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Good Work for Animals

Alasdair Cochrane

The idea that animals enjoy work is a familiar one. Indeed, one handler was recently quoted in a news story in the UK saying: ‘Sam lives for the joy of working, praise from me—and the occasional doughnut’ (Burchell 2013). Sam is a ‘rothound’: a golden Labrador whose job is to detect dry rot in Britain’s stately homes. Rothounds are of huge value to those charged with conserving historical buildings because of their ability to sniff out the fungus that causes the rot at source. This allows the rot to be treated much more accurately and effectively than if it were left to humans alone. Peter Monaghan, Sam’s handler and trainer, came across Sam in a rescue centre in Cumbria in the North of England, after his previous family had found him too boisterous to live with. As he makes clear in the quotation, Mr Monaghan is convinced that Sam is leading a flourishing life, and that this is down to his work.

Such sentiments about working animals are commonplace. It is normal to hear people who work alongside animals saying that the animals *enjoy* their work, *thrive* in their work, and even *need* to work (see chapter 4 of this volume by D’Souza, Hovorka, and Niel). And such descriptions are given for a wide range of animals working in a variety of different forms of employment—whether it be dogs herding sheep, horses being ridden for human therapy, geese acting as guards, cats preying on pests, and so on.

But are these claims valid? Are some forms of work good for certain animals? Or are these claims nefarious attempts to justify the human use and exploitation of animals? This chapter seeks to explore whether work can be good for certain animals, and if so, what such work might look like.

To be clear, the chapter is not focused on identifying the ways in which work is *bad* for animals. Other scholars have successfully exposed and condemned the brutal and exploitative practices carried out against them in the name of work (Noske 1997). Indeed, the extent of the harms perpetrated against working animals—on farms, in laboratories, in puppy mills, in combat training, and so on—has led many to conclude that such suffering is a *necessary* feature of animal work, and thus to call for its abolition (Francione 2008). In more recent years, however, there has been a trend within animal studies scholarship to imagine how more just interspecies relations might be brought about (Donaldson and

Kymlicka 2011). As part of this, I have conducted research (Cochrane 2016) into whether particular forms of work for some animals might be rendered *harmless* if reformed and regulated by recognition of working animals' *labour rights*. This chapter seeks to go beyond the question of harmless work, and contribute to the question of what Kendra Coulter (2017) has called 'humane work'; that is, work which is positively *good for* animals. After all, when it comes to the work done by human beings, few of us believe that jobs should merely be harmless. Many of us believe instead that we ought to organize societies so that they provide opportunities for 'decent', 'meaningful', or what I will call 'good work': that is, work which actively contributes to individuals' well-being and flourishing. For this reason, many states at least aim to instigate policies that do not just protect human workers from harm, but also help individuals to lead meaningful, autonomous, and fulfilling working lives. Such policies range from the public provision of education and training, giving career advice, and providing investment in industry and other sectors to boost or maintain employment.

So can work also promote the well-being of non-human animals? This chapter will argue that in some circumstances good work for animals is possible. In so doing, it will survey four of the most common proposed elements of good work for humans—self-realization, pleasure, autonomy, and self-respect—to see if and how they might apply to animals. It will conclude by arguing that good work for animals has a three-fold basis: it provides pleasure, including through affording opportunities to use and develop skills; it allows for the exercise of animals' agency; and it provides a context in which animals can be esteemed as valuable workers and members of the communities in which they labour.

Before starting in earnest, it is important to be clear about the type of animal work with which this chapter is primarily concerned. The focus of the chapter will be on that work conducted by domesticated animals and assigned by humans within mixed human–animal societies; what Coulter (2016: 61) has labelled 'formal work'. So I borrow from Samuel Clark (2017: 62), to take work to refer to those familiar things that are done in 'fields, factories, offices, schools, shops, building sites, call centres, homes, and so on, to make a life and living'. However, this is not to deny that domesticated animals do not perform other forms of labour, as for example companion animals do when they protect and care for others in homes all around the world. And nor is it to deny that wild animals also work, whether that be in providing subsistence for themselves, or certain vital services for human beings and other species (Coulter 2016: 60–1). I focus on formal work in particular because I am primarily interested in understanding if work can be good for animals when it is assigned and directed by humans. Whether the chapter's conclusions have relevance for the other forms of work which animals carry out is left for future consideration and research.

