A DEFENSE OF HUMAN DIGNITY

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The traditional doctrine of human dignity has fallen on hard times. It is said that that doctrine is "speciesist to the core" and "the moral effluvium of a discredited metaphysics." Those of us who would defend the view that humans enjoy greater moral standing than nonhuman living things must answer the question, "What's so special about humans?" In this paper, I argue that *moral agency* is a great-making property that confers special worth on its bearer.

I

Renaissance humanism never had a more enthusiastic spokesperson than the young intellectual, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). According to Pico, "Man is the most fortunate creature and thus worthy of all admiration." He is "to be envied not only by the beasts, but also by the stars, and the Intelligences beyond this world." "To him it was granted to have whatever he chooses, to be whatever he wills."[1] Pico was seldom known for restraint in his intellectual endeavors, and he may have allowed himself to get a little carried away. Indeed, Pope Innocent VIII—a human himself—suggested that Pico tone things down a bit. What this precocious young Florentine professed on paper, a younger Florentine contemporary would say just a few years later in marble. Michelangelo's *David* also bespeaks the dignity and greatness of man. Those were the days.

Humanism has come in for a great deal of criticism in these twilight hours of the twentieth century. In the view of some writers, Pico's praise for his fellow humans is the moral equivalent of the white supremacist's celebration of his fellow Caucasoids. In particular, environmentalists and animal liberationists have been keen to point out that such favoritism for those of one's own species is, at best, unjustified and probably just downright immoral. James Rachels regards the traditional doctrine of human dignity as "the moral effluvium of a discredited metaphysics."[2] Worse, that doctrine is "speciesist to the core."[3] One earns the designation *speciesist* in the event that one believes that membership in one's own species is sufficient justification for preferential treatment of conspecifics. Peter Singer, James Rachels, Tom Regan, Paul Taylor and a host of other contemporary writers have variously argued that there is no objective criterion in virtue of which we may assign humans a greater worth than their nonhuman neighbors. In short: we humans are nothing special.[4]

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Indeed, some have come to view the human species as a kind of blight upon the earth. Consider Edward Abbey's well-known quip that he would "sooner shoot a man than a snake."[5] And the Church of Euthanasia offers this counsel: "Save the planet: Kill yourself." *Rigor mortis* is the cardinal virtue to be cultivated according to the teachings of this sect. Immediate sainthood awaits any devotee who is willing to become cardinally virtuous and thus help to decrease the surplus population.[6] Paul Taylor suggests that, while we most certainly need our natural environment, it has no need of us. In fact, he muses that, were *homo sapiens* to go the way of the dodo, our fellow creatures would likely greet this event "with a hearty `Good riddance!'"[7]

II

My present aim is to defend the traditional doctrine of human dignity, which I understand as the belief that humans enjoy a special worth and moral standing[8] that is unequaled by the rest of the natural order. I shall argue that there are certain uniquely human characteristics or properties in virtue of which humans may be said to possess a greater worth than that of nonhuman earthly creatures.[9]

Of course, the claim that humans possess special value-conferring properties is nothing new. For instance, Aristotle observed that it is our *rationality* that makes us unique, and the Western tradition has been something like a footnote to Aristotle in taking this uniqueness to imply special standing. Or, alternatively, consider Thomas Huxley's reason for denying that Darwin's theory undermined the doctrine of human dignity.

