



Valuing animals as they are—Whether they feel it or not

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Abstract

Dressing up animals in ridiculous costumes, shaming dogs on the internet, playing Big Buck Hunter at the local tavern, feeding vegan food to cats, and producing and consuming “knockout” animals, what, if anything, do these acts have in common? In this article, I develop two respect-based arguments that explain how these acts are morally problematic, even though they might not always, if ever, affect the experiential welfare of animals. While these acts are not *ordinary* wrongs, they are animal *dignitary* wrongs.

1 | INTRODUCTION

One puzzling ethical question is whether, and how, you can be wronged by an act if it does not affect your experiential welfare. As Angela Martin (2019) notes, there is widespread agreement that the unnoticed infringement of human privacy and mocking of unaware humans are wrong, even if no humans are affected mentally or physically by these actions. She moreover claims that these kinds of acts *directly* wrong the humans who are the objects of the acts. Yet she insists that neither the unnoticed infringement of *animal* privacy nor the mocking of unaware *animals* directly wrong particular animals.¹ She thus avers that we “do not owe it to a particular animal to refrain from such actions” (Martin, 2019, p. 83). On Martin's view, stalking animals, mocking animals, painting the fur of animals, dressing animals up in ridiculous ways, treating animals as mere sources of amusement, and spitting on animals wrong particular animals only when these acts impact their experiential welfare. So, according to Martin, if we do these things without impacting the experiential welfare of animals, the *actions* themselves are morally permissible.²

Martin is not alone. Bonnie Steinbock (1999), for instance, claims that while it is an affront to human dignity to enslave humans, even if they are treated “nicely,” there is a different story to be told when it comes to animals. Presumably, on Steinbock's view, enslaving “happy” animals does not violate animal dignity because animals do not desire dignity. Likewise, Bernard Rollin (1998) argues that while it is permissible to change the telos of animals through genetic engineering, so long as we do not make them worse-off, it would be wrong to alleviate human suffering by genetically engineering humans to be happy.

While Martin, Steinbock, and Rollin seem to assume that animals cannot be subject to what I call *dignitary wrongs*, other animal ethicists suggest that animals have dignity and, consequently, can be wronged when their experiential welfare is not negatively affected. Sarah Gavrell Ortiz (2004), for instance, advances a dignity-based

argument in defense of the view that we ought not to change the telos of animals through genetic engineering, *even if doing so would improve the experiential wellbeing of animals*; in developing her capabilities approach, Martha Nussbaum (2007) frequently refers to “animal dignity,” insisting that it is an issue of justice when animals are denied a “dignified existence”³; in passing, David DeGrazia (1999, p. 128) remarks that he is “inclined” to believe that treating animals as mere objects of amusement or dying their hair with ridiculous colors is “objectionable for evincing disrespect towards the animals,” even if this does not impact their experiential welfare; in her reflections on the performance of bears in the Moscow Circus, Suzanne Cataldi (2002) insists that the presentation of bears in circuses is undignified, even if the bears do not suffer⁴; and Cora Diamond (2001) suggests that ridiculing animals is problematic because of the way the ridiculer exercises power over vulnerable animals.⁵

None of these philosophers, though, approach the topic of unfelt animal indignities through the language of animal rights.⁶ As Diamond (2001, p. 137) notes, “the discussion of animal rights almost invariably leaves out the ridiculing of animals.” She suspects this is because animal rights theorists (allegedly) assume that (a) rights are dependent on interests, (b) having an interest in something requires awareness of that thing, and (c) animals who are mocked are not aware that they are ridiculed. I aim to fill the gap in this literature by developing an account of animal dignitary wrongs through an animal rights framework that takes respect to be fundamental to morality. But rather than talk in terms of “rights,” I employ the language of “valid claims,” as this clarifies what is meant by the claim that animals have moral rights.

I provide two separate respect-based defenses of the claim that animals can be directly wronged when their experiential welfare is not affected. First, I argue that animals can be *harmed* when their experiential welfare is not affected, and since it is *prima facie* wrong to harm animals, we can easily explain how animals can be wronged when their experiential welfare is not affected. Here, I develop a respect-based argument that emphasizes an important distinction between welfare interests and preference interests (desires)—A distinction that can explain how animals can *have an interest* in something, even though they might not *take an interest* in that thing.

Second, I argue that even if animals cannot be *harmed* unless their experiential welfare is affected, animals can still be *wronged* when their experiential welfare is not affected. As I will argue, animals (humans and nonhuman) have the fundamental, valid claim against moral agents to be treated and viewed respectfully, even if they do not desire respectful treatment and even if such treatment does not always affect their experiential welfare. Since agents intend to disrespect animals when they commit animal indignities, they violate the valid claims of animals, which makes these acts wrong. On this view, *animals* can be wronged when they are not harmed; thus, animals can be wronged by indignities, even if the indignities do not harm them. As both arguments show, there are certain things that we do to animals, their bodies, and even images of their bodies that are wrong, even if they do not affect (directly or indirectly) their experiential welfare.

2 | PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This article explicates the different ways in which we can wrong animals without impacting their experiential welfare. But before beginning, I must make five basic assumptions, some of which will later be defended in detail: (a) Sentient animals have inherent worth, insofar as they are valuable in themselves, independently of their usefulness to others; (b) other things equal, beings with inherent value have dignity, which I take to be a *status*; (c) beings with inherent worth have a valid claim to respectful treatment; (d) to treat a being with inherent value with respect is to treat the being with dignity (i.e., dignified treatment); and (e) to treat a being with inherent value disrespectfully is to treat the being in an undignified manner.⁷ Dignitary wrongs, on my view, essentially amount to some form of disrespectful treatment. While I could simply talk in terms of “respectful treatment” and “respect wrongs,” I use the language of “dignified treatment” and “dignitary wrongs” to remain consistent with the standard language in the discourse on dignitary harms and wrongs.⁸

Important to note is the distinction between inherent value and dignity. Dignity is something that, other things equal, individuals with inherent value *possess*, and thus, it is not identical to inherent value.⁹ I, in the spirit of Jeremy

Waldron (2012, 2013), conceive of dignity as a high-ranking, equal *status*, while others conceive of it as a value (Rosen, 2012; Sulmasy, 2013) or as a principle (Düwell, 2014).¹⁰ Because dignity is a *status*, your dignity can be reduced or altogether taken away, and it can be restored after it is taken away. Inherent value, though, is something that can never be taken away. If you confine me to a dog house, you take away my dignity, but you do not, and cannot, take away my inherent value. I will always be the kind of being that is valuable in itself, even if I am treated disrespectfully. But I do not always have dignity.

Ruth Macklin (2003), then, is mistaken when she says that dignity essentially amounts to respect for persons or their autonomy. Dignity is not a principle. It is not respectful treatment. And it is different from inherent value. It is a *status*—a status that will be discussed in detail in Section 5.

3 | ORDINARY AND UNORDINARY HARMS

Morality is, in large part, about refraining from harming others and preventing harm to others. If I cause someone unnecessary harm or if I fail to help someone who faces great harm when helping them would not require much sacrifice on my part, it would be right to say that I act *wrongly*. The concepts of *harming* and *wronging*, then, are certainly central to ethical deliberation. But discussions about morality's demands tend to focus on what I call *ordinary harms* and *ordinary wrongs*, both of which involve either pain or suffering, and/or the deprivation of opportunities for satisfaction.

Other things equal, someone is harmed if she is made to suffer or feel pain.¹¹ We can refer to harms that hurt, mentally or physically, as *felt* harms. While felt harms are the paradigm kind of ordinary harm, we must remember that not all ordinary harms hurt. Some ordinary harms are *unfelt*. For instance, someone is harmed if she is denied for future opportunities for satisfaction, even if this does not cause her to suffer (DeGrazia, 2016; Regan, 1983). Call this a harm of deprivation.

