

Beastly Morality

Animals as Ethical Agents

Edited by JONATHAN K. CRANE



Columbia University Press
New York

Columbia University Press
Publishers Since 1893
New York Chichester, West Sussex
cup.columbia.edu
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Beastly morality : animals as ethical agents / edited by Jonathan K. Crane.
pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-231-17416-9 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-231-17417-6
(pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-231-54053-7 (e-book)

I. Animals (Philosophy) 2. Agent (Philosophy) 3. Conduct of life. 4. Ethics.

I. Crane, Jonathan K. (Jonathan Kadane), editor.

B105.A55B43 2015

179'.3—dc23

2015009579



Columbia University Press books are printed on permanent and durable acid-free paper.
This book is printed on paper with recycled content.
Printed in the United States of America

c 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
p 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

COVER DESIGN: Milenda Nan Ok Lee

COVER IMAGE: Courtesy Myrtle Beach Safari. Bubbles the elephant
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Eight Fighting Fair

THE ECOLOGY OF HONOR IN HUMANS AND ANIMALS

Dan Demetriou

IN JUNE OF 1813, CAPTAIN Philip Broke of the HMS *Shannon* challenged his counterpart, Captain James Lawrence of the USS *Chesapeake*, to a ship-to-ship duel. Broke hoped to restore British national honor, which was badly bruised at this point in the War of 1812. The problem for Broke was that half a dozen Royal Navy ships had recently been sunk or captured by American frigates of roughly equal size. These defeats in no way challenged British naval supremacy, but they traumatized British pride and self-image. As the great war anthem “Rule, Britannia” tells us, the British had come to see their rule of the waves not only as essential to their freedom, but as a divine command. And for the Royal Navy in particular, mere dominance by overwhelming force wasn’t enough: after decades of victorious actions against often larger European forces, British sailors understandably came to see themselves—sailor to sailor, officer to officer—as without rival. Their recent losses to the U.S. Navy cast that opinion into doubt.

Charged with blockading the Americans in Boston as part of a larger British effort to strangle American trade, Broke had previously tried to engage the American *President* and *Constitution* with his *Shannon* and *Tenemos*, but the prudent American commodore of that squadron, John Rogers, exploited a thick fog and sneaked out of Boston harbor without a scratch. Frustrated by this, Broke pressed the point with Lawrence. He ordered away all the other ships of his squadron, desperate to draw the more powerful, fresher, and more heavily manned *Chesapeake* into single action. And lest there be any doubt about his purpose, he fired off this challenge to Lawrence.

H.B.M. ship *Shannon*, off Boston,
June, 1813

Sir,

As the *Chesapeake* appears now ready for sea, I request that you will do me the favour to meet the *Shannon* with her, ship to ship, to try the fortune of our respective flags. To an officer of your character, it requires some apology for proceeding to further particulars. Be assured, sir, that it is not from any doubt I can entertain of your wishing to close with my proposal, but merely to provide an answer to any objection that might be made, and very reasonably, upon the chance of our receiving unfair support. After [the] diligent attention which we had paid to Commodore Rogers, the pains I took to detach all force but the *Shannon* and *Tenedos* to such a distance that they could not possibly join in any action fought in sight of the capes, and the various verbal messages which had been sent into Boston to that effect, we were much disappointed to find the commodore had eluded us by sailing on the first chance, after the prevailing easterly winds had obliged us to keep an offing from the coast. He, perhaps, wished for some stronger assurance of a fair meeting. I am therefore, induced to address you more particularly, and to assure you that what I write, I pledge my honour to perform to the utmost of my power.

The *Shannon* mounts twenty-four guns upon her broadside, and one light boat-gun—eighteen-pounders upon her maindeck, and thirty-two pound carronades on her quarterdeck and forecastle, and is manned with a complement of 300 men and boys (a large proportion of the latter), besides thirty seamen, boys and passengers, who were taken out of recaptured vessels lately. I am thus minute, because a report has prevailed in some of the Boston papers that we had 150 men additional lent to us from *La Hogue*, which really never was the case. *La Hogue* is now gone to Halifax for provisions, and I will send all other ships beyond the power of interfering with us, and meet you wherever it is most agreeable to you, within the limits of the under mentioned rendezvous. . . .

If you will favour me with any plan of signals or telegraph, I will warn you (if sailing under this promise) should any of my friends be too nigh, or anywhere in sight, until I can detach them out of my way; or I would

sail with you, under a flag of truce, to any place you think safest from our cruisers, hauling it down when fair to begin hostilities.

You must, sir, be aware that my proposals are highly advantageous to you, as you cannot proceed to sea singly in the *Chesapeake* without imminent risk of being crushed by the superior force of the numerous British squadrons which are now abroad, where all your efforts, in case of rencontre, would, however gallant, be perfectly hopeless. I entreat you, sir, not to imagine that I am urged by mere personal vanity to the wish of meeting the *Chesapeake*, or that I depend only upon your personal ambition for your acceding to this invitation: we have both nobler motives. You will feel it as a compliment if I say that the result of our meeting may be the most grateful service I can render to my country; and I doubt not, that you, equally confident of success, will feel convinced that it is only by repeated triumphs, in even combats, that your little navy can now hope to console your country for the loss of that trade it can no longer protect. Favour me with a speedy reply. We are short of provisions and water, and cannot stay long here.

I have the honour to be, sir,
Your obedient, humble servant,
P.B.V. BROKE,
Captain of H.B.M. ship Shannon.

N.B. For the general service of watching your coast it is requisite for me to keep another ship in company to support me with her guns and boats, when employed near the land, and particularly to aid each other if either ship, in chase, should get on shore. You must be aware that I cannot, consistently with my duty, waive so great an advantage for this general service by detaching my consort without an assurance on your part of meeting me directly, and that you will neither seek nor admit aid from any other of your armed vessels if I dispatch mine expressly for the sake of meeting you. Should any special order restrain from thus answering a formal challenge, you may yet oblige me by keeping my proposal a secret, and appointing any place you like to meet us (within 300 miles of Boston) in a given number of days after you sail; as, unless you agree to an interview, I may be busied on other service and, perhaps, be at a distance from Boston when you go to sea. Choose your terms, *but let us meet.* (n.a. 1893)

This remarkable letter helps us see, from the inside, what makes an honor-minded person tick. The word “fair” appears twice and “unfair” once, but in fact the entire letter is devoted to assuring Lawrence that Broke will take every possible measure to ensure a fair fight. Indeed, without quoting the letter in full we would miss the “minute” details and contingencies Broke considers to ensure that his proposed “interview” with Lawrence is fair to the American.

Philosophers and behavioral economists discuss fairness a great deal, but usually in the context of distributing material goods. Broke, however, is interested in a fair distribution of a good of a different sort: a zero-sum good that we will refer to as *competitive prestige*, and one much more often discussed by sports commentators than philosophers. What Broke understood is that what Britain needed most from him was not another successful season of blockaded American trade, but a restoration of what it felt to be its rightful share of competitive prestige among nations. He also knew that earning that prestige necessitated a victory over an American force “in even combat.”

Broke’s letter not only presents us with a noteworthy expression of honor, but also exemplifies how considerations of honor are typically weighed against other practical reasons we have, especially those of authority. Broke was officially under Admiralty orders to smother American trade, not to restore British honor. And although unofficially he was quite right that a victory over an equally (or ideally, more) powerful American would indeed be the “most grateful service” he could perform for his country, he would automatically be court-martialed for the loss of any of his ships, with a negative outcome likely if the Americans fared better by the encounter. And as an authority himself, he had a pastoral responsibility to his sailors, whom he was clearly putting in extra jeopardy by dispersing his squadron in order to invite a very preventable battle.

It might be wondered how considerations of “honor” and “authority” could be as distinct as all that. Surely, both authority and honor concern rankings, status, and social hierarchy? And if we view Broke’s strange behavior as an ethologist might, we cannot help but interpret it in light of the striving for high position observed in many species, where competition for supremacy in (what biologists call) a “dominance hierarchy” can be fierce, especially for males. One might contend that Broke *had* power and dominance over his lieutenants, midshipmen, and sailors, and *sought* power over Lawrence and, by extension, the Americans. What does all this talk of “honor” add, other than to gild the lily?

