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In It for the Nonhuman Animals: Animal Welfare, Moral Certainty, and Disagreements

ABSTRACT

Based on three years' ethnographic research with animal sanctuary workers, this paper argues that a level of moral certainty drives and justifies many of the workers' actions and beliefs. Similar to the "missionary zeal" of nonhuman animal rights activists, this moral certainty divides the world into two neat categories: good for the animals and bad for the animals. This overriding certainty takes precedence over other concerns and pervades all aspects of sanctuary life, resulting in the breakdown of different facets of that life into good and bad homes, good and bad animals, and good and bad workers. The paper, therefore, argues that animal welfare workers may be as "radical" as animal rights activists in one respect—their adherence to the overriding principle of being "in it for the animals."

Sociologically and otherwise, much has been written on the rights of nonhuman animals and the animal rights movement. Animal welfare, on the other hand never really has had the same level of scrutiny from the social sciences. Certainly, the ideas of animal welfare and their underpinning philosophies often have been debated—although usually as a tool against which to contrast rights (Francione, 1996; Guither,

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1998; Taylor, 1999). However, animal welfare from an everyday perspective of what it is to be involved in practicing animal welfare on a daily basis has not been subject to a similar level of investigation.

The Sociology of Animal Shelters

There are a small, but growing, number of exceptions to this in the area of companion animal welfare and animal shelters. Arluke (1991) investigated the coping mechanisms of animal shelter workers who were forced to deal with the daily reality of euthanizing animals. Frommer and Arluke (1999) investigated the blame-displacing strategies of animal shelter workers and animal relinquishers. Frommer and Arluke argued that those who surrendered companion animals and animal shelter staff both adopted various mechanisms to deal with surrendering animals to a shelter where they later may be euthanized. Among the mechanisms adopted by those surrendering to explain their relinquishing a hitherto loved companion animal were "blaming others"—landlords or spouses—or "passing the buck" by emphasizing the attractiveness of their particular animal. This served the purpose of shifting the blame from themselves to the shelter workers if their animal subsequently was not adopted or "blaming the victim," by claiming that they would rather destroy their animal for the animal's sake than keep the animal in inferior conditions. Shelter workers also had a set of mechanisms for coping with their part in the potential euthanizing of the surrendered animal. They "blamed those who surrendered," whom they saw as failing to meet their lifelong responsibility to their animals. Frequently, they also tried to "instill guilt" in the one who surrendered, "took the moral high ground" by arguing that they would never relinquish an animal no matter what the reason, and also "blamed the victim" by arguing that euthanizing an unwanted animal often was necessary and preferable to leaving the animal in an unwanted home.

In a related study, DiGiacomo, Arluke, and Patronek (1998) investigated the perspective of the relinquisher when surrendering companion animals to shelters. They discovered that—contrary to the general belief of staff in shelters—those relinquishing animals do not do so casually. They argued that the decision to relinquish an animal to a shelter was a difficult one. Most people had considered it, and any possible alternatives, for a long time before

approaching the shelter. Decisions to relinquish an animal were based on "acquisitional problems": Good Samaritans who consistently took in animals but were unable to care for them in the long term; "internal pressures" such as time and financial constraints; and, "external pressures" such as behavior problems with the animal.

Alger and Alger (1999, 2003) have studied the internal worlds of cat shelters in rich detail to discover that cat-centered volunteers form part of a cat-human community rather than being human outsiders to a feline community. They enforced cat-initiated choices and rules rather than imposing their own will on the cats. Thus, the cat shelter was very much run by its "clients."

Animal Welfare or Animal Rights?

Jasper and Nelkin (1992) argue that the "moral certainty" of animal rights activists underpins and justifies many of their actions. There is a basic distinction between animal rights and animal welfare, a distinction that has been much discussed in contemporary literature (Francione, 1996; Taylor, 1999). Francione argues that the rights position is based on the notion that some animals at least have rights and that "treating them solely as means to human ends violates those rights" (p. 42), whereas the "welfare position maintains that animal interests may be ignored if the consequences for humans justify it" (p. 42). The popular notion of an homogenous, unitary animal rights movement is one that has the potential to mislead because those fighting for animals come from a variety of different ideological backgrounds and advocate many different ways to achieve many different aims.

The generic term "animal protectionism" perhaps is a more apt and relevant one to explain the vast numbers of people concerned today with animal abuse, cruelty, and rights issues, because often these people come from diverse ideological backgrounds. One way to categorize these different backgrounds is to argue an implicit difference between animal welfarists and those who advocate animal rights, asserting that the two areas are self-contained and relatively distinct.