The novel *Room* provides a paradigm example of a harm of deprivation. In this story, a young woman is kidnapped and, for years, is locked in a shed, which she comes to call "Room." During her time in captivity, the woman is raped by her kidnapper and gives birth to a son who grows up in "Room." As the boy grows older, the woman tells him that "Room," and the things in it, are the only things that are real. Everything else, she says, exists only on television. Captivity itself never causes the boy frustration, simply because he is unaware that he is being deprived of important opportunities that wait outside of "Room." But even if the boy is *never* made to "hurt" and even if he never desires to leave "Room," surely he is, in virtue of being permanently confined to the shed, harmed. And we can best characterize this harm in terms of *deprivation*. The boy is harmed because he is deprived of opportunities for satisfactions—satisfactions that are more pleasurable than the ones available in "Room."

When ordinary harm occurs, the *experiential welfare* of the one who is harmed is affected, either directly or indirectly.¹² In the case of felt harms, one is *directly* made to be in a negative experiential state. With deprivational harms, one is deprived of the opportunity to be in some positive experiential state. Insofar as one's experiential welfare is lower than it could be if one were not deprived of opportunities for satisfaction, one's experiential welfare is *indirectly* affected by deprivational harms.¹³ In this article, I draw attention to *unordinary* harms and *unordinary* wrongs—wrongings and harms that do not always affect one's experiential welfare. I refer to unordinary harms and wrongs simply as *dignitary harms* and *dignitary wrongs*.¹⁴

Consider a quintessential example of a dignitary wrong in the human context: defiling human corpses by eating them, having sex with them, or painting offensive words on them. Most people have the strong intuition that defiling human corpses is wrong.¹⁵ And this belief is certainly plausible. But we cannot explain the fundamental wrongness of these acts by appealing to *ordinary* harms. When human corpses are defiled, the dead are neither caused distress, nor are they deprived of opportunities for satisfaction. The dead certainly do not benefit, in an experiential sense, from our refusal to defile human corpses. So, if defiling human corpses is wrong, what is the wrong-making feature? The answer to this question can help us understand how animals can be the victims of dignitary harms and wrongs.

4 | MARTIN'S HARMLESS WRONG APPROACH

If acts of human indignity, such as defiling human corpses, are wrong, it is either because (a) they cause unfelt, *unordinary* harm, or (b) they are wrong, but not because they cause harm. In defense of the latter approach, some argue that we can wrong without harming. Martin (2019), for instance, argues that, in order to harm someone, one's experiential welfare must be affected in some way, and since, as she claims, we can wrong at least some individuals without negatively impacting their experiential welfare, there are "harmless wrongs."

To motivate her account of harmless wrongs, Martin contends that we wrong *paradigmatic* humans—humans who meet some threshold of rationality and autonomy—without harming them when we mock them behind their backs or while they are unconscious. One hypothetical example she provides is of a hospital physician who mocks and spits on a patient who lies unconscious in a hospital bed. On Martin's view, the patient has been wronged, even if she never finds out she was mocked. Martin, though, insists that only *paradigmatic* humans can be wronged without being harmed. On her view, for a "non-harming" action to wrong someone, the object of the action must be self-aware and have a conception of and concern for social standing. She thus contends that, when it comes to animals, we do no wrong by stalking and observing them, laughing at them, dressing them up in ridiculous ways, and painting their fur, *unless doing so increases the likelihood that animals will suffer negative experiential consequences in the future*.

Martin (2019, p. 89) seems to endorse a desire-fulfillment account of wronging, as evident by her claim that "we owe it directly to some individual X to consider their values, interests, beliefs, and preferences justly." She explains the wrongness of the patient-mocking-physician's actions by pointing out that the patient, along with her valid claims and preferences, was disrespected by the physician. On this desire-fulfillment view, it is plausible to say that paradigmatic humans are wronged when their manifested or presumed desires about how they want to be treated as a human are thwarted, even if their experiential welfare is not affected.

This account of wronging explains the wrongness of defiling and eating human corpses by appealing to the alleged posthumous wrong done to the once "owners" of the bodies. Many paradigmatic humans, while alive, have a desire that their bodies be buried or cremated after they pass, and even if they do not explicitly express this, they likely have dispositions to generate desires regarding the "respectful" treatment of their corpses. Defiling human corpses, then, thwarts the preferences of those humans who, while they were alive, possessed the forward-looking desire that their corpses be venerated in some way. Those who endorse the desire-fulfillment view of wronging, such as Martin, thus might argue that while it is permissible to eat roadkill, it is, other things equal, impermissible to eat human corpses. While most humans have forward-looking desires regarding the treatment of their corpses, animals have no such desires.

5 | THE DIGNITARY HARM APPROACH

Even if we can explain the wrongness of some acts of indignity in terms of thwarted preferences or desires, it is not clear why these acts do not constitute *harmful* wrongs. Surely, we can broaden the notion of harm to acknowledge the existence of harms that do not impact one's experiential welfare. Martin herself seems to acknowledge this possibility, yet she avers that even if the unfelt thwarting of preferences and desires causes *harm* to paradigmatic humans, similar "indignity" scenarios involving animals do not cause harm and thus are not wrong. After all, animals do not desire that they be treated in "dignified ways"; any desires they have are allegedly connected to their experiential welfare. Thus, she insists that we cannot wrong or harm animals without impacting their experiential welfare.

But the desire-fulfillment account fails to explain the wrongness of eating or defiling the corpses of humans who, while alive, did not possess (even in the dispositional sense) forward-looking desires or preferences regarding the disposal and treatment of their corpses. Although severely mentally disabled humans and babies do not have forward-looking desires that pertain to the care of their corpses, other things equal, it still would be wrong for someone to consume their corpses.¹⁶ And it would be wrong to have sex with their corpses, just as it would be wrong to

paint the word “SLUT” on their corpses. Eating, vandalizing, or having sex with human corpses are wrong, even if their performance does not thwart anyone's preferences or desires.¹⁷

Martin considers this objection from “non-paradigmatic human beings” and seems willing to bite the bullet, suggesting that the only reason why it would be wrong to perform “degrading” actions towards non-paradigmatic humans is indirect. As she puts it, “we should refrain from humiliating them (from our point of view) because it may deeply hurt the feelings of their family, relatives, and caregivers, or because it may have harmful consequences for them or other members of their group” (Martin, 2019, p. 97). However, it is worth noting that she motivates her initial proposition that *paradigmatic* humans can be wronged without being harmed by pointing out that “most people” think that they can be wronged in these ways (Martin, 2019, pp. 83, 87). But, certainly, most people think that *non-paradigmatic* humans, too, can be degraded, and thus wronged, without being harmed.

The desire-fulfillment approach encounters additional troubles when we consider the problem of adaptive, misguided, or uninformed preferences of “paradigmatic humans.” Consider sweatshop workers. Perhaps some workers do not realize that they are being exploited and *prefer* sweatshop work to the alternative of having no job at all (Radin and Calkins, 2006). Some workers surely are *benefitted*, in an experiential sense, from their sweatshop jobs, as sweatshops provide a major source of income for these workers. But, still, it seems right to insist that we ought to regulate or altogether abolish sweatshops, as something is surely wrong with the current structure (Kates, 2015).

Or, consider the “happy slave” who desires to be enslaved for her entire life. Imagine that this person is moreover *benefitted*, in the experiential sense, from slavery, insofar as she has more opportunities for satisfaction as a slave than she would have as a free woman, given that her “master” takes care of her basic needs and provides her with comforts that she would not have otherwise. Still, it is wrong for the slaveholder to enslave this person. And the wrongness *cannot* be explained in terms of thwarted preferences, given that enslavement, in this case, satisfies the slave's desires.

A defender of the desire-fulfillment approach might then emphasize the importance of satisfying *rational* and *fully informed* desires. On this “enlightened” desire-satisfaction approach, morality demands that we prioritize what I call *counterfactual* desires—desires one would have if one were rational and fully informed. Thus, one might argue that if one were rational and fully informed, one would not desire to be enslaved. Martin (2019, p. 97) seems to endorse such an approach when it comes to the degrading and humiliating treatment of children, noting that such treatment is likely wrong because “if they [children] could rationally choose,” they would not agree to such treatment. This “enlightened” desire-satisfaction approach seems to endorse what I call the Dignitary Harm Principle:

An action causes a dignitary harm if (1) the actor performs the action with a disrespectful attitude, and (2) the object of the action, were she to be rational and fully informed, would desire not to be the object of the action, *even if the action does not impact her experiential welfare*.¹⁸

But if we are willing to endorse this principle when it comes to *paradigmatic* humans and children, as Martin seemingly would, moral consistency demands that we adhere to it when it comes to our interactions with *all* beings with inherent value: humans *and* nonhumans. To see why this is, consider again the “happy” slave. If being enslaved promotes one's experiential welfare, why is it rational to desire not to be a slave? The answer is that even “happy” slaves are not given their due, and *it is rational for creatures to desire that they be given their due*. And it is rational for creatures to desire that they be given their due because *it is good for them that they be given their due*. Individuals then have a *welfare* interest in receiving their due, even if they do not *desire* to receive their due.

