

# Is Moral Status Good for You?

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Should we cognitively alter animals in ways that might change their moral status? There has been some discussion of this question. For example, Chan (2009) and Chan and Harris (2001) consider whether we should radically enhance the cognitive capacities of animals, while Thompson (2008) and Shriver (2009) argue that we should in fact substantially *disenhance* some animals to protect them from suffering. More controversially, some have countenanced radical and possibly moral status-altering transformations of human persons. Tännsjö and Tamburrini (2011) defend the ‘soft decapitation’ of some psychopathic criminal offenders—inducing a docile, happy and severely cognitively impaired state—and there has been a lively debate regarding whether it would be possible or desirable to elevate the moral status of persons to ‘supra-personal’ levels by conferring on them as-yet-unseen cognitive or moral capacities (Agar, 2013; Buchanan, 2009; DeGrazia, 2012; Douglas, 2013; McMahan, 2009; Wilson, 2007).

One question relevant to all of these discussions is whether it is good for a being to have moral status; whether a being’s moral status contributes to its wellbeing or (as I take to be equivalent) has *prudential value* for that being. If moral status has prudential value—if it is ‘good for you’—then we would normally have some reason to bring about cognitive enhancements of the sort that would increase a being’s moral status, at least if we can do so without affecting that being’s numerical identity.<sup>1</sup> If,

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<sup>1</sup> I will not consider further whether and when moral status enhancements might affect numerical identity, but let me report that I do not see any reason to suppose that they must always do so. I concede that moral status enhancements plausibly would always involve a significant change in a being’s core personality traits—which are sometimes also referred to as aspects of a being’s *narrative* identity—but this would not prevent us from having reasons to bring about status enhancements. We often have reasons to benefit a person by altering the being’s core personality.

on the other hand, moral status has prudential disvalue—if moral status is ‘bad for you’—then we normally have some reason *not* to bring about such enhancements. Instead, we have reason to bring about cognitive *disenhancements*.

However, this question—about the prudential value of moral status—has not attracted much attention. The possibility that cognitive enhancement or disenchantment might alter a being’s moral status has frequently been *noted*. And the implications of increasing one being’s moral status for the wellbeing of *other beings* has been quite comprehensively explored: much of the debate on enhancing the moral status of persons focusses on whether the acquisition of supra-personal moral status by some would be bad for others. But, with the notable exception of Harris and Chan (2011), philosophers have not paid much attention to the implications of altering a being’s moral status *for that being’s own wellbeing*.

In this chapter, I begin to explore the prudential value of moral status by thinking about four different kinds of prudential value or disvalue that it might have: recognition value, protective value, vulnerability disvalue and noninstrumental value. I will not arrive at any firm conclusions about any of these types of value, but I will offer some initial, speculative arguments, the general thrust of which will be to cast doubt on the prudential value of moral status.

Before beginning to set out these arguments, though, I need to make two preliminary comments.

First, a comment on the nature of moral status. I understand moral status to be a metric of the overall strength and breadth of one’s fundamental moral rights. On this view, claims about moral status can always be translated into claims about fundamental moral rights. And on this view, one can gain moral status by acquiring new fundamental moral rights, or through an increase in the strength or breadth of (some of) one’s existing rights.

Some might prefer to think of moral status not as a metric of fundamental moral rights but as that which gives rise to those rights.<sup>2</sup> Others may think of moral status as a metric, but not only of rights. For example, they may think that a being’s moral status depends not only on its fundamental moral rights, but also on its morally significant interests, even where these interests do not give rise to rights (DeGrazia, 2008; 2012). I adopt a rights-metric account of moral status because it allows for the simplest

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<sup>2</sup> Buchanan (2009: 346) writes that “[a] being’s moral status can make a difference as to ... whether it has rights, and perhaps what kinds of rights it has”.

presentation of my arguments, though I think my conclusions would carry over to at least some alternative accounts of moral status as well.

Second, a comment on value: I will, in what follows, speak of various different types of (dis)value: recognition value, protective value, vulnerability disvalue, and noninstrumental value. In each case, I am referring to a subtype of *prudential* value. Though some of these value-types have obvious *moral* analogues as well, those subtypes of moral value are not my focus here. I will, throughout, use ‘value’ to refer only to prudential value.