> Our reverence for the nobility of manhood will not be lessened by the knowledge that Man is, in substance and structure, one with the brutes; for he alone possesses the marvelous endowment of intelligible and rational speech, whereby, in the secular period of his existence, he has slowly accumulated and organised the experience which is almost wholly lost with the cessation of every individual life in other animals; so that, now, he stands raised upon it as a mountain top, far above the level of his humble fellows, and transfigured from his grosser nature by reflecting, here and there, a ray from the infinite source of truth.[10]

More recently, Daniel Dennett at least hints in this direction. On the one hand, *persons* are merely primates that have come to be "infested" with "*memes*"—Richard Dawkins' name for any unit of cultural evolution. But on the other hand, he insists that "there is a huge difference between our minds and the minds of other species, a gulf wide enough to make even a moral difference."[11]

Beyond traditional appeals to human intelligence and linguistic capacities, there is the claim that man alone has the capacity to understand and act upon moral principle and that this is the basis of human dignity. If the immensity of the starry heavens above me seems to diminish my worth and significance, the moral law within me has the reverse effect. The Kantian doctrine of human dignity is rooted in human moral agency.[12]

Those critical of the humanistic tradition sometimes observe that humans are not, in fact, the only creatures who enjoy rational, linguistic or moral capacities. Chimpanzees use tools, gorillas learn sign language and elephants weep, we are told. Others challenge the assumption that such differences are of any moral relevance. Peter Singer considers such appeals in the context of racism. Consider the white supremacist who maintains that the average Caucasian has an I.Q. higher than that of the average African American, and that this difference justifies differential treatment. What should be the main line of defense from people of good will? Should we argue that no such differences exist and trust that the best empirical studies will bear us out? Singer thinks not.

> Fortunately there is no need to pin the case for equality to one particular outcome of a scientific investigation. The appropriate response to those who claim to have found evidence of genetically based differences in ability among the races or between the sexes is not to stick to the belief that the genetic explanation must be wrong, whatever evidence to the contrary may turn up; instead we should make it quite clear that the claim to equality does not depend on intelligence, moral capacity, physical strength, or similar matters of fact. Equality is a moral idea, not an assertion of fact. . . . *The principle of the equality of human beings is not a description of an alleged actual equality among humans: it is a prescription of how we should treat human beings.*[13]

Of course, Singer is out to apply the principle of equality *interspecifically*, and so he draws on the support of the imperishable Jeremy Bentham: "The question is not, Can they *reason*? Nor Can they *talk?* But, Can they *suffer?*"[14] Not just any difference counts as a morally relevant difference.

III

It is along similar lines that Paul Taylor argues for the irrelevance of all such human singularities. His argument poses a direct challenge to the thesis of this paper, and so the following discussion will devote considerable attention to that challenge and seek to formulate a reply.

Taylor considers a number of unique human characteristics, such as rationality and autonomy, as the grounds for supposing that humans are of greater value than nonhumans. Taylor responds to such suggestions with a general question: "Valuable to whom and for what reason?"[15] As he observes, the characteristics that are typically suggested are certainly of great value, but it is a relative value. That is, these uniquely human characteristics may well be of supreme value *to humans* because they serve as efficient means to uniquely human ends. But other species excel at other things. Consider the flight of the falcon or the tree-climbing capabilities of the monkey. It is certainly true that monkeys have no great aptitude for mathematics. But I have yet to meet a monkey who was concerned to correct this deficit. And few mathematicians are particularly keen at arboreal acrobatics. Each has his forte. Why suppose that either area of competence renders the one superior to the other? As Taylor sees it, all such arguments

are guilty of special pleading.

> To use only standards based on the good of humans is already to commit oneself to holding that the good of humans counts more than, or is more worthy of consideration than, the good of nonhumans, which is the point in question.[16]

Taylor thus offers a *species-relative* theory of value that resembles more familiar varieties of relativism in interesting ways. The cultural relativist insists that there can be no valid cross-cultural moral judgments precisely because there is no culture-neutral standpoint from which one might judge that some cultures are morally preferable to others. The various cultures are "traveling along different roads in pursuit of different ends, and these ends and these means in one society cannot be judged in terms of those of another society, because essentially they are incommensurable."[17] Similarly, Taylor asks, "From what point of view are they [human characteristics] judged to be signs of superiority, and on what grounds?" To judge that people are better than penguins because we can reason and they cannot is to appeal to a criterion that has no valid application beyond the boundaries of our own species. Penguin ends and penguin means are simply different from the ends and means of people. Penguins cannot play chess or build cathedrals. But this observation tells us little more than that penguins are not people. So what else is new?

