**Knocking on the Door of Human-Animal Studies: Valuing Work Across Disciplinary and Species Borderlines**

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We argue that human-animal studies (HAS) literature is essential for theorizing work because it fosters a reflexive questioning of humanist power and a more sophisticated understanding of the co-dependency and co-creativity between the species. We highlight that the neglect of nonhuman animals in organization studies stems from a preoccupation with contemporary industrialization, human forms of rationality, and the mechanisms of capital exchange. Drawing upon the example of sheep and shepherding, we illustrate how a flexible approach to studying the value and worth of work is made possible by attending to other-than-human activity and value co-creation. We conclude by suggesting that the concept of work and its value needs a more species-inclusive approach to foster a less reductively anthropocentric canon of interdisciplinary scholarship in the field.

**Keywords:** work; worth; value; sheep and shepherds; HAS; organization studies; labor process theory; new materialism

**Introduction**

Humans have always relied upon the productive capacities and qualities of the natural world to preserve and enhance their lives. Trees and plants, insects and nonhuman animals are managed, organized, and harvested to provide benefits for humans, whether in farming and food production or in transportation, defense and law enforcement. With few exceptions, organization studies (OS) has taken for granted the dominance of humanity over these Others by uncritically assuming human rights to manipulate and adapt their productive capacities to their own ends; this has, by and large, defined the organizational value of animals in its scholarship. By contrast, the diverse and growing field of human-animal studies (HAS) starts from a desire to challenge this status quo by stressing the necessity for respect of the contiguous and overlapping nature of human and other-than-human agency (Nimmo, 2015), and by disavowing simple binaries and labels that serve to objectify animals (Coulter, 2015). While not seeking to oversimplify the rich and variegated field of HAS (or its internal cleavages and intellectual differences), we start from the perspective that there is much that organization studies can learn about the worth and value of human work from this commitment to emancipate animals from the lowly status of objects and resources.

We focus particularly upon the concept of work and define it as any purposive activity or labor — manual or intellectual — that is exchanged for perceived capital or symbolic value. Its worth may reside in either/both material and immaterial gain: material gain in that wages are usually exchanged for effort (Baldamus, 1967) and immaterial gain in that the subject may acquire benefits that enhance their identity, status, and/or social and symbolic capital. While such a definition has clear resonance within the field of “animal work” where the rewards/benefits of labor are also open to ethical debate, it is beyond the scope of this article to consider this explicitly, and so our focus is on humans: their joint labor with animals and the perception of worth, value, and dignity (or the lack of such experiences) in such work.

The question of value and worth in work has been a pervasive theme of OS across its many component disciplines (human relations, critical management studies (CMS), sociology of work, and so on) and one which is topical during this period of profound change in the nature of contemporary capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2006; Doogan, 2009). The way in which this topic has been explored, however, has remained tethered to uncritical humanism: tied up with anthropocentric notions of human dignity, capital value, and exchange while remaining largely ignorant of animal interests or of the ways in which humans and other animals often rely upon each other to co-produce value through work.

In what follows, we consider value that is co-created through human-animal connections — or as Coulter (2015) helpfully puts it, “interdependencies” (p. 2) — and suggest that, beyond understanding this concept as taking resources from animals to enhance human lives, as has been the traditional paradigm within OS thus far, the combined work of humans and animals creates unique forms of worth that often generate a subjective perception of value and importance beyond the merely financial. Hence, we cannot simplify the concept of value to capital generation and/or accumulation but regard the value of work differently, as an outcome of human-animal relations (Coulter, 2015). To illustrate our perspective, we highlight an empirical example: the case of Herdwick Sheep and shepherds in the UK Lake District, a context which has come to prominence in recent years in arts and literature (Fraser, 2016), life-writing and autobiography (Rebanks, 2015), as well as in the retail, tourism, agriculture, and the charity sectors (National Trust, 2017). This example resonates for both OS and HAS scholars, and we demonstrate how drawing across these literatures yields a less anthropocentric analysis of the work underway.