One problem with Martin's approach is that it fails to acknowledge an important distinction between harms to one's experiences and harms to *the subject* itself, and, relatedly, it fails to recognize that there are both *experiential welfare* and *subject welfare*.¹⁹ We, as individuals with inherent value, are, as Regan (1985) puts it, more than just containers or receptacles of experiences. As he compellingly argues, the inherent value of individuals is “to be understood as being conceptually distinct from the intrinsic value that attaches to the experiences they have (e.g., their pleasures or preference satisfactions), as not being reducible to values of this latter kind, and as being commensurate with these values” (Regan, 1983, p. 235). To say that animals can be harmed *only* if their experiential welfare is

affected is to miss that animals are more than just bundles of experiences and that, because of this, animals have a separate kind of welfare that can be wrongfully harmed: their subject welfare. And one's subject welfare is harmed when one is treated in undignified ways.

Beings with inherent value are, other things equal, born with a high status, i.e., dignity. This high status amounts to being in a state that is fit for a being with inherent value.²⁰ So having dignity simply refers to *being in a state in which one's valid claims are not wrongfully thwarted*. And, other things equal, when one is born, one is in a state in which one's valid claims are not wrongfully thwarted, and one remains in this state *until* there is wrongful interference. For instance, when a squirrel is born in the "wild," he is born with dignity. He remains in a state fit for a squirrel, *until a malicious agent comes along to violate his valid claims*. When this happens, the squirrel loses part, or all, of his dignity. His high status is lessened or altogether taken away.

Consider an analogy. Person X is born a millionaire. But just because person X is born a millionaire does not mean that person X will retain his status as a millionaire. Someone may steal person X's money. Person X might gamble his money away. Relatedly, we are born with dignity, insofar as we are born in a state in which our valid claims are not *wrongfully* thwarted. If we live our lives without wrongful interference and without treating ourselves in undignified ways, the dignity that we are born with always remains intact, even if we endure "natural" harm, such as disease-related harm. But even though we are born with dignity, our dignity can, as Cataldi puts it, "slip away."²¹ Someone may wrongfully thwart our valid claims, thereby treating us in an undignified manner. We might treat *ourselves* in undignified ways. And when this happens, our experiential welfare may or may not be affected. But our *subject welfare* is harmed by indignities.²²

Because the harming of one's subject welfare involves the violation of valid claims,²³ when one's subject welfare is harmed, one, necessarily, has been *wronged*. Individuals have valid claims to what they are due, and thus, moral agents have a justice-based *duty* not to thwart the claims of individuals to what they are due. After all, having valid claims logically entails that other people have duties (Feinberg, 1970). Now, individuals with inherent value are due treatment that is in accordance with the value that they have: inherent value. So individuals with inherent value have a valid claim against others to be treated in accordance with their inherent value, even if they do not *take an interest* in the fulfillment of this claim, that is, even if they do not *make* a claim (Feinberg, 1970). After all, as Feinberg points out, "one might have a claim without ever claiming that to which one is entitled, or without even knowing that one has the claim" (Feinberg, 1970).

To understand what kind of treatment accords with the inherent value of individuals, consider what it means to have inherent value. To have inherent value is to have value in, and of, oneself, *regardless of one's usefulness* to others and *regardless of whether anyone recognizes one as valuable* (Regan, 1983, 1985). So, to respect a creature with inherent value, we ought to treat and view that creature as *valuable as the kind of being it is*.

To treat individuals with inherent value as *valuable as the kinds of beings they are* is to, at the very least, not reduce them to the status of tools, resources, or commodities. To do otherwise would be to fail to acknowledge that they are not the kind of things that are resources. Moreover, to treat individuals with inherent value *as valuable as the kind of beings they are* is to treat them in accordance with their specific nature.²⁴ To fail to do so would be to fail to acknowledge that those with inherent value are valuable *just as they are*, regardless of whether anyone recognizes their ways of being as valuable. Moreover, it is to acknowledge the *unique identities* of individuals with inherent value. While individuals with inherent value share something in common, they also are relevantly different from one another, insofar as they have different species-specific natures and individual ways of being. Since respecting beings amounts to (a) not using them as mere means, tools, commodities, or resources and (2) treating them in accordance with what Paul Taylor (1986, p. 127) calls "their own modes of existence," and individuals with inherent value have a valid claim to respectful treatment, moral agents have a *duty* not to treat individuals with inherent value as mere means or objects *and* a duty to treat them in accordance with their natures.

Consider, then, the Dignitary Wrong Principle, which is entailed by all that has been argued:

Action X is a dignitary wrong if the object of X has inherent value, yet is viewed or treated as a tool, commodity, or consumable or if the object of X is not treated in accordance with the subject's specific nature.

This principle explains why certain acts wrong *animals*, even if they do not impact their experiential welfare. They are wrong precisely because in performing such acts, the actors fail to fulfill their duty to treat and view individuals with inherent value respectfully. So, to mock an animal—say, by poking fun at or spitting on a “zoo animal”—is a failure to fulfill one's moral duty not to violate the animal's valid claim not to be treated like a mere object for human entertainment, *even when the mockery does not affect the animal's experiential welfare*. As Diamond (2001, pp. 136–137) puts it, when we mock animals, we turn them into an opportunity for jokes, essentially reducing them to “props in our show.”

While our experiential welfare certainly can be made better or worse-off, so, too, can our subject welfare. Other things equal, our *experiential welfare* is better-off when our positive experiences increase, and it is worse-off when our negative experiences increase. Likewise, our *subject welfare* is better-off when our inherent value is acknowledged by others, and our subject welfare is worse-off when this value is not acknowledged or altogether disregarded. When our dignity is lessened or stripped away, our *subject welfare* is harmed by agents who act wrongly, and this explains how we can be both harmed and wronged when our experiential welfare is not affected.

6 | HARMLESS WRONGS

In the previous section, I argued that animals can be both harmed and wronged when their experiential welfare is not affected. I explicitly and, at times, implicitly, defended a *non-experiential-based* account of harm. Now, I will argue that even if the *experiential* account of harm is the right account of harm, we can still explain how animals can be wronged when their experiential welfare is not affected.

Consider a paradigm wrong that harms, such as the act of *maliciously* stabbing someone to death. This act has two distinct “aspects.” First, there is *the harm-causing action*. I take an *action* to be *intentional bodily movement*, as opposed to mere *behavior*, which usually refers to automatic or reflexive bodily movement. *Intentionally* stabbing another is an *action* that negatively affects the experiential welfare of the one who is stabbed, and thus, it causes something *any* plausible account of harm would characterize as a harm. But not every harm-causing action is wrong. Suppose I see that Jake is thirsty, and I intentionally hand him a cup of liquid that is actually poison though, tragically, I mistakenly believe it to be water. In so doing, I poison Jake, and I have harmed him, but I have not wronged him, so long as I did not act recklessly or negligently. Surely, when someone *accidentally* harms another, even when acting intentionally, the harmer does not *necessarily* wrong the one who is harmed. Intentionally performing an action that causes harm, then, is not sufficient for wronging. For a harm to be *wrongfully* caused, something beyond a *harm-causing action* must be present.