This pattern of argument characterizes Taylor's critique of the traditional mainstream defenses of humanism. Consider the Aristotelian tradition mentioned earlier, which maintains that humans are essentially rational animals and that it is in virtue of their rationality that they are set apart from the brutes. Taylor replies, "Even if we were to accept this essentialist conception of human nature and human well-being, nothing follows from it concerning other organisms."[18] Given this conception of human nature, we may well appeal to rationality as a criterion for determining whether any individual human is a *good of its kind*, but nothing follows about the relative values or moral standing of humans and nonhumans. We may be able to say with Mill that it is indeed better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied, but we have not found here the resources for going on with him to say that it is better to be a human than a pig.[19]

The challenge, then, is to discover some property that is uniquely human and qualifies its bearer for greater moral standing than those who lack it. Let us call such a property a *great- making property*. Taylor has observed that two resembling properties are sometimes confused, and that this confusion is at the root of historical and influential defenses of humanism. Let us distinguish great-making properties from what I shall call *excellence properties*.[20]

(EP) S has an excellence property if and only if S is a member of kind K and S has a property P such that for all x and all y, if x and y are members of K, and x has P and y lacks P, then x is a better instance of K than is y.

(GMP) S has a great-making property if and only if S possess a property P such that for all x and y, if x has P and y lacks P, then x is greater (of greater value) than y.

Taylor has maintained, in effect, that the only good sense that can be made of the "is better than" clause in (GMP) is one that is *kind-specific*—as we have in (EP).[21] And so every meaningful instance of (GMP) may be translated without remainder into some instance of (EP). The fact that, say, Calvin admirably meets the criterion set at (EP) gives us no grounds for preferring him over Hobbes, who may meet that criterion equally well after his kind.[22]

It appears that Taylor is in the business of ruling out *apriori* the very possibility of there being genuine great-making properties as we understand them. And this seems to be from the very nature of the case. A property will not be a plausible candidate for conferring human superiority unless it is possessed solely by humans. But Taylor's logic turns that very uniqueness against the humanist: other creatures do not have the property (or do not have it to the degree that humans do) and therefore do not need or value it. It is thus valuable only from a human perspective, and so the humanist assumes precisely what she attempts to prove.

IV

How shall we reply to Taylor's argument? We might begin by observing that, interestingly, if it is effective in ruling out *human* superiority, it would seem to work equally well at persuading God to walk humbly with himself. For whatever divine attributes were once thought to be great-making properties (logically maximal power, knowledge and goodness, for example) may well be necessary for God to be God, but we humans seem to get on quite well without them. Deep gratitude to God may be appropriate, but insofar as the worship of God entails ascribing exclusive worth to Him,[23] God is simply out of line if he demands our worship. Indeed, *sparrows* that are sold two for a farthing, do not need divine attributes any more than they need any uniquely human characteristics. We would thus be mistaken if we supposed that God is of more value than sparrows. Many of us, believers and unbelievers alike, think it reasonable to believe that *if* there is a being such as God then he is deserving of our worship. Taylor's argument seems to have the effect of showing that the otherwise coherent concept of worship is, in fact, incoherent. While it may be true that one person's modus ponens is another person's modus tollens, one might take this result as a sign that Taylor hath proven too much.[24]

And one might wonder whether human rationality is valuable only from a human perspective, as Taylor maintains. As we have seen, he has suggested on several occasions that we look at things from the perspective of non-human living things. This is to have the effect of showing us the merely relative value of things human. Thus, in reply to the cartesian argument that only humans possess minds, Taylor observes that bears don't *need* minds.[25] But a mind can be a very handy thing when battling

blazes to save bears. I suspect that if bears *did* have minds they would agree[26]. And if, say, a pair of antediluvian penguins could think and speak, they might have thanked their lucky stars that the earth included a creature with the rational wherewithal to follow a blueprint.