Animal protectionism traces its roots to the nineteenth-century Victorian antivivisection movement in which, for the first time, the animal protection movement came into being on a large and mobilized scale (Garner, 1993). This

movement was born out of the wider humanitarian movement popular at the time and yet, in many ways, became stronger and more enduring than its predecessors (Sperling, 1988). The impetus of the nineteenth-century movements largely died with the beginning of the First World War. There came a resurgence of interest in animal issues from the late 1960s and early 1970s, but this was a different kind of interest involving a different kind of supporter (Garner).

The tone of these new animal protection movements was radically different from that of the early humane movement. Instead of advocating the welfare of animals under human care and for human use, this movement argued that it was morally wrong for humans to consider animals as inferior and to make use of them in any way. This later movement came to be known as the animal rights movement because it was predicated on a belief in the natural rights of animals, underpinned by a number of philosophical treatises concerning the rights of animals (Regan, 1985; Singer, 1975). With this change in ideology came a change in tactics. Compared to the traditional animal welfare movements, the methods of this new breed of animal rights activist were far more radical. The majority of animal rights campaigners believed in the need for direct action. As Garner (1993) argues, ". . . since the 1970s, however, there has been a marked revitalization and this upsurge has coincided with a growing radicalism, both in terms of objectives and methods" (pp. 41, 42).

Jasper and Nelkin (1992) argue that a number of events during the 1970s that mobilized large numbers of those concerned with animal protection (Spira's campaign against the NIH-funded cat experiments at the American Museum of Natural History) "made the more traditional humane movements look passive and sentimental, suggesting that victory requires a rigorous philosophy as well as more militant action" (p. 29). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the proliferation of more militant, philosophically informed animal rights groups slowly radicalized the existing humane movement.

Frustration with the conservative humane tradition and its bourgeois roots led to increasing radicalism. The increased awareness at this time of links between animal persecution and other issues—women's rights and environmentalism—also served to radicalize the traditional humane/welfare movement (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992, pp. 63, 64). Jasper and Nelkin point out welfare movements still retain the largest number of supporters and the larger bud-

gets. However, membership does not imply ability to direct policy, which is where the door remains open to the radicals.

The radicals especially have influenced the ideologies and attitudes of many staff members whose devotion to animals made them sympathetic to arguments drawing on sentimental anthropomorphism. Rights arguments merely carry to an extreme many of the sentiments about animals that already motivate welfare society staffers, who often join rights groups too (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992, p. 66).

Animal shelter workers interviewed here conformed to this analysis. A small number of those involved in the animal shelters advocated an animal rights position and saw no contradiction in their working in an environment that condoned, if not supported, the use of companion animals as pets. The rationale behind this was that they were working to better the welfare of specific animals. Although in an ideal world they may not condone animals as pets, the current situation demanded that they do something about it. As one interviewee explained:

> It's our fault in the first place, I mean we domesticated them and now we can't even take care of them. It should be our duty to do that at least seeing as though we did this to them in the first place. In an ideal world, no, there'd be no pets, but right now there are and about 300 of them are being destroyed on a weekly basis because we aren't dealing with what we've done so, no, there's no contradiction between what I'm doing now and my animal rights beliefs. I'm still fighting for animals' rights just in a different way. At least here I can be sure that this dog or this cat which can't survive on its own gets to live out the rest of its life in plush surroundings. It's the least we can do.

However, the majority of those involved in the sanctuaries in this study were not involved in animal rights and did not feel a particular need to address these issues. It has been pointed out that one of the key elements in the adoption of an animal rights agenda is a vegan/vegetarian diet (Garner, 1993; Guither, 1998), and almost everyone working in the animal sanctuaries in this study was a meat-eater. The two exceptions were moral vegetarians who supported animal rights philosophy and were involved in peripheral animal rights campaigning.

The rest of the workers involved in the animal sanctuaries advocated a welfare position based on the notion that it is our responsibility to care for animals properly, although they tended to be solely concerned with companion (pet) animals. This usually took the form of providing information about the care of pets and becoming involved in issues such as anti-quarantine appeals that directly affected the status of animals as pets. Most of the staff at the sanctuaries took the line that animal rights might, in theory, be worthwhile but, for now, was fairly unobtainable and that at least they were doing something productive in the meantime. In their sanctuary work, they could see clearly an end result that improved the status of a number of animals, such as seeing them placed in caring homes. This was considered to be more important than perceived philosophical arguments concerning the place of animals in society. Despite tentative support for the ideals of animal rights in the future, the majority of the sanctuary workers saw animal rights activists in terms of the media stereotype—violent law breakers intent on the liberation of all animals no matter what the cost.