The second aspect of a paradigm wrong is what I refer to as the “viewing” aspect. When we perform an action that foreseeably harms others and we perform that action without regard for those who we foresee will be harmed, we essentially *view* the ones who we foresee will be harmed disrespectfully. If this action results in harm, we essentially *treat* the ones who are harmed disrespectfully. When this happens, it is appropriate to charge the one who performed the harm-causing action with *disrespectful treatment*. One way we *treat* another disrespectfully, then, is when we perform an action that foreseeably harms another, without appropriate regard for the ones who we foresee might be harmed. When disrespectful attitudes, in part, motivate the actor to perform a harm-causing action, the harm-causing action is not a mere harmful action; it is a *wrong*.

I refer to paradigm wrongs as “harmful treatment wrongs.” *Treatment* refers to *an action* that is performed *with a certain kind of attitude* or intention directed at some particular, identifiable object of the act. There is a sense in which every time we perform an action, we *treat* the object of our action in a specific manner. For instance, when I intentionally place my cup on the table, I treat the table as a thing to support my cup. And when I intentionally throw my computer in the trash once it stops working, I treat the computer like a mere resource. I perform the computer-trashing action with a certain kind of attitude toward the computer: the attitude that the computer is a mere instrument, useless to the world once it is of no use to me.

It is, of course, appropriate to treat most, if not all, inanimate objects as mere instruments. So it is not the case that every time we treat the object of our action like a mere instrument, we act disrespectfully. *One way* our treatment of another becomes *wrongful* is when we perform the respective action with the intention of reducing *someone with inherent value* to the status of a mere instrument.

As noted, not all instances of “treatment” cause harm. For instance, when we treat a computer like a mere instrument, we do not harm the computer, insofar as the computer, as an insentient object, cannot be harmed in the first place. Moreover, not every instance of harmful treatment constitutes a wrong. If I intentionally harm my child by immunizing her in order to promote her health, I treat her as a being who can be justifiably harmed, but my reasons for treating her this way do not stem from an objectifying attitude.

A harmful treatment wrong is a *harmful* act that is performed with disrespectful attitudes or intentions that are directed at a particular, identifiable object of the action—an object that has inherent value. There is a second kind of treatment wrong: *harmless treatment wrongs*, which are non-paradigm wrongs. A harmless treatment wrong refers to a *non-harmful* act that is performed with disrespectful attitudes or intentions that are directed at some particular individual with inherent value. For instance, if I intend to kill Sarah by poisoning her, but unbeknownst to me, she is immune to the poison I slip in her cup, I have *treated* Sarah disrespectfully, although I did not harm her. I treated someone disrespectfully because I performed an action with a disrespectful attitude toward an object (Sarah) that has inherent value, and this is all that is necessary for “treatment” to be characterized as disrespectful and thus wrongful. While there cannot be disrespectful treatment without there being a certain kind of “viewing” or disrespectful attitude, there can be *disrespectful viewing* without there being any kind of *treatment* involved. This phenomenon refers to what I call *viewing only wrongs*, which I return to in Section 11.

There are thus two different ways in which we can wrong without harming. We can cause a harmless *treatment* wrong or we can cause a *viewing* only wrong. In both cases, the wrongness of the acts is explained in terms of disrespectful attitudes or intentions of the actors. In what follows, I provide a sketch of what attitudes and intentions we ought to act on in order to treat beings with inherent value in accordance with their value, and I highlight the ways in which we often fail our respect-based obligations in our “non-harmful” interactions with animals, their bodies, and their images.

7 | MARKINGS: RESPECT MARKINGS

Both arguments advanced in this article acknowledge that the imperative to treat individuals with inherent value with the respect they are due requires that we treat them *as the kinds of beings they are*. Beings with inherent value, though, are more than just unoriginal, identity-less sources of moral value. Rather, they are morally important individuals with unique identities, natures, and modes of existence. They are what Taylor (1986) calls “many-faceted beings.” For example, I, the author of this article, not only have inherent value, but I am also a human, a philosopher, someone’s child, and so forth. To respect me is to acknowledge that I am a “many-faceted being,” and to do this, you ought to treat me as a human, as someone who is a child, as someone who is a philosopher, and *as someone who has inherent value*.²⁵

All creatures with inherent value are, at the very least, the kind of beings who are not mere resources. Thus, we must ask: What does it mean to treat someone as a mere resource? To answer this question, we must first consider what is analytically contained in the concept “resource.” As Regan (1983) compellingly argues, we treat someone like a resource when we harm them for no good reason or when we harm them just to benefit ourselves or others, and this is a truth that holds independently of cultural practices and norms. So a cognitive grasp of the concept of respect involves the understanding that we ought not to harm creatures with inherent value just for our own benefit or the benefit of others. In other words, it is an analytic truth that respecting a creature involves viewing it as something not to be hurt or killed, and refusing to unnecessarily hurt or kill an animal is what I call an *objective* respect marking. Yet we also must be mindful that cultures enrich, or add to, basic moral concepts, such as respect.²⁶ As Cora Diamond

(1978, p. 469) proposes, there are actions or cultural practices that are “part of the way we come to understand and indicate our recognition of what kind it is with which we are concerned.” I refer to these kinds of culture-based acts that express either respectful or disrespectful attitudes as *culturally constructed* respect markings.

There are specific ways we “mark” our understanding that certain entities are, while others are not, resources, and these markings are often socially constructed. Moreover, there are markings that indicate our recognition of what it means to be human; there are markings that indicate our recognition of what it means to be an animal; and there are markings that indicate our recognition of what it means to be a particular kind of human or animal, such as a sister, a brother, a dog, a cat, and so on. Take, for example, “familial markings.” There are various ways in which we, as members of a culture with deeply embedded familial norms, mark our recognition of what it is to be a sister or a brother. These markings stem from deeply embedded cultural beliefs that build upon and inform our concepts “sister” and “brother.” For instance, one way a brother marks his understanding of what it means to be a sister is by not having sex with his sister. This marking stems from the deeply embedded cultural-based belief that “a sister is not someone a brother has sex with”—a belief that enriches the concept “sister.” We have, in part, come to understand what kind of being a sister is by endorsing and internalizing the cultural norm that a sister is not someone a brother has sex with, and this explains why it is morally problematic for a brother to have sex with his sister, even if the incestual act does not cause ordinary harm. The fundamental problem is that the sexual encounter expresses or indicates a failure on the brother's part to recognize what a sister is and to respect his sister qua sister. Other things equal, one way of respecting one's sister as a sister is to adhere to the cultural norms that inform our concept “sister.”

One purpose of marking is to distinguish different types of beings from one another. Most of us refuse to have sex with family members, while happily having sex with our significant others, because we see family members as distinct from those humans to whom we are not related. And this is perfectly fine. Sometimes, though, attempts to establish differences through “markings” stem from discriminatory attitudes and beliefs. At one point, humans “marked” their culturally produced belief that “black people are mere commodities and thus are very different from white people,” which informed their concept “black person,” by enslaving them. Clearly not all cultural “markings” are justified. Those markings that stem from or perpetuate racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, ageist, or speciesist attitudes should be challenged, as these markings ultimately lead to widespread *ordinary harm*. So, although we may have a respect-based obligation to adhere to cultural markings that do not cause or perpetuate ordinary harm, we certainly ought not to embrace cultural markings that promote harmful discrimination.

8 | EXPRESSIVE DIGNITARY WRONGS

With the concept “human,” there are both objective and culturally subjective components. Objectively speaking, humans are the kind of beings who have inherent value; they are not the kind of things that are resources.²⁷ Because this is an *objective* fact about humans, it holds true even in those cultures that fail to treat or view all humans with respect. Consequently, there are certain ways we ought to mark our understanding that humans have inherent value, independently of cultural considerations. For instance, intentionally causing *unnecessary* pain and suffering to humans is always disrespectful; thus, we ought to, in every culture and context, mark our understanding of the inherent worth of humans by refusing to cause them unnecessary pain and suffering.²⁸

Some claim that culturally accepted practices that harm humans, such as female genital mutilation, can be “markings” of respect for the ones who are harmed. To this, I respond that harm-causing markings are always wrongful when they cause *unnecessary* harm.²⁹ Humans, *in virtue of having inherent value*, are the kind of beings who should not be harmed unnecessarily, and one way we ought to “mark” this understanding is by refusing to cause humans unnecessary harm and by protesting the unnecessary harming of humans when we witness it. And, on the flipside, when we cause humans unnecessary harm, we “mark” a failure to understand that humans are the kind of beings who have inherent value, which itself is a failure to understand what it is to be human.