## II. RECOGNITION VALUE

One way to explore the possible prudential value of moral status is via reflecting on the analogous (but arguably less elusive) phenomenon of legal status.

It is tempting to think that legal status has prudential value. When an individual possesses a legal right to something, it often seems to be good for her that she possesses that right. It seems good for me, for example, that I possess the legal right to self-determination characteristically conferred on citizens of a liberal democracy: the right to spend my time, offer my labour, and generally live my life as I please, within some constraints. I would be in one way worse off were I to lack this right, as do slaves and the citizens of some authoritarian states.

Why is possessing this legal right good for me?

One answer holds that my possessing this right is good for me in part because of what it says about the attitudes that my fellow citizens (and rulers) have towards me. By granting me this right, my fellow citizens pay me a certain kind of compliment—we might say that they recognise my significance or worth. Call this kind of value *recognition value*.

Is my *moral* status good for me in similar ways? Does it also have recognition value?

It seems doubtful that it does, since our having moral status does not—at least on the dominant, objectivist accounts of moral rights—say anything about how we are in fact regarded by others. On these accounts, fundamental moral rights (and thus, on my view, moral status) are not granted to or conferred on us. Indeed, one could have high moral status while being regarded by everyone else as warranting no moral consideration. It is true that moral status is sometimes cashed out in terms of recognition. For example, Warren Quinn holds that, in granting a person rights over his body and mind, “morality recognizes his existence as an individual with ends of his

own—an independent being. Since that is what he is, he deserves this recognition”. Similarly, Thomas Nagel holds that “[t]he idea of rights expresses a particular conception of the kind of place that should be occupied by individuals in a moral system—how their lives, actions, and interests should be recognized by the system of justification and authorization that constitutes a morality” (2004: 33).<sup>3</sup> However, it seems to me that such claims are best read as metaphorical, or at least, as not implying that there is any *mind* doing any recognizing or any *attitude* of recognition being expressed. (Thomas Nagel comes close to explicitly acknowledging this. Immediately following the passage referring to recognition quoted above, he continues: “[m]oral status, as conferred by moral rights, is formally analogous to legal status, as conferred by legal rights, except that it is not contingent on social practices. It is a universal normative condition” (2004: 33).<sup>4</sup>) Rather, I think, such references are simply a way of emphasizing that moral status is grounded in features of the person. Perhaps recognition of this metaphorical or nonstandard variety is also valuable—I will return to consider some reasons why it might be later, under the heading of ‘noninstrumental value’ (§V)—but this value will be of a very different kind to the recognition value of legal status.

### III. PROTECTIVE VALUE

So much for recognition value. Let me now move on to consider another kind of value that moral status might have, and that is—once again—suggested by the analogy with legal status.

Consider again my legal right to self-determination. One reason—perhaps the most obvious reason—why it might be good for me to possess this right is that it helps to protect some aspect of my wellbeing—some interest of mine—for instance, my interest in self-determination or autonomy. Provided that people are generally somewhat disposed to comply with the law, my possession of a legal right to self-determination makes it less likely that I will in fact be deprived of my self-determination than were I to lack this right. In this way, my legal status has instrumental value for me by helping to protect my interests—by making it less likely that some of my interests will be set back. It has what I will call *protective value*.

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<sup>3</sup> See also Quinn (1994: 170).

<sup>4</sup> Nagel (2004: 33) further asserts that “[t]he existence of moral rights does not depend on their political recognition or enforcement but rather on the moral question whether there is a decisive justification for including these forms of inviolability in the status of every member of the moral community. The reality of moral rights is purely normative rather than institutional”.

Does moral status also have protective value. It might seem initially plausible that it does. Suppose I have a fundamental moral (not just a legal) right to self-determination. And suppose—as I will simply assume—that people are generally at least somewhat inclined to comply with their moral duties, including those duties that are correlative to moral rights. People tend to respect one another’s moral rights. Given this, my possessing a moral right to self-determination seems to be good for me in that it reduces the chances that I will in fact be deprived of my self-determination, just as my possessing the legal right does. Moral status has protective value.

