

generally do more violence "to a human's plans than it would to the totality of things the dog would want to do," as though the dog were not already captive. Since, in general, white males tend to do more various types of important things than blacks and women, we might as well conclude that they have a higher moral status.



We may deem some interests to be more important than other interests, but I doubt that this is based on any objective criterion. To consider our own interests and opportunities more important and central in some cosmic sense is an elitist position that I cannot defend. To contend that normal people have a higher moral status than people who are not normal, to refer to such people as defective or as marginal cases, to contend that some animals have a higher moral status than some people, is, I think, the height of egotism. To suggest that the interests of a normal dolphin may be more important than those of an elderly, retarded human is an affront to human dignity. To contend that this is all very objective and based on detached reflection is to fool ourselves; philosophers give a sceptical eye to scientists who make such claims. That we are not dealing with pure objectivity is evidenced by the constant appeal to intuition.

DeGrazia points out that the intuition persists that the killing of a human is more destructive of something objectively valuable than the killing of an animal. What kind of intuition is this? My guess is that it is based on a long history of speciesism, based primarily on our desperate desire to be important and powerful in a universe that cares as much about us as it does a flea. The terms "higher moral status" and "higher value" are usually connected to some capitalist idea of productivity and usefulness to those in power. That our total obsession with hierarchies and ranking is destructive to all life has been demonstrated in numerous works.

Giving all sentient beings equal moral status would not solve the ethical dilemmas with regard to extreme cases. We are all worried about a philosophical framework which would throw us off a lifeboat. I would not throw a human being overboard in favor of a dog, not for DeGrazia's reasons, but simply because I selfishly value humans more. I do not believe that our choices in these situations are justified by any ethical theory.

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## Response

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David DeGrazia

Let me briefly respond to Professor Squadrito's thoughtful commentary on my paper. Space precludes treating all of the objections, and I will honor none of the *ad hominem* remarks. To begin, I did *not* conclude that the use of animals in research is justified. The thesis was conditional and took this form: If research that harms animals is to be done *at all*, then such-and-such is, generally, a reason to prefer the use of animals over humans. For all I have asserted, Regan's view might be right, for it is compatible with the claim that normal humans and normal animals differ in moral status; indeed, his view implies this thesis with respect to life-interests. The truth is that I think a range of views are within reason and that each view within this range is compatible with the theses I advance, but I do not know which is correct.

Additionally, to be precise, I did not even argue that humans generally have greater moral status than animals, but rather that there is good reason to think so. This more modest claim is in keeping with my purposes, because my major objectives are (1) to distinguish the concepts of equal consideration and equal moral status and (2) to prove that the principle of equal consideration does not entail equality of moral status. These objectives are accomplished if it is shown that there is good reason to think there are differences in moral status while assuming the principle of equal consideration. I find it odd that Squadrito never comments on my two major theses.

However, I do, in fact, believe that there are differences in moral status. To deny this thesis is to accept fairly staggering implications, e.g., that there is no more reason, ethically, to save a human person in a "lifeboat situation" than to save a trout—that, given an



## DISCUSSION

equal presumption against sacrificing either, it would not be wrong to sacrifice the human. (Never mind that trout swim and do not weigh much.) Trying to be as objective as possible, I simply cannot believe this.

Although I think the judgment is explicable in terms of interests, it is true that I employ intuition here, for what controls my thinking on this point is a very persistent pretheoretical moral judgment. I do not think this is reason for epistemological embarrassment. Given that the question of whether two beings have equal moral status makes sense, it demands an answer. In comparing the values of lives (as opposed to, e.g., two cases of suffering, in which we can try to compare phenomenological events), our tools for analysis are very limited, and it is not clear how we can avoid some appeal to pretheoretical judgments. Again, I think maximizing interests can yield the same answer (and one need not be a utilitarian to endorse such thinking in such cases), but I think intuition is at least as solid as any particular theoretical commitment in this murky normative terrain.

Moreover, I think it is radically misguided to criticize intuitions categorically. It is worth noting that all moral philosophers—and I mean all—employ intuition in developing or testing their views. And as I have argued extensively elsewhere (in ch. 3 of my dissertation), some use of intuition is not only epistemologically respectable but, if rationalism is false (as I argue), actually necessary. The art is to distinguish pretheoretical moral judgments that are worthy of respect from the frauds. In the present case I acknowledge the fallibility of my use of intuition, but I point out that one who disagrees with me must either reject my intuition or else account for it in a way that does not imply differences in moral status. Squadrito attempts the latter, stating that she would not sacrifice a human over a dog, but claims that choices in such situations are justified by no ethical theory, while hers is made for selfish reasons. Of course, this implies that, as far as ethics goes, it would be permissible to sacrifice the human over the dog (say, if one's selfish concerns leaned the other way)—and, given her suggestion that all sentient beings have equal moral status, a human over a trout. This, again, I simply cannot believe. And if one's judgments here cannot be justified by any ethical theory (presently articulated or not), I do not understand in what sense they command any respect.

I think Squadrito's criticisms are most helpful with respect to two issues with which I think I have genuine

difficulty. First, if differences in moral status appear with respect to freedom and life, is it not the case that humans generally differ from each other in moral status? I am as dissatisfied with this putative implication as are most people. But I think it is critical that differences in the relevant characteristics among humans are generally quite small compared to the relevant differences between most humans and most animals. (Remember that I assert relevant differences primarily with respect to life, to a lesser extent and with qualifications with respect to freedom, and not with respect to other interests.) I acknowledge inequalities in moral status only where the relevant differences are very pronounced, a move that is attractive at least for practical reasons, possibly also for theoretical reasons.

But differences among humans are sometimes very pronounced, bringing us to another area where I am unsure what to argue: the problem of marginal cases. I do not think anyone has provided a truly adequate solution to this problem. I think that, in response to it, one should probably either (1) adopt a position like Regan's (which I have not precluded but *suspect* is too restrictive), (2) appeal to the side-effects of using humans, who, due to extensive communication, are far more affected by what happens to conspecifics than are animals, or (3) confer rights of protection on members of the community whom we so wish to protect.

