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WORKING ANIMALS, ETHICS AND CRITICAL THEORY

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Working Animals, Ethics and Critical Theory

José-Carlos García-Rosell and Philip Hancock

Abstract

In this chapter, we aim to contribute to the development of the ‘diverse and morally challenging issues’ associated not only with the question of animal rights and ethics per se., but also with the interrelationship between non-human and human animals as objects of workplace management and exploitation. In order to achieve this, we consider the relationship between animals and business ethics through the work of the German philosopher and social critic Theodor Adorno, along with others associated with the first generation of thinkers attached to what is commonly known as the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. To illustrate the dialectical interface between the exploitation and domination of both non-human and human animals, we draw on research into what is a somewhat novel, yet instructive working environment; namely Christmas tourism in Lapland, and the labour of those reindeer, and associated human workers who help create memorable experiences for visiting tourists. In particular, this research sheds light upon tourism as a global industry based on the work of low-paid, young female workers, and a wide variety of animal species. Through this chapter, we want to show that the ethical treatment of animals at work requires us to question the structures of economic activity including its implication for both human and non-human workers.

Introduction

Unreasoning creatures have encountered reason throughout the ages - in war and peace, in arena and slaughterhouse, from the lingering death throes of the mammoth overpowered by a primitive tribe in the first planned assault down to the unrelenting exploitation of the animal kingdom in our own days.

(Adorno and Horkheimer 1979: 245/6)

Critical theory (CT), associated with early members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, has a troubled relationship with the question of ethics. Not that this suggests that early CT is unconcerned with ethical issues. Far from it. Throughout the writings associated with the institute’s original and perhaps most prominent thinkers – including Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, amongst others - there is a notable concern with the ethical life of humanity and how we might live a good life both alongside, and through each other. At the same time, however, as a consequence of a continuous and immanent critique of the values of existing social relations, any attempt to

establish a foundational ethical system was recognised as inevitably self-defeating. For in a world in which, as Adorno observed, ‘wrong life cannot be lived rightly’ (1978: 18) such a system would merely reflect society’s existing and, therefore, fundamentally inadequate understanding of the ethical; one that merely legitimised the illusions of a repressed way of living which their philosophy railed against.

Given this, it is not wholly surprising that CT has failed, in particular, to have a significant impact on the field of business ethics. For lacking as it does the will to acknowledge the possibility of a truly ethical life within the confines of the current social and economic order few have entertained the idea that CT, particularly in its early formulations, has anything meaningful to offer business ethics today (for exceptions see Boje 2008; Parker 2003). So, while business ethicists have been prepared to draw upon a host of sources in an attempt elucidate a more radical approach to the ethics of the business world, including Marx (Corlett 1998), Foucault (Crane et al. 2008), Macintyre (Moore and Beadle 2006), and feminist scholars such as Diprose (Hancock 2008), early CT has been largely overlooked.

Interestingly, the same could also be said in respect of an interest, or rather lack of it, in the status of non-human animals within business ethics. Where discussions of say animal welfare in the workplace have taken place, it has tended to be part of more specialised discussions surrounding animal rights and justice (Garner 2013), or from an environmental perspective based on an eco-centric ethics whereby maintaining the equilibrium within natural ecosystems is the primary objective (Desjardins 1998). Not that this absence is limited to discussions of ethics. As Labatut et al. (2016) have observed, non-human animals have always been largely ignored by the field of management and organization studies, a situation they attribute to a purported lack of reason and, therefore, capacity for agency. As always, of course, this is not to suggest that non-human animals have been entirely excluded from more general considerations as either organizational resources, or actants within a particular labour process (Bertella 2013; Bright 1986; Coulter 2016; Nocella et al. 2013; Tremblay 2002: or as objects of ethical interest, especially in tourism (Burns 2015; Hoarau-Heemstra 2018; Hughes 2001; Fennell 2012, 2013;). Nonetheless, the field remains a relatively embryonic one.