This chapter's discussion begins by explaining why honor-governed competitions for prestige are indeed morally and psychologically distinct from authoritarian hierarchies. After characterizing honor psychology in humans, we turn to the question of whether honor-typical behaviors are found in nonhuman animals. I argue that paradigmatically honor-typical behavior is apparent in some nonhuman species, and it takes little specialized skill to recognize it or to distinguish such behavior from the primitive authoritarianism of our closest evolutionary relatives. Honor raises many exciting questions about human-animal normative continuity. The most radical proposal in this direction would be that some nonhumans not only behave in honor-typical ways, but are in addition honorable *agents*. I find that claims for "beastly honor" must wait upon philosophical consensus on the nature of moral agency, on the one hand, and additional empirical research into the distribution of honor-typical behavior in higher social animals, on the other. In an effort to help frame such research, I conclude by offering conditions of honor-agency that are general enough to apply to any species and any standard of moral agency.

HONOR VS. AUTHORITY

Honor is enjoying a renaissance, both as a topic of study and as a value worth rehabilitating.¹ What honor actually *is* remains a point of great dispute. Some scholars see it as equating to esteem, high regard, public praise, prestige, or social standing and respect.² Others see it as a *right* to these things, which is importantly different, since one may be honored without being honorable.³ I have no objections to either scholarly tradition, since "honor" is undoubtedly used in those ways. However, I focus on a third item that also is discussed in terms of "honor" and its translations: a particular normative system that says *how*, *when*, and *why* prestige is deserved—in the philosophical jargon, a philosophy "of right" as opposed to a theory of "the good." To avoid any confusion this ambiguity may cause, I will use "prestige" to refer to honor *qua* a good, and will reserve the term "honor" to denote the moral value that legitimizes the normative system of honor, or "honor ethos."

Authoritarianism

The honor ethos, then, concerns the constraints on distributing, pursuing, and respecting prestige. Prestige connotes comparative rank—of some

being superior to others. But so does authority. Does the honor ethos differ enough from the authoritarian moral system to justify its being thought of as a distinct ethos? Yes; and explaining why is the goal of this section.

For our purposes here, authoritarian norms concern *hierarchies*. In an ideal human hierarchy, rank is proportional to responsibility and control. Insofar as we are superiors in a hierarchy, we are responsible for the smooth functioning of our subordinates, and discharging this obligation justifies our control over them. On the other hand, insofar as we are inferiors, we must obey the commands of our superiors, and our obedience to their orders justifies our claim to continued status as subordinates.

In some hierarchies, mobility between ranks is impossible: examples include feudal societies, or the celestial hierarchy consisting of God and the angelic orders. But in hierarchies that allow mobility, individuals ideally move up or down only through promotion or demotion from above by virtue of how well they obey and discharge their rank-centered duties. In the authoritarian system of Judeo-Christian morality, for instance, God “raises up” the righteous, and the descendants of Abraham are “placed above” other nations because of Abraham’s obedience. “Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor the west, nor the south,” we are told, but from the Lord, who “putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalms 75:7). A believing centurion is praised by Jesus for his grasp of divine authority, for the centurion too was “a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, ‘Go,’ and he goeth; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he cometh; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he doeth it” (Matthew 8:9). Like the Roman legions, our modern military is also authoritarian, as are our corporations: subordinates are promoted only if they obey orders and do their job well, and they are demoted or terminated if they do not.

When it comes to demotion and termination, it is important to separate poor performance from code offenses. *Poor performers* are merely incompetent: a well-intentioned middle manager may be unable to meet reasonable profitability expectations for his unit, say. Poor performers won’t be promoted and may be demoted or even fired, but they won’t usually be met with hostility. *Offenders* in hierarchies, on the other hand, are rebellious or insubordinate, which is seen by superiors as violating the basic assumptions of the authoritarian scheme. Offenders are met with hostility; and if they are given a chance to remain in the group at all, they must abase themselves in some way to demonstrate their renewed commitment to authoritarian structure.

Authoritarianism recognizes that poor leaders sometimes need replacing. A nominal authority who has failed his duties may be legitimately overthrown by the inferiors themselves if no superior does so—this is especially true if that leader is not only incompetent but violates his pastoral duties and thus offends against the very code that legitimizes his authority. Nonetheless, rebellion is typically the gravest of offenses, and ambition—a vice on authoritarianism—is a wholly unacceptable reason for turning against one’s superiors. For instance, when Milton’s Satan rebels against God, he does so not for any good authoritarian reason, but rather, as he admits,

Pride and worse Ambition threw me down
Warring in Heav’n against Heav’ns matchless King:
Ah wherefore! he deservd no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.

.....
O had his powerful Destiny ordaind
Me some inferiour Angel, I had stood
Then happie; no unbounded hope had rais’d
Ambition.

Centuries of readers have found Satan’s rebellion to be heroic. But as social psychologists Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham point out, questioning authority is not admirable in this model: “From [the authoritarian] point of view, bumper stickers that urge people to ‘question authority’ and protests that involve civil disobedience are not heroic, they are antisocial.”⁴

The Honor Ethos

In contrast to authoritarian hierarchies, we have honor-governed *prestige rankings*. I noted above how the sense of “honor” I intend here is the one referring to a normative system that distributes prestige. We must now be more accurate: strictly speaking, the honor ethos regulates rankings of *competitive* prestige.

To see the difference between mere prestige and competitive prestige, note that in some cultures people enjoy high prestige and social rank

because of various qualities, such as being high-born, charismatic, beautiful, tall, funny, light-skinned, or athletic. These qualities are not competitive. Take athleticism: whereas an excellent runner happens to run more quickly than most people, an excellent competitive runner runs quickly *and* has the virtues of being a good competitor. When pitted against others, a merely excellent runner may panic, cheat, lose sorely, win ungraciously, or simply decline to compete, whereas the excellent competitive runner will not do any of these things. Honor as a normative system, then, keeps tabs and encourages not excellence as such, but competitive excellence. In this way honor moralizes regular prestige in the same way justice moralizes material goods and welfare: although justice on any contractarian tradition is ultimately about a cooperative distribution of these things, someone with a justice mind-set comes to see unjustly gained goods as positively bad and not reason-providing (e.g., the pleasure of the rapist does not at all weigh in favor of rape). Likewise, honor is about prestige, but the honor-minded person will moralize prestige and thus come to regard only honorably gained—i.e., competitively gained—prestige as reason-providing and good.

In a well-functioning ranking of competitive prestige, rank comes with a proportional amount of competitive prestige (not control), and unequal prestige is justified by the unequal distribution of competitive excellence (not responsibility). The most obvious example of competitive prestige rankings is found in sports: a high-ranked tennis player has more competitive prestige than low-ranked ones, but she has no control of, responsibility for, or authority over her rivals. Nor does she seek any.

The basic aim of the honor-minded person is not to reach the top by any means possible, but to ensure that the public ranking of competitive prestige reflects true competitive excellence. That said, since it would distort the ranking just as badly to accept a lower rank than one deserves as to accept a higher rank than one deserves, honorable people must strive for a higher rank if they feel they can win it—there is no room for false modesty in an honor system. Likewise, lest one occupy a higher rank than one deserves, honorable people must welcome challenges from likely up-and-comers. However, since not all would-be challengers have a plausible claim to one's rank, one shouldn't accept challenges from much-lower-ranked competitors or challenge much-higher-ranked competitors. Finally, since one's claim to higher status isn't proven by besting lower-ranked opponents, the honorable avoid challenging those who are

weaker or somehow lower in ranking than themselves. “Bullying” lower-ranked or weaker competitors suggests to others, if anything, that one sees oneself as deserving a *lower*, not a higher, place in their esteem. This is because honorable people demand fair contests for status, since obviously enough unfair competitions do not result in rankings that reflect true competitive excellence. We can codify these thoughts with the following principles:

Rank Ambition: One must seek the highest status one deserves, so one must challenge those who are ranked slightly higher if one thinks one can defeat them.