Further, and closer to the point of this essay, even if we were to grant that individual human characteristics and capacities such as rationality and autonomy are not, by themselves, great-making, one might yet go on to argue that such properties are essential components of a more complex great-making property. Consider human moral agency. Arguably, all moral agents are rational and autonomous. And so a successful argument establishing that moral agency is a great-making property will affect our assessment of these properties as well.[27]

Is there a successful argument from moral agency? As I indicated earlier, one traditional argument for human superiority is grounded in the observation that humans appear to be the only moral agents who grace the planet. It is on this point that the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* came as close as ever to poetic expression.

> Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. . . . The former view of a countless multitude of worlds annihilates, as it were, my importance as an animal creature, which must give back to the planet (a mere speck of the universe) the matter from which it came, the matter which is for a little time provided with vital force, we know not how. The latter, on the contrary, infinitely raises my worth as that of an intelligence by my personality, in which the moral law reveals a life independent of all animality and even of the whole world of sense....[28]

The clear implication of Kant's remarks is that, but for the moral law within, our importance would be annihilated by the sheer immensity of the cosmos. We have no good reason to suppose that our fellow earthly creatures also carry the moral law within them. And so, while our own worth is infinitely raised, they would appear to be, shall we say, "axiologically challenged." Kant thus seemed to believe that moral agency is a great-making property in the sense that we have specified.

We have yet to consider Taylor's reply to the argument for human superiority from moral agency. Though we might expect that his remarks concerning the merely instrumental and relative value of rationality and language apply with equal force to moral agency, this is not the case. When Taylor turns to the sort of tradition that is represented by Kant's famous passage, he adopts an entirely different strategy. He takes that tradition to be asserting that "we humans are *morally* superior beings because we possess, while animals and plants lack, the capacities that give us the status of moral agents."[29] Rather than argue for the relative value of human moral agency, Taylor charges that this argument rests on a fundamental confusion.

> There is a serious confusion of thought in this line of reasoning if the

> conclusion drawn is understood as asserting that humans are morally superior to nonhumans. One cannot validly argue that humans are morally superior beings on the ground that they possess, while others lack, the capacities of a moral agent. The reason is that, as far as moral standards are concerned, only beings that have the capacities of a moral agent can meaningfully be said to be either morally good or morally bad. Only moral agents can be judged to be morally better or worse than others, and the others in question must be moral agents themselves.[30]

Suppose, then, that we refer to the view under consideration as the belief in human moral superiority and allow that it may be represented as follows:

(MS) Humans are morally superior to nonhumans.

Taylor reads (MS) as having the following import:

(MS1) Humans are the "moral betters" of nonhumans

where "x is the moral better of y" means, roughly, "x is more virtuous than y." Taylor is certainly correct in observing that, on this reading, it is not quite correct to say that (MS) is *false*. Rather, it is just woefully confused. We might as well point out that Porsches accelerate faster than pianos and that alligators are fiercer than artichokes. The obvious point in all of this is that, in each comparison, a kind of category mistake is committed. Pianos and artichokes are neither fierce nor fast because they are not the *kinds* of things to which we can meaningfully ascribe these predicates.

But (MS1) is neither a plausible nor a natural reading of (MS). Taylor himself states the traditional argument for human moral superiority: "Such capacities as free will, accountability, deliberation and practical reason, it is said, endow us with the special nobility and dignity that belong only to responsible beings."[31] The claim that humans are "morally superior to nonhumans" is simply an awkward way[32] of saying that our moral capacities amount to great- making properties, and this is best expressed along the following lines.

(MS2) Individuals with moral capacities are of greater inherent worth than individuals lacking such capacities.