Self-Realization

According to John Elster (1986), at the centre of Marxism is a specific conception of the good life —*self-realization*—which is facilitated by free, creative, and skilful productive activity (see also Attfield 1984: 147–8). This understanding of human well-being is perfectionist in nature, whereby individual flourishing is tied to the exercise of the essential capacities of one’s species (Attfield 1984: 145; Clark 2017: 63). On this Marxist view, the essential capacity of humans—their ‘species-being’—is to intentionally labour on and transform the world. The claim is not merely that certain types of work can promote particular humans’ interests in some circumstances. Rather, the claim is much stronger: that the good life consists in self-realization, which consists in good work.

So what must our work look like in order for it to be self-realizing? According to Elster (1986: 100), self-realizing work must be active, skilful, and driven towards a goal. It can thus be contrasted with consumption (which is passive), drudgery (which lacks skill), and spontaneous interaction (which is not goal-driven). Most clearly, then, good and self-realizing work can be contrasted with the highly stratified division of labour in industrial societies, in which persons specialize in very specific and often repetitive tasks to standards and speeds set by others. In contrast to the dominant view in the history of Western political thought, whereby humans must be free from work in order to develop the highest parts of their nature (Kandiyali 2014: 117), this position sees free, conscious, and creative productive labour *as* the highest parts of our nature.

So might good work for *animals* be that which is self-realizing? Initially, there are reasons to be doubtful. After all, Marx famously excluded animals from his account of productive labour. For him, the work of humans and animals is qualitatively different: humans produce beyond physical need, but animals do not; humans can produce as a species, while animals can only produce as individuals; and humans labour according to a range of standards, but animals only produce according to fixed standards for their species (Marx 1994: 64). Marx would thus reject the idea that free and conscious labour is even possible for non-human animals, let alone necessary for their self-realization and flourishing.

And yet, there are good reasons to reject the qualitative distinctions that Marx draws between human and non-human work. We can certainly find examples of non-human animals working in ways which Marx assumes to be the sole preserve of humans: predator animals, for instance, often kill beyond their physical needs (Cochrane 2010: 100). And we can find examples of humans who fail to live up to these standards: young infants, for example, cannot meaningfully be said to labour at all, let alone as part of ‘a species’. For these reasons, the differences in the work of humans and animals seem to be of degree rather than kind (Clark 2014).

Furthermore, self-realization does appear to be a concept which can straightforwardly be applied to animals. After all, self-realization is achieved through the

exercise of one's species' essential capacities—and certain forms of animal work seem to facilitate this. Sam the rothound, for example, is quite obviously developing and utilizing his advanced capacities of smelling and tracking. And other examples are easy to think of: training and using pigeons to carry messages can be considered to be developing their remarkable navigation skills; pigs used to search woodlands for truffles are exercising their capacities of smelling and rooting in the earth; geese used to guard property are utilizing their skills of sight, defence, and intimidation; and so on. In all these cases, then, the work might be considered to be 'good' insofar as it contributes to the animals' self-realization.

In my view, however, there are three reasons to be sceptical of seeing good work for animals as that which is self-realizing. The first relates to the very connection between well-being (whether human or animal) and self-realization. Put simply, we ought to doubt this perfectionist understanding of the good life. For the idea that there is a single determinate standard of individual flourishing for each species which is objectively correct seems extremely dubious (Arneson 1987: 520). For example, it is far from obvious why a human who freely chooses a passive and highly pleasurable life of consumption ought to be judged as having low levels of well-being. Indeed, given our different personalities, histories, and desires, it at least seems likely that there are a variety of ways in which individuals can flourish. So while we might recognize that creative and skilful productive activity is enormously valuable for many humans, and perhaps even to be encouraged, it seems wrong to claim that this is the *only* means to lead a life that is good for the individual whose life it is.

Secondly, even if we do accept that self-realization is constitutive of the good life, that still does not show that *work* is necessary to secure it. For example, in the human case, activities that are skilful, creative, and goal-driven can be enacted outside of work. In fact, with shorter hours and higher pay, individuals might be able to achieve even more excellence in their leisure time (Arneson 1987: 525). And the same argument holds true for animals. For example, homing pigeons might be able to better exercise and develop their skills of navigation outside of a working environment—indeed, they are now often commonly trained and used simply for fun.