However, this way of thinking about the value of moral status does not tell the full story; the protective value of legal status cannot be carried over to moral status so easily. The reason for this is that legal and moral rights differ in their relationship to the interests that they protect. Legal rights are practically independent of the interests that they protect. Someone can deprive me of my legal right to something without doing anything to undermine my interest in it. But moral rights may be very closely connected to the interests they protect. In fact, I think it is plausible that having an interest in something—or a sufficiently strong interest—is necessary and sufficient for having a fundamental moral right to it.<sup>5</sup>

Why might having a (sufficiently strong) interest be necessary and sufficient for having a fundamental moral right? It may be so because, as proponents of the interest-based theory of rights hold, moral rights in some sense derive from, and serve to protect, our interests. Alternatively, it may be so because the interest and the right have some common source. For example, my interest in self-determination may imply that I have a right to self-determination because it implies that I have a capacity for self-determination, and that capacity also gives rise to the right.

I believe that having a (sufficiently strong) interest in something may be necessary and sufficient for having a fundamental moral right to it even on some versions of the so-called will-based understanding of rights, according to which the function of rights is not to protect the right-holder’s interests, but to empower her choice or reflect her status as a rational agent. On some versions of this view, there is really only one fundamental master-right—perhaps the right to be treated as befits a rational agent, or the right to be treated as an end in oneself—and this right derives from the possession of certain rational capacities which are also what generates the interest in being treated as befits a rational agent, or as an end in oneself.

In any case, I will now simply assume that—on the correct theory of moral rights—having a (sufficiently strong) interest in something is necessary and sufficient for

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<sup>5</sup> Though for some objections to this view, see Kamm (2004: 484-7).

having a fundamental moral right to that thing. My goal in the remainder of this section will be to explore how this relationship between interests and moral rights may affect the protective value of moral rights.

In suggesting that our legal rights have protective value, I implicitly compared a situation in which I have a legal right to something to one in which I lack the legal right, but still have the same interest that, in the actual situation, it protects. I compared the actual situation in which I have both an interest in and right to self-determination, to a counterfactual situation in which I lack the right to self-determination, but still have the same interest in it. When we made this comparison, it looked as though my interest would be better protected in the actual situation, in which the right is present, than in the counterfactual one.

This comparison makes sense in the legal case, because I could well be put in the counterfactual comparator situation; I could be deprived of my legal right to self-determination while my interest in it remains intact. Presumably most slaves and citizens of authoritarian states are *in fact* in precisely this situation; they have the same interest in self-determination as you or I have, though they lack the legal right to it.

It is not clear that this comparison is apt in the moral case, however, since it invokes a counterfactual situation that no one could bring about: a situation in which I have an interest in something but do not have the right that in fact—on the correct theory of morality—always comes along with this interest. True, it may be logically and metaphysically possible for me to, say, have the interest in self-determination without having the moral right to it. Morality could have been otherwise. But no-one could put me in that situation, since no-one has the power to change morality in that way. Given morality is as it is—or at least, as I am supposing it to be—the only way to deprive me of some moral right will also involve either extinguishing the interest that the right protects, or weakening it to the point that it is no longer sufficiently strong. For example, I suspect that the only way in which someone could deprive me of my moral right to self-determination would involve extinguishing or seriously weakening my capacity for self-determination, and this would also eliminate or weaken my interest in self-determination.

This suggests that the evaluative question of practical relevance here is whether I am better off with some right and the interest that it protects than I would be if I lacked both the right and the (sufficiently strong) interest. But the answer to this question will, I think, be dominated by the nature of the underlying capacities, not the protection provided by my right.

To motivate this claim, let me offer two cases.

In the first case—*Higher Porcine Pleasure*—we are to imagine that, through some form of cognitive enhancement, a pig acquires the capacity for a ‘higher pleasure’ of the sort that can currently only be enjoyed by cognitively more sophisticated beings: the pleasure of appreciating the beauty of nature. Perhaps this pig will have acquired a new interest—in being exposed to natural beauty, say—and perhaps it will also have acquired a new fundamental moral right—against being deprived of such exposure, say.

In this case, it seems that the pig is in one way better off with this new capacity, and the associated interest and right, than it would have been without them. With them, there is at least some chance that the pig will get to experience this higher pleasure. Without them, there is no chance it will get to experience it.