While humans certainly are the kind of beings who have inherent value, cultures add to or enrich our notion of “human.” For instance, in our society, there is a deeply embedded cultural belief that “humans are things to be named,” so one way of marking our respect for children is by naming them (Diamond, 1978). If a mother gives her child a number instead of a name, she might not harm the child's interests or capacities, but she nevertheless commits a wrong, insofar as giving a child a number, and not a name, demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of what a child is (Diamond, 1978). Because naming signals, indicates, or expresses *respect* for the one who is named and infants are entitled to respectful treatment, infants are the kind of things that should be named. It is thus a requirement of respect that parents name their infants, including terminally ill infants who will never care about having a name.

Relatedly, there is a deeply embedded belief that “a human being is not something to be eaten,” and many cultures mark their recognition of this is by refusing to eat human corpses. The refusal to eat human corpses, like the naming of children, is a socially constructed *respect* marking. We, as a culture, begin with the deeply embedded belief that humans are not resources, tools, or commodities, and we “mark” this understanding by naming children and refusing to eat human corpses.³⁰ As a culture, we decided that the norms of naming children and not eating human corpses are ways to express that humans are much more than mere resources.³¹ We thus use these markings to draw a clear distinction between humans and morally insignificant “things.” After all, we do not name inanimate objects, such as computers, chairs, desks, and so forth.³² So to name humans, and not inanimate objects, is to express that humans are, while inanimate objects are not, morally significant.

Now, one might think that naming humans and burying/cremating human corpses are markings of respect for humans *qua* humans. If this is the case, failing to name animals and eating animal corpses is perfectly fine, because *human specific* cultural markings, by definition, do not apply to non-humans. Humans *are* different from other animals, just as cats are different from dogs, and it is permissible to acknowledge these differences through culturally constructed “markings,” so long as these markings do not cause unnecessary harm. For instance, as Elizabeth Anderson (2004) suggests, it surely is fine to mark that humans are *human* by providing them with silverware at a table before they eat, while feeding other animals by putting their food in a bowl on the ground. In doing this, we draw a distinction between humans and other animals, acknowledging that humans are, while other animals are not, the kind of beings who eat at tables with silverware. Just as giving silverware to only humans marks an important difference between humans and other animals, perhaps so do the acts of naming only humans and burying and cremating only human corpses. And if this is the case, it is perfectly fine to name human children and venerate human corpses, while refusing to do the same when it comes to other animals and their corpses.

This line of thought fails to recognize important distinctions between different kinds of markings, such as “respect markings,” “familial markings,” and “humanity markings.” The familial marking of “not having sex with one's sister” expresses that there is a distinction between an immediate family member and a non-family member; this marking is not aimed at distinguishing a sister from morally insignificant objects. Relatedly, the humanity marking of “giving humans silverware” is not done to distinguish humans from mere objects. Rather, this marking is used to draw a distinction between humans and other *animals*—i.e., creatures who do not normally eat with silverware. On the other hand, because naming children and venerating human corpses is done to distinguish humans from morally insignificant *objects*, these markings are appropriately characterized as *respect markings* and not *humanity markings*.

There are good reasons to think that “naming” and “venerating” corpses are *respect markings* and not *humanity* makings. For one, those of us who live with animals name not only humans but also our nonhuman companions. Animal Sanctuaries and Animal Shelters do not number, in lieu of naming, the animals they rescue, and if they did, surely visitors would be appalled by this seeming lack of respect for animal individuality and identity. As Sun Borkfelt (2011, p. 117) points out, when we name an animal, “we not only choose how we want to represent that animal, but also how others are to represent and perceive it: we lay the foundations of representations and perceptions to come.” When we number, instead of name, animals, we express that they “are not like us, are not persons, and do not have the kind of identity, which could warrant a name” (Borkfelt, 2011, p. 123).³³

Zoologists who study animals in the field or in captivity often name the animals they study, leading wildlife researcher Robert Young (2014) to speculate that “[it] would seem humans cannot resist giving names to certain

types of animals.” Yet it is often frowned upon when researchers name the animals they study or experiment on, as there is a worry that naming, instead of numbering, animals biases the experiments (Young, 2014). When scientists study animals (invasively or noninvasively), they are expected to think about their research subjects in impartial and emotionally undetached ways. Animals are to be regarded as mere objects for observation and not as nonhuman persons with unique identities and mental lives. While humans are, in virtue of being human, “understood” members of our society and thus should not be observed for research purposes, animals are deemed distant “others” who, because they are allegedly so foreign and alien, are the “proper objects” of both invasive and noninvasive research. While naming animals expresses that animals are individuals or persons with their own unique *identities* (Hearn, 1986), labeling or numbering animals perpetuates the dogma that there are social and moral gaps between humans and animals, which in turn makes it easier for vivisectionists to hurt animals in terrible ways (Arluke, 1988).

Something similar can be said for the consumption of animal corpses. Those of us living in societies that do not eat *human* corpses as a sign of respect do not eat the corpses of deceased companion animals. Rather, “pet owners” have the bodies of their deceased nonhuman companions buried or cremated, and this expresses the belief that companion animals are not things to be consumed or defiled. When we consume or defile animal bodies, we express the belief that the animals to whom the corpses once belonged were mere objects for consumption, lacking value in themselves, yet when we bury or cremate animal bodies, we express the belief that the animals to whom the corpses once belonged were individuals with morally important identities. And we choose to cremate or bury the bodies of our companion animals because we believe that companion animals have morally important identities and are not mere objects for consumption.

When we name human children and refuse to eat human corpses, we do not mark what it means to be a human *qua human*; rather, we mark what it means to be a human *qua being worthy of respect*. So to say that creature X is the kind of being who should be named instead of numbered is to mark that creature X is worthy of our respect; it is *not* to say that creature X is human. Likewise, to say that creature X is the kind of being who should not be eaten is to mark that creature X is worthy of respect; it is *not* to say that creature X is human. Thus, to say that animals can be numbered instead of named and that their corpses can be consumed is not to say that they are not human; it is to express that they are not entitled to respect.

Of course, one might argue that while we ought to respect animals, respecting them need not amount to not killing and eating them. As the argument goes, a lion's nature is that of a hunter and, relatedly, part of a gazelle's nature is to be prey to hunters—both human and nonhuman. Perhaps, then, human hunters can kill and eat animals while respecting them as the kind of creatures they are.³⁴

Yet, while it makes sense to say that a lion's nature is that of a hunter, it does not follow that part of a gazelle's nature is to be prey to hunters—human or nonhuman. After all, being killed by a predator is something that happens to prey *against their wills*; it is not something that prey animals do or desire. In fact, it is the nature of prey to run away from predators, and when prey are captured by predators, their capacity to realize this “predator-fleeing” part of their nature is thwarted.

Moreover, even if it is the gazelle's nature to be preyed upon by nonhuman carnivores, it does not follow that it is the gazelle's nature to be hunted by humans. After all, part of our nature, as humans, is to use our rational capacities to act in accordance with morality's demands—including the demand to not cause unnecessary harm. As argued earlier, built into the notion of respect is the principle that it is wrong to cause unnecessary harm to those who are worthy of respect, and this principle holds independently of culture-based respect markings. Other things equal, death harms animals by depriving them of future opportunities for satisfaction, and because it is wrong to cause unnecessary harm, it is wrong for humans to hunt and kill animals when doing so is unnecessary. Animals, in virtue of having inherent value, are the kind of beings who should not be harmed unnecessarily, so when we kill, i.e., harm, animals unnecessarily, we mark a failure to understand that animals are the kind of beings who have inherent value.