The final reason to reject identifying good work for animals with self-realization is that it might actually be inimical to animal well-being. In fact, there is always good reason to be wary of applying perfectionist understandings of flourishing to non-human animals, in part because it can often lead to animals' self-realization being equated with self-sacrifice and 'realization-for-others'. For example, perfectionist understandings of well-being can lead to the problematic idea that what is natural for an animal is also deemed to be good for that animal. But such a conclusion cannot meaningfully be drawn in relation to, say, a prey animal being eaten alive (Cripps 2010). Moreover, some applications of perfectionist arguments to domesticated working animals are just as worrying. Indeed,

the exploitation of working animals is often justified by claims such as ‘they were born to do such work’, and ‘this is what they are for’ (Emery 2013). To an extent, these claims are right: domesticated animals have been selectively bred over centuries in order to possess traits and perform tasks that serve human ends. In this way, these traits and tasks are in some way ‘essential’ to these animals. However, that does not mean that the use and development of these traits and tasks is good for the animals themselves. Such a line of argument would lead us to some odd conclusions. For example, the so-called Beltsville pigs were injected as embryos with a human growth hormone gene so that they grew bigger, leaner, and quicker than other agricultural pigs (Christiansen and Sandøe 2000). So it makes some sense to say that these animals were self-realizing, excelling as they did in their capacity for carrying meat. However, since these animals suffered from severe organ and joint damage, as well as from a range of other pathologies, it would be absurd to say that they led lives that were good for them.

Skills and Pleasure

While I think that that it is wrong to identify good work with self-realization, there remains something plausible in the idea that good work should entail the opportunity to use and develop one’s skills. After all, there is no doubt that using and developing skills can be an important source of *pleasure* in individuals’ lives. This is certainly true for humans. For example, in Samuel Clark’s (2017) account of good work, a central role is given to the pleasure received from the development of our skills. He argues (67) that the movement between immediate involvement in a task and critical self-evaluation of what one is doing provides a crucial source of satisfaction (see also Attfield 1984: 143). Elster (1986: 104) concurs, arguing that while the ‘start-up costs’ of skill development might make it unattractive initially, these quickly diminish to be overwhelmed by the enormous gratification that individuals receive from their achievements. In this way, Clark (66) differentiates the skill-developing activity of learning a musical instrument from spot-welding on a production line. The former demands critical self-attention and the conditions for pleasurable skill development; while the latter demands repetitive, non-consciously directed work which is planned and evaluated by someone else.

There are several advantages to understanding work which develops capacities and skills as good insofar as it is a source of pleasure, as opposed to good insofar as it represents the essence of the human species. In the first place, it allows us to eschew the perfectionist view that conducting skill-enhancing productive labour is the good life. For example, we can acknowledge that while work which utilizes and enhances skills promotes well-being, it is not the *only* source of human well-being. We can thus recognize the important role of leisure, rest, consumption, and idleness as components of human well-being (Russell 1935). Furthermore, it

also allows us to acknowledge that pleasurable skill development can take place outside of work, as Clark's example of learning a musical instrument illustrates. Finally, we can also recognize that there are pleasurable forms of work other than that which are skilful. Indeed, many of us would concur that routine labour can provide its own enjoyments—whether that be because it can provide a holiday from thought (Attfield 1984: 143), because of the satisfaction gained from producing the necessities of life, or because of the enjoyment afforded by social engagement. However, while the pleasures that can be derived from routine and unskilled work must be acknowledged, it is unlikely that humans get much satisfaction if they are *only* pursuing narrow and routine tasks which never provide any opportunity to use and develop their skills. As such, the *opportunity* to derive pleasure from the exercise of skill seems like a necessary condition of good work for humans.