While we are restricted to human subjectivity and concepts of value within this sheep-human relationship, lacking the methodological tools to establish how sheep experience their role in the process of work, we feel this is sufficient to meet our primary objective: raising awareness of the importance of seeing work across extant subject distinctions. The article proceeds with a review of HAS and OS literature on the theme of work and value, which is relevant to our interdisciplinary aim. We then turn to our illustrative example before drawing out our main contributions in a discussion and conclusion.

**Theorizing Work and Its Value**

Inter-species relationships are of clear significance in the practicality of various forms of work, a point amply supported by empirical research within HAS in shelters (Alger & Alger, 2003; Taylor, 2010), scientific laboratories (McAllister Groves, 1996; Weider, 1980), and veterinary practices (Hamilton & Taylor, 2013; Sanders, 1993). What is perhaps difficult to pinpoint, however, is a precise meaning of worth throughout such studies. Beyond the wage exchange, the idea of value and worth in relation to work is subjective and open to diverse interpretation. As Shapiro (2016) writes:

Worth and value is within the frame of ‘what is’ whether we find transcendent value in working to promote the betterment and preservation of humans, other animals or the earth itself. (p. 11)

While work is usually defined as the exchange of mental or physical effort for material or symbolic reward, the concept of “worth” as related to work is not so clear-cut and is open to diverse interpretation depending on the experiential and theoretical paradigm applied. HAS literature demonstrates that work with other species need not be waged for value to be experienced (Taylor, 2010), for several studies have shown that being “in it for the animals” often proves sufficiently important to derive a sense of significance, importance, and dignity; despite difficult, dirty, or emotionally demanding labor (Taylor, 2004).

Though different theorists of work and society employ diverse de-ontological or consequentialist frameworks, the concept of worth arises without simple definition throughout studies of organization, management, sociology, and human psychology. Research highlights the management of human relations and work processes as a mechanism for empowering and encouraging workers to find meaningful fulfillment through work (Hodson, 2001; Bolton 2007; Hicks, 2011; Yeoman, 2014) by meeting various needs beyond the basic existential requirement to exchange wages for effort (Baldamus, 1967) and addressing social, spiritual, and symbolic gratification. Many focus on what defines decent, meaningful, empowered, or dignified work and the conditions that threaten this (Crowley, 2013). There are countless studies of the social and organizational determining factors of degrading work, for example, from lack of education, development, and infrastructure (Ghai, 2003; Anker, Chernyshev, Egger, Mehran & Ritter, 2003); to discrimination and socially exclusionary forces (Lamont, 2000; Green, 2006); to unjust abuse of power and control mechanisms (Crowley, 2012; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008).

Braverman (1976), developing Marx’s conceptions of the labor process, maintains that productive human labor is beneficial and worthwhile but one needs to interrogate who controls the labor process and what work is — or may become — under a capitalist means of organizing. Here, the separation of conception from execution and the differentiation of functions limit the potential of work to be a means of realizing one’s self in conscious life-activity. The purposive activity of work can be a means to a worthwhile life but threats to that process arise from the intersection of social, material, and moral consequences of contemporary modes of capitalist organizing (see Hodgkiss, 2013).

Within this context, Sayer (2007) has explored issues of autonomy, reciprocity, mutuality, and trust in terms of how the features of different circumstances at a social, organizational, or individual level affect human relationships. Concerns over the influence of labor market conditions on the subjective experience of self-worth, through the restriction of individual autonomy and imposition of poor economic rewards, contend that such circumstances may reduce humans to lower, or “animal status” (Roscigno, Hodson & Lopez, 2009; Purser, 2009; Dufur & Feinberg, 2007; Berg & Frost, 2005). What connects these debates is that they strive to examine relations between humans and organizations rather than their position relative to other natural or nonhuman entities. When they are not used as a homogenized category of lower life-forms, animals are often overlooked entirely, treated as objects and materials of work.