Rank Humility: But one mustn’t challenge those who are ranked much higher, and parties who are ranked much higher cannot accept challenges from those who are ranked much lower.

No Ducking: One must not decline legitimate challenges to one’s rank.

No Bullying: One mustn’t aggress upon/challenge those of lower rank.

Fair Play: Competitions must be fair, and extraneous advantages (e.g., wealth, rank, superior networks, etc.) must be eliminated, set aside or voluntarily handicapped.

These are some of the rules that, if adhered to, make one fully honorable; similarly, violating them makes one dishonorable. According to this system, “honor” in the sense of competitive prestige is supposed to be apportioned in greater or lesser degree according to rank among those playing by the rules of the game; bystanders have no honor-standing.

The performance/offense dichotomy we noted in authoritarian hierarchies is also evident in the honor-governed rankings of competitive prestige. Poor performers in rankings of competitive prestige merely have low prestige. They may not be highly regarded, but they nonetheless are fully honorable because they compete correctly and give and demand rank-appropriate respect. Code offenders, on the other hand, are positively dishonored. The punishment directed at the dishonorable offender is not abasement, as it is in authoritarianism, but rather takes the form of social death: insignias are torn off of uniforms, names are erased from record books, e-mails are ignored, faces are not recognized in hallways.⁵ Shame and contempt—the widely recognized self- and other-critical affects attending judgments of dishonorable conduct—prepare us to dole out and accept just these sorts of punishments.⁶

As Broke's letter exemplifies, honor's boyish and playful spirit was commonly applied to war—or, more precisely, battle. The First World War supposedly taught us that war was not a game, and to look pityingly on those naive British soldiers kicking along footballs as they charged German trenches. But in seeing battle as dangerous play, those young men were channeling an ancient and widespread human impulse. In his seminal work on play, *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga describes the “play quality” of aristocratic warfare, which pitted equal antagonists against each other to prove who was “the better man.”⁷ Thus, underhanded forms of fighting (ambush, punitive expeditions) and “base” motives for conflict (conquest, domination, and material gain) are naturally repellent to this ethos. As Huizinga notes, in honorable war or play antagonists compete not out of a “desire for power or a will to dominate, [but rather] to excel others, to be the first and to be honoured for that.”⁸ This is why Achilles—who deliberately chose glory over life, prosperity, and authority—is the paradigm warrior, and not the wily Odysseus, whose less-than-honorable stratagem actually defeats the Trojans.

Theoretical Payoffs

The distinction between authoritarianism and honor and their corresponding sorts of rankings is relevant not only to ethics and political theory, but also to ethology, evolutionary psychology, comparative psychology, and behavioral ecology. For instance, in an influential article,⁹ biologist Sandra Vehrencamp distinguishes between “egalitarian” animal societies and “despotic” ones, arguing that a main force in creating despotic animal societies is the inability of lower-ranked individuals to pull up stakes and leave the group.¹⁰ Vehrencamp defines a despotic society as one where “benefits accrue disproportionately to a few individuals in the group at the expense of others” and the egalitarian one to be “where benefits are divided roughly equally or in proportion to the risk or effort taken.” Egalitarian societies are (for some unexplained reason) “cooperative,” whereas despotic ones are “competitive.”¹¹ Clearly, Vehrencamp's one-dimensional continuum cannot accommodate the distinction between authoritarianism and honor. On the one hand, honor-governed rankings of competitive prestige are clearly competitive. Furthermore, honor-based rankings of competitive prestige are surely ones in which “benefits accrue disproportionately to a few individuals at the expense of others,” since prestige

is a zero-sum commodity and can only be gained by one if lost by others. On the other hand, honor groups are also quite voluntary and egalitarian: the prestige that high-ranked players enjoy is voluntarily given by their rivals and their audience, and that prestige is instantly withdrawn the moment it is decided that it was won dishonorably—even God wouldn't be powerful enough to *coerce* competitive prestige. So are honor-based rankings of competitive prestige competitive and despotic (because prestige is distributed unequally and at the expense of others) or cooperative and egalitarian (because all involved voluntarily compete and bestow their prestige voluntarily)? There seems no sense to be made of the question, because Verhencamp presents us with a false choice. It is an abuse of the notion of "despotism" to think that Roger Federer, even in his prime, was a despot in the world of tennis simply because he had more prestige and won it competitively. Whereas authoritarian despots *compel*, honorable winners *attract*, their benefits.

I am not the first to note the important distinction between rankings of prestige and rankings of dominance. For instance, in a widely cited article, psychologists Joseph Henrich and Francisco Gil-White distinguish between prestige, which for them concerns ranks based on attraction, and dominance rankings, which are based on "agonism" or "force."¹² Prestige rankings for Henrich and Gil-White are based upon some excellence; and our attending to the excellent, high-status people is adaptive, they speculate, since this process helps us transmit important cultural knowledge. Their way of carving things up is revealed by an instructive example:

In humans . . . status and its prerequisites have often come from *non-agonistic* sources—in particular, from excellence in valued domains of activity, even without any credible claim of superior force. For example, paraplegic physicist Stephen Hawking—widely regarded as Einstein's heir, and current occupier of Newton's chair at Cambridge University—certainly enjoys very high status throughout the world. Those who, like Hawking, achieve high status by excellence in valued domains are often said to have "prestige."¹³

So to Henrich and Gil-White, the enfeebled Hawking couldn't plausibly be said to have won his status agonistically. Rather, he is eminent because he's excellent at what he does. However, in light of the theory advanced above, precisely the reverse is true. Of course Hawking didn't rise to prominence through muscular exploit. But his area of endeavor is

physics, not athletics or war, and in the academy excellence is distinguished through *intellectual* competition. Academia is in fact a fiercely competitive realm. As researchers, we must win our share of a limited amount of prestige by taking someone else's ideas down. The more popular and successful the theory we convincingly undermine or (better yet) replace, the better for our status. As professors, we generally do not demand that students agree with us, as happens in authoritarian educational systems, but rather we encourage our students to challenge our ideas and theories. As conference organizers, editors, and reviewers, we take measures to militate against the advantages of "old boy" networks and the disadvantages faced by those we have unconscious biases against. Moreover, the proliferation of grants and prizes is so extraordinary that the day-to-day labors of teaching and research often take a backseat to work created by those competitions. The competitiveness we observe at the professorial level is writ large on the level of our universities: the only measure of success for any dean, provost, chancellor, or college president is how well their "peer institutions" are doing, against whom schools compete for students, government and private funding, talent, and college rankings. *This* is the milieu in which Hawking rose to eminence. So to claim that Hawking gained his status non-agonistically is gravely mistaken.

That said, there is much to recommend Henrich and Gil-White's distinction. Certainly it is the case that prestige can be gained non-competitively, as it is with Indian castes. And even excellence itself can garner prestige non-competitively: the prestige of being musical may well encourage young people to become musicians. So I have no dispute with their claim that mere prestige may promote cultural transmission of successful practices. My point is that there are *agonistic* prestige-based rankings, and these agonistic rankings are nonetheless very much to be distinguished from the sort of strongman, authoritarian-style rankings that Henrich and Gil-White wish to separate from prestige-based ones. Their basic misunderstanding, as their example of Hawking reveals, is that they take "agonism" to include "aggression, intimidation, violence, etc."¹⁴ But lumping agonism together with other sorts of violence is an abuse of the term. The focal meaning of the agon is a contest of equals, not just any old exertion of force, much less that of bullying aggression or enforced control of inferiors (even biologists, who are somewhat promiscuous with the term, won't refer to predation as "agonistic"). Whether the contest is physical or not isn't important—from the time of the Greeks we have used

“agon” to describe non-physical contests, too. Hopefully, the account of the honor ethos offered here makes it clear that even a mild-mannered academic such as Hawking lives by a code that is structurally the same as the warrior’s: both seek prestige through competitive excellence, both understand that this excellence can be revealed only through fair contests, and both seek from their high status not domination but recognition of their deserved place in the competitive ranking.