But now compare this to a case—*Higher Porcine Suffering*—in which a pig, through some form of cognitive enhancement, acquires the capacity to experience a ‘higher’ form of suffering, but not any higher pleasure. Perhaps the pig acquires the ability to experience anxiety regarding the long-term future when previously this form of suffering was only open to more sophisticated creatures. Again, we might think that the pig has acquired a new interest (in not experiencing such anxiety) and a new moral right (against being caused to experience it). But in this case, it seems that, other things being equal, the pig is going to be worse off with the new capacity—and the associated interest and right—than it would have been without them. Without them, the pig would have had no chance of experiencing anxiety about the long-term future, while now it presumably has at least some chance of experiencing it.

In these cases, it seems to be the value of the underlying capacity that is crucial in determining whether the pig is better off with or without the capacity, and thus with or without the associated interest and right. If the capacity is a capacity for something good, then the pig is likely to be better off with the capacity, and thus the interest and the right. But if the capacity is a capacity for something bad, then the pig is likely to be better off without it, and thus without the interest and right.

Similar points could be made in relation to cases in which a right is acquired not through the acquisition of an entirely new capacity and corresponding interest, but through the strengthening of an existing capacity and interest, such that the interest becomes sufficiently strong for a right to obtain. If the strengthened capacity is a capacity for something good, it will probably be good to acquire the right; if it is a capacity for something bad, it will probably be bad to acquire it.

The protection provided by the right, in these comparisons, is only a parasitic, secondary consideration—a factor that amplifies the value or mitigates the disvalue of having the capacity (or having it to a greater degree). It is not a consideration that could make it good to acquire a (stronger) capacity for befalling harm—all it can do is mitigate the badness of the new capacity by reducing the chances that harm will in fact occur. So, the protection provided by the right is not a value that we can straightforwardly plug into our moral calculus as giving us a reason to pursue moral status enhancements. The value of the capacity being enhanced is the primary consideration in determining whether we have such reason.

At this point it might be objected that my argument so far has conveniently ignored the fact that rights can protect interests besides those that are explicitly covered by the right.<sup>6</sup> Consider the putative fundamental Kantian right to be treated as an end in oneself. This right protects our interest in being treated as an end in oneself—the interest that, if my assumption above was correct, is necessary and sufficient for the existence of the right. But it also protects other interests. For example, it plausibly protects us from being killed to save others, and thus, in some circumstances, protects our interest in continued life. But this interest in continued life is an interest that we would arguably have had even if we had lacked the interest in, and right to, being treated as ends in ourselves. Thus, it may seem, the right to being treated as an end in oneself has protective value with respect to interests besides the interest it explicitly protects.

To this suggestion, I have two responses.

First, we have been supposing that moral rights might have protective value because people are generally disposed to do what they are morally required to do, and thus to respect moral rights. But it may be that morality in fact often requires us to respond to the rights of others in ways that do not confer the kind of collateral benefit that I have just described. Suppose that there exist in a society two types of being, the Kantopods and the Benthopods. Kantopods have both an interest in continued life and a right to be treated as ends in themselves. Benthopods possess an equally strong interest in continued life, but lack the right to be treated as ends in themselves. Because Kantopods enjoy this additional right, they will be better protected from death in certain circumstances—such as those in which they could be sacrificed to save the lives of others. But, given that Benthopods have an equally strong interest in continued life, this might seem unfair. It might seem that, to offset this advantage enjoyed by the Kantopods, the society should arrange itself so that, in other circumstances—circumstances where the right to be treated as an end in oneself is not

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<sup>6</sup> I thank Benjamin Sachs for pressing me to consider this objection.



in play—the Benthopods’ interest in continued life is prioritised over the similar interest of the Kantopods. Perhaps, for example, the Benthopods should be prioritised over Kantopods in the allocation of scarce healthcare resources, and to precisely the degree that offsets the collateral benefits produced by the Kantopods’ additional right. More generally, perhaps, everyone ought to act such that, notwithstanding the additional right possessed by the Kantopods, the two types of being overall fare equally well with respect to the interest in continued life. In that case, there would be no reason to suppose that the Kantopods’ possession of the additional right would—by virtue of the moral compliance of others—confer a collateral benefit with respect to their interest in continued life.