Ignoring the animal actor within human-animal workplaces, even when they play an explicit role, such as in agriculture, mainstream OS has overlooked a vital component of the ways that humans derive purpose and value from their work (Sayers, 2016). As Coulter (2015) writes, “the diverse and complex realities of human-animal work relations remain relatively under-examined and are not well theorized” (p. 1). Sayers (2016) argues that there is “too much humanism” (p. 370) in organization studies and defines the problem as originating in language practices, particularly the preoccupation with writing. Sanders and Arluke (1993) claim that this is a problem for the whole of the social science community which has ignored animals as a result of a “phonocentric emphasis upon verbal facility and language utilization” shored up by the belief that, “in advanced industrial societies, animals occupy a far less important place than they do in preindustrial worlds” (pp. 277-378). Hence, industrial work and language are implicated in the process of exclusion.

As Sayers (2016) emphasizes, it is rare to read organizational scholarship which reflects explicitly on nonhumans (although, for an exception, see Callon, 1986; Labatut, Munro, & Desmond, 2016). With the exception of research concerned explicitly with animal rights, the role of nonhuman animals in organizational theory has remained segregated from human activities, or identifies nonhuman animals as a symbolic vehicle for human concerns such as stigma. For example, in the meat trade, concerns about work processes focus on the abjection of human workers but not the subjective experience of animals and humans together within such plants (see for example, Ackroyd & Crowdy, 1990; McCabe & Hamilton, 2015).

The common assumption that valued work and dignified labor relate to realizing human potential has deep roots in ideas about human uniqueness and distinction, buttressed by the operation of industrial ideologies that reinforce categorical boundaries to distinguish human-as-manager from animal-as-resource (McCabe & Hamilton, 2015). Animals can be seen as “slaves” to human economic production and capital exchange (Spiegel, 1996; Murray, 2011), as de-animalized units of production, or simply as objects imbued with value only through human labor (Wilkie, 2005).

Throughout, the difference between human and nonhuman is often assumed to lie in the absence of particularly human capacities: that animals exhibit a lack of emotional range, a lack of cognitive (rather than impulsive) thought, and a lack of free will. To deny these capacities to human beings is to infringe on their very membership of species but to deny them to animals has a history based in the rejection of the human animal and the embrace of modernity (Nibert, 2003). Of course, this serves to erase animals from discourse about the worth and value of their unique social contributions and reinforces anthropomorphism throughout the study of work.

**Economic Rationality and Value**

Beyond a preoccupation with language and humanity, OS is further anchored by its intrinsic interest in capital exchange and economic rationality, cornerstones supporting conventions of anthropomorphism in discussions about the value and worth of work. In labor process theory approaches to understanding the origin of worth in work, the value inherent in an object derived from (human) labor and profit is acquired through inadequate recompense (exploitation) of workers, an idea applied predominantly to the manufacture of tangible goods. A variety of contemporary approaches have revised the underlying conceptions of the subject and object of work in the context of increasingly social and immaterial forms of employment (e.g., Hardt & Negri, 2000; Adler, 2007), prompting a move away from a focus on individual autonomy as the core characteristic of non-alienating human labor and instead looking at the significance of socialization and valorization processes.

Vatin (2013) claims that the concept of valuation often obscures or conflates judgments of value with practices of production, and we should take care not to assume a socially isolationist view of the attribution of prices to workers and products: “goods and workers arrive on the market already calibrated, classified, and measured in many ways” (ibid, p. 38). This conceptualizes the problem of the worth of work firmly in the context of a crisis of measurement, and mandates that we pay closer attention to those diverse processes and criteria employed in the abstraction of labor from specific efforts: in other words, how some labor “counts” for the purposes of economic reward while other types of labor are neglected. This price component of valuing work is understood as an outcome of social negotiations and power relations, not a rational attribution of the market’s “invisible hand.” These debates are now beginning to break down the dichotomy between commensurable value (price) and incommensurable values in the context of contentious and diverse social practices (see Kornberger, Justesen, Madsen, & Mouritsen, 2015).

