Moral Status, Final Value, and Extrinsic Properties

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Starting from a distinction between intrinsic and final value, I explore the implications of the supervenience of final value on extrinsic properties regarding moral status. I make a case for 'extrinsic moral status' based on 'extrinsic final value'. I show that the assumption of 'moral individualism', that moral status supervenes merely on intrinsic properties, is misguided, and results from a conflation of intrinsic with final value. I argue that at least one extrinsic property, namely vulnerability, can be the basis of both final value and moral status, and that dependence on such extrinsic properties is compatible with the requirement of agent-neutrality.

Final value and intrinsic value have often been conflated ever since Moore (1903, 1922) analysed the latter notion as the value something would still have *in isolation*, that is, he believed, in virtue of its intrinsic properties. Valuing something for its own sake means, on Moore's view, valuing it in virtue of such properties rather than in virtue of its relations to something else of value, or to a valuer, or to its environment. I shall follow Korsgaard (1983) in making two 'distinctions in goodness'. There are two *types of value*: the intrinsic or extrinsic value things have in themselves or in virtue of other 'sources'; and two *ways of valuing*: final and instrumental. Valuing something as an end, or for its own sake, is contrasted with valuing for the sake of, or as a means to, something else from which it borrows its value (for example, a tool or a banknote with respect to their function or monetary value). It is analytically true that intrinsic value supervenes merely on intrinsic properties. By contrast, it is conceptually open that some things might be valued as ends in virtue of their extrinsic properties. Here I focus on final value as it yields more interesting results concerning moral status, as I shall explain. So, what are the implications of the supervenience of final value on extrinsic properties (call it extrinsic final value, EFV) regarding mor-

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al status? I make a case for extrinsic moral status (EMS) in connection to EFV. Connecting them has one major virtue: it makes relational accounts of moral status avoid the charge of being too partial and agent-relative to be genuine accounts of moral status.

I

Moral Individualism. Most accounts of moral status link it with the possession of value, but also conflate intrinsic value with final value. As a result, many claim that some properties are irrelevant to status *because they are merely extrinsic*. For instance, a prominent advocate of 'moral individualism' writes 'that only intrinsic properties can be status-conferring and give rise to agent-neutral moral reasons' (McMahan 2005, p. 357).

So on moral individualism, reasons that bind agents in virtue of their relation to given entities bind *only* those agents; hence they cannot ground moral status. I argue that moral status does bind agents neutrally, but that it can do so in virtue of relationships. Hence, relational (extrinsic) properties can be status-conferring.

II

Extrinsic Final Value. I assume, following many others (Korsgaard 1983; Kagan 1998; Olson 2004; Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000) that *final* value (which Kagan prefers to call intrinsic) can supervene at least in part on extrinsic properties such as rarity or originality. Beauties, delicacies and athletic records are valuable in contrast to average or ordinary instances of their comparison class. Korsgaard suggests that mink coats, handsome china or gorgeously enamelled frying pans might have final value in virtue of their rarity; to Kagan, history determines the final value of the pen Abraham Lincoln used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, and unique instrumentality can determine the final value of a fast racing car; Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen suggest that Princess Diana's dress might also be finally valuable for being owned and worn by Lady Di; finally, Jamieson (2002, pp. 197–212) and O'Neill (1992) have shown that environmental ethics must allow 'intrinsic' (here: final) value to supervene both on relational[1] features of natural wholes

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(rarity, diversity, naturalness, wildness, function) and on valuers' appreciation.

EFV is very plausible unless one restricts the supervenience of final value so narrowly as to sever the link between moral status and value by making EFV supervene on *internal relations of complex wholes*. In particular, I shall assume (contra Bradley 2006, Feldman 1997, Lemos 2005, Moore 1922, and Zimmerman 2005; and following Anderson 1993, Kagan 1998, Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2000, and Regan 1983) that final value supervenes on concrete objects such as artefacts, living beings, animals and persons, rather than fine-grained states of affairs such as Jerry's experiencing pleasure or Tom's being justly punished.[2] Genuine status cannot depend on states of affairs, of which entities are only parts or means.

III

The Case for Extrinsic Moral Status.

(P1) Moral status implies final value.