Of course, there may still be other cases in which moral rights do have collateral benefits, by virtue of protecting interests besides those which they explicitly cover. This brings me to my second response: moral rights may also have collateral *costs*. This is because rights can also *frustrate* interests that they do not explicitly cover. For example, your right to be treated as an end in yourself may preclude certain forms of paternalistic and exploitative-but-beneficial treatment. The more general point here is that, though our possession of moral rights may affect the realisation of interests besides those that the rights explicitly protect, it will be an open question in any particular case whether the overall effect will be to protect or frustrate those other interests. Whether moral status possesses protective value, or rather what we might call ‘overprotective disvalue’, will thus depend on exactly which rights are in question.

#### IV. VULNERABILITY DISVALUE

In discussing the suggestion that moral status might be good for you in the respect that it has protective value, I wound up noting that it might in fact be in one way bad for you: it might protect you against beneficial treatment. In this section, I want to consider another respect in which moral status might be bad for you.

My thought here is that moral status might be rather like a fragile or needy disposition. It may make it harder for others to avoid harming you, and thus increase the chances that you will in fact be harmed. To see why this might be so, suppose that you have some moral right against being harmed in some way. Suppose, for example, that you have a moral right against being caused to suffer pain. And suppose that some other person then harms you in this way, thus infringing this right.

This person has harmed you by causing pain, but I think it is also plausible that he has, separately, harmed you simply by infringing your right. It is plausible that it is noninstrumentally bad for you to have your rights infringed.<sup>7</sup>

This may help to explain why most of us would prefer to suffer pain caused by natural misfortune, like a random genetic mutation or a natural disaster, than to suffer pain caused by the action (or inaction) of some other moral agent. Perhaps when pain is caused by another's action, we suffer the additional harm of having our rights infringed.

The noninstrumental disvalue of rights infringements may also help to account for our intuitions about some cases of moral status enhancement. Suppose that we enhanced the moral status of all farmed pigs through causing them to acquire something like the moral right to self-determination enjoyed by persons. And suppose we kept treating them in all the same horrific ways that we treat them currently. It might seem that they would then be in one way worse off than they are at the moment, and one way to account for this would be to appeal to the disvalue of having one's rights infringed. The pigs are worse off because they now suffer both pain *and* infringements of the right to self-determination.<sup>8</sup>

If these observations are correct, then moral status is instrumentally bad for you insofar as it makes you vulnerable to a kind of harm that you could not otherwise suffer. It has what we might call *vulnerability disvalue*. More specifically, it has the disvalue of making you vulnerable to the harm of having your rights infringed.

How great is this disvalue? How bad for you is it to have your rights infringed, setting aside the other harms that may ensue? I am unsure about this. On the one hand, many of us do not care all that much about rights infringements compared to other kinds of harm. For instance, most of us care much more about not suffering pain than about not having our rights against the infliction of pain infringed. And since it is plausible that our cares to some degree track actual harm, this suggests that the bare rights infringement involved in inflicting pain is not seriously harmful.

On the other hand, it seems to me somewhat plausible that certain kinds of degrading, dominating or exploitative treatment can be seriously bad for you even if they do not

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<sup>7</sup> Wertheimer (2003: 97, 93) uses the term 'dignitary harm' to refer to the harm of having one's right infringed.

<sup>8</sup> Though note that there are other ways of accounting for why enhancing the pigs makes them in one way worse off. It may do so, for example, by bringing it about that they have frustrated autonomous desires when otherwise they would have had no autonomous desires.

cause pain or suffering, perhaps because they infringe the victim's rights. Consider the position of a person who is enslaved, but under relatively favourable conditions, and for whom the only possible alternative existence was one of freedom but severe material deprivation. It seems plausible to me that this person is seriously harmed by her enslavement. Moreover, it also seems plausible to me that the harmfulness of the enslavement is best accounted for by reference to the rights infringements that it involves.

I leave the magnitude of the disvalue of having one's rights infringed as an open issue.

## V. NONINSTRUMENTAL VALUE

A fourth and final possibility to consider is that moral status might possess *noninstrumental* value for you; it might be a constituent of your wellbeing, like pleasure or, perhaps, achievements. Admittedly, moral status is not standardly included on the lists of constituents of wellbeing provided by theorists of wellbeing. However, the view that moral status or moral rights are valuable for their bearers not merely instrumentally, but also noninstrumentally, has a strong pedigree in nonconsequentialist moral philosophy (e.g., Kamm, 1992: 382-6; 2004: 492-5; Nagel, 2004; Wenar, 2005). In this literature, the connection between moral status and the status-holder's prudential good is often made out by reference to dignity. Dignity is commonly equated with status<sup>9</sup> or more specifically with a particular moral status, such as *inviolability* (Kamm, 2004: 492-5; Nagel, 2004: 36-40).

