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Do Animals Work? Creating Pragmatic Narratives

Here we ascend from earth to heaven.¹

They [humans] begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence, men are indirectly producing their actual material life.²

Of all philosophers, Marx understood relational sensuousness, and he thought deeply about the metabolism between human beings and the rest of the world enacted in living labor. As I read him, however, he was finally unable to escape from the humanist teleology of that labor—the making of man himself. In the end, no companion species, reciprocal inductions, or multispecies epigenetics are in his story.³

One of the most advantageous paths, but the least attended to as such, in an effort to get beyond the division between “sciences of nature” and “human sciences” is the consideration of work. For thousands of years, domestic animals have worked beside human beings.⁴

DO ANIMALS WORK?

Certainly some animals deserve to be called “workers.” We readily admit this in the case of service dogs, and in the cases of horses or oxen who pull heavy loads; it also appears to be true of certain animals who are used by professionals, such as police dogs, rescue dogs, rats who locate buried land mines so that they can be safely neutralized, and messenger pigeons, among others. Donna Haraway, in

1. Karl Marx, “The German Ideology” in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (London: Blackwell, 1998), 656.

2. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 653.

3. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 46.

4. Jocelyne Porcher and Elisabeth Lécivain, “Bergers, chiens, brebis, un collectif de travail naturel?” *Études rurales* 189 (2012): 121.

YFS 127, “Animots”: *Postanimality in French Thought*, ed. Senior, Clark, and Freccero, © 2015 by Yale University.

When Species Meet, has proposed looking at the “collaboration” of laboratory animals in this light, a suggestion that unequivocally reflects the attitude of animal-handling technicians toward the animals they use in their experiments.⁵

The area of public performances and show business can offer an introduction to this way of looking at things. In an essay about what he calls the anomalies of the theater, the “alien bodies” of the stage: stage fright, embarrassment, laughter, and . . . animals on stage, theater historian Nicolas Ridout remarks that the presence of animals in the operation of traditional theater is always problematic, and it is rare that real animals are used (of course, in this instance, the theater is to be distinguished from the circus). According to Ridout, when animals have parts in a stage production, they create a certain tension or uneasiness, and he attempts to analyze this. In his view, the presence of animals explicitly cast in roles on stage makes visible things that are supposed to be invisible: on the one hand, the work actors are doing (everything in the theater has to do with a kind of register of action that imitates spontaneity); on the other, an unpleasant feeling connected to the light the animal seems to cast on the human actors. “The strangeness of the animal on stage comes not from the fact that it ought not to be there, has no business being there, but rather in the fact that there is suddenly nothing strange about it being there, being exploited there, as any human performer.”⁶

Certainly the presence of animals on stage—to the extent that they are not just there “to be there,” that is, they are often there (paradoxically) as a sign of something else (they may be representing something, acting as a symbol for something else)—does not in itself have the power to create this uneasiness. This feeling emerges when animals really act on stage—when they are claimed as “real actors.” Some theatrical companies, such as the Societas Raffaello Sanzio, have experimented with this, particularly in a performance of the *Oresteia* in 1996, which was staged from a deliberately polemical point of view.

Here Ridout elaborates on Romeo Castellucci’s analysis. Castellucci wonders about a time when animals will disappear from the

5. Haraway, *When Species Meet*; Vinciane Despret, *Penser comme un rat* (Paris: Quae, 2009); Robert Kirk, “Between the Clinic and the Laboratory: Ethology and Pharmacology in the Work of Michael Robin Alexander Chance, 1946–1964,” *Medical History* 53/4 (2009): 513–36.

6. Nicolas Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 127.

stage, and speculates about the moment when the gods were removed from it. The polemical gesture of reintroducing animals on stage, he argues, is equivalent to returning to the theological and critical roots of the theater, that is, to the theater before tragedy, in its infancy—in the etymological sense of “infancy” (*infans*: the condition of those who are without language). Ridout quotes Castellucci: “If there is a polemic regarding tragedy it is without doubt related to the role of the author, to the movement of writing and therefore to that incredible pretension of verticality that is differentiated in terms of gender.”⁷ For Castellucci, this “incredible pretension to verticality,” which differentiates a non-human from a human animal, is echoed in the allusion to infancy and is carried forward in the difference between genders. It is linked to the mythical reconstruction of an origin and to the appearance of the authorial function. The function of the author in the theater, in this reconstruction, is thought to be co-emergent with the separation from the animal, the assumption of power by men (over women) and the division of labor between humans and animals, men and women, manual laborers (rendered proximate to infancy and animality) and intellectuals. In other words, and still according to this constructed mythical origin, “the division of labor, the death of God, the establishment of human dominion over the animals and the birth of tragedy may all be seen as simultaneous (. . .); Western theater has kept the animal offstage in order to hide its origins in these moments of inaugural violence and the institution of division of labor.”⁸