Practical Animal Protection Work

This philosophical distinction between rights and welfare has practical consequences. In general, the "practicality" of animal rights is seen in the campaigns to end animal abuse wherever it occurs, whereas the practicality of companion animal welfare often manifests itself in sanctuary and refuge work. This stems from a bourgeois ethic of care that informed the early humane societies and led to their maintenance and establishment of animal shelters, originally to deal with stray animals, but increasingly expanding their remit to include unwanted animals (Sperling, 1988). A detailed distinction between animal rights and animal welfare has been rehearsed elsewhere (Francione, 1996; Taylor, 1999) and will not be rehashed here. These issues are raised because of the direct link between philosophy and action. As Garner (1995) notes:

> The growth of mass activism is clearly linked to the belief, derived from an animal rights perspective, that since so much more is wrong with our treatment of animals than was previously thought, only permanent and sustained activism will help put things right. Likewise it is no accident that the use of—sometimes violent—direct action has corresponded with the development of a rights position (p. 12).

It is this ideology of the animal rights movement that justifies (at least in their eyes) their behavior. As Jasper and Nelkin (1992) argue, ". . . moral certainty inspires calm confidence" and "missionary zeal" (pp. 45, 46). It is the moral certainty of animal rights activists that their beliefs concerning the rights of animals are immutable—which is used to justify their sometimes deviant behavior. This pertains to those working in animal welfare as well as in animal rights.

Rationale Behind This Study

Despite certain studies (Alger & Alger, 2003; Frommer & Arluke, 1999), the daily realities of those working in animal welfare remain an unknown entity. This paper, based on data drawn from three years research with members of staff working at various different types of animal sanctuaries[2] in the United Kingdom, attempts to rectify some of this neglect. It presents a discussion of how those working in such environments use the moral certainty they have concerning their actions to divide their world into clear-cut, discrete categories.

Methodology

This work is based on data collected during three years of ethnographic research at two local animal sanctuaries. The researcher visited the sanctuaries on average twice per week spending between three and five hours observing, interacting, and often helping with the routine business of the sanctuary.[3] Field notes were kept at the site wherever possible, and completed at the end of each day. In addition to this observational work, interviews with a number of staff from five other animal sanctuaries/welfare organizations were also conducted, bringing the total number of animal welfare organizations/sanctuaries accessed to seven. Interviews were tape-recorded and independently transcribed. Finally, the researcher attended the monthly public meetings of one of these animal sanctuaries for six months.[4] The public meetings were intended to be a forum for discussion and for bringing members of the public who had an interest in the sanctuary up-to-date with what actually was happening at the sanctuary. In reality, they often were used to air grievances among the staff and between supporters and staff. Field notes were kept throughout the meetings. Many members of the public kept notes

during these meetings, so the researchers' note-keeping was not out of place and did not draw undue attention.

The researcher easily gained access to four of the organizations because she had worked at one of them for five years and thus had "inside" contacts. She approached the other three "cold" because she knew about them only indirectly.

General Outline of the Organizations

All the organizations were involved in caring for unwanted or lost companion animals. Six of them had as their central aim the re-homing of these animals, while the seventh aimed firstly to reunite lost animals with owners and, secondly, to re-home those not claimed. The organizations largely dealt with domestic companion animals. Within this group, the main animals sheltered were dogs and cats, although smaller animals—rabbits, rats, and gerbils—were fairly common. Goats, pigs, and horses sometimes were cared for in the larger sanctuaries, although because of space limitations, they were relatively few in number.

The organizations fell loosely into three different categories: (a) those in which individuals work from home with no premises for the animals and with the aid of one or two volunteers (often family members); (b) larger, "structured" sanctuaries that have premises and any number of (sometimes paid) staff and volunteers who help to run them; and (c) organizations engaged in specific pedigree breed rescue.

Individually Run Welfare Centers

The first type of shelter was one in which individuals work from home with no actual premises for the animals. Individuals managing these centers did not have approved premises for their animals. Instead, they relied on a "paperwork" system, whereby they would advertise in the local press for "good homes." They would take the details of people who called wanting to adopt a cat or dog and try to match them to the people who wanted to surrender their animals. Volunteer drivers then brought the potential adopter together with the potential adoptee. The potential adopter was evaluated, and the animal either was passed on or returned to the original owner until another potential match was found.