In summary, then, individuals in authoritarian hierarchies are connected by control, responsibility, and obedience. Individuals in contests for competitive prestige have no such ties, but are responsible for ensuring that the ranking reflects true competitive excellence. Prominent among the duties entailed by this overarching obligation is an imperative to compete fairly.

HONOR-TYPICAL BEHAVIOR IN ANIMALS

The authority- and honor-based models of rank described above are ideal types. Real cultures and real people are messy, and any particular human ranking will be influenced by a host of quirky historical and environmental factors, including factors that resist rankings altogether, as egalitarian tendencies do. There might even be *additional* normative systems suited for other sorts of rankings, for all we have said. Nonetheless, these two normative systems of honor and authority exert a considerable pull in our disassociated moral minds, and paradigmatic examples of each manifest themselves in the right contexts. Corporations, governments, and modern militaries are good places to look for authoritarianism. Warrior castes, athletics, and “competitive” academic institutions are good places to look for honor-typical behaviors. For various reasons, these subcultures create ecologies that make such systems likely. Might there be ecologies in non-human nature that are also conducive to authoritarian and honor-typical behaviors?

Chimpanzee Authoritarianism

Male chimpanzees present us with perhaps our best, but still a very imperfect, example of animal authoritarianism. Generalities are dangerous here. Chimpanzees are highly intelligent creatures with distinct personalities. And there are behavioral differences even among troops of them.¹⁵

Furthermore, different males will pursue different strategies in negotiating their local hierarchy: for instance, some alphas—and, it has been suggested, the smaller ones—employ a softer leadership style, which includes lots of grooming of the lower orders, whereas others—and perhaps the biggest alphas—use a more domineering approach.¹⁶ Nonetheless, a composite picture of chimpanzee males suggests a somewhat authoritarian social structure.

Male chimpanzee rankings are decided by challenges, but these challenges are not completely predictable or rigidly ritualized. Challenging aggression is usually premeditated (a male might heft a stone before his target even appears), and is typically not a one-off action but part of a sustained effort to dominate the targeted male.¹⁷ Males cannot achieve the highest ranks without forming alliances with other males and without gaining the support of females: indeed, chimpanzee dominance hierarchies are not well ordered in part because A may dominate B if allies are around, whereas B may dominate A in isolation.¹⁸ Alphas sensing a troublesome alliance may form “alliance breaking” coalitions of their own, with lieutenants who not only help them physically coerce lower-ranked males but even alert them to potential upstarts.

When squabbles erupt among low-ranked individuals, alphas often play the populist and support the weaker of the two belligerents (“loser support”), and this is thought to help cement their status with the troop. On the other hand, social-climbing young challengers tend to adopt a “winner support” strategy, presumably to gain powerful allies in their future bid for supremacy. Generally, pacification behavior is seen as part of a “control role” that attaches to high status, and a clever male sometimes interferes with a rival’s attempts to break up squabbles, as if challenging the rival’s right to interfere. It is possible that the troop understands the political implications of all these behaviors and assesses the dominance ambitions and skills of males performing them.¹⁹ For instance, Frans de Waal describes how an aspiring male, Luit, abused females in the presence of the dominant Yeoren, as if to demonstrate to the females that Yeoren was unable to protect them. When Luit became dominant, his behavior changed and he became a protector of the females.²⁰ In human terms, the idea would be that an ideal alpha doesn’t so much *equalize* the weak and the strong as *protect* the weak against the excessive abuses of the strong.²¹ Furthermore, he claims the right to do so solely for himself; so if another male successfully lobbies for grassroots support, he is in essence declaring himself to be the true alpha.

Chimpanzees have a variety of ways to communicate deference to dominant individuals, including special grunts, postures, and patterns of approach and avoidance. But for some alphas, the usual amount of dominance is not enough. Researchers routinely describe some alphas as “bullies,” “brutes,” “thugs,” or “disagreeable” and “nasty.”²² And some researchers claim that particularly despotic alphas, who are selfish groomers and rule by terror, are deposed by subordinates more quickly and violently than average.²³ These moralistic evaluations are significant to the question of beastly morality, for they indicate a sense among researchers of the role a chimpanzee alpha is “supposed” to play. For instance, Jane Goodall is reported to have remarked to attendees at a leadership conference that chimpanzee “tyrants” last about two years, whereas a “real chimpanzee leader” lasts about ten years. This is because a leader “is one who leads because the others respect him and want to follow him. If he sets off on a boundary patrol the others will follow because they want to. Whereas if the tyrant sets off the others won’t follow on boundary patrol because they don’t like him very much.”²⁴

De Waal contrasts chimpanzee alphas with the much more despotic baboon and rhesus monkey alphas, observing that whereas most chimpanzee males take sides when they interfere in squabbles, those assuming a control role (and thus perhaps taking on the mantle of an alpha) are “impartial” and, as it were, “place themselves *above* the conflicting parties” (emphasis in the original). These observations lead de Waal to ruminate on a sort of egalitarianism among chimpanzees, insofar as these more “impartial” interventions—even to the point of favoring the weaker parties—may serve to level the hierarchy below an alpha, thus creating a “gap” between him and possible rivals. Moreover, the benefits of this populist strategy aren’t to be despised by those at the bottom rungs.²⁵ An individual behaving in this authoritative but non-despotic way is in some sense an ideal chimpanzee alpha.

So although chimpanzee behavior presents us with an imperfect analogue to authoritarianism as described above, we do see some aspects of authoritarianism in their societies. Chimpanzees sort themselves into rankings, and those rankings come with control of those below. This control isn’t brute domination, but has something like a primitively pastoral or “leadership” quality to it. Low-ranking chimpanzees expect and demand something from their dominants, and overweening alphas who rule by force alone pay a heavy price when, during a challenge to their reign, the lower orders of the troop turn on them. Coalition forming is

rampant in conflicts; and in both intra- and inter-tribal conflict, we see no inkling whatsoever of a “fair fight” sensibility in these, our closest relatives.²⁶ Instead, we see a scheming, opportunistic, guileful “politicking” that is a credit to the social intelligence of the species, but hardly anything we would call noble or honorable. This is not to condemn chimpanzees morally, of course. Plausibly, all this strategizing and coalition building is a good way to select for alphas who will themselves be sensitive to the needs, interests, motives, and personalities of the troop they are to dominate.²⁷ Nonetheless, we will have to look elsewhere for beastly honor as such.

Honor-Typical Behavior in Nonhumans

But where? Well, given the theory of honor described above, we should start off by looking for honor-typical behavior in species where rank

- (a) is fought for;
- (b) is fought for “fairly”; and
- (c) is not correlated with responsibility or control.

“Fair fighting” is somewhat common among “tournament species,” or species in which a small number of males do most of the mating and their mating access is determined by their success in male-male competitions influenced, to some extent, by female choice.²⁸ This mating pattern creates highly dimorphic, ornamented, and weaponized males. For instance, elephant seals are a paradigmatic tournament species. They are highly sexually dimorphic, with males often four times the size of females. This is because bull size is highly correlated with sexual success, given that the most dominant “beachmasters” control the best stretches of beach and the largest harems, while smaller males lurk around the periphery, lucky to sneak in some sex here and there. And their male-male competition behavior—in which they rear up and smash themselves down against each other in a particularly ungainly form of combat—is as iconic an example of fair fighting in the animal kingdom as any. Elephant seal fights are fair because we do not see multiple bulls joining together to oust a more dominant male. The fights are also fair because challengers engage beachmasters only if they feel up to it. Thus, actual encounters between elephant seal bulls pit males of roughly equal size against each other. Fi-

nally, dominant elephant seals do not stand in any control relationship to the smaller males they fight off.²⁹ So are elephant seals demonstrative of honor-typical behavior?