In this chapter we seek to contribute to this nascent body of research by developing our concern with CT in respect of a consideration of the role and ethical status of animals within a particular work environment. In doing so, however, we also consider the problematic relationship between non-human animal and human ethics, in that we argue that by critically evaluating our relationships with non-human animals in the workplace it can lead us to question not only our ethical responsibilities to those non-human creatures we work with, but also a commonsensical understanding of our ethical accountability for each other. We commence with a brief introduction to the CT of the Frankfurt School focusing, in particular, on its critical orientation to human exploitation of the natural world in general, and nonhuman animals in particular. Following from this, the chapter briefly considers the animal in the workplace before undertaking a more extensive discussion of the role, status and experience of reindeer working predominantly during the Christmas tourist season in Finnish Lapland. This is then extended into a discussion of the reindeer cycle and the parallel working lives of many human employees employed during this

season. Finally, we discuss the possibility of moving beyond a critique of the instrumental appropriation and exploitation of both human and non-human animals within the workplace by combining the idea of compassion with that of recognition as a tentative way of considering a radical ethic of the workplace; one that incorporates all those currently reduced to the status of an economic resource.

CT and the Exploitation of Nature

According to Gunderson (2014: 285), prior to the development of the field of animal studies no approach to the critical theorization of society can be said to have ‘theorized and problematized society’s troubling relationship with animals’ more so than CT. In this chapter, CT is used to refer to the work of a group of scholars affiliated to, or associated with, the Institute of Social Research based in Frankfurt between the 1930s and 1960s. While the group represents a diverse range views on particular issues, its earlier members including Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm amongst others, shared a belief in the repressive nature of humanity’s relationship to nature and the natural world, expressed perhaps most clearly in Adorno and Horkheimer’s joint work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1979 [1944]: 9) and its most famous passage:

Myth turns into enlightenment, and nature into mere objectivity. Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves towards things as a dictator toward men. He knows them insofar as he can manipulate them... In the metamorphosis of the nature of things, as a substratum of domination, is revealed as always the same...

and, as they proceed to observe:

The human race with its machines, chemicals, and organizations – which belong to it just as teeth belong to a bear, since they serve the same purpose and merely function more effectively - is the *dernier cri* of adaptation in this [the modern] epoch

(Adorno and Horkheimer 1979: 222 *original emphasis*)

Such adaptation was not viewed particularly positively, however. For while they acknowledged that such adaptation is a necessary prerequisite of human freedom from nature, in their typically dialectical way of thinking Adorno and Horkheimer also identified it as an act of violence and repression against both the natural, and ultimately human world that are, while not identical, mutually interdependent. That is, despite the hubris of reason, humanity can never truly be raised out of nature and, as such, its negation and domination is also a negation and domination of humanity itself.

For CT, therefore, herein lies the roots of an increasingly repressive form of rationality that was understood as both reductive and instrumental in its character, and which became the object of its ongoing critique. Through the growth of science and

technology, including technologies of management and organisation, such instrumental reason had become the guiding thread running through all human action and ambition whereby ‘what men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order fully to dominate it and other men’ (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979: 4). It is from this perspective, whereby the natural world has become an object of domination and manipulation, that the attitude of critical theorists to what they considered to be the on-going exploitation of the non-human animal realm emerged.

As Maurizi (2012) suggests, however, while Adorno and Horkheimer referred to the condition of non-human animals on a number of occasions they did not necessarily focus on the ethics of their (mis)treatment per se. What they did do, however, was directly engage the idea that in order to recognize the ethical responsibilities that people have to each other we must first consider the ethical responsibilities we have to the natural world in general, and non-human animals more specifically. As such, in order to reflect on the human condition, they were forced to address the instrumental appropriation of the lives of non-human animals either as disposable resources for economic production or, for example, objects of entertainment where they are frequently bullied and reduced to spectacles that alienate not only their own nature but also those claims to rationality made by their human audiences (Horkheimer 1978).

Yet to argue that the reduction of non-human animals to nothing more than instruments of toil or pleasure expresses the deep-seated antipathy of reason to life, including human life perhaps leads to more questions than answers. In particular, can one pursue the care of such creatures and the forging of an ethical relationship between human and non-human animals as an end in itself or, is it to be viewed merely as epiphenomenal outcome – however desirable – of a radical shift in humanity’s orientation to the natural world as a whole? Furthermore, if this is the case, how might the conditions of possibility for such a change come about in a world that appears so thoroughly corrupted by the need for human survival in the face of a natural environment fundamentally hostile to its survival?