The move away from the rationalist and objectifying conception of the value of work is compatible with claims to individual autonomy as the uniquely human element of apparently decent or dignified work, and allows for more sophistication than simple dualisms between individual agent and structure. These perspectives were never wholly absent in classic OS accounts. Storey (1985), for example, states that capitalist interests are not fixed but “control devices oscillate, are activated, deactivated, merge and are constituted anew,” forged in the “struggle between various groups – both within and between workers and managers” (pp. 207-208). In short, systems and agents constantly interact through negotiation which is shot through with free-floating indeterminacy, a view which resonates broadly with our own present-day perspective on the relations between human and nonhuman workers — one which identifies the process and symbolic enactment of work with and through objects, materials, and meshworks of actors and other living beings (Haraway, 1991; Barad, 2007; O’Doherty, 2016; Knights, 2015).

Contemporary critiques of work emphasize the over-extension of rationality identified by Weber as one of the key features of secular modernity, a feature that along with the drive for economic efficiency has, paradoxically, acquired almost theological status in contemporary societies. It is this extensive rationality, manifest in a differentiation of functions and individualism throughout society and within workplaces, which legitimates the organization of work according to individual productive capacities. This neglects capacities not valued as productive (though increasingly the tendency is for previously neglected capacities, such as those that produce *affect,* to become commoditized) and also the relationality of capacities such as autonomous judgment, creativity, self-interest, and developing sustainable relationships. In organizations, where rationality is perhaps the most highly prized of all human virtues, it is unsurprising that the ultimate value of work is often regarded as that which enables the ambition of the rational mind to be realized, implemented and, operationalized: a precept rarely applied to nonhuman life.

When we consider the pervasive power of language and the underlying preoccupation with financial exchange, it is understandable that organization studies has remained anthropocentric in locating decent, valuable, or dignified work alongside the agential capacities for decision-making, planning, control, management, and capital accumulation. With little capacity to act autonomously in the human organization, to manage, to organize and to speak, other species have been excluded from study by their social positioning outside of human interactions, their seemingly absent individual capacities, and their very animal-ness. Hence, human interests have occluded the interests of animal Others, just as the receptionist, dry cleaner, and wife are often invisible parts of the business executive (Star, 1991).

**Towards new areas of concern**

In thinking beyond animal-as-product, a small but growing number of OS scholars have begun to question the persistence of humanist hegemony by taking a more critical view of animals as workers. There has been talk of venturing into new areas of concern, interest in the unique capacities of technology and robotics, and a growing enthusiasm for experimental research methods that address these differing forms of agency and being (O’Doherty, 2016).

Some CMS and OS literature now acknowledge that interspecies interactions are a legitimate area of organizational investigation (see, for example, Labatut et al., 2016). This contemporary interest (though by no means a “species turn”) is informed by a rich legacy of theorization of knowledge, action, networks, hybridity, and by the new materialism which brings into focus (and explains the significance of) matter and processes of materialization (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2009; Coole & Frost, 2010).

Drawing on (and against) classic literature within STS and ANT (Callon, 1986), posthumanist strands of OS stress that matter can be “lively” or exhibit agency, which prompts thought about the lived, fleshy realities of everyday life (Dale & Latham, 2015) as well as broader geopolitical and socio-economic structures and relations (Coole & Frost, 2010; O’Doherty, 2016). Although some of this posthuman and materialist scholarship has retained a focus upon matter (Bennett, 2009), technologies, robotics, and monstrosity (Braidotti, 1997 & 2005), some has focused particularly upon species (Law & Mol, 2008), or at least animals as metaphors and symbols of business and work (O’Doherty, 2016; Ten Bos, 2004). It is at this juncture that we see the timeliness of interdisciplinarity to produce more fulsome discussions about work.