It does not matter whether this mythical reconstruction is plausible, and Ridout states this clearly: “What was the animal doing on stage before the birth of tragedy, what was the pre-tragic theater? We do not know.”⁹ What matters is what we are sensitized to by the mythical and fabulous origin, what the origin makes visible that was not previously visible, and the new questions we are thereby authorized to ask, but which we had not thought to formulate. Thus, the mythical origin indeed creates stories (fabulous, “fabulating”); it seeks some means of making a vanished experience available again in the contemporary world. It can move us to story making, to the

7. Ridout, *Stage Fright*, 111.

8. *Ibid.*, 114.

9. *Ibid.*, *Stage Fright*, 111.

creation of memories, the construction of a history that renders the present and the future richer in possibilities.¹⁰ Ridout adds:

In the shudder, the unease, the disquiet and the caution with which we greet the appearance of the animal on the stage, we are responding to this looking back, and in that looking back the recognition of some kind of complicity in domination and submission. What we experience is a form of shame, I think, at being discovered in our own acts of domination, over animals and over ourselves. The truth of the division of labor makes itself felt, and what we are ashamed of is that we never saw it before, not until the animal returned to the stage and made us stare it in the face, smell it, sense it in our shuddering.¹¹

What the reconstruction makes visible, what I would like to cite as evidence, is a little different from the usual historical reconstruction. Primary violence is not located in the fact that animals have been transformed into "potential instrument(s) of satisfaction," but in the carrying out of a division of labor in such a way as to exclude them. Animals do not appear to work; in the referential framework that emerges from this division of labor/exclusion from labor, it is held that what animals do, they do "naturally," as if answering *our* needs is the same thing as acting according to nature. Thus, in its initial movement, the division of labor is a matter of dividing those who explicitly, really, work, from those who are only following a bent in their nature, a necessity of a biological rather than a historical sort.

RECREATING HISTORY WITH ANIMALS

When the French historian Eric Baratay began looking at the possibility of writing a history from the animal's point of view, the methodological and epistemological difficulties of the project led him to adopt a number of strategies. In order to write a history from the point of view of an animal, such that it should not simply be a human story in which animals play symbolic roles or function as

10. On the concept of that which is "fabulatoire," see Donna Haraway, "Sowing Worlds: A Seed Bag for Terraforming with Earth Others," in *Beyond the Cyborg: Adventures with Haraway*, ed. Margaret Grebowicz and Helen Merrick (Columbia University Press, forthcoming) and Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret, *Women Who Make a Fuss: The Unfaithful Daughters of Virginia Woolf*, trans. April Knutson (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2013).

11. Ridout, *Stage Fright*, 137.

mere instruments, one must, he says, look for places and moments in various stories “when the animals start paying attention to what humans are offering or demanding, and then either accept, play for time, resist, refuse . . . stories in which they exhibit unusual skills or behaviors (. . .) We could describe [this process] as one of acculturation, that is, not just humans imposing their will but also acceptance from the animal, dialogue between the two, influence of the animal upon the human.”¹² This strategy leads him to write a chapter about the work of horses in certain mines. The active participation of the horses is corroborated by examples, testimonials, and archives that preserve stories told by mine managers, who were able to depend on their horses for many different skills, including the remarkable one of finding their own way in and out of the mine. These men tell stories about horses doing things without being told,

going forward on their own, to the place where wagons were loaded, as soon as the gong had been struck the usual number of times, which were nonetheless different depending on which gallery the wagon was close to; they slowed down the wagon convoy by pushing against it with their chests if anything untoward happened in the front (. . .); they pushed open swinging doors with their heads, undoubtedly in order not to [have to] start going again [once they had come to a halt]. They refused to work after the quitting time, appearing to know the time by themselves; when they were untied, they returned to the barn immediately, finding their way in the dark through winding passages.¹³

He remarks that the most frequently recounted episode involved horses refusing to pull extra wagons hitched onto the usual load. Some horses just stopped pulling if the number of wagons went beyond the norm (it was imagined that they might be able to estimate the number based on the difference in noises produced by the wheels when there were more of them rolling). Some horses would respond to repeated urging in this situation by kicking off the chain that hooked them to the lead wagon. “In this case there was evident resistance, though from good co-workers.”¹⁴ Some horses distinguished between drivers, as miners observed, refusing to work for one and then consenting to work for another, whom they knew would drive them gently and pay attention to their comfort.