Of course, there may be situations in which humans must, regrettably, hunt, kill, and eat other animals to survive, and in such cases, killing and eating animals may be permissible. But even if there are unfortunate situations in which

we must hunt, kill, and eat animals to survive, this does not mean that it is the nature of animals to be hunted, killed, and eaten by humans, nor does it mean that, in cases of *non-necessity*, we can hunt, kill, and eat animals while respecting them as the kind of creatures they are. After all, while there are, regrettably, situations where we must kill innocent human threats (such as child soldiers) to survive, this does not mean that it is part of the nature of children to be killed by humans, nor does it mean we can kill *non-threatening* children while respecting them as the kind of creatures they are. Likewise, although it may be permissible to kill and eat other *humans* in “lifeboat” scenarios, this does not mean that humans are the kind of beings that are eaten by other humans, nor does it mean that we are justified in eating human corpses in *non-lifeboat* scenarios.³⁵ For these reasons, we respect neither humans nor animals while hunting, killing, or eating them unnecessarily.³⁶

9 | OTHER KINDS OF EXPRESSIVE DIGNITARY WRONGS

Given their social meaning, eating animal corpses and failing to name animals are dignitary wrongs—expressive dignitary wrongs. Other things being equal, we commit expressive dignitary wrongs when we treat a creature with inherent value in a manner that either is objectively unfit for a creature with inherent value or has been identified within the respective culture as unfitting for morally important creatures. Essentially, expressive dignitary wrongs refer to the performance of actions with a certain kind of meaning—i.e., actions that symbolically express that individuals with inherent value are not morally significant.

But eating animal corpses and failing to name animals are not the only kinds of expressive dignitary wrongs humans commit against other animals. Other examples include painting the fur of animals in ridiculous colors, dressing animals in silly clothing or costumes, watching and sharing “funny” videos of animals that portray them as clumsy or stupid, spitting on animals, “dog shaming,”³⁷ laughing at animals when they hurt themselves, bestiality, and so forth. These acts are wrong, even if they do not affect the experiential welfare of animals, simply because the animal objects of the acts are treated like, as Diamond puts it, “props in our show,” whether it be mere objects of entertainment, pleasure, or ridicule. Indeed, when non-consenting humans are the objects of such actions, these actions are rightly deemed disrespectful.

10 | NATURE-DENYING DIGNITARY WRONGS

Recall that in order to respect a creature with inherent value, we must (a) not view the creature as a mere tool, commodity, means, resource, or object and (b) treat the being in accordance with its nature or modes of existence. Expressive dignitary wrongs are a kind of harmless treatment wrong; they are wrong because they fail the first requirement of respect. Now, I turn to a discussion of a second type of harmless treatment wrong: nature-denying treatment wrongs, which violate the second requirement of respect.

While all creatures with inherent value should be treated in accordance with both objective and (non-harmful) culturally constructed respect markings, we must remember that individuals with inherent value are relevantly different from one another; they are “many-faceted beings.” Because there is more to being human than just being the kind of being who has inherent value, to say that humans have inherent value, and thus should be treated in accordance with “respect markings,” does not tell us what it means to respect humans *qua human*. To show respect for humans *qua humans*, we ought to adhere to what I call (permissible) “humanity markings,” which are markings that distinguish humans *from other animals*. To some extent, we establish humanity markings by simply observing what kind of being a human is, biologically speaking. In addition to being the kind of things that ought to be treated as non-resources, humans are also intellectual creatures; we are the kind of beings who do math, read novels, and write poetry. Thus, we rightly “mark” what it is to be a human *qua human* by educating children, such as by teaching them to read and sending them to school.

Humans are moreover the kind of beings that use language to communicate, so another way we rightly “mark” the humanity of children is by teaching children language. And, as Anderson (2004) notes, while some nonhumans may have the capacity for language, we need not teach them language, simply because they are not the kind of beings who normally use language to communicate. So, other things equal, when we fail to teach an animal language, there is no sense in which we disrespect that animal, even if the animal has the capacity for language. Rather, by not teaching animals language, we rightly “mark” that animals are neither human nor the kind of beings that needs to use language to get on in the world.

In addition to there being “biological” humanity markings, there are also socially constructed humanity markings. In our culture, we have decided that humans are the kind of beings who wear clothes, and thus, one way we mark our recognition of the humanity of children is by clothing them. After rightly acknowledging that humans are the kind of beings who use tools, we have decided that humans are the kind of beings who eat with forks. Thus, one way we mark our respect for a child *qua human* is by teaching the child to eat with a fork.³⁸

Some might argue that since it is a “mark” of respect to clothe humans and teach them to eat with forks, it is also a mark of respect to clothe animals and feed them with silverware. As Cataldi (2002, 117) notes, many people assume that we elevate animals when we force them to imitate us. Quite the contrary, as Cataldi agrees, we *belittle* animals when we do these kinds of things; we treat them as something less or other than what they are. These actions are thus kinds of *nature-denying dignitary wrongs*, which involve “markings” that violate, or fail to appreciate, the natures of creatures with inherent value.³⁹

There are at least three different ways we can commit nature-denying dignitary wrongs in our interactions with other animals.⁴⁰ First, we commit nature-denying dignitary wrongs when we *try to make animals more like humans*. Consider the Paris Hilton-type dog lover, who dresses her dog in pink, frilly dresses. This sort of person “marks” a failure to acknowledge what kind of being a dog is—a kind of being who does not wear clothes. After all, dogs neither need clothes to stay warm, nor do they need clothes to be “accepted” by their respective communities (human or nonhuman). Humans, on the other hand, ought to be clothed, not only to keep warm but also because, as Anderson (2004) puts it, this is what is needed to make them “representable” for human society. For humans, clothing is needed for both thermal *and* social purposes, as clothes are part of our identity, culture, and social norms (Gilligan, 2010). But to clothe dogs is not only socially and thermally unnecessary; it is moreover to deny their natures by attempting to make them more “humanlike.” When we clothe dogs, we refuse to acknowledge the dog’s dogness, failing to respect the dog as a *dog* and decreasing the chances the dog will be taken seriously as the creature it is (Cataldi, 2002, p. 118).

In building the concept “human,” we have decided that we, as humans, are the kind of beings who wear shoes, sweaters, and dresses, and we clothe ourselves even when it is not necessary to keep warm. Humans are entitled to, within their respective societies, collectively enrich the concept “human,” so long as doing so does not cause harm.⁴¹ But although we can, to some extent, determine what it means to be human within our culture, we are not entitled to bring animals into human communities and redefine them, claiming that because they are now part of human society, they are liable to be redefined by humans. Surely forced cultural assimilation is terrible, such as when the Canadian government forcibly assimilated Aboriginals into European culture, destroying the structures and practices that the Aboriginals needed to continue as a cultural group, and this assimilation would have been wrong even if the experiential welfare of Aboriginals was not affected. Just as it was wrong for the Canadian government to “redefine” the Aboriginals, it is wrong when humans try to “redefine” other animals. It is not our place to decide, for instance, that chihuahuas are the kind of beings who wear sweaters.⁴²

Some people perform nature-denying acts because they love the animals in question and sincerely believe that attempting to make animals more humanlike is “respectful.” Still, these markings fail to acknowledge the true nature of the animals and thus are wrong, just as a “benign” sexist, despite his “good intentions,” acts wrongly. To respect individuals with inherent value requires that we not only refuse to treat them as resources but we also respect their natures, and if you fail either demand of respect, you act wrongly, regardless of what your intentions might be. So, while Paris Hilton might not fail morality’s demands by treating her dog like a resource, she fails on the second

account—She distorts the nature of her dog, and her failure to see why this is problematic is a failure to appreciate her dog *as a dog*, and thus a failure on her part to *respect* her dog.