While constituted by many subtle and different strands of thought — anthrozoology, human-animal studies, animal studies, and critical animal studies – HAS provides a large literature regarding individual relations between different species and societal and cultural relations with, and attitudes towards, animals (Taylor & Signal, 2011; Taylor & Twine, 2014), which is of clear value in supporting this interdisciplinary trajectory. A key focus of HAS, for example, has been challenging the homogenization of animals as a category — as Other (Coulter, 2015; Corbey, 2005; Fudge, 2002; Twine, 2007; Sax, 2011) — a perspective which ought to be integrated in theorizing multi-species work. It is in the context of interspecies relationships that we can expect to find alternative and challenging means of identifying worth.

If, in taking careful note of the inclusive nature of HAS, we can acknowledge that the extant critique of animal capacities is flawed within OS and accept animals not only as living beings but also as actors whose particular work forms the basis for a shared, relational system that co-produces value (Coulter, 2015), then we must find ways to integrate them into debates on valuation and worth that resist normative treatments of them as resources or “goods.” We consider the worth of human-animal interactions beyond economic exchange and are influenced by Coulter (2015) regarding worth as the product of shared labor, a state of affairs she describes as “interspecies solidarity.” There is much to commend this label if we are interested in developing interdisciplinary insights into work. As Coulter (2015) argues:

By thoughtfully exploring animals and work, and moving beyond our intellectual cages, we gain a deeper and fuller understanding of labor and of the true range of the world’s workers. Moreover, we can glean meaningful ideas about how to build more inclusive, ethical, holistic, and inspiring workplaces and societies. (pp. 1-2)

For us, such thinking has potential to challenge the norm of humanism in scholarship on work in radical ways, by emphasizing that the modernist categories of human and animal – while of some pragmatic and linguistic use – are neither as firm nor as useful as they have been (Buller, 2015; Gordon, 1997; Haraway, 1989; Morgan & Cole, 2011; Nimmo, 2015). It destabilizes hegemonic assumptions about humans as unique in their capacities to perform valuable and worthwhile work, as well as the presupposition that worthiness resides in intrinsic capacities, transcendent hierarchies, or universal claims to humanity. To consider the mutuality and the co-productive capacities of animal-human work should be our goal; in the next section, we briefly explore an example where we think this is possible in a practical sense.

**Herdwick Sheep of the UK Lake District**

The Lake District is a mountainous region in the Northwest of England within the county of Cumbria and is dominated by the Lake District National Park, the largest in England. A proportion of the land in the park is owned by the National Trust: a charitable association well-known in the region for campaigning to preserve traditional farming methods. The National Trust’s policy of encouraging local farmers to graze Herdwick sheep, a native breed famed for physical toughness, is a prime example of their sustainability agenda. For their small body size and slow growth rate, Herdwick sheep have traditionally been devalued in the UK lamb market compared with lowland sheep and international imports, but through lobbying by the National Trust and local people, the breed has survived to the present day and has become emblematic of the region:

We want to recognize the Herdwick champions, those committed individuals whose lives are dedicated to producing sheep of the highest quality, or who add value and status to the breed, its story and products, and who encourage and work with the next generation of farmers and shepherds to ensure a future for Herdwick sheep on the Lakeland fells.

National Trust, 2017

For all this talk of securing a future for the fells, in drawing attention to this example, we are revisiting a pre-industrial world in which animals held a greater social significance in work (Sanders & Arluke, 1993): a time when living closely with the land and other creatures was necessary for survival, rather than an artisanal way of life to be preserved for future generations. Yet the traces of the ancient shepherd’s craft endure in the cultural values of present-day community members who remain tethered to the fells despite the manifold possibilities offered by contemporary capitalism and forms of work in which less reliance is placed upon heavy manual and “dirty” labor in the harsh weather and landscape conditions of the craggy hill farm.