Larger, Structured Organizations

The second category of organization was a much larger, "structured" sanctuary that tended to be a registered charity. There were three of these in this study. Two were charities that had started from very humble beginnings, often due to the vision and hard work of one person, and that had gone on to become large organizations dealing with between 600 and 1500 animals each year, with a supporting staff of between 10 and 30 people. A third was the local council depository for lost and stray dogs. It was responsible for the largest number of stray and lost dogs in the United Kingdom with more than 12,000 passing through in 1995. This differed slightly from the other organizations in size and scope, because the first aim of the depository was to reunite owners and lost dogs. When this was not possible, unclaimed dogs would be re-homed. They operated a seven-day system whereby any animal not claimed after seven days was put up for sale, not adoption, and, if not sold within the next seven days, was destroyed. A further difference between this and the other two larger sanctuaries was that potential homes were not vetted and, generally speaking, not turned down if they were able to pay the purchase fee for the dog.

Local, Breed Specific Rescues

The third category of group was local off-shoots of national canine breed organizations. In the United Kingdom, many pedigree breeds have their own rescue societies, dedicated to giving advice about a specific breed to owners who are struggling. They also re-home unwanted or problematic animals. Most of these breed rescues are national charities operating by way of local off-shoots that would pick up and drop off animals in their areas. Data were collected by interviewing the organizers of two of these local branches. It also should be noted that these breed rescues are a valuable resource for other sanctuaries that, when they get a pedigree dog, will contact them to see if they want to take the animal.

These worked slightly differently from the other organizations discussed, although their homing practices and policies were largely similar. Everything revolved around a centralized headquarters that would take calls from the public with problem animals or from those who wanted to adopt an animal. They then would contact the local operator to go and vet the home or

evaluate the problem. Much of the vetting would be done by the HQ who would pass people on to their local organizer only if they were happy with the suitability of the home.

Workers' Commitment

Sanctuary life is difficult and demanding, both of time and emotion. It also tends to have a high turnover of staff and an unsettled air about it because of the continual movement from one sanctuary premise to another as the organizations grow. One of the main things learned from interviewing sanctuary workers is their devotion to "the cause." Most, if not all, are fanatical about what they do and the animals for whom they care. One way in which their devotion to the cause can be seen is through their willingness to commit illegal acts. They believe that if they are doing something illegal for the good of a particular animal, then it is acceptable. Not all workers would be involved in these acts, but most of them would know that such things occurred.

It was deemed acceptable practice to steal animals known to be in bad homes. Occasionally, concerned members of the public would call the sanctuary—reporting what they felt was cruel behavior toward an animal. The caller either would be advised to ring the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals helpline or the sanctuary would take direct action. This would involve getting in touch with people known to be active in the animal rights movement and giving them the details. A dog or cat then would appear at the sanctuary shortly thereafter, exactly matching the description of the animal the member of the public called about. This animal would, however, be legitimately handed over by its "owner" who would fill in the necessary paperwork. The animal then would be moved to a rescue in another part of the country to be re-homed.

This is one example of the devotion of the staff at the sanctuary to the animals in their care. They see themselves as doing a good job with the resources they have. Considering the number of animals—stray or unwanted—nationwide, they have no illusions about their contribution being anything more than a drop in the ocean. However, they believe that their small contribution is a valid one, as one sanctuary manager explained, "even if I've only homed one dog to a good home this year its one dog who's better off and that makes my job worthwhile."

Re-Homing Policies and "Good" and "Bad" Homes

All organizations researched operated similar homing policies with the exception of the Lost Dogs Home, which generally sold dogs to anyone with the money to buy. The sanctuaries took the re-homing of animals as perhaps the greatest responsibility of their jobs. This would be passed on to any new recruits with such fervor that many volunteers chose to stay away from the re-homing process, not wanting to deal with the "stress" of the responsibility As one worker explained,

> I must say I never felt confident enough to take a homing from beginning to end. . . . I don't have enough confidence or experience. . . . . It's too much of a responsibility and I worry too much all the time whether I made the right decision, I'd rather let someone else do it instead.

The managers of all the organizations estimated that they turned away approximately 50% of those wanting animals as "bad homes," and much of this was done on the phone at the initial inquiry stage. At this initial stage, people simply were asked why they wanted an animal, whether they had had an animal before, and what happened to the animal. This was deemed sufficient to gain an instant impression about whether the person was a decent enough prospect to be invited to the sanctuary.