No. Although elephant seal bulls are one of the species delimited by criteria (a)–(c) above, they do not present an ideal instance of honor-typical behavior because there is a strong element of “resource defense” in their mating system. Bulls arrive on the rookery before cows, and they fight to establish their dominance on the beaches that are most attractive to prospective mates (they also fight more often on breeding beaches than on non-breeding beaches). Once the cows arrive, bulls aspire to defend their stretch of beach against encroaching males. Granted, cows have a great deal to say about whom they mate with: they are more sexually receptive to dominant males, they are particularly receptive to bulls who have just won encounters, and they even alert dominant bulls if they are being mounted by a lesser male. So it may be that females are receptive to bulls who can maintain a beach not only because they dominate the *beach*, but because they *dominate*, period.³⁰ Nonetheless, the sexual success of bulls is substantially influenced by their ability to control an area that females want. According to our theory of honor, however, pure competitive prestige is about being attractive for what you *are*, given your victories in fair contests, not for what you will *provide* for your admirer. So we should add to (a)–(c) that we’re looking for species for whom

(d) contestants are desirable because they defeat rivals, not because they dominate resources.

Criterion (d) thus directs our attention to species with “non-resource-based” mating strategies—that is, species for whom the competing sex provides nothing useful to the choosy sex except their gametes. The prime examples of such species are those in which males gather together in a lek, or grouping for the purposes of competitive display. (Pleasingly, the biological term “lek” is shortened from the Swedish *lek-ställe*, which literally means “sport-place,” “playground,” or “playing field.”) Some grouse species, for instance, gather together in the spring to strut, vocalize, and fight “fairly” under the watchful gaze of highly selective females (10 percent of the males account for 80 percent of the matings).³¹ Males provide nothing to the females other than their desirable genes. The exact cause of male desirability in species with non-resource-based mating systems is not fully

understood. It may be that highly ornamented and weaponized males prove their genetic hardiness by surviving despite the extra costs of their ornamentation, which makes them easy targets to predators.³² Or perhaps certain traits are attractive because they reveal a resistance to parasites.³³ It may also be that the trait is attractive to females precisely *because* it is attractive to females, making the prospect of having “sexy sons” from this male highly advantageous for a picky female.³⁴

Various deer species also provide an excellent example of honor-typical behavior in nonhumans. As with grouse, in red deer we have a highly dimorphic, polygynous species with males who do not care for offspring or provide resources for females. Stags compete for harems through overt agonistic contests (locking horns), which explains their weaponry as well as their size dimorphism. And although stags do try to “herd” hinds into their harems, it would be an exaggeration to say that females do not have any say in the matter: females are attracted to dominant stag roars, and can escape one harem for another if they wish to.³⁵ During the rut, stags size each other up through roars and parallel walking rituals. Often, a prospective challenger realizes that he’s bitten off more than he can chew, and trots off. But when he feels his chances are good enough, he will lock horns and battle things out in sometimes deadly encounters. Stags will challenge males who are only slightly higher-ranked than themselves, since this strategy strikes the ideal balance between risk and reward (fighting a much higher-ranked male is too risky, and defeating a roughly equally-ranked or lower-ranked male is not advantageous enough): animal equivalents of the “Rank Ambition” and “Rank Humility” principles.³⁶ It is also worth noting that when it comes to actual fights, stags clearly pass up opportunities to gore or kick their antagonists. Since stags do gouge and kick predators when they can, it doesn’t seem as though this “fair fight” behavior with other stags is attributable to their being too unintelligent to realize the deadliness of their antlers or hooves. For instance, on one BBC video, a stag named Percy returns from an expedition to round up more females only to find a challenger, Titus, roaring right amidst his (Percy’s) harem. As Percy charges, Titus’s flanks are plainly exposed, but Percy trots *around* to Titus’s front and locks horns with him in furious encounter. After about a minute, the two disengage and roar, parallel walk, and Titus retreats.³⁷

Fallow deer present us with an even more interesting case of honor-typical behavior in animals. Fallow stags use two mating strategies. During

the rut, some males use a resource defense strategy, and try to dominate large territories on the edges of glades with oak trees whose acorns does find desirable. But the stronger stags tend to form leks in the center of a rutting area that offer negligible benefits to females in terms of resources. However, females are more attracted to the lek, and greatly prefer mating with dominant lekking males. Thus the weaker males engage in a low-risk, low-reward strategy that may earn them a small number of copulations, whereas lekking males pursue a high-risk, high-reward strategy by fighting things out in the lek. For females, the lek provides a chance to efficiently evaluate males, but this choosiness is of course to be balanced against the costs of mating with males in areas that offer more resources.³⁸

So in some grouse and deer species we have good analogues to honor-typical behavior in humans. As with chimpanzees, these animals create ranks and are acutely sensitive to who's stronger and weaker. Yet unlike chimpanzees, these creatures settle rank through "fair fights," even though they are physically capable of injuring opponents in other ways. Furthermore, it is highly probable that these victories serve to impress mobile, choosy females looking less for resources or protection than they are an excellent genetic contribution. Finally, these males take on no responsibility or control role by rising up the ranks.

Thus, whether we are speaking of animals or humans, it is plausible that certain sorts of ecologies promote authoritarian and honor-typical behaviors. Sometimes leadership is beneficial: when a group of highly social individuals with various interests need to coalesce for some reason, for instance. In that case, it makes sense to select popular and dominant individuals as leaders, since they are more likely to do a good job of satisfying or shaping the desires of the fractious group. Democratic election is one way to select such individuals. Another way is to create a system that promotes ambitious, charismatic, effective coalition builders (which self-made monarchs—and chimpanzee alphas—are). On the other hand, sometimes we're not looking for a leader, but we want to know who's best at something. Maybe we want to know which musician to make first chair. Or maybe we need advice about global warming, and need to know who the best climatologists are. Or maybe we enjoy some sport, and we can't help wondering who is best at it. Or maybe we want to know who will provide us with the healthiest offspring or the sexiest sons. In such cases we need competitive mechanisms to sort out who's best. Admittedly, this process does weed out some excellent individuals who are simply poor

competitors—we all know immensely talented and capable people who could not handle the competitive aspects of their excellence’s corresponding “game.” But our need for objective proof of excellence forces us to use competitive success as the measure of even non-competitive excellence. Since the results of those contests illuminate the desired quality—i.e., are what biologists call “honest signals”—only if the contests are fair, we have a vested interest in ensuring fairness and condemning cheaters (see Bekoff, chapter 7 in this volume).

AGENCY AND MORAL MULTIPLICITY

Some sort of moral pluralism—at least on the psychological level—is increasingly probable: a recent “consensus statement” by a number of empirically informed moral psychologists affirms Jonathan Haidt’s hypothesis that there are multiple building blocks of morality, each with its own evolutionary history.³⁹ On a version of this view I favor, there are multiple normative systems, each consisting of distinct principles and justified by different values. There may be a value we call *justice*, which validates an ethos that sees rightness in terms of cooperation and wrongness in terms of free-riding, and which legitimizes punishments designed to correct distortions to the distribution of the extra benefit gained by cooperating.⁴⁰ There may be a value we call *purity*, which justifies an ethos that sees rightness in terms of purity and wrongness in terms of contamination, and which legitimizes cleansing punishments, such as exile.⁴¹ As seen above, there seem to be values of *authority* and *honor*, with their codes and characteristic punishments surveyed above. And so forth—how many of these moral systems influence human behavior is an open question.

Multiplicity

If this picture is correct, then our twentieth-century talk of “moral intuitions,” “moral principles,” and “moral judgments” is too coarse-grained, and in some contexts should be replaced with more-informative language along the lines of “honor intuitions,” “principles of justice,” and “purity judgments.” And, apropos to the theme of this book, similar thoughts apply to “moral agency”: it will be possible and advisable in many discussions to be more specific about what sort of moral agency we’re talking about, so we should sometimes speak of *justice-agency*, *authority-agency*, *honor-agency*, and so on.