It is somewhat puzzling that Taylor should choose this way of criticizing the traditional argument from moral agency because, in addition to stating the view in a way that is best represented by (MS2), he interacts with a contemporary author who clearly argues for that proposition.[33] But it seems to me that Taylor has splendid reasons for not attempting to dismiss the value of moral agency by means of the relativity argument that we have considered above. For this would be to maintain that morality and moral capacities, like rational and linguistic capacities, are of *merely instrumental value* as they serve uniquely human interests. On such a view, moral values are

subordinated to non-moral values, and morality becomes a system of hypothetical imperatives: rules telling us what we must do in order to accomplish certain ends that we happen to hold, as individuals or as a species.

It is no mere coincidence that Kant identified *two* sorts of things that have dignity rather than a mere price: human persons and the moral law itself.[34] Kant saw that genuine respect for persons requires respect for the law. My respecting you calls for my acting for the sake of certain direct duties *to you*. I should respect you because it is the right thing to do; and it is the right thing to do because you are deserving of respect. If, however, my fair treatment of you is only a happy by-product of my looking after my own interests or seeking my own ends, then I am merely acting in accordance with those duties owed you. This is to behave as though I have, at best, certain duties *regarding* you, and such behavior hardly qualifies as respect. It seems to me that these observations apply in the present context. If our moral nature has merely instrumental value, in that it serves uniquely human ends, then human moral behavior is not directed to nonhuman individuals as ends-in-themselves. Neither Taylor nor anyone who challenges the doctrine of human dignity on *moral* grounds is in a position to limit the significance of human morality to human ends and human interactions, for the very project of contending for the equal standing and value of nonhuman life is a moral one. In sum, if human morality is of merely relative and instrumental value from a human standpoint, then any acceptable environmental ethic will be an ethic grounded in a kind of enlightened anthropocentrism: if ethics is a means to human ends then so is environmental ethics. It seems, then, that Taylor himself offers us a theory that requires the dignity or inherent worth of morality itself.[35]

V

Consider again our revised statement of the thesis of human moral superiority:

(MS2) Individuals with moral capacities are of greater inherent worth than individuals lacking such capacities.

In the spirit of Taylor's discussion we may ask "From what point of view are moral agents judged to be of greater worth?" Taylor's discussion has served to sharpen our focus so that we now know precisely what it is that is needed: a uniquely human property that is not merely an *excellence* property but is also *great-making*. And if there are any great-making properties then there is an impartial—indeed, an all-encompassing—point of view from which they are so highly esteemed.

Further, the resulting value must not be merely instrumental since we have no reason to suppose that instrumental value is sufficient for establishing inherent worth.[36] Thus, it will not be enough to point out that moral agency is valuable *to* someone or something *for* some purpose. We seek grounds for making the claim that *it is a good thing that there are moral agents* in such a way that it is not reducible to a description of the evaluative preferences of some individual or group in the way that *it is a good thing that*

there are chocolate chip cookies is reducible to a description of my own preferences. What point of view might provide us with such grounds if it is not that of humans, bears or penguins? How about the *moral point of view*?

To see this, suppose we restate the claim made at (MS2) in terms of the relative values of *possible worlds*. And let us think of great-making properties from a slightly different perspective. A property is great-making if it is *world-enhancing*. And a property is world- enhancing if a world in which it is instantiated is, all other things being equal, that much the richer. Thus, our claim at (MS2) may be expressed as the following:

(MS3) For any two possible worlds w and w*, if w includes moral agents and w* lacks moral agents, then, all other things being equal, w is of greater value than w*.

(MS3) maintains that moral agency is a world-enhancing property.

Of course, (MS3) is no more impressive than (MS2). But imagine God deliberating over which world he will make actual. Presumably, some worlds will be more worthy of God's election than others. Consider two of God's options. In W1, God creates the heavens and the earth. The light is separated from the darkness. The earth brings forth vegetation. But the story of creation ends somewhere around verse 13. When trees fall in the forests of W1 there is no one there to hear them. And, alas, the ocean waves of W1 are forever unridden. But among the propositions included in W2 are all of those represented in the entire first chapter of Genesis. W2 includes moral agents with the ability to choose for good or ill. The suggestion under consideration is that, all other things being equal, W2 is more worthy of God's choice than W1.