But can the same be said for non-human animals? Do some animals also enjoy developing and using their skills? And do they thus take satisfaction from forms of labour which allow them to do so? There is good reason to believe that many do. Intuitively, at least, it seems perfectly reasonable to suppose that animals do not just suffer from being denied the ability to exercise their natural capacities, but in fact take enjoyment from using them. As William Morris (1886: 21) writes: 'I think that to all living things there is a pleasure in the exercise of their energies, and that even beasts rejoice in being lithe and swift and strong.' And from an evolutionary perspective, it makes sense for animals to take pleasure from the successful use and development of the skills that will help them to flourish (McGowan et al. 2014: 577). Furthermore, there are a number of behavioural studies which have confirmed these assumptions and demonstrated that some animals take real satisfaction from their accomplishments, in much the same way as Elster has described for humans. For example, Hagen and Broom (2004) designed a study with cattle to see if they responded emotionally to their own achievements in an operant learning task. One group of heifers was trained to press a panel to receive a food reward, while a control group was not. The study found that the cattle who mastered the task in order to receive a food reward demonstrated a greater emotional response than the cattle who received the reward without performing the task. A similar study to test the 'eureka effect' in dogs also found that animals achieved a more positive affective state when reacting to their own problem-solving achievements (McGowan et al. 2014).

Now, the conclusion to be drawn from this is not that each and every type of work which allows animals to experience such 'eureka effects' can be considered good. After all, if work entails fleeting moments of pleasure, but in overall terms is experienced as painful, monotonous, frustrating, and so on, then it cannot plausibly be considered as conducive to well-being. Rather, then, the claim is that a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of good work for animals, like for humans, is that it involves the opportunity to take pleasure from the development and use

of skills. Once again, this is not to say that such pleasures cannot be found outside of work, or that routine work cannot bring its own enjoyments. But given that all sentient animals possess a variety of physical and mental skills, it seems right that a necessary condition of good work for animals is the opportunity to employ them.

How might such opportunities be provided? What kinds of work will allow animals to take pleasure in developing their skills? While much will depend on the work, skills, and animal in question, there is no doubt of the importance of *variety* in the work (see Morris 1886: 32). This is in part because all animals have numerous skills and capacities. Current forms of employment often allow animals to excel in one particular capacity—sniffing, carrying, hunting, fetching, watching, and so on—to the neglect of all others. But a dog has far more skills than the ability to smell, for example. As such, if a dog such as Sam the rothound is employed primarily to ‘sniff’, for his work to be good, it must also provide opportunities for him to take enjoyment from using and developing his athletic, social, problem-solving, and other capacities. So the argument here is *not* that good work rules out specialization. It is rather that good specialist jobs must be constructed so as to allow for a range of skills to be employed. Relatedly, without any variety in the work undertaken, it will be very hard for skills to be honed and developed. It is through being confronted with new challenges that individuals come to grow and develop their capacities, and this is as true for animals as it is for humans. For these reasons, then, we can say that good work for animals must have variety in the tasks that are performed; variety to both use and develop the different skills they possess.

But work can also provide sources of pleasure which are not solely attached to the development of skills and capacities—and this is true for both humans and animals. Again, which kinds of work will foster pleasure obviously depends on the species and personality of the individual in question. Nonetheless, I think that it is reasonable to propose that pleasant surroundings and appropriate relations with others are vital (Morris 1886: 34). Starting with pleasant surroundings, then, it is obvious that the majority of contemporary animal workers labour in conditions that are extremely dangerous to their health and vital interests. For work to be harmless for animals it must eradicate these dangers; but for it to be *good*, it must also provide surroundings in which animals can experience stimulation, fun, and joy. The kinds of working environments which help animals to experience pleasure will of course vary. One factor will be how far those environments enable animals to exercise their natural capacities, but others will involve fostering simple pleasures like the ability to feel the warmth of the sun, the cool of the wind, and the comfort of shade. Securing such conditions is clearly easier for some forms of work than for others. For example, it seems relatively straightforward to provide a pleasurable working environment for those pigs who are used to locate and extract truffles; after all, this work necessarily takes place outside in large, open, stimulating woodland. On the other hand, while it might be relatively easy to secure

harmless conditions for assistance dogs, creating environments which facilitate joy and pleasure might be tougher. This is simply because most of their working lives are spent in human houses and urban settings. Nonetheless, this should not mean that creating joy-inducing conditions is impossible; with sufficient thought and imagination, for example with plenty of outdoor access and activity, perhaps they too can enjoy their working environments.