The multiplicity of moral systems complicates the question of whether an animal is a "moral agent." To see why, consider how most authors sympathetic to animal moral agency put forth heartwarming cases of animals acting kindly. A widely discussed instance is that of the self-sacrificing behavior of some captive macaques who preferred to go hungry rather than see an unrelated conspecific, sitting behind a one-way mirror, suffer from electrical shocks (macaques who had themselves been shocked were even more averse to being fed at the expense of the other's suffering).⁴² We are moved by stories of elephants mourning dead loved ones, and accounts of dolphins who nudge weakened swimmers to the surface (recently, researchers filmed a handful of long-beaked common dolphins forming a "raft" to keep a paralyzed podmate afloat for hours before she finally succumbed).⁴³ Perhaps these are cases of "care-agency." However, there is no a priori reason to think that an individual who is agentive in one respect will be agentive in all respects. For example, de Waal's comments about "competent" male alphas who can stop a fight by "raising an eyebrow or with a single step forward" might suggest authority-agency in such individuals (holding fixed your favored view of what agency requires), but in and of itself such behavior gives us little indication of a caring agent.⁴⁴ So even if some nonhumans pass the threshold of "moral" agency because they are moral agents in certain ways, it is quite possible that these individuals lack other sorts of moral agency. In some cases, this moral inability results from lack of training or other environmental contingency. But in most cases the absence of some particular sort of agency is due to the makeup of the individual animal. If we magically made the asocial and non-maternal squid as intelligent as ourselves, surely it would nonetheless be hopeless as a caretaker, leader, and competitor, and it would be silly to blame intelligent squid for these qualities.

Thus, since moral agency may be realized in some moral modes but not others, we must keep distinct the qualities making an individual a moral agent generally from those making one an agent in some particular moral respect. Not everyone is as fastidious at separating the general conditions of moral agency from particular moral capabilities. For instance, in his discussion of animals and morality, de Waal writes at one point that "evolution has produced the prerequisites for morality: a tendency to develop social norms and enforce them, the capacities of *empathy* and *sympathy*, *mutual aid* and a sense of *fairness*, the mechanisms for *conflict resolution*, and so on."⁴⁵ De Waal is certainly not alone in thinking that the roots of human morality are to be seen in proto-moral qualities of caring and

cooperative behavior in animals.⁴⁶ And in an important early essay on animal agency, philosopher Lawrence Johnson concludes that “in general, a being acts as a moral agent when it respects the interests of (some) others as well as, or to some degree, in preference to its own.”⁴⁷ But it does not seem that honor (or, for that matter, authority) requires empathy, sympathy, mutual aid, or altruism. And it doesn’t seem that altruism or authority requires fairness. So if creatures must have all these qualities to be agents, then no matter how intelligent and morally conscientious they are otherwise, they won’t be moral agents if they lack any of these particular capacities. This strikes me as implausible. Take the case of honor-agency. *Star Trek’s* Klingons may serve as a thought experiment here: an intelligent species whose defining characteristic is their innate love of honor and its agonistic norms, but who have trouble understanding and abiding by “human” (read: Starfleet) norms, which are biased in favor of altruism and cooperation. Klingons are certainly agents. And although they lack agency in some moral respects (let us grant), they doubtless are honor-agents. In at least this way they are moral agents. Therefore sympathy, an interest in giving mutual aid, altruism, etc., are not necessary to moral agency.

Honor as a Moral Value

Of course, this argument assumes that honor is a *moral* value. Philosophers are divided on the question of whether honor is a moral quality, and I cannot make the full case for that assumption here.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, a few words on the moral status of honor should be sufficient for establishing the plausibility of the claim.

First, it is worth noting that the etymology of our words for moral praise—*virtus* (literally, “manliness”) and *arête* (something akin to battle-field excellence)—testify to the widespread notion among pagan Europeans, at least, that agonistic qualities were once centrally important to our fundamental appraisals of people. We may have improved our notions of what is centrally important, of course. But progress in figuring out *what really matters morally* (a substantive normative discovery) is a different thing from progress in *what it means for something to matter morally* (a meta-normative, or formal, discovery).

Also worth thinking about is whether honor-psychology satisfies mainstream formal criteria of “moral” phenomena. We should be impressed by the way honor’s demands are seen by many (sub)cultures as “trumping”

all other concerns, as demonstrated by the shocking sacrifices that honor adherents, such as Captain Broke, are prepared to make. The nature of these sacrifices also suggests that duties of honor are being interpreted in a disinterested way: recall Broke's commitment to fight fairly with Lawrence under terms that Lawrence also would find acceptable—Broke was hardly "making an exception of himself." Furthermore, the honor ethos also portrays honor's principles as universally binding and inescapable. In his letter to Lawrence, Broke graciously apologized on behalf of Commodore Rogers for the latter's refusal to meet Broke on even terms, the suggestion being that Rogers's slipping out of Boston harbor under fog risked violating the "No Ducking" rule. Rogers didn't have the option, in Broke's mind at least, of simply rejecting the norms of honor.⁴⁹ Finally, honor's principles are certainly social, insofar as they regulate the social interactions, and they are practical, insofar as they claim to norm actions. So honor's principles are treated as trumping, universal, impartial, social, and practical.

These five qualities aren't sufficient for honor's principles to count as *in fact* moral: moral norms must also be reasonable—there must be some *reason* to follow a moral rule. Some readers will find competitive prestige to be valuable, and some won't. The latter group may reject the honor ethos because they find it otiose, given the irrelevance of competitive prestige or prestige generally. But most readers will grant that competitive prestige *is* valuable; indeed, few readers who are honest with themselves will find that they do not strive greatly for it, and I trust these readers will have a difficult time finding fault with honor's principles for distributing it.

Doubts might linger, of course: many audiences reject honor because the examples I and other scholars give of honor-typical behavior—duels, medieval tournaments, tribal contests, athletics—smacks of an ethically toxic brew of masculinism, bellicosity, aggressiveness, and inegalitarianism. Certainly my discussion of honor-typical behavior in strutting male grouse and sexually frustrated stags battling to impress females will do little to mitigate these concerns. Nonetheless, audiences who find honor bewildering or downright nasty must keep in mind two points. First, we must separate what *is* honorable from what people *think* is honorable. I doubt many friends of justice would want to defend ancient or medieval punishments executed for the sake of justice, or the many bad things that continue to be done in our "justice system," including inhumane forms of capital punishment and the widespread prosecution of people

for morally permissible acts. So why must a friend of honor be committed to defending the immoral acts done in the name of honor? It is our job as philosophers to help improve humanity's sense of these values, not to dismiss them because of popular misconceptions of what they require. On the other hand—and this is the second point—we must grant the possibility that, even after giving honor a fair hearing, a critic may see no reason to act honorably in her pursuit of competitive prestige. After all, honor would not be a *unique* moral system if it was reducible to other moral values; so it stands to reason that if someone is quite (stubbornly?) satisfied with her present set of moral values, she will be bound to reject the addition of honor (or any other value that does not reduce to her preferred set of values). Suppose such a critic is right, and there really is no reason to be honorable. Even so, good philosophical practice nonetheless suggests we avoid begging questions against first-order views—especially against views cherished by large segments of humanity—in advancing formal conditions for the moral realm. Kantians and utilitarians disagree, and their disagreement at least partially reduces to disputes over what is reasonable or not. But each must concede that both sides are advancing *moral* theories, and thus each side must characterize the “moral” so as not to beg the question against the other. The same lesson applies to formulations of “moral agency” vis-à-vis honor.

Happily, most accounts of moral agency do not beg first-order moral questions. Some say an individual A is a moral agent if and only if A can apprehend moral reasons, and act accordingly.⁵⁰ Some say this is not enough—A must also understand that the moral reasons are *moral* ones, fulfilling the diverse (and contested) criteria for what counts as a specifically “moral” reason.⁵¹ Some offer a much lower standard, according to which A is a moral agent if A merely acts virtuously (where “act” seems to imply voluntariness and the ability to have chosen otherwise).⁵² For the purposes of this chapter, I wish to remain uncommitted on the general criteria for moral agency or the question of whether any animals are agents. My contribution is to say what must be added to “beastly” agency (supposing there is such a thing) to get us beastly honorableness.