How are we to assess the claim that inviolability—or moral status more generally—has noninstrumental value for those who have it?

One strategy, inspired by an approach taken by Hooker (2015) in a different context, would be to reflect on whether we would feel sorry for a being were we to discover that it had less moral status than we thought, or glad for a being were we to discover that it had more moral status than we thought.

Suppose we discovered that neonates or the severely brain damaged definitely do not have full moral status when previously we were uncertain about this. Assuming that these individuals will in any case be treated in a way that respects all the rights they would have had had they had full moral status, would this cause us to feel more sorry for them? I do not find it clear that it would. Alternatively, suppose we discovered that chimpanzees definitely have full moral status when previously we were uncertain about this. Would we feel glad for them (again, assuming that chimpanzees are in any

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<sup>9</sup> See, for a full development of this idea, Waldron (2009).

case always treated in a way appropriate to full moral status)? Again, I do not think so. At least, I don't find it obvious that we would.

Perhaps we can elicit a clearer response by considering cases in which a being's moral status *changes*. Would we feel glad for a being were it to acquire more moral status, or sorry for it, were it to lose moral status, bracketing the kinds of instrumental effects discussed in the previous sections.<sup>10</sup> Again, however, I find that, when I reflect on this, I do not have clear intuitions. At least, I do not have intuitions that consistently support the noninstrumental value of moral status across a range of cases. On the one hand, when I think of cases in which other people would lose their full moral status (by which I mean simply the moral status characteristic of persons, whatever that might be<sup>11</sup>), I am inclined to think that I would feel sorry for them, even if nothing in how they are treated would change. But on the other hand, when I think of the possibility that other beings—beings that do not currently have full moral status—might gain such status, it does not seem to be at all clear that I would feel glad for them, holding fixed the ways that they will in fact be treated.

I can see two possible explanations for these intuitions.

On the first explanation, moral status *is* noninstrumentally valuable, but only up to some a ceiling—perhaps the level of moral status that is typical, or natural or to be expected for the kind being that one is (or was, prior to some alteration in moral status). If one is already at that level, losses in moral status are bad for you, but gains are not good.

On the second explanation, moral status is noninstrumentally valuable, but in a non-standard sense of value. Moral status is not valuable in the sense of being something that is to be *promoted*, though it—or at least *full* moral status—is valuable in the sense of being something that, when it obtains, is to be *protected*.<sup>12</sup> We have reason to protect—that is, prevent losses of—moral status, but we lack any reason to bring about gains in moral status.

Note that, if either of these explanations holds, then moral status is not valuable in a way that is relevant to one of the questions that motivated this chapter: ought we to

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<sup>10</sup> We can bracket these effects by assuming that, whatever level of moral status it ends up possessing, the being will never be, and is not at risk of being, treated in a way that infringes, or would have infringed, the rights entailed by the highest level of moral status that it might have. This takes the risk of rights-infringement off the table.

<sup>11</sup> I wish to remain neutral here on whether the moral status characteristic of persons is that of inviolability.

<sup>12</sup> For an account of the distinction, see Cohen (2011).

enhance beings' moral status? To answer that question, we need to know whether moral status is valuable in the standard sense of being something that ought to be promoted (not just protected), even beyond its current level, and here, I suggest, there is no clear support to be drawn from intuitions regarding whether we would feel glad or sorry for those who undergo changes of moral status.

Let us turn, then, to an alternative, less direct strategy for defending the noninstrumental value of moral status. On this strategy, rather than seeking to show that moral status has *nonderivative* noninstrumental value—what is often called *final* value—we seek to show that it has *derivative* noninstrumental value by virtue of being a constituent of some other good that is itself a constituent of wellbeing.

One good to which moral status might plausibly be thought to contribute is self-respect. It seems quite plausible to think that our self-respect consists in our rightly viewing ourselves as having full moral status—that is, in our (i) *having* full moral status, and (ii) *recognising* our own full moral status.<sup>13</sup> It is also plausible, I think, that self-respect belongs on an objective list of constituents of wellbeing. So perhaps we could establish the derivative noninstrumental value of moral status by citing its constitutive contribution to self-respect.