Of course, it is not just the physical environment in which they work that can help promote pleasure in the lives of working animals. Social relations can be an important source of joy too. On the one hand, working with others can be important for skill development, in order that individuals can learn, be trained, and hone their particular capacities. But good social relations can be an independent source of pleasure at work. Work should not be regarded simply as a productive activity; for it can also be a tremendous source of joy, laughter, companionship, and fun. In most instances, the reason why work fosters such feelings is because it fosters good social relations. It is important to note that those pleasurable social relations can take place within and between species. Indeed, Jocelyne Porcher (2014) takes the argument one step further to argue that the primary rationale for humans to work with animals is to live and socialize them with.

But what then of solitary work? It is clear that some humans get considerable pleasure from conducting creative, skilful, intensive work all on their own. The lone author or artist working on their magnum opus offers a vivid example of this. But the pleasure some receive from solitary work does not undermine the wider claim that *appropriate* social relations are important for good work. Furthermore, few enjoy working alone all of the time, suggesting that good work must therefore provide the *opportunity* to engage with others. In addition, it is worth remembering that even solitary work relies on important forms of social support (Clark 2017: 69); for no work is or can be conducted entirely independently. Finally, it is likely that fewer animals enjoy solitary work compared to humans. After all, domesticated animals have been bred in part because of their social natures and ability to thrive in mixed human–animal societies. As such, the appropriate social relations for working animals are very likely to be those which entail considerable engagement with others.

In summary, then, we can say that good work for animals is work from which they can take pleasure through having the opportunity to use and develop their various capacities, in pleasant surroundings, and with appropriate social relations. Are these conditions sufficient for good work? The next section argues that they are not.

Autonomy and Agency

Several scholars have argued that good work is not just that which is pleasurable, but also that which is *autonomous*. Autonomy usually refers to the ability to make

fundamental choices about the direction of one's life. Autonomous agents can frame, revise, and pursue their own conceptions of the good (Rawls 1993: 72), and it is usually regarded as essential to autonomous agents' well-being to be able to make choices in pursuit of that good (Raz 1988). It is for this reason that Adina Schwartz (1982) argues that it is seriously problematic that so many contemporary workers are employed in jobs where the ends, pace, and standards of the work are set by others than themselves. And more positively, Andreas Eshete (1974: 42) argues that, 'A central feature of meaningful work is that it is autonomous . . . Other things being equal, we take pride in work which displays our part in its making.'

For work to be autonomous, then, it clearly needs to be freely chosen. According to the literature, this would seem to require three things of work conducted by humans. First, and most obviously, individual workers should be free to take up and leave particular forms of employment. Slavery and forced labour evidently violate autonomy and are thus the antithesis of good work for humans. Second, when individuals freely choose to work for a corporation or other organization, they should also be able to help direct the goals and strategy of that entity through forms of workplace democracy. And finally, according to Schwartz (1982: 641) respect for autonomy also demands that there must be a sharing of supervisory and routine tasks so that there is no permanent distinction between those who decide and those who execute decisions.

Some might object that all of this is too demanding. For it might be claimed that the importance of autonomy to human well-being relates to their whole lives, meaning that sacrificing some autonomy while in work is fine, so long as humans' lives are autonomous overall. In response, however, Schwartz persuasively argues that autonomy is a matter of integrating one's plans across all areas of one's life (1982: 638), including work, which is certainly a fundamental aspect of our lives. And secondly, she points to evidence which suggests that engaging in non-autonomous work directed by others can lead to a lack of invention and agency outside of work (1982: 637).

But while we might accept autonomy as a necessary component of good work for humans, is the same true in the case of animals? At first blush, there are reasons to be doubtful. For one, autonomy is not as central to the well-being of the vast majority of animals as it is for humans. This is quite simply because most animals are unable to frame, revise, and pursue their own conceptions of the good (Cochrane 2009). While all sentient animals certainly have agency and possess desires which they act upon, they do not have the capacity to reflect on those desires and integrate them into a life plan or set of goals. For this reason, interfering in the lives of animals and making fundamental choices about their lives on their behalf is not necessarily problematic as it is for most humans. While we would rightly regard raising, training, and keeping a human to go and hunt for dry rot or for truffles as a gross affront on human autonomy, doing the same to a dog or a pig is not as obviously problematic. Indeed, it is animals' lack of

autonomous agency which makes employing them in work that they have not chosen *not* morally equivalent to human slavery or forced labour.