This may appear to be an instance of special pleading of the worst kind. One may be tempted to suggest, politely or otherwise, that the God of this story bears the *imago hominis*. That is, the suspicion may be that we have merely projected our own human-centered prejudices into the heavens and accorded them divine sanction. But in asking which worlds are worthy of God's choice, we are asking which worlds would likely be chosen by a being of the nature that God has traditionally been thought to have. And it is primarily God's *moral* nature that we have in mind in raising this question. The suggestion is that in virtue of his capacity as a perfectly good being, some worlds are more worthy of election than others. In this way, at least for present purposes, we might think of God as morality personified. We are asking, therefore, which worlds are better given the moral point of view.

Why suppose that moral agency is a world-enhancing property? Why think that a world with moral agents is of any greater value than one without? I suggest that this is because there is a necessary connection between moral agency and moral values. With this in mind, one might urge the claim that worlds without moral agents are equally impoverished with respect to moral values. On this view, worlds that include nothing but, say, penguins or elm trees or washing machines are morally neutral. There is a range of core moral values that are impossible to attain without the presence of moral agents. A world inhabited only by penguins or elm trees is a world that excludes moral goodness (or evil), rightness (or wrongness) or

any of the virtues or vices. This consideration arises in the context of certain theodicies in which it is argued that genuine moral agency is a necessary condition of a world's producing moral goodness. The suggestion in that context, of course, is that that same moral agency has also made possible a great deal of moral evil. The backbone of this theodicy is found in the claim that it was *good*—morally good— of God to have created a world capable of producing moral goodness or creatures of good will.

We have identified the moral point of view as the standpoint from which to judge the relative worth of beings. There are, to be sure, other perspectives from which one may proffer value judgments. For example, I happen to think that bald eagles are more beautiful than bald heads so that the former are of greater aesthetic value than the latter. Further, some philosophers have maintained that beauty has inherent worth.[37] If they are right, then we must allow that not all judgments of inherent worth are made from the moral point of view. But, even if there are valid nonmoral judgments of inherent worth, the moral point of view is presupposed in the present discussion. It is precisely from the moral standpoint that the doctrine of human dignity is either challenged or defended. To observe that, say, stunning plumage is of greater value than moral agency from an aesthetic point of view is just to imply that some birds are more beautiful than moral agents. But I do not deny this. That the hummingbirds in my back yard are more interesting to look at than the sleeping student in the back row of my classroom is perfectly consistent with the latter enjoying greater moral standing than the former. The insights of the aesthetic point of view do not, of themselves, challenge the argument of this paper. To maintain that objects of beauty deserve moral standing that is equal to or greater than that enjoyed by moral agents would indeed propose a challenge. But it would be a challenge that is urged from the moral, rather than the aesthetic, point of view. In order for a challenge to the present argument to *be* a challenge, it must maintain that I am mistaken in claiming that the moral point of view favors moral agency.

At any rate, Taylor himself maintains that the concept of inherent worth is a moral one with practical moral consequences.

> The assertion that an entity has inherent worth is here to be understood as entailing two moral judgments: (1) that the entity is deserving of moral concern and consideration, or, in other words, that it is to be regarded as a moral subject, and (2) that all moral agents have a prima facie duty to promote or preserve the entity's good as an end in itself and for the sake of the entity whose good it is.[38]