12. Eric Baratay, *Le point de vue animal* (Paris : Seuil, 2012), 67.

13. *Ibid.*, 121.

14. *Ibid.*, 122.

Despite epistemic, conceptual, and ideological obstacles, some authors interested in the animal's point of view still manage to unearth convincing testimonials; they succeed in asking this question seriously and in searching for serious answers (not just thinking about "good intentions") regarding certain animals who work and work together with humans. It is, however, an altogether different situation when we consider how we think about animals that we raise in order to kill and eat them.

Jocelyne Porcher, a sociologist who studies breeding practices, places this question at the center of her research. She began her study by asking breeders: could one in any way say that their animals collaborate with them and work with them? Would that make any sense?¹⁵ This is not something easy to think about—not for us, and not for the breeders, for the most part. The general response is that humans work, animals don't. Yet Porcher heard many stories about animals who did in fact participate in the work of those who were raising them, and animals who acted in deliberate ways of their own volition. This leads Porcher to suggest that work may not be visible, and also that what work is may be difficult to conceive. It is said without saying; it is seen without being seen.

When a proposition is difficult to respond to—do animals work?—it often indicates that the answer to the question will change something. And that is the thing that guides Porcher as a sociologist: if the proposition is accepted as true, that will change something. Because such a question is never asked "just to see" in her sociology; rather, it means taking a pragmatic position, involving a question whose answer turns out to have consequences.

Porcher notes that few sociologists or anthropologists have tried to imagine that animals work. Richard Tapper is one of the few. Taking a perspective that is very close to that assumed by Marx in *The German Ideology*, but this time including animals, which Marx would not have permitted, he examines the development of the relationships between humans and non-human animals, judging that this relationship must have followed a historical progression similar to that undergone by the relations of production between different groups of men. In hunting societies the relationship between humans and non-human animals is communitarian, because animals are part of the same world as humans. The first examples of domestication appear

15. Vinciane Despret and Jocelyne Porcher, *Etre bête* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2007).

to be similar to types of slavery. Pastoralism is similar to contractual forms of the feudal type. In industrial systems, the relationship is based on means of production and capitalist relationships.¹⁶

But Porcher discards this otherwise attractive hypothesis. And this is no doubt the way she would treat Castellucci's analysis: for if Castellucci's or Tapper's reconstructions are valid because they raise the possibility that animals may indeed work, they also close these relationships up in a single schema, that of ownership and exploitation. From this vantage point, Porcher writes, "a different ending is impossible to imagine." What these reconstructions (by Tapper and as recounted by Ridout) put in play has to do with what we inherit. The verb "to inherit" is not merely receptive; it implies a task, a pragmatic act (appropriation). One's heritage is something constructed, and it is constantly transforming itself retroactively. It makes us capable of something other than simply carrying on a tradition; it demands that we be capable of responding and that we in fact respond to our heritage. Things are inherited, but we become ourselves in carrying out the gesture of inheriting. "Re-member," as Haraway would say; enact the past, and collect and compose. To inherit includes giving oneself an account of a certain task, which is more than just remembering. To make a story is to reconstruct, to fabulate, and to offer other presents and futures to the past. "Good stories reach into rich pasts to sustain thick presents to keep the story going for those who come after."¹⁷

What sort of history would allow us to suppose that the relations that have linked stock raisers or breeders to their animals might change? To ask the question of work properly, Porcher says, "One must consider animals as other than victims, natural and cultural idiots that need to be liberated despite themselves." The allusion is to liberationists who would like to "liberate the world of animals," that also implies freeing the (human) world of (the presence of) animals. And this critique is part of Porcher's basic stance; for Porcher, humans and animals must always be imagined together.

Ceasing to consider animals as victims means considering a relationship that is other than one of exploitation, in which (since they are not natural and cultural idiots) animals involve themselves, giv-

16. Porcher, *Vivre avec les animaux, une utopie pour le 21ème siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011).

17. Haraway, "Sowing Worlds."

ing, receiving, exchanging, just as breeders are not “exploiting,” but are giving, receiving, exchanging, raising, and growing with, their animals.