So does this mean that autonomy is unimportant or irrelevant for good work for animals? Not exactly. For as stated, while animals might not have the capacity to possess or reflect on a ‘conception of the good’, and thus have no interest in making choices which relate to that good, they do very much have desires and an interest in acting upon those desires. In other words, sentient animals have *agency*. Given that being able to exercise this agency is very often important to the well-being of animals, it is a very plausible criterion of good work for animals.

What would agency-respecting good work for animals look like? In my view, there are at least three aspects to work which respects and promotes animals’ agency. In the first place, animals’ agency must be respected when animals are chosen for work, and when work is chosen for them. Non-human animals cannot fully consent to being employed in the same way that humans can: they can neither fully understand the purposes for which they are being employed, nor the terms under which they will labour. It is thus plausible to see all forms of animal work as in some sense ‘forced’ (Cochrane 2016: note 7). Nonetheless, animals can still express desires about whether they want to work, and in what roles. Indeed, current practice in the selection of dogs to work as service or assistance animals often entails choosing individuals with not only the right skills and traits, but also the right *personalities*. Harmless work would thus seem to require *not* selecting for work those animals who resist human company and who refuse to comply with tasks set by others. And in terms of good work, while we cannot select animals who actively desire to sniff out cancers, act as guards, and so on, we can select those who not only seek human company, but also desire the stimulation of being set tasks and problems to solve.

Of course, once animals are selected for work, they will usually also need to be trained in the tasks to be performed. Since animals cannot be fully aware of what precisely they are being trained for, and since they are unlikely to actively desire the precise activities that the training involves, it might seem that training *necessarily* compromises their agency. Nonetheless, I believe that animals’ agency can still be respected when they are trained for work. Obviously, for this training to be harmless, many traditional and existing practices, which often involve the use of painful restraints and punishments, must come to an end. Instead, good work must involve forms of training with activities which are desirable because they are enjoyable for the animals involved. For example, Sam’s training involved hunting for toys which had been scented appropriately—tasks which his trainer claimed Sam, as a boisterous and lively dog, enjoyed enormously. Of course, this is not to say that training cannot be challenging and even at times frustrating. As previously noted, the development of new skills and capacities often requires effort which can be discomforting. But for such exertions to be considered elements of good work, it must be part of an overall programme that is ultimately desirable for the animals involved.

Finally, good work for animals must also permit animals to exercise their agency within the work itself. First of all, in order to be harmless and not engender frustration on the part of animals, animals should have some say over the tasks that they perform. This will again require *variety* in the work: animals should have the opportunity to select from a range of different tasks in their work. But, in my view, good and not merely harmless work requires more than this. For good agency-respecting work also requires animals to have their desires respected in *the planning and strategies* of the organizations for whom they work. In other words, good work requires animals to be included within schemes of *workplace democracy* (Blattner 2019). This is important not only to ensure that these organizations do not enact plans which might be inimical to animal workers, but also to put policies on the table which will enhance the joy and satisfaction that animals receive from their work. In other words, workplace democracy is an important means by which to instigate the kinds of pleasurable and agency-respecting conditions outlined so far.

But how can animal workers participate in workplace democracy? While it is true that animals cannot reflect on and vote for their preferred plans and policies, their interests can still be represented in decision-making. Dedicated representatives of animal workers—like the union representatives of human workers—can speak up for their interests to ensure that their voices help to shape its future direction. It is of course true that the representatives of animals cannot be held to account via periodic election in the same way as the representatives of humans. Nonetheless, other means of ensuring that these representatives act upon the desires of animal workers are available. For one, we can ensure that these representatives are trained in what Andrew Dobson (2014: 175) has called the art of ‘good listening’. While animals cannot directly voice their desires, representatives can still listen for and hear them through being attentive to body language, eye movement, facial expression, habit, and so on (Donovan 2006: 321; Meijer 2013). Furthermore, while animals may not be able to choose and select their preferred candidates, a human proxy electorate could certainly do so on their behalf, making accountability through elections a clear possibility (see Dobson 1996; Ekeli 2005).