As Gunderson (2014) notes, however, certainly within the work of Horkheimer some hope is offered of a better way of living alongside and within nature. This is a hope premised on our ability to extend what he termed compassion to the world beyond us. For Horkheimer, *compassion* is not only the medium through which one might find common cause and understanding with other human animals, but also the other creatures of the natural world that while non-identical with human beings are amenable, to cite Gunderson (2014: 293), to a ‘reflexive identification with suffering’. Thus, compassion is considered to provide a normative basis for a recognition of non-human animals, along with the rest of nature, as worthy recipients of care. In doing so, such an approach would also, of course, extend this value to humans in a dialectical movement that would recognise humanity’s own animal status and its indebtedness to the natural world for its own being, even to the extent that a more authentic human existence could be seen as exemplified in the passive life of the content animal, one shorn of the instrumental pressures of a constantly competitive culture and yet open to the possibility of freedom and reflection (Adorno and Horkheimer 2011).

Work, Animals and Nature's Instrumentalisation

While we will return to this discussion in due course, it is also worth recognising, given our concerns in this chapter, that the relationship between CT's diagnoses of the exploitative orientation of human reason towards the natural world is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the world of work and the management of the labour process in all its various forms and manifestations (Braverman 1974). For while originating in the primacy of the production and distribution of scarce economic resources for need, the requirement to generate ever increasing amounts of surplus value under capitalism has resulted in an inexorable rise in management techniques designed to appropriate and utilise the natural human capacity for labour. From the pecuniary enticements associated with the formal rationality of scientific management (Taylor 1911) to the fixation with capturing an employee's desire for identity and purpose (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), the human animal has become an object of intervention in ways that not only violate the Kantian (2005) deontological imperative to treat people as ends and not means, but equally undermine the kinds of collective ethics of intersubjectivity in more post-Hegelian approaches such as those of CT (Honneth 1996).

Nor is it different for non-human animals in the workplace. Excluding the contemporary popularity for bringing pets into the workplace in the hope of improving employee well-being and concentration (Linacre 2016), in most respects it has been far worse with the best a non-human animal employee can hope for is sufficient food and rest with little attention being given to its needs for distractions, companionship or care. In most cases they have proven to be even more disposable than their human animal counterparts, providing surrogate lives in order to aid our own survival as in the case of, for example, the use of the famed canary in the coalmine or today, in the use of animals in often fatal medical and other scientific experiments (Coulter 2016; Monamy 2017).

In the next section of this chapter we present, as an illustrative case study focusing on the working lives of one example of such a non-human animal labourer, the reindeer of Finnish Lapland. These reindeer annually find themselves attractions for visiting tourists particularly, as we shall see, during the run up to Christmas. And while the initial focus will be on their working lives and activities of such reindeer, the dialectical logic of the research will, without directly focusing on the ethics of the management of human employees per se, also consider the interrelationship between the ethical condition and status of non-human animals within this world of work, and the ethical status of those human animals who both work with, and depend on them for their, albeit perhaps meagre, livelihood. That is, as we have discussed above, the question is asked to what extent does the possible exploitation and domination of non-human animals produce both a template for, and a legitimisation of, the parallel and interdependent exploitation of their human counterparts and what, if anything, might be done to address this within the constraints of the theoretical resources available to us.

Santa's Helper – The Reindeer of Lapland

In the following sections we focus on the work of the reindeer of Finnish Lapland, especially during the Christmas period which is the region's most lucrative tourist season. It is then that visitors arrive in their hundreds of thousands to meet Santa Claus especially in what, since 2010, has been his official home town of Rovaniemi – the regional capital and gateway to the Arctic. Saint Nicholas became popular in Finland sometime around the early nineteenth century as Christmas itself became more widely recognised in the region. Originally called Joulupukki, or the 'Christmas Goat' (Hawkins 2013), it was not until the end of the Second World War that the Finnish gift giver changed his grey fur for a red coat and became more like the Santa Claus popularised largely through American culture. Nonetheless, it had been 1927 when the Finnish children radio presenter Markus Rautio exposed the exact location of Santa's home and workshop as Korvatunturi, a fell in northern east Lapland located next to the Russian border (Nieminen 2014), with Rovaniemi chosen in 1985 as a more suitable place for Santa Claus to receive his visitors.