Within the organizations that had premises for the animals, anyone wanting to adopt an animal was shown around the sanctuary by a member of staff who chatted about the animals in the sanctuary. The potential owners would be asked questions designed to assess their suitability as a new home. They would be asked whether they had cared for an animal before, what happened to that animal, and had their animal been neutered. The crucial information needed from people who had lived with animals before was what happened to the animal. An animal who died of old age always was the preferred answer. Anyone who had an animal euthanized without "a proper reason," that is, unless it was recommended by a vet, was seen as instant suspect as was anyone whose animal died at a young age without illness. Persons who had had an animal previously but had given the animal away—no matter what the reason—instantly were denied any animal from all the organizations. They would be "blacklisted," as one manager reported:

> People with a bad history they're turned down . . . People who have given animals away in the past. One of the first questions we ask here and on the home visit is whether they've had animals before and what happened to them. It puts you in an awkward situation sometimes you know when they've recently lost an animal and they start crying on you but that's generally a good sign, that they loved their previous animal enough. Then there's others who've got the cheek to turn up here wanting to adopt an animal when they've given their last couple of animals away for pathetic reasons and they expect us to let them have one of our dogs. It's a joke.

In general, the homing ritual was performed to see whether the interested persons would make a good home for the animals they chose. This meant establishing, first, whether they would be a good home for any animal and then establishing whether the animal they had chosen suited their lifestyle. To do this, the manager asked not only about the potential homes' history of pet-keeping but also about their lifestyle. They were asked where they lived, in what sort of accommodation, whether there was access to a garden or yard (which must be fully fenced in the case of those who wanted to adopt a dog), whether there were children in the household, and whether there would be someone at home during the day. A prospective home that satisfactorily answered all these questions either was offered an animal or—if the manager still had doubts—was referred for a home visit.

All those interviewed who were concerned with homing animals believed that there was no one formula for successfully placing an animal in a new home. All argued that they simply "got a feel" for a person and that this "gut reaction" was instrumental in whether the prospective owner was given an animal. Hence, there often were cases where prospective owners had answered all the questions "correctly," and the manager still was uneasy with them. In this case, another member of staff would be asked to talk to the person, and the person usually would be referred for a home visit.

The distinction between good and bad home was fairly clear cut for most of those working at the sanctuary. If they felt comfortable with the person, if the person had clearly cared for their previous animal and treated the animal well, physical, financial, or familial circumstances did not matter:

> I'm not working off the basis that all rich people look after dogs properly, that isn't the case. I'm looking how much heart and soul there is in the sit-

> uation, how long the dog is going to be left . . . It's like an adoption situation, by the time you've got there and had a cup of tea with them you've got a very good idea about what they want and then you're making a decision whether you think you want them to have one of your dogs and you can tell within a good home visit how well you think your dogs will be looked after.

And again:

> I've had a lot of calls off [the local council estate considered to be undesirable] and this is how you can typecast people wrongly, I was very loathe to go and vet on [this estate] and you know on the three occasions the houses were absolutely gorgeous, lovely people. . . . All three that rang were suitable and I've had people ring from areas where they've got everything going for them and yet I wouldn't leave a dog there.

All involved in homing animals made reference to whether they would be comfortable leaving their own companion animal with the prospective new home. If they would, then it was considered good enough for the sanctuary animals. One homing officer explained, "Once you think 'I would be happy to leave my dogs with these people' then you've got the right answer."

Another priority was whether they felt the animal would be treated as one of the family. As one interviewee explained: "You're looking to see whether you think the cat will be happy here and if it will be treated the way you'd treat it, like one of us really." And again, another participant elaborated, "You want them to spoil their pet and treat it like one of them."

The obvious corollary of this is that those who did not want to adopt an animal to be part of the family were considered to be bad homes. One "homer" told the researcher:

> I went to see a house recently that wanted a young cat and it turned out they wanted her as a mouser and I thought there's no way they're getting her. I actually had her in my car and they'd seen her and I had to make loads of stuff up about that not being the cat for them . . . but they didn't care whether they got that cat or any cat they just wanted a cat and any would do and that's not a good sign. It's obvious then that they want a cat for other reasons than just wanting a cat—as a pet I mean, and that's not on.

It also was expected that the whole family would participate in the decision to adopt an animal and that all the family would come to the sanctuary to choose their new animal. If members of the family were not present, they would be asked to come back another day when everyone could be there. It was assumed that the decision to adopt an animal was such a serious one that the whole family would be considered. The length of time given to this consideration also was a factor, with those who had spent a longer time deciding being given priority over those who had not. As one animal re-homer explained, "I sometimes feel as if they woke up that morning and thought 'I'm bored, I know—let's get a dog,' and it's not enough, it's a big commitment, and it should take a lot of thought and family discussion."