This is why the questions, “Do animals work? Do they collaborate with their owners actively?” are important in pragmatic terms. Without a history to learn and a story to tell, we must address this question to the present. Putting this question to breeders is not a means of knowing through information – “what do breeders think of x?” – but a real experiment. If they are asked to think, and actively, it is not to gather data or opinions but to explore these propositions with the breeders, to make them hesitate, to try an “experiential” experiment: What does it mean to speculate in such a way? And if we try to think that animals work, what would “work” mean then? How can we make visible and expressible that which is invisible and hard to think about? I will come back to this point.

THOSE WHO WORK ARE NOT THE ONES WE EXPECT

I said that the question of considering whether animals do work is not an easy one. It is still more difficult if we consider that the only place it can be brought forward is the place where only the meaning associated with exploitation can matter. In other words, animals’ work is invisible except in places where both humans and animals are greatly mistreated.

In fact the places where the question of animal work manages to be formulated, the places where the evidence of such work is found, are the places where animals are industrially “produced.” Porcher explains this apparent paradox: in industrial animal raising and feeding, animals are sequestered and removed from their own world, then placed in a world so completely human that “their behaviors appear very definitely as belonging to a work relationship.” Men and animals are involved in a competitive production system that seems to favor considering an animal as a worker who also has his or her job to do. The animal may be punished if someone thinks he or she botched a job (for example when a sow eats her farrow). Workers in these systems, says Porcher, especially in relation to intensive hog feeding, end up thinking of their jobs as a kind of personnel management. The expression is not used, but its content is constantly invoked. Productive sows must be distinguished from unproductive ones, and the

capacity of the animals to reach expected production levels must be monitored. "Representing oneself as a sort of 'Director of animal resources' is something that attests the wide diffusion of thinking like a manager, and the place this thinking has assumed in animal production operations."¹⁸ The animal in such a frame seems to occupy the place of an obscure underclass, malleable, serviceable, and disposable in the end. The typical tendency of industrialization not to use human workers unless it is absolutely necessary, since they are costly and error-prone, appears here: machines replace humans for cleaning tasks, and there are even mechanical boars that can detect when sows are in heat. On the other hand, the possibility that animals work, in modern feeder operations, appears harder to render perceptible.

I said above that when we put the question to stock raisers, most often we got a subdued response: no, humans work, not animals. But when Porcher conducted the interviews for her thesis on the relationship between breeders and their animals, she ended up hearing many anecdotes that made her think that, in fact, the animals did collaborate, that they were involved, that they sometimes wanted to help, and that they did some things on their own initiative.¹⁹

Porcher and I decided that, since we had worked cooperatively on this inquiry in order to try to resolve the difficulty, we would share with the breeders the manner in which we had formulated the question.²⁰ In fact, we adopted a pragmatic approach, pragmatic not in the sense of revealing a reality, but in order to make a reality perceptible, to actively make it exist. Then we wagered, as it were, that we could reach this goal through a simple methodological postulate: the problem needed to be part of the solution. So we decided to ask the breeders to help us. We introduced ourselves to them, explaining exactly what our problem was, and asked them to work with us on that basis. We said to them: "During the preceding inquiries, Jocelyne heard many anecdotes from stock raisers that tended to indicate that animals collaborated actively in working. But when we asked them the question, the breeders we had been talking to said no, animals do not work. And yet there were these stories. So, in your opinion, *as a*

18. Porcher and Schmitt Tiphaine, "Les vaches collaborent-elles au travail? Une question de sociologie," *MAUSS* 35 (2010); Porcher and Schmitt, "Dairy Cows: Workers in the Shadows?," *Society & Animals* 20/1 (2012).

19. Porcher, *Éleveurs et animaux, Réinventer le lien* (Paris: PUF, 2002).

20. Despret and Porcher, *Être bête*.

breeder, could you help us learn how to ask our question so that it has a chance of making sense to other people?"²¹

When we asked the question that way, it started the breeders thinking. It was interesting, however, that some of the breeders chided us gently, saying, "Isn't your job to ask questions? And aren't you trying to get us to do your job?"