Like tourist centres around the world, at Christmas Finnish Lapland relies heavily on the labour of relatively low-paid, often young female employees, employed in the majority on seasonal contracts alongside a number of non-human animal species such as huskies, reindeer and horses (Casado-Díaz et al. 2016; Fennell 2012; Valkonen & Veijola 2008; Valtonen 2009). While huskies and horses play an important role in Lapland tourism (see Bohn et al. 2018), none of these are more significant or central to the Christmas mythos, and indeed more popular with the majority of tourists, than the reindeer. Originally introduced as an albeit magical draft animal in the service of the American Santa Claus in around 1821, it was with the then anonymous publication of the poem *A Visit from Saint Nicholas* two years later that the idea that Santa Claus was transported around the world, each Christmas Eve, by a team of eight flying reindeer - Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blixem - was fully established. This story gained even greater popularity over a hundred years later when they were joined by a ninth character - namely Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer - who first appeared in a short story by Robert May in 1939 which cemented 'magical' reindeer as a staple of the Christmas experience.

Today, Reindeer herding is an ancient, but still vital source of livelihoods in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland. Herding, which originated from reindeer hunting, is based on the reindeer's natural instincts to search for food (see Heikkilä 2006). It is a traditional livelihood associated with Sámi culture, the only truly indigenous culture in Europe (Hoarau-Heemstra 2018). Nevertheless, in contrast to Norway and Sweden where the right of reindeer ownership is reserved to members of the Sámi community, in Finland non-Sámi can also own reindeer (Heikkilä 2006). Indeed, less than 20% of reindeer owners in Finland are Sámi (Nieminen 2014) and while, as semi-wild animals they roam freely in the mountains and pastures of Lapland, every reindeer has an owner.

The importance of reindeer as an economic asset to the region cannot be over-emphasised. Reindeer occupy an area that covers 36% of the country as a whole, with the total number equalling around 200,000. The number is strictly regulated by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry which determines the largest permissible numbers of living reindeer for each reindeer herding district. As a result, a predefined number of

reindeer are sacrificed annually. An estimated of 34 reindeer farms operate in tourism, keeping around 700 well-trained male reindeer used largely to pull sleighs (Bohn et al. 2018). According to Bohn et al. (2018) the yearly turnover per reindeer is approximately 5500 euros. In addition to reindeer tourism farms, there are also individual reindeer herders who may rent some of their reindeer for organized tourism programmes.

When it comes to the Christmas tourism industry it is the region's association with the Santa Claus story that remains the biggest attraction, however, with reindeer integral to the 'magic' of the season. For many visitors just seeing these animals along the road or while walking through the forest in the snow is part of the Christmas experience while, for children in particular, they represent an encounter with something more than a non-human animal; that is, a meeting with a sentient and super-powered creature that each year becomes a central character in the playing out of their seasonal hopes and dreams. Equally, reindeer sledding is also a highly popular with tourists of all ages throughout the Christmas and winter season, especially if it's part of a visit to see Santa himself. Yet in order to achieve such magical meetings reindeer are commodified and commercialized in a variety of ways (see Burns 2015; Hoarau-Heemstra 2018; Nieminen 2014). Some reindeer are enclosed within the boundaries of the "reindeer farms" where tourists can pet and feed them, as well as photograph themselves with these almost mythical creatures. Others, as we have indicated, pull sleighs, meet and greet visitors at local airports, and generally perform the roles of both objects of the tourist gaze (Urry 1990), and manual workers. These are, however, the lucky ones. For within this organizational order some reindeer are more equal than others.

For it is the skilled castrated male reindeers who become, for the tourists at least, the truly magical ones. These are sleigh reindeer who, being expensive to train (the training lasting between four and five years) have a contract for life. They are Santa's confidantes and enjoy a special place in the hearts of those they meet. Smaller, and in particular, female reindeer (who are less suitable for annual labour due to the gestation period) are not used as draft animals, however, but are reduced to another type of commodity. For while often fleetingly seen by tourists these reindeer are quickly reduced to the utility of flesh, skin and bone and converted to tourist souvenirs – such as the ubiquitous 'reindeer pelt – and a hearty evening meal of Poronkärästys or sautéed reindeer (see Hoarau-Heemstra 2018).