The first thing to note about this appeal is that it invokes a good that is possible only for certain kinds of being: beings capable of recognising their own moral status. As a result, its practical relevance is somewhat limited: it will not be relevant to many questions about the ethics of animal enhancement or animal disenchantment, since these alterations would normally not produce beings capable of self-respect.

A second point to make about this suggestion is that, as well as being a constituent of self-respect, moral status could also be a constituent of self-*dis*respect, where self-*dis*respect consists in wrongly viewing oneself as *lacking* full moral status.<sup>14</sup> Self-*dis*respect seems prudentially disvaluable, and it is a disvalue that is enabled by moral status. Only those with full moral status can wrongly take themselves to lack it. Thus, the present argument for the noninstrumental prudential value of moral status could just as well be re-purposed into an argument for the noninstrumental prudential *dis*value of moral status.

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<sup>13</sup> For the classic statement of this sort of view, See Hill (1973: 89-97). Dillon (1992: 137, n. 4) notes that this is the 'predominant understanding of this kind of self-respect [*viz.* self-respect as respect for persons] in Western democratic society'.

<sup>14</sup> Hill (1973: 89, 91, 92) understands servility, which on his view 'betrays a certain kind of self-respect', as the 'denying of [one's own] moral status' or 'failure to understand and acknowledge one's own moral rights'.

More importantly, once we distinguish self-respect and self-disrespect, it is no longer clear that self-respect has prudential value over and above the value of the absence of self-disrespect: although self-disrespect seems positively bad, it is not clear that self-respect is positively good.

To see this, suppose that a Jewish person in Nazi Germany comes to accept the then-prevalent view that Jews have less-than-full moral status. The person manifests self-disrespect, and this seems plausibly bad for her. But now consider an Aryan in Nazi Germany who correctly takes himself to have full moral status. He manifests self-respect. Is this positively good for him, over and above the absence of self-disrespect? It is not clear to me that it is. As a result, I am inclined to think that self-respect is not positively good, though self-disrespect is bad. This leads me to suspect that moral status is not noninstrumentally valuable by virtue of contributing constitutively to the good of self-respect and indeed that in some cases it may be noninstrumentally bad by contributing constitutively to the evil of self-disrespect.

## VI. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Let me conclude. I have considered four types of value that moral status might have.

First, I asked whether moral status might, like legal status, have recognition value. I argued that it does not.

Next, I considered whether it might have protective value—value in helping to protect an individual's interests. I argued that, with respect to the interests that they explicitly cover, moral rights—and thus moral status—do not have any protective value of a sort that could straightforwardly be plugged into the balance of considerations for and against a particular moral status enhancement or disenchantment. The protection provided by moral status at most modifies the value or disvalue of possessing a particular capacity. By contrast, with respect to other interests—interests not explicitly covered by the right—a moral right might have protective value. Moral status might help to protect these interests. But it may also help to frustrate them. Which effect predominates will depend, among other things, on the nature of the moral rights in question.

Next, I asked whether moral status might, like a fragile disposition, render us vulnerable to certain kinds of harm. I suggested that it would. More moral status renders one more vulnerable to the harm of having one's rights infringed. Moral status thus has one kind of instrumental disvalue—what I called 'vulnerability disvalue'—though I was unsure about how great that disvalue is.

Finally, I considered whether moral status might, like pleasure, be a constituent of wellbeing. I concluded that there was no good reason to think it that it is—at least, not in a way that would bear positively on moral status enhancements. I conceded, however, that there is some intuitive attraction to the idea that moral status might be valuable up to some ceiling, or may be valuable in the (non-standard) sense of being something that warrants protection, though not promotion. Either way, the value of moral status might well count against disenchantments of moral status.

My tentative conclusion is that moral status is in one way bad for you, and is not good for you in any way that counts straightforwardly in favour of moral status enhancement. If this is correct, then, from the perspective of someone considering whether to enhance a being's moral status and concerned about the possible effects of this on the wellbeing of the enhanced individual, the fact that the intervention will enhance the being's moral status counts against, rather than for, doing so. Of course, this consideration might often be outweighed by countervailing considerations, for example, reasons to produce capacities that are valuable for reasons other than their contribution to the being's moral status.

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