A second, more obvious way we commit nature-denying dignitary wrongs is when we try to change the natures of animals *simply because we do not like the way the animals are*. Natural examples include feeding only vegan food to cats, confining cats to the indoors to prevent them from hunting other animals, and declawing cats. Often, it is argued that feeding vegan food to cats is wrong because it is unhealthy (and bad health leads to either some form of pain and suffering and/or a premature death). Some argue that confining felines to the indoors is problematic because it causes them to suffer from boredom and frustration and it denies them opportunities for pleasure (Abbate, 2019). And there is a growing consensus that it is wrong to declaw cats because this procedure is itself painful and results in long-term feline frustration. But, other things equal, these acts are wrong, *even if they do not affect the experiential welfare of cats*. Take, for example, people who feed their cats only vegan food. There is a sense in which they express a disdain for the carnivorous nature of cats, thereby failing to appreciate, and moreover blatantly rejecting, part of the nature of felines. This is a failure to respect the cat *as a cat*. A cat's nature just is to be the kind of being who hunts, kills, and eats other animals to survive, and, regrettably, this sometimes harms other critters.⁴³

A third way we commit nature-denying dignitary wrongs is when we deny the nature of animals in the pursuit of human amusement and entertainment under the guise of “appreciating” nature. Consider, for instance, the acts of photographing and tape-recording animals in their “natural” habitats. Although “wild” animals who are tape-recorded and photographed are not dressed in silly costumes and treated like “puppets on strings, hallowed out stuffed animals,” as animals are in the circus, their natures are nevertheless misrepresented.⁴⁴ For one, wildlife photographers repeatedly disturb the animals they film in order to get the desired photograph, altering and interfering with the natural behavior of animals. Many wildlife photographers and filmers use “bait” to lure animals out of hiding, capturing animals behaving abnormally (Dattatri and Sreenivasan, 2016). Even the most well-meaning “wild” animal photographers and videographers are selective in *what* and *when* they shoot, thus sharing only a glimmer of “life in the wild” and often anthropomorphizing and exaggerating various character traits of “wild” animals. For instance, some “nature” videos emphasize the hunting of predators, depicting them as bloodthirsty, vicious creatures. Other videos emphasize the play behavior of animals, depicting them as sweet, fuzzy stuffed animals. What is captured in “nature” photographs and videos rarely, if ever, tells the entire story about the complex lives of these animals—even the most “realistic” and “unedited” recordings and photographs involve assumptions about “wild” animals that do not accurately represent their authentic intentions, desires, behaviors, and goals.

11 | REPRESENTATIONAL DIGNITARY WRONGS

Thus far, we have considered the ways in which we wrong animals through both nature-denying and expressive dignitary wrongs. Now, we will consider a third kind of dignitary wrong: *representational dignitary wrongs*, which are the *viewing only* wrongs I briefly discussed in Section 6. Representational dignitary wrongs occur when someone: (a) performs some action with an object that is *not* an individual with inherent value, but it [the object] *represents* (a) creature(s) with inherent value; and (b) the action is one that, if performed on the creature(s) represented by the object, would be disrespectful. When it comes to viewing only wrongs, no real animal is the object of the action; rather, the object of the action is some insentient entity that *represents* (a) creature(s) with inherent value. Because no actual animals are the objects of such actions, there is no sense in which anyone is *treated* disrespectfully. But there is a sense in which creatures are *viewed* disrespectfully when such actions are performed.

Consider, for instance, a grown man who has sex with a doll that resembles a child. Sex is not itself wrong. Moreover, “sex” with an inanimate object is not necessarily wrong. Surely, though, this man's behavior is deeply problematic. But it is not the mere act of having sex with a child doll that is wrong. After all, if a dog were to sexually gratify himself with his “owner's” child sex doll, we would not say that the dog's behavior is morally problematic. So what makes a

grown man having sex with a child doll morally reprehensible must be the thoughts the man has about who the doll represents and the fact that his use of the child doll represents an intrinsically wrong, disrespectful act. Since no real child is directly wronged when a child sex doll is used, there is no one who is *treated* disrespectfully. But because the object of the action (the doll) *represents* all children, every single individual who is a member of the group “children” is *viewed* disrespectfully. Consuming child sex dolls, then, is an affront on the dignity of children everywhere.

There are analogous representational dignitary wrongs when it comes to the performance of acts that represent intrinsically bad ways of treating animals. One example is the Big Buck Hunter arcade game, which allows gamers to “take down” whitetail deer, moose, and other “game” animals. Because trophy and sport hunting are intrinsically disrespectful, one's participation in the hunting video game represents an intrinsically wrong act. Since no actual animal is harmed when this game is played, there is no animal who is *treated* disrespectfully. But because the images in the game *represent* deer, moose, and other “game animals,” every single member of the group “game animals” is *viewed* disrespectfully. Thus, to play Big Buck Hunter is an affront on the dignity of “game” animals everywhere.

Consider also the proposal that, in lieu of raising and killing sentient farmed animals for consumption, we “breed, or engineer, [chickens] as a deaf, blind, featherless, legless, anencephalic lump[s] that we could not injure further” (Clark, 1998, p. 217). Relatedly, Adam Shriver (2009) proposes that if we are going to have factory farming, we should replace factory farmed animals with “knockout animals”—animals that are genetically engineered to have diminished abilities to suffer. But because raising and killing animals on farms are intrinsically disrespectful, the consumption of anencephalic lumps and knockout animals represents intrinsically wrong acts. Now, no real animal is the object of the action; thus, there is no animal who is *treated* disrespectfully. But because the insentient objects of these acts *represent* farmed animals, there is a sense in which every single animal who is a member of the group “farmed animals” is *viewed* disrespectfully. Thus, to consume “knockout animals” is an affront on the dignity of farmed animals everywhere.⁴⁵

When given the option, we ought to pursue solutions to the tragedy of factory farming that do not involve the disrespectful viewing of animals, such as the development of healthy, affordable, and delicious plant-based foods. Moreover, as some have argued, producing cultured meat is not obviously problematic from a dignity perspective, as it is not produced via animal-shaped organisms, but is instead grown as a bundle of tissues, and is thus akin to plant matter (Savulescu and Schaefer, 2014; Gavrell Ortiz, 2004). Because producing a group of cells and tissues does not represent an intrinsically wrong act, it is morally preferable to focus our efforts on developing cultured meat in lieu of insentient or “knockout” animals.

12 | CONCLUSION

I surely have not captured the many ways we fail to respect other animals as the kinds of beings they are. But I hope that I have provoked an overdue discussion about seemingly “harmless” human interactions with animals, their bodies, and images of their bodies. And if we cannot find it in ourselves to appreciate animals in their own right, hopefully we can at least foster a concern for their experiential well-being. At the end of the day, the experiences of *all* animals are likely negatively impacted when we put their lives on display and modify their bodies for the mere convenience, entertainment, amusement, and pleasure of humans.⁴⁶ For the sake of their subject welfare and their experiential welfare, let us refrain from treating and viewing animals in undignified ways.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ When I refer to nonhuman animals in this article, I will use only the word “animal.”
- ² Although Martin grants that the actors can be blamed for fostering bad intentions.
- ³ Nussbaum, though, does not directly address the “wronging without harming” puzzle.
- ⁴ Cataldi does not extend her account of animal dignity beyond the circus context.
- ⁵ Drawing on the work of Simone Weil, who draws a distinction between genuine injustice (i.e., real evil) and rights violations, Diamond suggests that, in discourse about our treatment of other animals, we ought to talk in terms of justice, and not rights. Because, according to Diamond (2001, p. 137), injustice involves the relentless exercise of power over the vulnerable, she can offer an account of the wrongness of ridiculing animals: When we ridicule animals, we, through the relentless exercise of power, turn powerless, vulnerable animals into an opportunity for jokes, essentially reducing them to “props in our show.” Yet, because many animal indignities do not amount to real evil, such as the indignity of dressing animals in human clothes, the language of rights is quite useful for animal ethicists who take seriously Weil's distinction between injustice and rights violations.
- ⁶ Ortiz (2004, p. 95), for instance, puts “aside claims about animal rights” in developing her account of animal dignity, while Cataldi (2002, p. 111) suggests that because the notion of respect in animal rights theory is fundamentally concerned with the use and exploitation of animals, it cannot explain why it is wrong in itself to portray animals as something other than what they are.
- ⁷ The account developed in this paper is largely influenced by Tom Regan's work in *The Case for Animal Rights*. Since he has compellingly argued in defense of the first two claims, I will not belabor these points in my project. But, unlike Regan, I deploy the language of “dignity” and “dignitary” harms to address the problem of “wrongs without experiential harm”, which Regan did not himself address.
- ⁸ See, for instance, Michael Rosen's (2012) work on dignitary harm.
- ⁹ Meyer (1989), too, draws attention to the commonly overlooked distinction between “worth” and “dignity.”
- ¹⁰ While Waldron conceives of dignity as a *legal* status, I conceive of dignity as a *moral* status.
- ¹¹ There may be cases of masochists who enjoy enduring pain and suffering.
- ¹² This account of deprivational harms explains why, other things equal, death harms infants, the severely mentally disabled, and nonhuman animals, even if their deaths are painless and even if they do not have a desire to continue living.
- ¹³ My account of harm recognizes the commonly overlooked distinction between harming states and harming actions and the distinction between *harms* and *all-things-considered-harms*.
- ¹⁴ Dignitary harms, if they exist, are always produced by dignitary wrongs. This is in part why, as I later argue, we need not employ the language of dignitary *harms*. We can simply talk in terms of dignitary *wrongs*.
- ¹⁵ What counts as defiling a human corpse is culture dependent.
- ¹⁶ Here, I refer to cultures that normalize the burial or cremation of human corpses.
- ¹⁷ Some might turn to a character-based argument to explain the intuition that these acts are morally problematic. Yet to say that “the virtuous person” would not engage in these kinds of acts is to assume that there is something problematic about the acts *themselves* in the first place.
- ¹⁸ This principle seems consistent with Korsgaard's (2011, p. 110) thoughts about our interactions with other animals. As she writes, “we may interact with the other animals as long as we do so in ways to which we think it is plausible to think they would consent if they could—that is, in ways that are mutually beneficial and fair, and allow them to live something reasonably like their own sort of life.”
- ¹⁹ This distinction is similar to the distinction between subjective and objective well-being (Balzer et al., 2000).
- ²⁰ Similarly, Cataldi says that “dignity” is related to the ideas of decency or decorum, i.e., what is fitting or what suits one's status.
- ²¹ Dignity, though, can be restored.
- ²² Relatedly, Michael Meyer (1989, p. 529) argues that failing to “have an appropriate sense of dignity gives no individual moral license to treat him...as if he has no dignity.”
- ²³ I admit that one's valid claims can be justifiably *overridden*. But the *violation* of valid claims is always wrongful.
- ²⁴ This refers to both species-specific and *individual* natures.