The Reindeer/Tourism Cycle

Now, returning for a moment to our earlier discussion of CT, while for Adorno and Horkheimer the relationship between the exploitation of the natural and human worlds was a largely theoretical proposition – one grounded in speculative philosophy and historical extrapolation – the actual lived experiences of both those human and non-human animals working within the Finnish Christmas industry might in fact prove to be empirically informative. First and foremost, the seasonal rhythm of work of both reindeer and their herders, and employees in the tourism industry - especially those who share a precarious and uncertain relationship with their future employment - demonstrate some distinct commonalities.

Referred to colloquially as the reindeer year, the annual life of a reindeer can be divided according to the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter. The majority of calves are born in May during the spring when the snow has partly melted, and the risk of cold weather receded. At this time of the year, reindeer herders working in tourism have time to rest before focusing on key activities related to the management of the herd. Most of the reindeer kept on the farm are released into local forests to roam freely during the summer with a number held back to be seen and fed by summer season visitors. This is also the time when tourists to the region Finnish Lapland are at their lowest resulting in a lack of contracts for annual fixed-term employees. Also, during the summer - between June and July - the new calves are collected and marked with their owner's earmark - in Finland there are more than 10,000 reindeer marks in use (Nieminen 2014) - and then are returned to pasture with their mothers. While the herders will use the rest of the summer for maintenance (e.g. fences) and collecting hay for the winter, most remaining permanent tourism employees and sled reindeer are released from their respective obligations with many hotels and activity companies shutting down their activities for one or two months – usually July and August.

In early autumn, around September, the reindeer are again collected before the snow arrives and in time for the mating season. Herders take advantage of this natural event to conduct the first round-ups where herds are again gathered behind fences. It is at this point that the reindeer are separated into those that will be slaughtered, while those that will live are set free again. Existing sleigh reindeer that were roaming the pastures will be brought back to farms and start preparing for tourism work. Some male reindeer will be newly recruited to start training as sleigh reindeer, with the selection based on the character and attributes needed to pulling sleds and interacting with people. The entire event also provides an opportunity to update the register of all individual reindeer. During this period, tourism companies also start the recruitment of seasonal human workers. Such workers are predominantly young and female, and are drawn from southern Finland and abroad and are often students looking for an additional income to support their studies. In an approach reminiscent of the selection process applied to the reindeer, companies will select the most suitable and promising applicants based on their character and attitude to working with tourists, a role that often requires a high level of competency in forms of emotional (Hochschild 1983; Lewis and Simpson 2009) and aesthetic labour (Hancock and Tyler 2000; Witz et al. 2003), before offering short periods of induction and training.

Winter in general, and Christmas in particular, is the busiest season for both reindeer and tourism workers. For those reindeer selected, it is when they truly become integral to the aesthetics of the Christmas 'servicescape' (Bitner 1992); observed, photographed and adored by tourists of all ages. For the young seasonal employees this is the period when, despite often low pay and precarious conditions of employment – many of them are employed on contracts of only a month to three months long - the demands of an often physically and emotionally draining period of work are in full swing. Like the reindeer and the snow, many of these employees are viewed as integral to the Christmas aesthetic on offer; one of magic and fun. Indeed, for those on the front line of the tourist encounter working as 'elves' and other seasonal characters, the requirements are stringent. Take, for example, the requirements laid out on one recruitment website (*emphasis added*).

Becoming one of Santa's Elves is a truly magical task... Elves are only ever seen by our guests as Elves, and not in any other capacity in order to keep the believability. This involves character work, *endless energy and a love for Christmas magic*. You must *adhere to the Elf character at all times*. While *portraying your inner elf* you will frolic and play with the guests at the airport on arrival, escort the guests to Santa's cabin for their magical visit, ensure all the presents are wrapped ready for Santa and take part in elf sightings at various locations. *A comprehensive and constant commitment to the Santa story is essential and a desire to make all our guests dreams come true*. Only committed and responsible applicants with previous experience and training in acting, as well as a love of Christmas will be considered.