(P2) Moral status depends on the properties final value supervenes on.[3]

(P3) Some forms of final value supervene on extrinsic properties (EFV).

(P4) There is a subset of entities with EFV that have moral status.

(C) Therefore, the moral status of some entities (EMS) depends (in part) on their extrinsic properties (in virtue of which they have EFV).

[1] Some relational properties are intrinsic (e.g. being an internal part). However, by relational here I mean extrinsic.

[2] Bradley (2006) distinguishes those two views: a 'Moorean' view about *intrinsic* value, supervening on states of affairs, and a 'Kantian' view about *final* or *inherent* value or worth, supervening on objects.

[3] That is, a thing's moral status depends precisely on the—token- rather than type- — properties on which its final value supervenes. I avoid talk of 'moral status supervening on properties' on purpose, because I assume moral status can be fully explicated in terms of the obligations that arise from something's value, and obligations depend on value in a loose sense that the supervenience relation is not designed to capture.

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Moral *status* is a specification of the obligations agents have toward morally considerable entities. Moral status is a normative guide for action, it provides reasons given the entity's morally relevant or 'status-conferring' properties, while c*onsiderability* is the 'capacity to absorb moral consideration' of those 'toward whom moral behaviors can be intelligibly addressed' (Bernstein 1998, p. 9), who meet the criteria for being taken into account in agents' moral deliberations.

Warren (1997, p. 3) characterizes moral status, or 'standing', as the fact that agents *owe directly* to entities moral consideration of their 'needs, interests, or well-being' 'in their own right', that is, not in virtue of their relation to other things that have status. Moral status is 'a tool', 'a means of specifying those entities towards which we believe ourselves to have moral obligations, as well as something of what we take those obligations to be' (Warren 1997, p. 9).

Only entities with 'needs, interests, or well-being', or a welfare, that is, entities for which things can go better or worse, can have moral status (Bernstein 1998; Harman 2003; Kamm 2007; Warren 1997), because (i) having a welfare is a necessary and sufficient condition for being harmed or benefited, and (ii) moral status defines the limits of permissible and impermissible harms (Harman 2003, p. 174), as opposed to the costs of damaging objects lacking a good of their own. Breaking a vase or stealing a bike harms owners, who have moral status, but they do not harm the objects owned. Moral status basically derives from the importance of harms: the *badness of a given harm to an entity* (Harman 2003)—which leaves open whether harms depend only on intrinsic properties, for instance whether sentience equally matters across species, environments and worlds. Status thus protects that which a being has *interests* in: eating, staying healthy, not suffering, continuing to live, having positive experiences such as pleasure, joy, comfort, fun, love, and so on, or avoiding corresponding aversive experiences.

Now, when agents fulfil their obligations directly to *X* they take *X* into account 'for its own sake'. Genuine moral status, then, is not derivative of the moral status of other entities, on pain of circularity, and it is not a function of one's contribution to other things of value. Those features, being *non-derivative* and *non-contributory*, are also marks of final value (Olson 2004, pp. 34–5). We take morally considerable entities into account *in their own right*, and in virtue of their (specified) status we act *for their own sake*, that is, in ways ap-

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propriate to their good or 'sake'. So moral status implies that its bearer has final value (P1).

I have already assumed P3. P2 is equally plausible given structural correlations between reasons summarized by status and reasons generated by value. Specific types of value require specific types of attitudes. Whether final value expresses a way of valuing or denotes a mind-independent property, it requires appropriate responses (respect, promotion, preservation, admiration, protection, love, care, impartiality), which may be instantiated by corresponding actions. Now, obligations owed to entities with status may either imply or be accompanied by such attitudes, for instance, when we preserve or protect nature, when we love and care for our near and dear, or simply when we tend to the basic needs of all sentient beings.

Since value supervenes on entities' properties, and since obligations, like attitudes, are appropriate responses to such properties, moral status depends on the subvenient properties of value (P2). A pig's status depends on which harms matter to a pig, which depends on such subvenient properties. Pigs are valuable for their own sake because their are sentient and have rich emotional and social lives; and perhaps specially valuable because they bear special, domesticated or affective, relations to us, in which case their extrinsic properties contribute to their special value. Now, in both cases, the same properties ground value *and* status. Therefore, variations in status depend on relevant differences in the supervenience base of value.