In sum, then, good work for animals is that which promotes both pleasure and agency. Are pleasure and agency the sufficient conditions of good work for animals? The next section examines a possible further criterion—one which has been proposed as an important element of good work for humans: self-respect.

Self-Respect and Esteem

Jocelyne Porcher (2014: 4) argues, in keeping with many other scholars outlining the conditions for good work, that, ‘Work is central to the construction of identity

and to the construction of social relations.’ And there is surely no doubt that for the majority of humans, an individual’s work is an important aspect of that person’s identity. Put simply, feeling good about the work that one conducts is an important source of self-respect. It is worth noting that this type of satisfaction is independent of the other pleasures individuals might find in their work. So, for example, a singer might take certain fleeting pleasures from working on the stage, such as when taking the applause of the audience. However, it would be odd to regard such work as good for that individual if the singer saw no value in singing, and was ashamed to make a living out of public performance. Work confers self-respect, then, when it relates to one’s autonomous plan of life (Attfeld 1984: 144). If the work an individual does conflicts with the aims and ideals that they care about, then it will not confer self-respect and could not plausibly be regarded as ‘good’.

As we have already seen, most non-human animals lack the autonomous capacities to frame, revise, and pursue their own conceptions of the good. On this basis, it is hard to see how self-respect can be a necessary element of good work for animals. For example, it is difficult to imagine that an animal who performs on stage could get the same kind of existential angst as a human singer. If an animal wants to perform and takes pleasure from so doing, then it seems initially plausible that such work ought to be considered good for the animal.

However, in the human case, self-respect is not always thought of as something that is derived *solely* from one’s own values and judgements. *Other people’s* judgements matter just as much, if not more. For this reason, many argue that self-respect is dependent on the *esteem* of others (Attfeld 1984: 145). Indeed, John Elster (1986: 106) even goes so far as to argue that esteem is, ‘The most important value for human beings’, and that, ‘Self-esteem derives largely from the esteem accorded one by other people.’ Whether or not we agree that esteem is of ultimate value in this way, we can surely concur that if others recognize one’s work as worthy and valuable, this acts as an important source of self-respect and well-being. And esteem is not and should not be conferred only on those who undertake jobs that are highly paid or which takes years of training. As Elster (106) rightly states, even drudgery can be a source of esteem if it produces things that others want and need.

But does the esteem of others matter for the work which animals conduct? At first glance, it might seem that it does not. After all, it is unlikely that animals will actually *know* whether or not they are held in esteem by others. This is not to say that animals cannot feel shame or embarrassment, and perhaps even pride. But coming to a more fine-grained judgement about whether the work they do is respected and valued by the wider community seems far less likely. Animals generally have little understanding of the ultimate purposes of their work, nor of how that work is regarded by others. It might seem, then, that neither self-respect nor the esteem of others is a necessary component of good work for animals.

In my view, however, such a judgement is too hasty, and there is reason to believe that the esteem of society makes a significant contribution to the work of animals too. In the first place, we can be reasonably confident that *not* being held in esteem can lead to harmful treatment in the workplace. If working animals are not respected as workers, but instead despised, disrespected, or commodified, then there is ample evidence that this leads to abuse. The most obvious example of this is the cruel acts which are perpetrated against animals in slaughterhouses (Pachirat 2011; Smithers 2017). Given this, we can reasonably assume that if animals *are* held in esteem by the communities in which they labour, they are more likely to receive better treatment, and not be regarded as mere tools or instruments for human ends. As Coulter (2016: 155) points out, one cannot condone killing someone with whom you feel solidarity.

But while esteem might be important for ensuring that animals' work is harmless, can it also make it *good*? Might societal esteem contribute to the flourishing of individual animals? I believe that it has an indirect role here too. For if a society esteems animals as valuable workers, it seems that it must also get close to recognizing them as active and contributing *fellow members* of that community (Kymlicka 2017: 147). And as several scholars (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011) have pointed out, animals require recognition as members of our societies in order to live well, and to enjoy the rights that come along with that status—rights to residency, healthcare, retirement provision, political representation, and more.