Today’s shepherds see the worth of their work not only as an ability to make a living by maximizing the efficiency of the movement, weight, and size of sheep, but also by the cultivation of valued pedigree characteristics for optimum meat production and reproduction (body size, docility or compliance, robustness, growth speed, appetite, and fertility). For Herdwick farmers, this breeding legacy goes beyond valuing sheep as short-term business assets – as “fatstock” or meat-in-waiting (Wilkie, 2005). As the National Trust state, for example, Cumbrian upland sheep farming can be regarded as cultural and epistemological “stewardship” in which work also involves curating the stories, status, knowledge, and genetic progeny to create lasting legacies, vital to an entire region and its heritage.

Farmers are not merely food producers, then, but historians, custodians, teachers, and even “champions” whose shared experience of life on the land with Herdwick sheep exceeds the wage/effort trade-off by preserving agricultural traditions within an iconic landscape. Wilkie’s (2010) argument that livestock valuation has always been political as well as economic remains of clear relevance.

Herdwick shepherding is a combination of building symbolic and material value between land-human-sheep: a tie that is mutually reinforcing and sustaining, ancient and simultaneously new, and that generates and empowers the shepherd’s experience of worthwhile and dignified work despite the long hours, harsh conditions, and uncertain financial rewards.

Helpfully, from a farmer’s perspective, in 2007 a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) European quality mark (a label that confers a degree of territorial prestige) was awarded to Herdwick meat and, as a direct result, local farming incomes have risen (Farmer’s Guardian, 2014), making this a more viable way of life. Furthermore, there are many other human actors in the Lake District who capitalize on the Herdwick’s powerful iconography. Sheep turn bleak and empty space into pastoral land and create a tourist commodity by populating a bucolic view (Darby, 2000) which is, in turn, a highly marketable asset in a variety of souvenir items from woolly hats to representative artworks.

Without the breed’s entrancing visual effect on tourists, conservationists, would-be farmers, restaurateurs, and European bureaucratic officials, the National Trust warn that the occupation of farming in these human communities would become economically and socially worthless despite the passion many upland farmers display for work and tradition, the breed and the landscape (Fraser, 2016). Paradoxically, perhaps, the farming of Herdwicks is presented by the National Trust as key to ensuring their survival in the landscape, and one could interpret such comments as exploitative in their treatment of sheep as agricultural heritage objects — a repository of human labor and other assets carrying financial and symbolic value to humans (Wilkie, 2005). What, then, of the Herdwick sheep? Beyond dwelling within a landscape as pedigree “assets” or “decorative” compliments to the scenery, what work do they perform to generate value?

It is useful at this point to consider how, during their lives, Herdwick ewes demonstrate purposive and intentional activity when they learn to live within nominal boundaries on open land and mountains, their understanding of the best grazing, shelter, and so on passing from one generation to the next. This internalized knowledge is communicated without words, and the farmer has limited power in getting such knowledge to stick. In this semi-wild state, the sheep rely upon their own wits for day-to-day survival and indeed, they often resist human management by straying, fighting and destroying human artifacts. Much of the work of the hill farmer, for example, revolves around repair or prevention of animal damage: dry-stone walling, rescuing stranded sheep, and arranging veterinary visits for routine and emergency tasks.

Marxist readings of work have stressed that the separation of the means and ends of production carries a threat to the human worker’s sense of worth and value but highlight the experience of nonhuman animals as an ideal in that they have unmediated access to their life-activity (see Wilde, 2000). Taking this view, it could be argued that Herdwick sheep conjoin work and life-activity for the majority of their existence on the land when they graze, reproduce, move, and create attractive rural views. Their very existence generates this value for themselves and encourages humans to venerate their legacy as a breed. One way of viewing this is that sheep are dwelling within “fields of relations” (Jones & Cloke, 2002; O’Doherty, 2016) by embodying the region’s uniqueness, and environmental and heritage values. While the primacy of human rationality is now under threat from technological advances, no such problem plagues the Herdwicks who are as capable (if not more so) of contributing to symbolic value as their human counterparts in their repertoires of grazing and dwelling, their very being in time and space.