Working as an elf *you will be working predominantly outside all while maintaining an extremely happy and excitable personality often for long periods of time*. *Lack of natural day light and minus temperatures are part of the day to day lifestyle you can expect*.

After Christmas, the amount of work and the need for seasonal workers starts decreasing. While a small elite of employees will be kept on throughout the year, those predominantly young employees will see their contracts ended throughout the spring. During the Christmas season, the performance of each seasonal worker will have been assessed by their respective supervisors. Based on this assessment, tourism companies will make a decision on which workers to keep and which to dismiss. Skilful employees will work until the end of the spring and be released for the summer. They will most probably return in the autumn and, if fortunate, they may receive a permanent contract. Similarly, in January reindeer herders will have the last round ups. Some of the reindeer that served the Christmas season will be dismissed from their duties and sent to the slaughterhouse. The rest of the herd will stay in the pastures of Lapland waiting for the birth of new reindeer, and thus start a new reindeer year.

Reindeer, Reason and Repression

The appropriation and commodification of the lives of the reindeer discussed here offers an apt illustration of the ways in which non-human animals are reduced to things, with the sole purpose of being appropriated and managed (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979). Be it as visceral raw materials turned into food, souvenirs, or objects of the tourist gaze, they are reduced to the status of disposable raw materials or sources of entertainment, where they are often bullied and reduced to spectacles that alienate not only their own nature but those claims to rationality made by their human audiences (Horkheimer 1978). It might be argued of course, that such non-human animals are treated relatively well compared to many other creatures that find their way into human service, and in part this may well be true.

The slaughtering of many these creatures for food and raw materials can be understood as part of a long and traditional relationship between the indigenous population of the region and these non-human animals. For the Sámi reindeer herding is, after all, a holistic activity whereby economic, ecological, social, and cultural aspects are closely intertwined (Heikkilä 2006). According to Sámi cultural beliefs, Sámi offer reindeer care and protection from predators in exchange for their meat, skin, antlers and bones. In fact, the survival of Sámi people has greatly depended on reindeer and thus it is considered a sign of respect to use everything and every single part of the animal (Hoarau-Heemstra 2018). Similarly, for those animals spared the slaughterhouse their future as draft or show animals, especially when closely associated with the magical aesthetics of Christmas and Santa Claus, might be considered one of favour and affection. Indeed, generally restricted to pulling tourist sleighs over short distances – although they are known to be raced and to undertake longer tourist treks – there's is an existence characterised predominantly by a long life and continued care and attention, valuable as they are to the selling of the festive story.

Yet such observations would miss the point that underpins the objection of CT in that while the treatment of these animals might be considered humane within the context of a lifestyle and industry that depends on them, it is the very notion of humane treatment as it is currently constituted that is at fault. Whatever the cultural mores or economic needs that are at stake, the reduction of such animals to tools and resources cannot help but depend on the sacrifice demanded of the natural world to support that of the human, ultimately to the inevitable detriment of the former. The taking of the lives of non-human animals to support our own is itself an expression of the capacity of human animals have to take any life in support of what they might consider to be a greater good (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979). Similarly, the idea that we can somehow symbolically redeem ourselves by turning such animals into albeit well-cared for toys and attractions, or by token acts of reconciliation or care, is equally anathema.

Just as the employer who claims his treatment of employees is now beyond reproach as he or she no longer refuses to pay them their merger wages for periods of holiday or illness, so the herder who lets his or her exhibits roam free can claim that they are enlightened and caring and, as such, devoid of blame or intention of harm. Yet as Gunderson (2014: 289) observes in respect of Adorno's (1978) reaction, this is in fact a false reconciliation; one that fails to address the underlying repression of such creatures whereby 'the fact that animals are put on display in the rationality of civilisation is not critically questioned by society but soothed in the guiltlessness of transferring animals from cage to pit, making captivity simultaneously less painful and more in inexorable'.