Given this understanding of inherent worth, it seems that the attempt to determine whether some uniquely human characteristic is of supreme *instrumental* value—as a means to achieving some non-moral end—is wrongheaded. When the humanist asserts that rationality, autonomy or moral agency are great-making properties, Taylor's question, "Valuable to whom and for what reason?" proves to be a red herring.[39] Taylor's own view trades on the moral concept of inherent worth, of which he believes all organisms to enjoy an equal degree. If the very concept of (moral)

inherent worth is coherent, then there is an impartial moral standpoint from which that worth may be discerned. The humanist's claim is that humans are more valuable *simpliciter*, and it seems to me that this is best captured by the moral judgment that the world is simply a better place if it includes moral agents.[40]

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NOTES

1. Giovanni Pico del Mirandola, "On the Dignity of Man," in *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, Ed., James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin (New York: Viking Penguin, 1953), p. 477.
2. James Rachels, *Created From Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5.
3. Ibid., p. 181.
4. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York Review of Books, 1990); James Rachels, *Created From Animals*; Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985); Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).
5. Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), p. 20.
6. "A Time to Pull the Plug," *Outside Magazine* (January 1995), p. 50. I once had a student who took this group's views very seriously. This person soberly suggested in a formal paper that the practice of the exposure of unwanted infants be revived in Western society.
7. *Respect for Nature*, p. 115.
8. As I understand the term, S has moral standing if and only if S is the appropriate object of direct moral duties. I may have duties *regarding* your car (e.g., my duty to refrain from spray painting snappy sayings from the *Critique of Pure Reason* onto its surface). But such duties are not *to* the car but, presumably, to you. If I violate such duties, I wrong you and not the car itself. To say that A has greater moral standing than B is to claim that, all other things being equal, where there is a conflict, one's direct duties to A outweigh one's direct duties to B.
9. For a consideration of the environmental implications of such a humanistic perspective, see my "A Little Lower Than the Angels: Christian Humanism and Environmental Ethics," *Christian Scholar's Review* 28 (Winter 1998): 283-297.
10. Thomas Henry Huxley, quoted in James Rachels, *Created From Animals*, p. 83.
11. Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), p. 371.
12. Cf., Immanuel Kant, KprV 162.
13. Peter Singer, "All Animals are Equal," in James P. Sterba, ed., *Earth Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1995), p. 40. Emphasis in original.
14. Jeremy Bentham, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. XVII, Sec. 1, footnote to paragraph 4, quoted in Singer, "All Animals are Equal," p. 42. Perhaps I should note here my agreement with Singer and Bentham on one fundamental point. Clearly, one could not rationally justify animal abuse by observing that dogs cannot do modal logic or recite poetry. The only relevant question to ask in such circumstances is "Is this creature sentient?" Though I acknowledge difficulties on every side, my thesis that humans are of greater

worth than, say, sparrows, need not be taken to entail that sparrows are of no worth at all, nor that their interests are not to be counted.

15. Taylor, *Respect for Nature*, p. 130.

16. Ibid., p. 131.

17. Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1935), p. 223.

18. *Respect for Nature*, p. 137.

19. Taylor considers two other traditional defenses of humanism: mind-body dualism and the "Great Chain of Being" tradition. To the former he replies that "bears don't need minds" and so, having a mind, like being rational, is valuable only instrumentally in relation to human ends. There is no reason to confer greater value on mental stuff than on material stuff. In response to the latter, he invites us to sympathize with plants and animals whom God has placed under the dominion of man. Is this overall arrangement a good thing from their perspective? They may have the occasion to question God's justice, wisdom or mercy. One may be tempted to reply to Taylor here by suggesting that if plants and animals were capable of harboring such resentment, then God would likely reconsider.

20. A distinction dimly reflecting that urged by Alvin Plantinga between "maximal excellence" and "maximal greatness" in *Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

21. Or perhaps *end-specific*, where the possession of P confers a greater instrumental value upon its bearer. Given Taylor's discussion, it appears that kind-specific values *are* instrumental or end-specific.

22. It may occur to someone that, in certain instances, a meta-judgment is in order. Where Calvin meets (EP) and Hobbes does not one may decide that it is better to have a fully-functioning Calvin than a broken Hobbes. This seems to capture what some have had in mind in comparing the relative moral standing of healthy chimpanzees and severely retarded humans.