WHAT YOU NEED IS TRUST

But we had an answer for those remarks. Very simply: "We are not doing anything other than what you have described to us, what you do with your animals: we are letting you do something." The majority of breeders, once they also had explored the manner in which we were obliged to formulate our question, answered, saying things like: ". . . in fact, our system of stock raising is based on letting the animals do as much for themselves as possible." I can cite an excerpt from Eric Simon, who articulated this with particular clarity—and his response exhibited a characteristic that we have often observed: the stock raisers indicated to us that we should not put this question to industrial animal feeder operations and to small traditional or organic operations in the same way. "Let's say," he explained,

that a system with buildings and cages is set up to put the animal in a place where the breeder can do things that may be required more easily. So we would say that the contribution of the animal is reduced, but the breeder tries to be able to do as many things as possible. We others are out here in the open air, and the object is to put the animal in a situation where it can do as much for itself as possible. For example when hogs are farrowing, the problem is how to set things up so that the sow is calm enough, that she can feel herself in a universe that is sufficiently reassuring so she can farrow correctly in a short enough time, and roll over on a minimum of piglets. So from our side, we try to work on this problem using equipment and also our relationship with the animal, when is the right moment to go into the farrowing shed, things of that nature, whether to put in more or less straw. But we say to ourselves: OK, it's the sow's job to farrow. That is, personally, I don't try to speed up the farrowing. I hardly ever give oxytocin injections. (. . .) I make sure to move my sheds around

21. For a further analysis of the methodological and epistemological consequences of this inquiry, see Despret, "The Becomings of Subjectivity in Animal Worlds," *Subjectivity* 23 (2008).

so that the ground underneath is dry enough, because if the ground is wet, she doesn't like it, she moves too much. We want to put straw out, but not too much because if there's too much straw, it doesn't work. At some point I ask Gibelin how much straw to put in. So I'm saying to him, where should I put the straw? How much should I put in? And he starts talking to me, and he says, whatever you do, it's not going to change things, because the straw is her little nest, and she's the one who arranges it. It's like your wife; if you started cleaning the house she will never be happy with it, because it will never be done like she does it. He says to me: the sow is the same way. She's going to come after you whatever you do and put things the way she wants them. (. . .) The word, it's the technological mastery over everything. There, we accept that there are some things that we don't master, and we say, I have confidence. I trust. (. . .) There is a delicate balance to find, between doing enough so that everything works, and then at some point saying, OK, I've done what I had to do; now it's her turn.

References to confidence and trust occurred often in the interviews we conducted, and also references to responsibility. What we have discovered links up with what Haraway says with regard to animals in laboratories: "animals as workers in labs, animals in all their worlds, are response-able in the same sense people are; that is, responsibility is a relationship crafted into intra-action through which entities, subjects and objects, come into being."²² And in fact, the breeders did not hesitate to speak of the responsibility of which their animals are capable: "There is a hierarchy of value," said André Louvigny, "and of responsibility within the herd, certainly, the fact of coming in to eat, and of having the same place to lie down every night. (. . .) And then," he continued, "there are those who show the way sometimes, the ones who work most closely with humans." And at that point one of us spoke up and said, "So in the end they do work with you." And he answered, "Yes, they work with us, it's the older ones who teach the young how to act around the breeder, that's certain. That's why we like to keep the oldest cattle sometimes, it's good to have them around because they have the right habits, and they trust us. They help the others stay calm. They calm things down, if other cattle are nervous about something, they help quiet that down." Louvigny was talking about a cow they call a lead cow. A lead cow is not a dominant

22. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 71.

animal, but one who trusts the breeder, and one the herd itself trusts, an animal the breeder can count on to help move the herd around. In the words of Paul Marty: "the lead cow is always the same one, she's not the dominant of the herd but she is in front" (it was frequently explained to us that the most dominant animal in the hierarchy of the herd would be found in the middle of the herd). Marty continued:

That is a good cow, because thanks to her I can go all over the place. Often I am alone, I walk in front and they follow me. Other times, it's surprising, afterwards I want to round them up, and they won't cooperate. But if I want to put them in another field, I could lead them to the end of the world because of that lead cow. (. . .) That cow, I walk in front of her, she will follow me anywhere. That's it. And I can certainly say that that cow, yes, she really does participate because she saves me time. (. . .) Sometimes I trick her, and she knows it, when I call the cattle, for example, in the spring to weigh the calves, in the beginning they follow me, but when they figure out what's happening at that season they don't help me anymore.