Indeed, in part, this extension of symbolic care is in itself an act that contributes to the physical denigration of these non-human creatures. For tourists that experience the care and love seemingly extended to Santa's magical helpers, the switch to consumers of their flesh - be it in their traditional Finnish stew or in a bag of reindeer antlers – becomes so much easier. Through their inability to distinguish between the different classes of reindeer, between the lucky and unlucky ones, chosen or not by virtue of temperament, strength or gender, tourists assume that all have enjoyed a fulfilling and cared-for life. Equally, their own special encounter with these animals, and the ways in which the physical so happily

co-exists with the symbolic in tourist shops and attractions across the region, legitimises their own desire to ‘take a piece of Rudolph home’, such that it is a common sight to see a happy family heading home with a large plush ‘Rudolph’ in one bag, and several reindeer pelts in another.

The Ethics of Compassionate Recognition

As we have stressed, however, the criticism that these non-human animals are reduced to commodified objects within the context of the Christmas tourism industry tells only part of the story. If the objectification and instrumentalisation of nature is also that of humanity, then the empirical facticity of the relationship between reindeer and employee is both instructive and ethically challenging. For as in the world of the non-human reindeer, the human animal workforce experiences an equally legitimized regime of instrumental disposability. In contrast to the reindeers, however, it is not those employees who are most visible to the tourist – those who win their love and affection - that are the most secure and most valued. Like those reindeer who are too small, too strong willed, or simply unlucky enough to be born female and therefore not deemed suitable for draft work, the young and predominantly female performers who commit, to cite the recruitment advertisement above, to the ‘desire to make all our guests dreams come true’ are the disposable human resource of the industry, predominantly low paid, often overworked, and increasingly recruited from overseas as is common across the sector (McKay et al. 2011).

Despite their importance to the overall tourist experience and the production of the Christmas servicescape (Haahti and Yavas 2004), these employees frequently work long and unsociable hours in exceptionally cold and dark conditions. Also, while often deemed to be low skilled they are expected to be able to undertake frequently complex and demanding forms of emotional (Guerrier and Adib 2003; García-Rosell et al. 2016) and aesthetic labour (Warhurst and Nickson 2007) in order to ensure that visitors who are often characterised by high expectations and, in the case of day trippers, high levels of fatigue, experience the Christmas magic the tour operators promise. So, while the chosen reindeer – those offered up as Santa’s magical helpers - experience an almost anthropomorphic transformation into something more than bestial, this somewhat lesser class of human employee experience an almost inverted zoomorphic process. Easily jettisoned and replaced, their short lifespans as employees and their reduction to embodied resources – instructed as they are to smile, laugh and please – mirror the worst aspects of the tourist reindeer cycle with both species interdependently objectified and appropriated by an instrumentalist logic that builds an industry upon the relative disposability of their lives.

Nonetheless, as we have acknowledged above, while the ideas we draw upon here might offer a powerful medium of ethical critique, they are less equipped to offer possible solutions. Indeed, when the very urge to survive itself is viewed as leading to an inevitable path of repression then it leaves little space for ethical renegotiation, especially when the question of our relationship to nature – including both the human and non-human animal - as a commercial resource is concerned. Yet having said this, returning to Gunderson’s (2014) aforementioned discussion of compassion in Horkheimer (1993) might offer one possible way of rethinking this question, if albeit in a somewhat speculative manner.

Compassion, as we observed above, can be thought of as a ‘reflexive’ (Gunderson 2014: 293), or pre-cognitive, identification with another’s suffering. It is, as Stirk (1992: 191) observes, a state of mind associated with the formation of a subject ‘that has not yet been subject to the influence of a strong ego’, one who is able to engage phenomenologically the world through its embodied and immediate experience and show it genuine and meaningful care.

In this context, however, this would seem to suggest the need for a dialectical way of thinking that draws not only on the notion of compassion, but also that of recognition (Honneth 1996), through an acknowledgment of the shared suffering of both human and non-human animals in this experience of tourist service. The notion of recognition as an ethical act is itself one that has its roots in CT and has most recently been developed and advocated by Axel Honneth, the current director of the Institute for Social Research. For Honneth (1996), humans require recognition as autonomous subjects, manifested through love, respect and esteem, in order to flourish and enjoy an emotionally and psychologically healthy life. The intersubjective fulfilment of such relations of recognition provides the basis of a form of ethical life that is both concretely embedded in the intersubjective facticity of life and those social practices that define it. While Honneth does not explicitly extend this approach to non-human animals, there is an argument to be made that though the extension of compassion as a form of recognition, based on the mutual acknowledgment of suffering and the need for care, it establishes the basis for an ethics that extends beyond the well-being of both human and non-human species and into the living world as a totality.

