecies confidence can be built and expressed through shared activities.

## **Content outline**

This book is divided into three sections, each dedicated to an important aspect of work. The first, “Working is not functioning”, distinguishes working from functioning as robots or animal work substitutes do (Elmo and Paro). It also aims to show that operant conditioning and constraint are not sufficient to explain the ways animals act (horses in the lab). Lastly, it aims to demonstrate that when faced with complex tasks in which animals have to pretend, and appear natural, work experience and training are essential (animals as movie actors).

The second section, “Working is cooperating to live together”, considers collaboration. The bodily adjustments between the mahout and his elephant, as well as their mutual subjective investment, transform them into an interspecific work collective (elephants in Asia). This generally naturalized adjustment work is nevertheless the result of a process of professionalization that is developed in very different styles, in the world of care (the education of guide dogs), and that of defense (the professionalization of military police dogs). Work is a world within which objectives and constraints create a framework and a goal which is imposed on animals, as it is on humans, but which it is sometimes necessary to subvert in order to better achieve it (the she-wolf and the Patou dog).

The third section, “Working is to create wealth”, is concerned with what is produced in and by work. First, the deadly aspect of some methods of organizing work is contrasted with the potential other forms of work have to create a shared world (critical thought on work in agriculture). The question of what it means to create capital and value through work is then considered in the final chapter (on draft horses in agriculture).

## **Conclusion: work as a political and ethical objective**

By shifting the question of “animal welfare” and oppression to real work, we will follow a new line of thought. The calculating and utilitarian theories of welfare have a tendency to obscure the heart of the problem (the size of the cage rather than a good life) and theories of oppression tend to reduce our ties with animals to power relations, and obscure their complexity.

Although work without doubt produces milk, meat and manure, personal care, in other words, products and other goods and services, its main reason for being is the production of ties. Animal husbandry allows humans and animals to live together. This anti-utilitarian filiation, to which we subscribe, has its roots in the gift theory as developed by Marcel Mauss (Porcher 2002).

The worlds of pigs, cows, dogs and elephants can cohabit with the human world and shape themselves around a network of relations that drives subjectivity and intelligence. That this desire for a shared life is not always realized in capitalist societies does not alter the fact that work has this potential. Work can be seen to be founded in mutual gifts that are recognized on both sides through a judgment of the quality of work relations; this we call “the

judgment tie”, and it is carried into work by the animals themselves (Porcher 2017a). This desire is a political one aimed at reciprocal emancipation.

Work can therefore be a time of transforming and developing competences and sensibility registers that neither animals nor humans were conscious of before engaging in the work. For an experienced rider, the postures and movement of the horses with which they work becomes a truly articulate language, one that is totally invisible to the beginner. For an experienced show-jumping horse, the intentions of the rider are also transparent, through the adjustments of both of their bodies. Yet none of this existed before they engaged in work together. For human life and animal life expand in work, together.

Work is an ethical question because it is a central means by which we come together (Dejours et al. 2018). Studying the organization and conditions of work in a political and economic system within which productivity and utilitarianism hold sway over all other forms of relationships is a central political challenge wherein lies the germs of a potential liberation, but also the increased mutual alienation of humans and animals.



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