Many of the situations recounted by staff during their interviews concerned their placing an animal in a home they thought good that turned out to be poor. These errors were seen as an initiation ritual. It was commonly assumed that until a member of staff had completed a first erroneous "homing," that member was not a fully fledged homer. It was this first error and the subsequent sleepless nights it caused that taught them more about homing animals and the public than anything else in the job. Sanctuary staff spent a great deal of time interacting with the public whom they view in very negative terms. Excuses the public gave for surrendering their pets, as well as some of the worst potential homes to be vetted, were the source of much hilarity in the privacy of the offices. One sanctuary had a "top three reasons for getting rid of your pet" chart on display in the office. The reasons were (a) human pregnancy and concern for the baby; (b) asthma or allergies to the animal; and (c) poor behavior by the animal. These reasons were, however, seen as excuses on behalf of the owners and generally were taken as being lies or, in the case of poor behavior by the animal, were seen as being the fault of the owner in the first place—such as the belief that dogs who chewed furniture did so because they were starved of human company and not exercised enough. One staff member recounted:

> I couldn't believe the flimsy excuses people gave for getting rid of their pets—my wife's pregnant, we're moving house, we work 10 hours a day and he's wrecking the house—what do you expect when you leave a dog all day?

This skepticism often led to a "nothing shocks me any more" attitude on behalf of the sanctuary staff when conducting their home checks (and certainly when faced with "cruelty cases"). One staff member explained:

> One thing this job did teach me was that you can't rely on these stereotypical judgments—it's weird really because on the one hand I am telling myself not to judge—whether they come off a council estate or have a nice home and so on—while all the time I am judging—whether their children are well behaved or they seem like responsible people. It's very difficult to explain how you get this feeling about them, like I said at first you think that everyone who comes to an animal sanctuary comes for the right motives but you soon learn.

In the same way that staff members have a clearly delineated idea of good and bad homes, they have a clear demarcation between good and bad animals.

"Good" and "Bad" Animals

Welfare workers perceived their animals as good animals, rarely as bad animals. Their belief system stressed that it was not the animals' fault that they were abandoned. It was the human owner who was responsible. In this way, animals are perceived as never being intrinsically bad but are seen as being "made that way" by their errant owners. One worker explained the following about a dog who actually had bitten three members of staff, one of them quite seriously:

> We had a guy bring a dog in who was snapping and biting at everyone. We couldn't handle him he was way too dangerous. We ended up putting him down then later we found out he'd belonged to this druggie who fed him drugs. No wonder he was so aggressive. We only found this out after we'd destroyed him. People like that really make me mad. If he'd have told us when he brought the dog in we would have worked with the dog and sorted him out. His anger wasn't his fault it was his stupid owner feeding him drugs.

This division of the world into good and bad clearly ties beliefs together about good and bad animals and good and bad homes. If there is no such

thing as an intrinsically bad animal, then it must be the fault of the owner; this belief is clung to despite evidence to the contrary. A staff member recounted the following:

> We had a dog who bounced around five or six homes with each one of them bringing him back cause he chewed and wrecked things. Well you have to start wondering at this point. We'd be pretty unlucky to have six bad homes on the run so you have to ask whether it's the dog. We were thinking about getting him into training classes when this woman came along and fell in love with him. We warned her about him but she still wanted him. Anyway three months later we go and see them and what do you know he was completely happy and very well behaved. Maybe we did just have a real bad run of bad luck with the wrong personality match up between this dog and those six homes.

On other occasions, the notion that it has to be the home that is bad as it cannot be the animal is extended specifically to blame members of staff who are considered to have re-homed animals inadequately:

> We had this dog who was a real problem to home so one day when no one else was here he [the manager] homed him to these people. We were all a bit suspicious so I decided to go and check on [the dog]. It was the worst home you can possibly imagine and there's no way these people came off as a good home on the day he spoke to them either. He just wanted to get rid of Ben cause he wasn't an easy dog. Not long after he was back with us he bit one of the workers really badly and the decision was made to put him down. No one agreed with this decision. The Committee had decided based on the manager's report on Ben's behavior that he was un-homeable. None of us agreed. A few people left over this one—I was nearly one of them. You can't work in a place where a good dog gets put down just 'cause the manager doesn't care.

"Good" and "Bad" Workers

Moral certainty was used as a tool by those working in the animal sanctuaries studied to create dichotomous classifications of good and bad animals and good and bad homes. In the same way, this also was applied to the staff

working at the sanctuaries in order to classify them as either good or bad workers. During the many internal disputes in the sanctuary, one thing always was present: the idea that those who were involved in the sanctuary for the right reasons—were "in it for the animals"—were classed as good people. Those who were assumed to be in it for the wrong reasons, such as personal accolades, were classed as bad people. The moral certainty of those involved in the sanctuary—that they were doing the right thing by the animals—led to this "overly simple definition of the world into good and evil" (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992, p. 43).