That last sentence is important. What it implied allowed Porcher to go further with her inquiry. Marty's last observation shows that the work animals do appears more clearly in those moments when animals refuse to cooperate. This is apparent when breeders, many of whom talk about this theme, spontaneously bring up the subject of limits. I ran across this theme very often myself in interviewing animal technicians working in laboratories, doing experiments: what they call paying attention to the animals refers to more than questions of well-being, and implies that we are able to feel the limits that animals ask us to take into account. With regard to cows, we have often heard breeders say: "They show us that there are limits, beyond which we must not go." The question of limits is at the center of the relationship between breeders and their animals. And this is what guided the following part of Porcher's inquiry.

For if, in the framework of our research together, when we insisted, some breeders ended up saying "perhaps they do," and "if you look at it like that we may believe that animals work," it took time and patience and required that we acknowledge the anecdotes we were told as having more than one meaning; it was an experiment.

Because work often leaves no evidence behind, Porcher decided to modify her research tools. She addressed her questions to the cows.

ASKING THE ANIMALS

Ethology has taught us that certain questions cannot be answered unless one constructs concrete conditions beforehand, not only those that allow the questions to be asked, but also those that render those who ask capable of discerning the answer, capable of grasping it when it emerges.²³ With one of her students, Tiphaine Schmitt, Porcher spent a long time observing and filming the cows in one particular herd kept in a barn. She noted all the occasions when the cows had to act on their own initiative, follow rules, and work cooperatively with the breeder, anticipating his actions so that he could finish his work. She also paid attention to the strategies the cows created to maintain a peaceful environment, to the polite maneuvers, the social grooming, and the peace-maintaining gestures of the cows, such as giving way to a congener, letting an other supplant oneself, etc.

What she observed is precisely the reason why the work was invisible: work only becomes perceptible when the cows resist, refuse to cooperate, and place limits on what can happen, because this resistance shows that when everything goes correctly, it is because of an active investment on the part of the cows. When everything happens as it should, we don't see the work. If we now reread Baratay's testimony, we see clearly that the conditions under which the animals' work can appear are the conditions in which the animals show that they can resist, that they can throw their heads in refusal, and even sabotage the work and its possibilities. We find again, implicitly, this very condition in the testimony of animal technicians working on scientific experiments : if the animals will not cooperate, there can't be an experiment. Thus when the cows go peacefully to be attached to the milking machine, when they do not kick up a fuss, when they go in order, when they move away from the machine after the milker has finished, when they move here and there to allow the breeder to clean their stalls, when they do what has to be done in response to an order, and when they do what they must so that everything happens as it is supposed to, we do not see this as their willingness to do what is expected of them. Everything begins to look like a machine that is functioning, and their obedience looks "mechanical," a word that conveys its meaning very well. Only when there are conflicts that disturb this order of things, for example when it is time for

23. Despret, *Quand le loup habitera avec l'agneau* (Paris: Seuil, coll. Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2002).

one cow to be attached to the milking machine, or when the cows do not move around to allow cleaning, or when they go somewhere other than where they are being driven, when they balk, or when they are simply slow to move, in short, when they resist, then we begin to see, or rather to interpret in other terms the situations in which everything goes as planned. Everything goes as planned because the cows have done their part. Thus the moments without conflict no longer appear as something merely natural, self-evident, or mechanical. They require from the cows the activity of pacification, in which the cows make compromises, groom each other, and exchange gestures of politeness.

A similar observation, though there are important differences, emerges from the research conducted by the sociologist Jérôme Michalon with animals such as dogs and horses who are asked to serve as therapeutic assistants for humans with various kinds of problems.²⁴ These animals often have a passive air and seem to simply be letting things happen, but when things become difficult for them, when they “react,” one can tell that their cooperation is based on a remarkable ability to hold themselves back, an active restraint, and even a determination to contain themselves. But none of this is perceived, since it seems to be something that goes without saying.²⁵

In the observations made by Porcher and her student, many things that seemed to go without saying suddenly attest to a whole range of kinds of work that amounts to cooperation with the breeder, invisible work. Only by observing the many ways that cows can resist the breeder, bending or breaking the rules, hanging back or otherwise doing something other than what is expected of them, were the researchers able to see clearly that the cows understand what they are supposed to do and that they are actively invested in the work. In other words, when the cows show that they are unwilling to do what

24. Jérôme Michalon, *Panser avec les animaux, Sociologie du soin par le contact animalier* (Paris: Presses de l'École des Mines, 2014).