However, even though moral status implies final value, final value does not imply moral status. Entities counting 'in their own right' (a painting) but lacking a welfare or 'sake' (unlike a bird) are not *owed* anything by agents (Kamm 2007, pp. 227–31). They have no *claims* against them. Yet, if the base set of morally relevant properties includes extrinsic properties, given P2, entities which have moral status *and* EFV very likely have EMS. Having EMS is having such status in virtue of the properties in virtue of which one has EFV.

IV

Cases of Extrinsic Moral Status. Final value can apply to a variety of objects: humans, non-human animals, natural wholes, biological species, artworks, monuments, precious artefacts. For sure, not all of these have moral status: not all can be *harmed* (hence wronged) (for

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instance, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, the Taj Mahal, Venice, arguably Muir Woods and the mountain gorilla species). Therefore, agents cannot fail to perform what they owe *to* them; they can only fail to do what they ought to do *concerning* them. Yet these things' having final value implies that they morally matter in a way that is reminiscent of moral status: they require protection in their own right against damage. However, are there not straightforward instances of EMS? I have argued that capacities in virtue of which some things matter to one ground status, but some things also matter in virtue of relational features of one's life. Let me provide an example.

Vulnerability is a disposition that makes one more likely to be harmed than comparable duplicates situated in different contexts. Vulnerability, unlike fragility, is thus an *extrinsic disposition* (see McKitrick 2003 for other instances of extrinsic dispositions: weight, visibility, recognizability, etc.). Vulnerabilty is not an intrinsic property whose realization conditions are external; it is essentially extrinsic: context itself explains why something is vulnerable. By contrast, the intrinsic physical properties of a vase explain, across contexts, why it is fragile: shocks explain the breaking. Disability is also an extrinsic disposition: how one is disabled essentially depends on a society's configuration in terms of facilities, provisions and rights, as well as on social norms, even though a given disability also has lower-level internal physical grounds.

Vulnerability can arise at various stages of life to varying degrees (high for children, disabled, senile and other dependent people; low for normally functioning adults). Most fundamentally, we are all born in need of care and dramatically vulnerable to harm by others, nature and ourselves. As a result, children normally have rights that adults lack or have to a lesser degree (e.g. rights to parental provision or basic education), and they lack rights that adults have (e.g. rights to vote, drive, sue, write checks, pay taxes). Thus, vulnerability is among the supervenience base of EFV and EMS (implicit in appropriate care in terms of both attitudes and actions).

Vulnerability gives rise to final value *and* moral status both agent-relatively *and* agent-neutrally. Particular people ought to specially care for their dependants in a way that does not bind other agents. The special value of my child *to me* is agent-relative. However, failing to perform partial obligations directly wrongs the corresponding claimant—a mark of moral status. Furthermore, we also value children for their own sake on other counts: because *all of them* are vul-

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nerable and in virtue of the finally valuable relationships—essential to human flourishing—that they instantiate. Finally, for me to fulfil my obligations to my child, this special value ought to be recognized agent-neutrally by the society which makes it possible for me to provide care to her through institutions, schools and health care (Darwall 2013, p. 120; Kittay 2009, pp. 623–5). Society ought to provide for all children, even and above all those who are not fortunate to have caring families, by allowing and helping parents or caretakers to perform such care, which is best achieved partially. First-order relative value binds everyone by second-order neutral reasons.

A similar reasoning can extend to other forms of partiality to our 'near and dear' (friends, family, lovers) (see Kolodny 2010; Scheffler 2001)—on two conditions: valued relationships must not be discriminatory (e.g. racism: see Kolodny 2010); mere attributions cannot by themselves endow with status, so as to avoid granting a much higher (or lower) status to sacred mountains (or foetuses, to pro-life advocates) than they would reasonably have on their own terms (Harman 2007). Partiality must be impartially endorsable.

To conclude, then, moral status can depend on extrinsic properties on which EFV supervenes (P4). Hence, though intrinsic properties, responsible for welfare, surely matter, some extrinsic properties give rise to EFV which, when impartially endorsable, can ground EMS.[4]

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