23. This seems to be implied by both the language and practice of the worshiper.

24. Those of the modus ponens persuasion may find inspiration in an argument offered by James Rachels in "God and Human Attitudes," *Religious Studies* 7 (1971): 325-37.

25. *Respect for Nature*, p. 146.

26. Assuming, of course, that they are in their *right* minds.

27. I owe this point to David Werther. Kant, for one, made it clear that rationality serves the interest of morality. In a section on "The Function of Reason," he maintains that "reason has been imparted to us as a practical power—that is, as one which is to have an influence on the *will*; its true function must be to produce a *will* which is *good*, not as a *means* to some further end, but *in itself*" in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper, 1964), p. 64.

28. KprV 162.

29. *Respect*, pp. 131-32.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p. 132.

32. I am not aware of anyone besides Taylor himself who has used this language in just this way.

33. Louis G. Lombardi, "Inherent Worth, Respect, and Rights," *Environmental Ethics* 5 (Fall 1983): 257-270. Lombardi argues in effect that (1) right-bearers are of greater inherent worth than individuals who lack rights and that (2) only moral agents have rights. Taylor grants (2) but challenges the move from rights to greater inherent worth on the ground that the concept of

rights is limited to human ethics. My ensuing argument takes a course different from that of Lombardi, and so I cheerfully leave this discussion.

34. Thomas Hill finds five things that have dignity, according to Kant: humanity, morality, persons, persons who conform to duty and moral disposition or good will. The first two correspond to those that I mention. The rest are the result of placing the first two in a bag and shaking them. Cf., Thomas Hill, *Dignity and Practical Reason* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 47.

35. This is not the place to press the point that Taylor's implicit acceptance of an evolutionary account of human morality does not readily accommodate his notion of inherent worth. Daniel Dennett admits that, given that account, morality is "nonsense on stilts," " but it is "*good* nonsense—and good only because it is on stilts." See *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), p. 507. And J. Baird Callicott seems more consistent than Taylor in wedding Humean subjectivism to such a Darwinian account:

> I concede that, from the point of view of scientific naturalism, the *source* of all value is human consciousness, but it by no means follows that the *locus* of all value is consciousness itself or a mode of consciousness like reason, pleasure or knowledge. . . .
>
> Something may be valuable only because someone values it, but it may also be valued for itself, not for the sake of any subjective experience. . . it may afford the valuer." Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 133.

Thus, while there is no inherent value, there may well be intrinsic *valuing*. Living things do not *deserve* our respect but we may be so wired as to *feel* that they do.

36. Thus, if the views of Dennett and Callicott are correct (see n. 35), then the present argument will not succeed. Taylor and I have a common foe in the ethics of naturalism.

37. I wish to thank the editor for this observation. G. E. Moore, for example, maintained that beauty has value quite independent of the beholder. Thus, on Moore's view, beauty is intrinsically valuable in that it does not depend upon its *being valued* by anyone. Moore thus uses "intrinsic value" in a way that is synonymous with my "inherent worth." Taylor disagrees with Moore on this point, and reserves the term "inherent value" for objects of beauty, historical importance and the like. He avers that "*the inherent value of anything is relative to and dependent upon someone's valuing it.*" Thus, while we ought to appreciate beauty for its own sake rather than, say, for its commercial value, its value is not "autonomous"—independent of its being valued. See Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 83-84; Taylor, *Respect*, pp. 73-74. To make matters worse, Callicott's (see n. 35 above) use of "intrinsic value" is synonymous with Taylor's "inherent value" and he denies that *anything* possesses "inherent worth" as I have used this term.

38. *Respect*, p. 75.

39. And perhaps reminiscent of the sophomoric question, "Who's to say?"

40. And this is simply a better paper than it might have been, due to the suggestions of David Werther, Bill Wade and D. J. Dycus.