Despite the sizeable differences in the lived experience of sheep farming between the human and nonhuman animal participants, there is mutuality here. The shepherd cannot work at all without the sheep, and the sheep sometimes depend upon human (and canine) work to provide a degree of care and protection. While at times, there is an implicit tension between the desire of the shepherd to make a living and the sheep’s autonomy, there is also a measure of interdependence (Coulter, 2015), and despite the fact that the terms of their very existence are controlled and measured by humans, the purposive activity of sheep is often in defiance of human objectives and rationality in day-to-day life. Here, human-ovine power relations are sinuous (O’Doherty, 2016), with no certainties about the outright dominance of the farmer over the flock.

The continual negotiation between farmer, flock, and fell encourages us to develop a different “politics of valuation” from the work process, one which does not rest upon a simplistic treatment of sheep as exploited commodities. Following Coulter (2015), a more sophisticated perspective is possible if we consider that it is togetherthatsheep and humans co-constitute a process of work in which neither party is a clear and separate agent but is embedded in a complex web of relations, markets, and terrains. The valuation of work here is imbued with ethical, political, and social considerations which far exceed a discussion of who controls the means and ends of the labor process and take us into the politics of species membership.

This is not the approach usually adopted within OS, however, where it is routinely taken for granted in debates about value and worth in work that human experiences and measurement tools form the primary matter of concern. Discussions remain tethered to two key pillars: first, consideration of the individual worker’s ability and freedom to conduct rational thought and action, and second, understanding the symbolic means through which other workers protect or confer value on their activity. This approach concentrates on the human animal in a human social context and either signifies animal work as entirely different in its existential rather than rational capacities or, at worst, denigrates the “animal irrationalities” of behavior as unworthy of “us” (Riley, 2010). This explains the persistent trivialization of nonhuman life and lack of empirical research into human and nonhuman animal entanglements within the labor process, a problem which HAS has tackled explicitly across a broad spectrum of its empirical work.

The Herdwick sheep’s current status extends from an acknowledgement of their social, symbolic, and productive significance. Although their capacities as workers are easily overlooked, and the work that they undertake is not usually defined as value-creating labor, their participation in the labor process as participants rather than as objects is evident and, hence, their theoretical exclusion from organizational analysis is neither justified nor logical. The sheep’s value is earned through long association with - and their location within - important political narratives about legacy, landscape, and sustainability; this mitigates the limited and risky rewards offered to humans in agricultural work, individuals who perceive limited control over the value and conduct of agriculture, living at the mercy of commodity prices and consumer demand (Law & Mol, 2008). The sheep/shepherd dialectic is a form of multi-species interaction in which neither party is reduced to a straightforward role of laborer, and so the value and worth of both human and non-human work is at stake and inextricably tied together.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

If we are to understand the process of sheep farming or indeed any other kind of work with other species, we need to take a more sophisticated view of the relations involved, and thus far it has not been possible to do so within OS – except in the most niche spaces of discussion. By extension, it is desirable to consider a more advanced conceptualization of the value of work – as something which does not need to relate to exclusively human forms of generating financial and symbolic gain.

When we consider the pervasive power of language and the underlying preoccupation with financial exchange, it is easy to see why OS has been reluctant to consider decent, good or dignified work beyond discussion of the agential capacities for management and capital accumulation. With little capacity to act autonomously in the human organization, to manage, to organize, and to speak, other species have been excluded from study by their social positioning outside of human interactions, their seemingly absent individual capacities, and their very animal-ness.