25. As psychoanalyst Christophe Dejours writes about human work: “Being intelligent in work always means standing back from procedures and instructions. Working well implies violating recommendations, regulations, procedures, codes, specifications and normative organization. In many work situations, however, the monitoring and surveillance of gestures, movements, operating methods, and procedures are rigorous if not severe, with the result that intelligence in work is often condemned to remaining unobtrusive, or even hidden.” See Christophe Dejours, “Subjectivity, Work and Action” in *Recognition, Work, Politics: New Directions in French Critical Theory*, ed. J. P. Deranty et al (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 78.

is wanted, the effect of their willingness, their “good will” appears. Cooperation becomes perceptible when compared to recalcitrance.²⁶ Practical or collective intelligence appears when intentional mistakes are made, or when feigned misunderstanding leads to active disobedience. Work is rendered invisible when everything is going correctly, or to put it another way, when everything goes as it’s supposed to, which is the conclusion one must draw if the fact that everything is functioning correctly is rendered invisible. The cows get tricky, they pretend they don’t get it, they refuse to work in a rhythm that is imposed on them, they try to see what they can get away with—all for their own reasons, but all of which renders perceptible by contrast that they participate in work, and do so intentionally, in a certain way. I am reminded of a remark by Vicki Hearne, who asked why dogs often drop the stick they fetch a couple of feet in front of you. She suggested that it was a way for the dog to give to the human a sense of the limits to the authority that she is ready to concede, with an almost mathematical precision, reminding us that not everything goes without saying.

CALLING FOR RESPECT

What changes, for the cows, so that the active investment in working together is made visible? Concretely, and on the side of empirical relations, something changes, of course. As Porcher wrote in 2002, “Taking care of animals, seeing oneself as at their service, feeling a moral obligation in regard to them, all these are representations and feelings that give rise to confidence and make cooperation and collaboration possible in a context of work. Talking to animals, putting oneself in their shoes, so to speak, and learning patience in regard to them, respecting them as they are, implying that you know them and recognize them—all this belongs to communication, to being together engaged in work.”²⁷ I remember hearing about a friend who came back from a training session with a dog named Baruch, who was told by a trainer, “Remember, you’re not his master, you’re his pupil.” And that changed many things.

26. Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour have in their work insisted on the importance of studying the “recalcitrance” of certain objects of scientific study (Stengers, *L’invention des sciences modernes* [Paris: La Découverte, 1993]; Latour, *Politics of Nature* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004]).

27. Porcher, *Éleveurs et animaux*, 237.

Further, considering that breeders and cows share their working conditions relocates the manner in which the question is usually raised. We are required to think about people and animals as connected in a single experience, which they are living through together, and in which they jointly constitute their identities. This obliges us to consider the manner in which the two communicate with each other, the manner in which they keep faith with each other—not that they act based on shared assumptions, but that they respond to each other through the consequences of their actions, and their responses are part of the consequences.²⁸ If animals don't cooperate, work becomes impossible. Therefore it is not a matter of animals "reacting"; they only do that when we cease to see anything other than the functioning of a machine.

If we allow that shift of meaning, then the animal is not, strictly speaking, a victim, because being a victim implies passivity and all its consequences; saying that the animal is a victim is not a mode of being engaged in the question—and we should not forget that culpability is easier to tolerate than responsibility, if only because the latter prevents the question from being closed. Following this, and just as pragmatically, we know that a victim does not invite curiosity, and that curiosity is essential in relations in which two beings learn to look and to look back,²⁹ to respect in the etymological sense of the term, from the Latin *respicere*.

It is evident that Porcher's cows give rise to greater curiosity than if they had been portrayed as victims. They are more alive, more present; they invite more questions. They are interesting to us and they get the chance to become interesting to their owner. A cow who disobeys consciously is in a completely different relationship from the one who is disobeying because she is stupid or because she does not understand what is being done. A cow who does her job engages us in a totally different manner than an animal who is the victim of the authority of her breeder.

Even supposing that Porcher's research allows us to say that cows help in the breeder's work, is that the same as saying that they do work? Can we say, Porcher asks, "that they have a subjective interest

28. Haraway, *When Species Meet*.

29. See on this point the critique Haraway addresses to Derrida in *When Species Meet*.

in the work?" Does work increase their awareness, their intelligence, and their ability to improve and to achieve a life? This question requires us to distinguish between situations in which constraint makes work visible and situations in which animals make a contribution and thus make work invisible in the way we have mentioned. In order to construct this difference, and to take account of which of these descriptions characterizes situations in stock raising, where animals and humans work together, Porcher reconsiders the theories of the psychoanalyst Christophe Dejours and extends them in an original way.