By way of illustration, consider the case of those animals who work in the police or military. Some of these animals already possess a kind of 'quasi-membership status' in certain communities. For example, these are the few animals to whom some societies have variously awarded retirement pensions (Pleasance 2013), medals of bravery (Baynes 2017), and memorials commemorating those who have died in service (Kean 2014; Johnston 2012). And such acknowledgement is in large part because of the *work* that they conduct. These animals perform tasks that are so familiar to us as work, and which so obviously contribute to the functioning of society, it is little wonder they are widely considered as both workers, and also *quasi-members* of our communities.

To be clear, my point is not that police and military animals are treated perfectly. Obviously, they are not, and are often asked to perform tasks that unjustifiably expose them to incredible risk. Nor is my point that the work which police and military animals conduct is especially worthy of esteem, while other work is not. Just as my aim is not to support the existing ways in which animals are used for work (cf. Eisen 2019), nor is it to support the existing ways on which their work is esteemed. Rather my goal is to point to some *possibilities* of what esteem can and could do for working animals. If animals' work were esteemed as it should be, it would make it more likely that they would be recognized as fellow members of our society, and hence more likely that they would enjoy the entitlements such status affords.

But is societal esteem of animals' work *necessary* for their flourishing? Some might think not. After all, societies could simply recognize the membership of animals directly through granting them full membership status. Indeed, this is the route to membership for human non-workers, and it would presumably have to be the path for animal non-workers too. As such, why can't societies just assign membership to working (and other) animals, irrespective of how that work is viewed by wider society? While societies should of course recognize membership in this way, there is some reason to believe that in order to both *establish and secure* the status of working animals as members, the social esteem of their work is a necessary condition. For there is certainly no doubt that in the absence of a sufficient basis of mutual recognition and support within a community, the formal legal standing of individuals can start to erode in practice (see Doppelt 1984: 72). And in contemporary societies, as the experience of so-called 'welfare ghettos' demonstrates, one of the most important bases of such support is that which comes through recognizing and valuing each others' work. Put simply, and as the examples of police and military dogs show, valuing the work of animals may be a crucial step in both establishing and securing the status of animals as members of our societies.

In sum, then, I believe that a necessary condition of good work for animals is that it is esteemed by society. This is on the basis that without esteem, the social standing of working animals is in jeopardy. For example, even if Sam the rothound takes immense pleasure from his work, without wide recognition that his work is a valuable contribution to society, his status within that society will always be uncertain. Just as it is hard to kill those with whom we have solidarity, it is hard to deny the political status of those whose work we esteem. That is why some have granted pensions to police dogs, and why many are horrified when military service animals are abandoned in conflict zones (Hediger 2013). Good work is that which enhances animals' well-being; and the social esteem of others can facilitate that by establishing and securing their membership in our societies.

Conclusion

This chapter has defended the view that work can not only be harmless but also *good* for certain animals. In so doing, it has argued that good work for animals has a three-fold basis: it is work which provides pleasure, including through affording opportunities to use and develop skills; which allows for the exercise of animals' agency; and which provides a context in which animals can be esteemed as valuable workers who are recognized as members of the communities in which they labour. If an animal conducts work of this kind, then we can feel confident that this work is helping that animal lead a flourishing life.

There is clearly no doubt that very few animals currently employed in human societies enjoy harmless, let alone good work. This should obviously be a source of

regret. Moreover, it would also seem to provide a *pro tanto* case to transform our societies so that they provide opportunities for such forms of work; and for employers to strive to create such conditions for the human and animal workers under their charge.

Does this then mean that states *must* provide opportunities for good animal work as a matter of *justice*? It might be the case, for instance, that justice only demands that work is harmless, not that it is also beneficial (see Arneson 1987). However, if esteem is as crucial to the establishment of animals' proper social standing as has been suggested, then justice would also seem to demand good work for animals. After all, without good work, the very basis for establishing and securing membership for working animals will be blocked. The ultimate conclusion of this chapter, then, is that our duties with respect to working animals lie not only in eradicating the serious harms that are currently perpetrated against them, but also in making efforts to get societies to recognize, value, and esteem the work which animals undertake.

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