The value of work needs to be considered as the product of multiple actors and agencies, interacting locally as well as globally, within a series of negotiations (Coulter, 2015; Wilkie, 2005). This, we perceive, is the meeting place between OS and HAS. It is the recognition of the agency of the nonhuman animal within HAS that has significance for OS, and new interdisciplinary scholarship is important if we are to develop more rounded understanding of what work is and how it creates value. HAS perspectives that blur supposedly clean lines between the species by undertaking close-grained analysis of human-animal work environments are especially valuable for developing new ontologies that help us learn to live within multi-species worlds. In line with the shift away from essentialist concepts of species that have historically informed a division between worthy human animals and their nonhuman objects, we locate worth primarily in mutuality, in social interaction, and relational meaning-making. This is a point well-made by Latour (1992):

To balance our accounts of society we simply have to turn our attention away from humans and look at non-humans. Here they are, the hidden and despised social masses who make up our morality. They knock at the door of sociology requesting a place in the accounts of society as stubbornly as the human masses did in the 19th century.

We consider nonhuman animals to be the “missing masses” of organization studies (Latour, 1992), for while classic theorization in this field has long been attuned to the power imbalances inherent in work, interrogating who controls the labor process and how, this is a problematic which is just as relevant to human work as nonhuman animal work. New materialist thinking helps bridge this gap and is being used to question humanism at a deep level, beyond dualisms of boss/worker, agent/structure. As Braidotti (2006) argues, the contemporary era is one in which “the very notion of ‘the human’ is not only de-stabilized by technologically mediated social relations in a globally connected world, but it is also thrown open to contradictory re-definitions of what exactly counts as human” (p. 197). This encourages us to consider the work of cyborgs, robots, “monsters,” animals, and indeed many others within our scholarship.

As alingual participants in work, the acting capacities of animals, though different, confer clear value in work and extend current definitions of worth as principally human concerns tied up with capital exchange mechanisms. We see this in agriculture as well as in a whole host of less exploitative settings where humans and nonhuman animals come together. For example, we have shown that attribution of value to the work of sheep farming is complex, and the price of the “product” is only part of the story (Wilkie, 2005 & 2010), as sheep are not “sentient commodities” (Wilkie, 2005, p. 213). Some will argue that positioning the concept of worth within a relational view of human-animal connections will re-inscribe the very humanism that should be challenged, that we are seeing animals in the context of our own organizing activities and viewing them through our own linguistic and textual lenses.

While we may aim to challenge the ontological hierarchies and humanism that have tethered OS to reductive norms about species difference, we cannot claim the ability to rise above our own, embodied humanity. Perhaps the best we can do is listen to those who study work outside our immediate areas of ontological security. The implication of this is that OS needs to acknowledge the importance of variance between humans and other animals, to explore rather than shy away from our differential but co-productive capacities for creating value. This involves questioning humanity as the source of all worth and providing the intellectual space for the unique qualities of animals to be considered as significant in their own ways as well as in co-creative relations with others. It also recognizes the limits of our own ontological positions, our humanist means of knowing Others with different repertoires of “workplace being.” It is important to consider animal activity and agency, not merely for generating metaphors and parallels between animal and human workers (O’Doherty, 2016; Ten Bos, 2004), but as a starting point for a more holistic reflection on the asymmetry in the proceeds and rewards of labor (Coulter, 2015).

To conclude, we have highlighted that both traditional and contemporary conceptions of worth and value in work are destabilized by literature outside OS. We see worth as an outcome of relations, social processes, and interactions in which heterogeneous actors are engaged, not as an inherent or natural trait of laboring human subjects using nonhuman objects as their exclusive resource. This position demands scrutiny of hidden nonhuman animal identities as well as problematic and marginal human identities. While this is a starting point of much HAS scholarship, such a position is both radical and controversial for those in OS. It challenges the use of the terminology “worthwhile,” “valuable,” and “dignified” work as a signifier of a privileged ontological status justly applied to a species or an individual. We have argued that such a challenge is much needed if we are to fully understand the nature of our own relationship to the world beyond our own species borderlines and to bring the “missing masses” into truly interdisciplinary enquiries.

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