Beastly Honor

We begin by noting that if one is to have any hope of being honorable, one must be able to identify her *honor group* (among whom it is appropri-

ate for her to compete) and have some sense of the prestige rankings of individuals within that group (including herself). For animals, the honor group may be the conspecific males or females of a certain age and/or locality competing for mates, or perhaps it will be the other dogs at an agility competition. It may be possible to call a creature who is deprived of an honor group “honorable” if she *would* have been honorable if given the opportunity. Nonetheless, such a creature would have been prevented from acting honorably, since honor is (as is justice or authority) a social norm, and cannot be exemplified by isolated individuals. So there may be a third precondition on beastly honorableness: the creature in question must *actually* have the opportunity to negotiate a competitive prestige ranking.

With these preconditions met, we can use the principles of honor discussed earlier to guide our thoughts about what it would take to make an animal honorable. According to “Rank Ambition,” the individual should be competitive. Again, by “being competitive” we do not mean the desire to monopolize some resource or to control others, but rather a drive to win. With respect to animals, it is not uncommon to hear horseracing professionals claim this on behalf of some horses. Perhaps the greatest thoroughbred ever, Secretariat, was said by many to be not only markedly intelligent but also keenly competitive. His trainer, Charlie Davis, claimed Secretariat moped after losses early in his career, and

Secretariat’s owner Penny Chenery lends some credence to Davis’ story. “I do think we humanize the animals we love,” admits Chenery. “But Secretariat was like that. After he got beat, he wouldn’t come to the webbing (the barrier across the stall door). He wouldn’t be consoled, saying, in effect, ‘I know I messed up.’” After each of those losses, Davis says he and groom Eddie Sweat knew exactly what to do: Nothing. They let their big horse work things out for himself. “We’d just leave him be the next couple days,” Davis explains. But when Secretariat returned to the track to train for his next race, Davis would be ready. “I’d just hold on tight and let him do what he wanted to do,” says Davis. “I knew I couldn’t hold him. He’d be thinking, ‘Now I’ve got to get this out of my system, and be ready next time.’ When Onion beat him in the Whitney he was a mad horse. Mad. And then he came back and set a world record. When Prove Out beat him, I’d say, I know he wants to get big. He’d work fast and I’d say, ‘Oh man. Oh, man. They better look out.’ And sure enough he went right to the front—and was gone.”⁵³

Second, the individual should also be averse to challenging weaker parties in his/her/its honor group (“No Bullying”). Stags will challenge only higher-ranked individuals. Stags presumably act this way not because of some commitment to an abstract principle, but ultimately because challenging lower- or equal-ranked males does not benefit their mating prospects enough to risk themselves. It takes only a little imagination, however, to imagine a species that comes to care about competing for prestige for its own sake, even if the roots of that impulse lay in competition for mates. Third, the individual should challenge those just above it in the ranking (“Rank Humility”). As we saw, a red deer stag will challenge only slightly higher-ranked stags because its chances of losing to a much higher-ranked stag are significant enough to make it not worth the danger and effort. And once again, this pattern is a sound strategy not only when it comes to fighting for mates; it also makes sense for any ranking of competitive prestige, since only slightly lower-ranked challengers have proven that they have a plausible claim to some rank.

Fourth, an honorable agent should be receptive to challenges. A sort of desperate courage is common in animals defending their offspring. But the courageousness of an honorable agent arises in part by her refusal to decline a legitimate challenge in a fair fight (“No Ducking”). In ecologies in which we have good evidence for mate choice driving intrasexual competition, there is little possibility of an animal declining legitimate challenges without losing its status. If females of a species use male-male competition as a way to ensure honest signaling of male desirability, then they will ignore males who do not compete at all. Reproduction for most female creatures is far too costly to find charming any male who not only fails to provide resources and protection, but also refuses to prove the quality of his genes. If fights are the mechanism that females of some species have to evaluate the quality of males, then males hoping to mate must agonize, literally: they must fight.

Finally, the individual in question must have some sense of the desirability of fair play or fair fights (“Fair Play”). Of all the traits that are characteristic of honor, this is actually the one most commonly observed in nature (see Bekoff, chapter 7 in this volume). Species in which individuals use coalitions to overmaster rivals, such as male lions and chimpanzees, are the exception, not the rule: males (and in species where males care for offspring, females) compete in fair contests in many species of insects, fish, birds, reptiles, and mammals. And if we turn our attention from outright

fighters to other contests, we find that self-handicapping is a very common element in “agonistic play” across species.⁵⁴ “The basic rules for fair play in animals also apply to humans,” Marc Bekoff writes, “namely, *ask first, be honest, follow the rules, and admit you’re wrong*. When the rules of play are violated, and when fairness breaks down, so does play” (emphasis in the original).⁵⁵ So finding animals who play/fight fair is easy. Indeed, the behavior is so ubiquitous that it should be considered honor-typical only when *other* honor-typical behaviors and pressures are present, as we saw in our contrast of male elephant seals and stags.

Any individual creature found to express all five of these behaviors in whatever way we consider to be “agentive” would be honorable. Whether we should say any actual creatures are honor-agents must wait for further philosophical consensus about the nature of moral agency in general, and additional ethological research taking seriously the notion of honor as a distinct normative category.

I will conclude this section with three philosophical observations with respect to ascribing honorableness to animals. First, as with any case of beastly agency, ascribing honor-agency does not mean we can expect or demand that an honorable creature be honorable at all times or in all ways. Its cognitive and affective limitations—like yours or mine—would limit its ability to discern precisely when and how to act honorably. Second, we must not hesitate to identify an animal as honorable just because we morally condemn the aims and violence of the contests in which honor-typical behavior is so often found. Many humans past and present have thought honor *requires* violent contest. But according to the principles advanced above, it does not—I have argued that academic and artistic agonistic practices are perfectly honorable, too. However, honor does *not rule out* violent contests, either. Now it may be morally wrong to engage in violent contests; if this is so, it is because of reasons having nothing to do with honor, and reasons that our imagined creature might not be able to comprehend. So even if a creature were to manifest its honorable behavior in contests that a *more* morally rational creature would reject (as Broke and Lawrence did in the completely unnecessary War of 1812), that fact does not impugn said creature’s genuine honorableness in the slightest. Third and finally, we must not infer that an honor-agent has acted wrongly just because it has acted dishonorably, even by its own local or species-based standards, and according to its own (sometimes meager) cognitive limits. This is because the individual may well be acting in response to another

type of moral reason, and may have judged (rightly or wrongly) that this non-honor consideration outweighs its honor-based reasons. This point generalizes to any sort of moral condemnation of a creature: an individual might have an inclination to act cooperatively (justly), but may nonetheless act uncooperatively because of a greater kin-altruistic concern. If pluralism is true, the obvious difficulties of morally judging animal behavior are compounded by the challenge of discerning whether an act that failed to respect some sort of moral principle was nonetheless done conscientiously, out of respect for another sort of moral value. The epilogue (chapter 13) in this volume explores such questions, too.

CONCLUSION

Hobbes, himself an important critic of honor and defender of a sort of authoritarianism, wrote that “among men there is a contestation of honour and preferment; among beasts there is none.”⁵⁶ Hobbes was dead wrong, if by “honor” we mean honor-typical behavior, which is characterized by fair contests for status. Hobbes thought it unreasonable to care about prestige for its own sake, and thus viewed the aristocratic concern for honor as foolish and detrimental to the cause of a “rational” ethic built upon a concern for life and property.⁵⁷ Whether competing for prestige is silly for humans is an issue that I have tried to set to one side. But competing for mates is emphatically not a trivial matter for animals, and I have argued that tournament species with non-resource-based mating systems have just the sort of ecology in which we should expect honor-typical behavior, since in such systems there is significant pressure for one sex to compete fairly among its own members in order to attract choosy mates who demand not food, shelter, or paternal investment, but good genes, which are proved by the “honest signal” of victories in fair fights. So in honor, as with other moral values such as justice and care, we observe a remarkable continuity between ourselves and other animals.