- ²⁵ This account of respect has much in common with Stephen Darwall's (1977, p. 38) account of (moral) recognition respect, which involves taking seriously the person as the "presented self" in one's response to that person. Darwall suggests that we can be the object of recognition respect not only as persons but also as fathers, husbands, and so forth.
- ²⁶ There is thus a sense in which there are both "thin" and "thick" notions of respect.
- ²⁷ At least *sentient* humans have inherent value.
- ²⁸ For a harm to be morally necessary, at the very least, the harm must be caused in the name of an end that is worth the cost of the harm.
- ²⁹ With female genital mutilation, non-trivial harm is caused in the name of an end that is not worth the cost of the harm. The long-term negative effects the women endure are not "outweighed" by the end of adherence to cultural norms, pleasing men, and so forth. Moreover, this practice perpetuates the oppression of women, which itself is the cause of many ordinary harms.
- ³⁰ Stephen Mulhall (2004, p. 25) suggests that we make sense of our animal nature and mortality by refusing to defile human corpses, insofar as the human corpse is "all that remains to the living of that once-living human being." As he claims, the human corpse is not a kind of artifact or a kind of property; it is one "central mode in which that [once living] person is present among us" (Mulhall, 2004, p. 25). Presumably, one reason we desire to preserve the "modes" in which deceased humans are present among us, and we do not attempt to preserve the "modes" in which broken computers are present in us, is that we respect humans, but not computers. Mulhall's claim that we recognize our animality by refusing to defile human corpses, then, is compatible with my claim that we mark respect for humans by refusing to defile human corpses.
- ³¹ Human communities are at liberty to enrich the concept "human" and "respectful treatment," so long as this does not cause unnecessary harm. There are some communities that eat human corpses as a sign of respect, and I acknowledge that, in such cultures, eating human corpses is, other things equal, morally right.
- ³² And if we do name some inanimate object, it is usually because we believe it to be special or significant.
- ³³ My suggestion that we ought to name animals pertains only to *animals with whom we have some sort of special relationship*. Just as I, myself, do not, and need not, name every human, I need not name every animal, such as "wild" animals whom I never, and will never, "meet." When it comes to the problem of naming and numbering animals, the fundamental wrong is not that we fail to name every animal. Rather, the fundamental wrong is that when we number instead of name animals, we fail to name animals with whom we have some sort of special relationship—i.e., we fail to name the very animals who ought to be named. Arguably, if we are in a position to number animals, we likely have some kind of special relationship with them, and thus, we ought to name them.
- ³⁴ Thank you to an anonymous reviewer from the *European Journal of Philosophy* for encouraging me to consider and respond to this object.
- ³⁵ Here, I have the well-known "lifeboat" case involving Thomas Dudley and Edward Stephens in mind.
- ³⁶ Demetriou and Fischer (2018) defend the permissibility of hunting and killing animals in certain tragic conflict situations. Crucially, their view requires that it can be respectful to treat animals as prey, and I take it that the view is therefore speciesist, as it would never be respectful to treat humans as prey. Moreover, note that they never defend the respectfulness of eating, only of killing. Fischer (2019) argues that there is nothing inherently disrespectful about eating animals as well, but his argument fails because it does not recognize the way eating marks nonhuman animals as lacking inherent value.
- ³⁷ "Dog shaming" refers to internet memes that depict dogs with signs that describe doggy "misdeeds," such as a sign that reads "I eat bunny poop!"
- ³⁸ Although, in other cultures, it is decided that "humans are the kind of being who eat with chopsticks."
- ³⁹ This idea that denying the nature of animals is wrong in itself, regardless of whether it causes experiential harm, is found in the work of Rod Preece and Lorna Chamberlain (1993, pp. 205–6), who draw attention to what they take to be the fundamental indignity of the circus industry, suggesting that "[t]he very principle of circus entertainment is to encourage animals to act contrary to their nature. The animals become objects of fun, even of ridicule... What matters beyond any cruelty is that the animals are portrayed entirely as something other than what they are. They inspire curiosity, perhaps amazement. But they are compelled to act in a manner totally destructive of respect."
- ⁴⁰ When one attempts to change the nature of some animal, they moreover express that the animal is a resource that can be changed, just like we might change an inanimate object, such as by painting it, to better suit our desires.
- ⁴¹ We do not get to decide that "humans are the kind of beings who hunt and kill animals," given that hunting harms other animals.

- ⁴² One might argue that if it is wrong to dress animals in clothing, then it is also wrong to name them and bury and cremate their corpses, because in doing so, we anthropomorphize animals, which is to deny or redefine the nature of animals. After all, animals are not the kind of beings that name each other, nor are they the kind of beings that bury the corpses of their conspecifics. But when animals are named, their natures are not changed. There is no sense in which, once they have a name, they can no longer move about in the same way, and there is no sense in which their appearances change. Likewise, when the corpses of animals are buried or cremated, there is no sense in which the nature of animals are changed or denied. Hence, it is consistent to say that it is a sign of respect for animals to name them and to refuse to eat the corpses, while at the same time insisting that it is disrespectful to clothe animals.
- ⁴³ If we could reduce great harm to other animals by feeding vegan food to cats, then, perhaps, our dignity-based duties to cats can be overridden. But, nevertheless, we ought to acknowledge that the act of feeding one's cats only vegan food is, in itself, morally problematic, and thus, we ought to have a sufficiently good enough reason for changing a cat's diet, if we do in fact do so. For instance, we ought not to, as a mere sign of protest against the meat industry, refuse to purchase animal products for our feline companions, especially if our "pet" food purchases are causally impotent.
- ⁴⁴ For example, when I searched for "lion nature movie" on the internet, the first video that popped up is a PBS (2009) video called "Born Wild: The First Days of Life Lion Cubs," which shows adult lions rolling around and playing with adorable cubs. Yet videos that capture adult lions eating cubs are hard to come by.
- ⁴⁵ But if producing insentient farmed animals is the most efficient way to end factory farming, there may be a moral excuse for doing so.
- ⁴⁶ Relatedly, DeGrazia (1999, p. 129) suspects that the kinds of acts discussed in this article likely "reinforce a pernicious attitude: that animals exist for our use."

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