A case in point came from the occurrences that led to the division between "Animal" manager and "Public Relations" manager in one particular sanctuary. When the sanctuary was first opened, one person ran the entire sanctuary. Over a period of about four months, there were various problems between the staff at the sanctuary and this manager that culminated in an explosive public meeting, which all the sanctuary staff attended with the purpose of forcing this issue to make the committee act. The problems that the staff had with the manager were varied but centered on his treatment of the animals. There were complaints that he was too rough with the animals, shouted at them, and occasionally mishandled them. There were allegations that his homing technique was poor as it was based on a desire to "get rid" of the animals as quickly as possible rather than caring where they went. As one interviewee explained, all allegations were couched in terminology pertaining to his motives for working at the sanctuary:

> I don't have a problem with him personally, he's actually done some good stuff. I mean he started this place, it wouldn't be here without him but he's in it for himself, to get his picture in the paper and be a kind of celebrity, he just doesn't care about the animals, you know, like he should.

The staff at the sanctuary had very fixed ideas about what constituted the right motives for working there, and these were central to the way they categorized other staff and how they felt about them. It often was stressed that these were not personal views, and many of the interviewees claimed to like the manager in question but still wanted him moved because he was not "in it for the right reasons." On the other side of the coin, there were workers who were not liked but who were respected because they were "in it for the animals."

The new animal manager was a prime example here. After the complaints concerning the original manager were made public, the committee brought in an "Animal" manager and moved the existing manager sideways to the role of "PR" manager. The new animal manager had a long history of working in animal welfare and was seen as a welcome addition to the animal staff. He was not particularly popular, being seen variously as "bossy," a "know-it-all," and too rigidly inflexible in his ways. These problems, however, were overlooked, because he was seen as dedicated to the animals:

> He's not that popular really. He's a real pain, everything has to be done just so, exactly the way he wants or he hits the roof. But you can't complain really. He's miles better than [the last manager] and at least you know he's committed. He's always here, and you know, does a good job. You can see it when he's homing the dogs, there's no way these dogs are going to go to any old home, he cares you know. He's made loads of changes too in the way we work like cleaning the kennels with a hose and even though he's a pain demanding it just so, at least you can see why he wants it perfect, it's so the animals are happier.

All those involved in the animal sanctuaries studied subscribed to a belief system based on notions of what animals under their care needed. They judged and classified their fellow workers according to the extent they met the criteria of being "in it for the animals." Being in it for the animals was primary, often overcoming personal likes and dislikes.

This moral certainty, at one and the same time, both created and diffused arguments. It created arguments precisely because the workers felt they were right to do whatever they wished or needed to facilitate the best interests of the animals. Often, this led to workers arguing among themselves as to what was the best course of action for an animal in a particular situation.

A heated exchange between two workers concerning the euthanizing of a litter of newly born pups was witnessed. One worker wanted to euthanize all but one of the pups to give the remaining pup and undernourished mother a chance to live, while the other worker wanted to take all the pups away from the mother and hand rear them.

Both workers claimed to be acting in the best interests of the mother. Each thought the other's actions would compromise the mother's health and, thus,

that the opponent was not acting with the mother's best interests at heart. On the other side of the coin, this same moral certainty has the power to diffuse arguments. The defense of having done something "for the good of an animal" or "in the best interest" of the animal is not one easily argued against. The individual's "moral certainty," the belief of acting in the best interests of animals, justifies that individual's beliefs and actions.

The "best interests of the animals" was a trump card with the moral authority to end discussion (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992, p. 46). In this way, the moral certainty that welfare workers have concerning their work became a central, defining concept within their daily lives, one powerful enough to represent the "last word" in all disagreements.

Conclusion

Those studied here largely corroborate the findings of others who have studied sanctuary life (Frommer & Arluke, 1999; Alger & Alger, 1999, 2003). Alger and Alger (2003) in their study of Whiskers, a cat shelter in the United States, found there was a high turnover of staff within the shelter, largely because of internal differences being common (pp. 29, 30). The staff at the sanctuaries studied here also was prone to internal arguments that led to a high turnover—many leaving because of these differences.

Alger and Alger (2003) also chronicle the differences within Whiskers between those working "on the ground" with the animals as cleaners and feeders and the Board Officers. This was incredibly common in the U.K. sanctuaries studied here and ultimately led, in one case, to the removal of one manager from his position. Linked to this is the fact that this manager was removed because he was perceived as not being "in it for the right reasons," that is, for the welfare of the animals. This was seen as a paramount pre-requisite in the eyes of the volunteers at the sanctuaries in the United Kingdom and at the shelter Alger and Alger studied.