NOTES

1. In anthropology, Peristiany and especially Stewart are most influential; see J. G. Peristiany, *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); James Henderson Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). In political science, I am particularly guided by Laurie Johnson, *Thomas Hobbes: Turning Point for Honor* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield,

2009), and Sharon Krause, *Liberalism with Honor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). In intellectual history, see Peter Olsthoorn, *Honor in Moral and Political Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY, 2015); Paul Robinson, *Military Honour and the Conduct of War: From Ancient Greece to Iraq* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982/2007); and Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). In literary studies, see James Bowman, *Honor: A History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006); George Fenwick Jones, *Honor Bright: Honor in Western Literature* (Savannah: Frederic C. Bell, 2000); William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Miller, *Humiliation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Alexander Welsh, *What Is Honor?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). In foreign affairs, see especially Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Barry O'Neill, *Honor, Symbols, and War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999). In cultural psychology and social psychology, the most notable contribution is Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996) (although the account of honor in this chapter differs dramatically from Nisbett and Cohen's: see Dan Demetriou, "What Should Realists Say about Honor Cultures?" *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 17, no. 5 (2014): 893–911. Concerning the overlap of honor and economics, see Geoffrey Brennan and Philip Pettit, *The Economy of Esteem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Robert Frank, *Choosing the Right Pond: Human Behavior and the Quest for Status* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Discussion by ethicists in the past few decades has been comparatively sparse, but see the following: Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: Norton, 2010); Peter Berger, "On the Obsolescence of the Concept of Honor," in *Revisions: Changing Perspective in Moral Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); Anthony Cunningham, *Modern Honor* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Dan Demetriou, "Honor War Theory: Romance or Reality," *Philosophical Papers* 42, no. 3 (2013): 285–303; Demetriou, "The Virtues of Honorable Business Executives," in *Virtues in Action: New Essays in Applied Ethics*, ed. M. Austin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Shannon French, *Code of the Warrior* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); Lad Sessions, *Honor for Us* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

2. Brennan and Pettit, *The Economy of Esteem*; Olsthoorn, *Honor in Moral and Political Philosophy*.

3. Appiah, *The Honor Code*; Stewart, *Honor*.

4. Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham, "When Morality Opposes Justice: Conservatives Have Moral Intuitions That Liberals May Not Recognize," *Social Justice Research* 20, no. 1 (2007): 105.

5. O. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

6. Appiah, *The Honor Code*; Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 138–39.

7. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Boston: Beacon, 1950).

8. *Ibid.*, 50.

9. Sandra Vehrencamp's "A Model for the Evolution of Despotic versus Egalitarian Societies," *Animal Behavior* 31 (1983): 667–82, is made much use of by the in-turn

very influential Christopher Boehm, *Hierarchy in the Forest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), which in turn has influenced Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind* (New York: Pantheon, 2012).

10. Vehrencamp, "A Model for the Evolution of Despotic versus Egalitarian Societies."

11. *Ibid.*, 667.

12. Joseph Henrich and Francisco Gil-White, "The Evolution of Prestige: Freely Conferred Deference as a Mechanism for Enhancing the Benefits of Cultural Transmission," *Evolution and Human Behavior* (2001): 165–96.

13. *Ibid.*, 167 (emphasis added).

14. *Ibid.*, 160.

15. Christopher Boesch, "Cooperative Hunting Roles among Tai Chimpanzees," *Human Nature* 13, no. 1 (2002): 27–46.

16. M. W. Foster, I. C. Gilby, C. M. Murray, A. Johnson, E. E. Wroblewski, and A. E. Pusey, "Alpha Male Chimpanzee Grooming Patterns: Implications for Dominance, 'Style,'" *American Journal of Primatology* 71 (2009): 136–44.

17. Jane Goodall, *The Chimpanzees of Gombe: Patterns of Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 324–25.

18. *Ibid.*, 409–10.

19. Frans de Waal, "Sex Differences in the Formation of Coalitions among Chimpanzees," *Ethology and Sociobiology* 5 (1984): 239–55.

20. Frans de Waal, *Chimpanzee Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982/2007), 118.

21. Frans de Waal, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 130–31.

22. Steve Ladd, "Pimu's Murder," *Vimeo* video, 4:10, April 16, 2012, <http://vimeo.com/40444106>; Mike Wilson, Jane Goodall Institute, "Reflections from Gombe," last modified July 8, 2010, accessed September 3, 2014, <http://www.jane-goodall.org/gombe50/reflections/mike-wilson>.

23. De Waal, *Good Natured*, 132.

24. Caitlin Fitzsimmons, "Leading through Human Instincts," *CIO*, August 8, 2011, http://www.cio.com.au/article/396365/leading_through_human_instincts/.

25. De Waal, *Good Natured*, 129.

26. Goodall, *The Chimpanzees of Gombe*, chap. 17.

27. As was suggested at least as early as T. Nishida, "Alpha Status and Agonistic Alliance in Wild Chimpanzees," *Primates* 24, no. 3 (1983): 318–36.

28. Robert Sapolsky, "Human Behavioral Biology: Behavioral Evolution," YouTube video, 1:36:56, posted by "Stanford University," March 31, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoOa4Lp5fLE>.

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31. Sandra Vehrencamp, Jack Bradbury, and Robert Gibson, "The Energetic Cost of Display in Male Sage Grouse," *Animal Behaviour* 38, no. 5 (1989): 885–96.

32. Amotz Zahavi, "Mate Selection: A Selection for a Handicap," *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 53, no.1 (1975): 205–14.

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38. T. H. Clutton-Brock, D. Green, M. Hiraiwa-Hasegawa, and S. D. Albon, "Passing the Buck: Resource Defence, Lek Breeding, and Mate Choice in Fallow Deer," *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology* 23, no. 5 (1988): 281–96.

39. Roy Baumeister, Paul Bloom, Joshua Greene, Jonathan Haidt, Sam Harris, Joshua Knobe, and David Pizarro, "Consensus Statement: A Statement of Consensus Reached among Participants at the 'Edge: The New Science of Morality' Conference," *Edge.org* (2010), http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/morality10/morality_consensus.html; Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*.

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41. Dan Demetriou, "There's Some Fetish in Your Ethics: A Limited Defense of Purity Reasoning," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 38 (2013): 377–404; Daniel Kelly, *Yuck! The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Alexandra Plakias, "The Good and the Gross," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16, no. 2 (2013): 261–78; Paul Rozin, Linda Millman, and Carol Nemeroff, "Operation of the Laws of Sympathetic Magic in Disgust and Other Domains," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50 (1986): 703–12.

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44. De Waal, *Good Natured*, 128.

45. *Ibid.*, 39 (emphasis added).

46. For a survey of the topic, see Richard Joyce, *The Evolution of Morality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

47. Lawrence Johnson, "Can Animals Be Moral Agents?" *Ethics and Animals* 4 (1983): 50–61.

48. Appiah, *The Honor Code*; Steve Gerrard, "Morality and Codes of Honour," *Philosophy* 69, no. 267 (1994): 69–84; Sessions, *Honor for Us*.

49. Sometimes it is said that honor cannot be moral because its prescriptions are not universal (cf. Sessions, *Honor for Us*, chap. 4). I think this mistakes local conventions that help fix what is expected in some community with the general and abstract principles of honor. What matters is that honor adherents generally expect others to be honorable too, in exact parallel to how we expect everyone to be just, even though we recognize that local conventions help determine whether or not a particular action is just.

50. Evelyn Pluhar, *Beyond Prejudice: The Moral Significance of Human and Nonhuman Animals* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

51. Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. L. Beck, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997).

52. Paul Shapiro, "Moral Agency in Other Animals," *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 27 (2006): 357–73.

53. Bill Doolittle, "Secretariat: Super Genius," Secretariat.com, <http://www.secretariat.com/fan-club/writers-forum/secretariat-super-genius/>, n.d.

54. Marc Bekoff, *Animals at Play: Rules of the Game* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008).

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56. Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, ed. B. Gert (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991).

57. Johnson, *Thomas Hobbes*.