JUDGING THE BONDS

According to Dejours, whose writings constitute a central reference for Porcher, work can be defined as follows: "In our view, from a clinical standpoint, work is what is implied, in human terms, by the fact of working: gestures, know-how, the involvement of the body and the intelligence, the ability to analyze, interpret and react to situations."³⁰ The power of work is threefold: it transforms the world, objectifies intelligence, and produces subjectivity. The subjective relation to work represents a fundamental relationship to life.³¹ Dejours makes available a concept of work that allows escape from the regime of exploitation. He insists that working is not just something that has to do with economic rationality, but participates in other forms of rationality, in relation to identities, to other relations, and moral rationality. Marx proposed something like this, but he explicitly excluded animals from the domain of work. Work, as a means of reproduction, "must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definitive form of activity of these individuals, a definitive form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part."³² Working is a means

30. Dejours, *Subjectivity, Work and Action*, 72.

31. We can see that Dejours' conception of work is historically and disciplinarily situated. One may find in the writings of Denis Grélé, and especially in his analysis of Fontenelle's book "La République des philosophes ou Histoire des Ajaiiens" a very interesting history of the various conceptions of work, in particular in the relationship to God—oscillating between (among others) obligation and curse; obedience to Nature or mastering it; or, for the human-worker, assertion of its own existence. I thank Matthew Senior for his precious advice.

32. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 653.

of accomplishment and self-realization through the expression of the creative potential of each person.

If human work, as Dejours suggests, can be for us a source of pleasure and can participate in the construction of our identity, it is because it is a source of recognition. Dejours articulates this recognition in connection with the exercise of two types of judgment: a judgment about the “usefulness” of such work, a judgment rendered by beneficiaries, clients or users, and a judgment about the “beauty” of the work, which concerns something being well done, and relies upon the recognition of one’s peers. Porcher suggests that we should consider and add a third kind of judgment: the judgments about the bond. This is the judgment that the breeders feel is rendered by the animals. It does not concern the work as accomplished, nor the results, but only the means of the work’s doing. This judgment is the very core of the relation to the breeder. It is a reciprocal judgment, through which the breeder and his animals may recognize each other. And that is where a contrast can arise between situations, between work that causes death and destroys identities in stock-raising operations where everyone suffers, and places where humans and animals share things, achieve things together, accomplish themselves. The judgment of the bond, or the judgment about the conditions of a life lived together, makes the difference between work that alienates and work that builds up, even in situations that are radically asymmetrical, such as those between breeders and their animals. The judgment of the bond goes along with this proposition by Haraway, that “work” is a process that crafts identities and “response-abilities,” capabilities to answer for, and above all to answer to.

And the possibility that work might be a process that involves beings also takes into account, for example, the testimony of the salaried worker at an industrial stock farm who said sadly, producing a new version of Wittgenstein’s famous (and quite meaningless) observation, “If animals could speak we would get shouted at every day,” showing in an exemplary and tragic manner that the judgment of the bond is at the center of all relations. This judgment of the bond, which gives meaning to living together on stock farms, finally takes account of the fact that “we work with animals in order to be able to live with them, not the other way round.”³³

33. Porcher, *Vivre avec les animaux*, 124.

TO BEGIN ANOTHER STORY . . .

It remains for us to write the story, to recreate a story that gives meaning to this present in order to offer it a future that is a little more viable. Not an idyllic story of a Golden Age long ago, but a story that whets our appetite for possibilities, that opens the imagination to the unforeseen and to surprises, a story that might make us wish for a sequel. A speculative fabulation, Haraway would say. This is what Porcher is getting at when she tells the story, in the last lines of her 2011 book, recounting something that happened back when she herself was raising goats: "The work was the locus of our unexpected encounter, the possibility of our communication, although we belong to different species, thought to have had little or nothing to do with one another before the Neolithic, or before Neanderthals."³⁴

Everything is being said, and yet everything still remains to be said.

34. These words echo those of Cary Wolfe in his wonderful *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). What our times dramatically and urgently need, he says, is "another thought of the biopolitical in which human and nonhuman lives are deeply woven together de facto, even if, de jure, they 'politically' have nothing to do with each other" (48). As Wolfe addresses the difficult issue of why we afford some animals unprecedented levels of care and recognition while subjecting others to unparalleled forms of brutality and exploitation, this essay might be considered not so much as an answer, but as an attempt to reformulate (maybe optimistically) the problem.