"Even when conflicts arose between officers and other volunteers, their commitment to the cats kept many volunteers on the job" (Alger and Alger, 2003, p. 52). The volunteers Alger and Alger studied displayed similar feelings in that if people were "in it for the animals" other discrepancies could be overlooked. Their volunteers "perceived the organizational culture of Whiskers

as committed to life at all costs . . . . They found it a source of pride that counteracted the deficiencies they otherwise noted" (p. 56).

The sanctuary staff studied during this project have further similarities to those studied by others. Frommer and Arluke (1999) point out that the shelter staff they studied often have negative attitudes toward the public and blame them for surrendering their animals. This was a common occurrence in the sanctuaries studied here, where staff considered the reasons the public gave for relinquishing their animal trivial and often untrue.

Similarly, those studied here—working on behalf of, and with, animals—subscribed to a clearly delineated world-view, one that breaks down the world into "good-for-the-animals" and "bad-for-the-animals." This applied to all involved in their working environment and took precedence over everything else, even personal feelings towards others. As long as the workers were considered to be doing it "for the right reason," many other problems or behavioral quirks were overlooked. This allowed workers to ignore other potential problems such as personality clashes and different beliefs. It formed a rallying point in that like-minded workers—despite personal dislikes on other levels—could come together and agree on many things.

On the other hand, it also provided the basis for a great deal of enmity as there was little room for compromise given the "missionary zeal" with which those who are in it for the animals clung to their beliefs. That these beliefs often were contradictory did not appear to matter; It was the fervor and intensity of their motivation that was considered important. In this way, it conformed to Bittner's (1969) outline of radicalism: "There must be an intensive concern for the purity of belief. The value sought must be purity, not clarity, of belief" (p. 305).

Animal welfare often is considered to be at one end of a continuum of animal protection with animal rights at the other (Francione, 1996). This largely is because of differing ideologies and tactics. However, the "moral certainty" that allows the animal rights activists to "justify their beliefs and actions" (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992, p. 46) is just as evident in the animal welfare community. In this respect, those working with animals in welfare settings arguably can be considered radical simply in their subscription to an overriding principle of "in it for the animals," as Bittner (1969) explains:

> The radical gives unity of meaning evaluative primacy, that he tends to think, argue and act on grounds of an overriding principle, even if the way in which he expands the relevance of the principle is utterly absurd in the light of formal logic (p. 298).

This does not mean necessarily that the animal sanctuary workers studied here actually subscribe to a principle that is absurd; rather, it means they subscribe to a particular way of seeing the world that others may consider absurd. To the workers in question, their commitment to their work and to the animals involved makes complete, conceptual sense. Indeed, they would not be able to meet the physical and emotional demands of their job without it.

The emotional, organizational, and motivational bases and structures of those who work with animals deserve our attention. There are clear similarities, such as their belief systems, between staff from different sanctuaries within this study and similarities between the staff in this study and in other studies (Alger & Alger, 2003; Frommer & Arluke, 2003). These similarities deserve further exploration. We need to continue to explore our relationships with animals. Animal sanctuary culture forms an important part of this, as do the motivations and belief systems of those who work within animal sanctuaries.

The radical belief systems of sanctuary workers identified in this research indicate that animal welfare is of paramount importance. This positively affected how animals were treated within these sanctuaries, in that workers considered not to be working in the best interests of the animals soon were forced to leave the organization or cease to interact with the animals. In this way, the missionary zeal of the workers acted as a safeguard of animal welfare. However, it also determined the lengths to which many sanctuary workers were willing to go—such as the illegal stealing of animals considered to be in bad homes—in the name of animal welfare. The evolution of such belief systems also deserves further study.

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Notes

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[2] A note about definition: In the United Kingdom, organizations that temporarily house unwanted domestic animals with a view to placing them with a new home are called variously shelters, refuges, or sanctuaries; there is (usually) no difference in their outlook and policies implied by the different names. The only exception are local Dog's Homes that are council run (as opposed to charitably run) depositories for stray animals that do not necessarily place the re-homing of animals as high on their agenda. Rather, they seek to reunite lost animals with errant owners. I therefore use the term, animal sanctuary, throughout this paper to refer to those organizations that seek to re-home animals and specify on the odd occasion that I refer to anything different.

[3] Consent was gained from the senior staff at the sanctuaries who therefore were aware of the researcher's presence. It then was left to their discretion whether they decide to tell the rest of the staff. One methodological consideration, as with all participant observation, was whether the presence of the researcher would significantly alter the participant's behavior. Because the researcher already was well known to staff and was routinely involved in work at the sanctuary, this became less of a consideration.

[4] One exception to this was at public meetings where consent was gained only from the senior staff of the organizations present. Therefore, many members of the public who participated in the meetings had no knowledge of the research.

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