For if we take seriously the understanding that the domination of nature, including its non-human animals, is as much the domination of humanity, then the extension of compassion through the recognition of shared suffering - be it the denial of a natural lifespan and the reduction of one’s existence to that of a novelty sideshow to the uncertainty of a precarious means of support and the a lack of recognition and reward for ones skills and contribution – the actual question of animal ethics become somewhat redundant. Rather, we face a far more difficult question of how to act ethically when the appropriation of nature in all its fullness, becomes both a template for, and the realisation of, a relationship of exploitation underpinned by the vary capacity for reason that is frequently deployed to interrogate and challenge it.

Conclusion

In this chapter, through a discussion of the lives of reindeer working predominantly during the Christmas tourist season in Finnish Lapland, we have considered ideas associated with the earlier generation of Frankfurt critical theorists and the treatment and welfare of animals. In doing so, we identified the view that the exercise of human reason is – as the basis of human survival – premised on the domination of nature that not only includes the realm of the non-human animal but ultimately also that of the human, despite our frequent forgetting of this. Such a de-differentiation of the natural and cultural requires that we ask, therefore, to what extent the exploitation for profit of one inevitably legitimises and provides a atemplate for the other.

By examining the work of reindeer in Lapland, a cold dark environment superficially warmed by Christmas cheer, we have considered the ways in which the physical suffering of animals who are cast aside, herded, slaughtered and consumed or, at best, reduced to objects of amusement, can be understood as a dialectical reflection of the reduction of young human lives to disposable commodities with little opportunity for personal development or recognition of the value of their skills and labour. That the condition of each provides the foundation of tourism as an industry that, while promising memorable experiences and pleasure to all, is built on the objectification, appropriation and shared suffering of its disposable animal workforces, both human and non-human.

Furthermore, reflecting on the human and non-human animal in terms of a commercial resource in tourism unveils a hierarchy shaped by male subjectivity, where man is taken to be superior to women, adults over children and humans over animals (Labatut 2016). Although the reindeer cycle and its relation to the tourism is a unique case, the arguments build upon this particular case are applicable to a wider set of uses of human and non-human animals in society. For instance, these could be other animal-related industries such as the slaughterhouses and animal testing facilities. The poultry industry and their slaughterhouses, which employs mainly migrants with low pay and long working hours, is an good example of another sector where both animals and humans are objectified and instrumentalized for the sake of commercial goals (Hamilton and McCabe 2016).

Yet more than just offering critique by bringing together, albeit somewhat speculatively, the notion of compassion found in Horkheimer (1993) and discussed in Gunderson (2014), and the idea of a recognition ethics as more latterly developed by Honneth (1996), we started to think about what might be needed to address, philosophically at least, this condition. For not only is it important to extend our acknowledgment of the ways in which the exploitation of non-human animals legitimatises the concomitant exploitation of a predominately young, female human workforce, but that in order to address this it is necessary to first identify the conditions under which their status and experiences might be recognised as part and parcel of the same. This would involve an extension of compassion through a pre-rational and embodied recognition of the shared suffering that defines a world in which natural and cultural (human) experience is of the same tyrannies of instrumentalisation in the workplace and beyond.

To extend such a recognition of the need for compassion and care, to understand that even non-human animals have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to be spared the indignity and suffering of a disposable life lived merely as a tool of other animals – albeit human ones – would, of course offer a radical challenge to the ways in which the economic world is landscaped (see Coulter 2016). It is not something that could be pursued as an isolated project associated with terms such as ‘welfare’ or calls for more ‘humane treatment’. Rather, it would require questioning the very structures of economic activity such that our treatment of animals as organizational and workplace resources would become the yardstick by which we also adjudged the treatment of human working animals. Indeed, such differentiations would have to cease to exist as we increasingly recognised that only by embracing our commonalties within the natural world might the ethical treatment of animals at work truly be achievable.

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