

BETWEEN THE SPECIES

A Critique of Scanlon on the Scope of Morality

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I argue that contractualism, even when it is actually used to construe our moral duties towards non-human animals, does not do so naturally. We can infer from our experiences with companion animals that we owe moral duties towards them because of special relationships we are in with them. We can further abstract that we owe general moral duties to non-human animals because they are the kinds of beings that we can have relationships with, and because of the capacities that make possible this relational capacity. This type of approach better explains our duties towards non-human animals and other non-rational beings than does the trustee account that Scanlon leaves room for in his contractualism. This relational account of moral duty will only apply to non-human animals with the requisite capacities, but this includes common companion animals.

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Introduction

In this paper, I will evaluate T.M. Scanlon's account of the scope of morality in his version of contractualism. I will argue that Scanlon's own view of whom we owe moral duties to is too narrow, wrongly excluding non-human animals. Moreover, his trustee account, both in the case of non-human animals (if applied to them), and of humans who lack judgment-sensitive attitudes, is not the most plausible account of our moral duties to them in themselves. I will develop an account according to which we owe moral duties to non-rational beings because of relationships we have with them, the capacity they have to form relationships, and the capacities that undergird the capacity to form relationships.

Scanlon's Account of Moral Duty

Scanlon's account of the scope of morality is focused on what is required for a being to be the kind of thing which can be wronged (Scanlon 1998, 179). We can wrong others if they are the type of beings to which it makes sense for us to justify ourselves. The general form of this justification is that we treat such beings "...only in ways that would be allowed by principles that they could not reasonably reject insofar as they, too, were seeking principles of mutual governance which other rational creatures could not reasonably reject" (Scanlon 1998, 106).

Violating the formula here is not meant to be the only way in which one can do something morally wrong. This is because there is moral wrongness in the broad sense in which "...some form of conduct is open to a serious moral objection of some kind" (Scanlon 1998, 178). One important way in which a thing can be wrong in the broad sense is if it unjustifiably causes a sentient being to experience pain (Scanlon 1998, 181). In caus-

ing a sentient being pain, we have done something which we have *prima facie* reason not to do, because pain is bad. Scanlon's view, however, is that in doing something wrong in this broad sense, we have not wronged a being *itself*. We have not violated a duty we owe to that being *qua* other.

Sentience, i.e. the ability to experience pain and pleasure, is not a sufficient condition for owing a moral duty to a being in itself, because the being that merely has sentience does not have "judgment-sensitive attitudes" (Scanlon 1998, 180). Judgment-sensitive attitudes are defined as attitudes that it makes sense to offer or require justificatory reasons for having (Scanlon 1998, 20). Paradigm cases of such attitudes seem to be beliefs and intentions to act in certain ways, but Scanlon also includes attitudes such as hopes and fears under the umbrella. A being without judgment-sensitive attitudes is not the kind of thing to which it makes sense for us to have to justify ourselves, so we cannot wrong it in itself.

Non-human Animals

A crucial question for Scanlon's account of moral wrongness, in the strict sense of what we owe to others *qua* other, is whether or not non-human animals are owed duties in themselves. Intuitively, it seems that we do owe duties to non-human animals. As Scanlon acknowledges, in the case of torturing a non-human animal it "...may seem wrong in a sense that goes beyond the idea that pain is a bad thing: it is something for which we should feel guilty *to* the animal itself, just as we can feel guilt to a human being" (Scanlon 1998, 182). Reasons for feeling this way in the case of companion animals include capacities we attribute to them for "...mutual expectation, reciprocated affection, and emotions such as disappointment, anger, and even resentment" (Scanlon 1998, 182). Such capacities, as

BENJAMIN ELMORE

Scanlon acknowledges, seem much more sophisticated than mere sentience.

Given such considerations, Scanlon allows that his contractualism can account for duties we owe to non-human animals themselves, if we choose to utilize it in this way. This allowance posits a trustee account, according to which non-human animals are represented by trustees who can stand in their place and judge principles for them (Scanlon 1998, 183). If the trustees can reasonably reject principles that endorse certain treatment of non-human animals, then those principles are to be rejected.

Although Scanlon *allows* that such an extension of his account is consistent with it, he himself does not endorse it. Rather, he thinks we can account for our required treatment of non-human animals in the broader sense of the moral wrongness of pain (Scanlon 1998, 184). As a result, the reasons that non-human animals provide us with are impersonal rather than personal reasons (Scanlon 1998, 219). Non-human animals are sentient, and thus valuable, so it is wrong in the general sense that we cause them pain. But the value of non-human animals does not directly affect the moral duties we owe to others. Non-human animals are not themselves a locus to which we can owe moral duties, so the only way their value can affect moral duties to others is indirect. For example, if someone wants to live in a way that respects the impersonal value of non-human animals, say, by not letting them suffer when they can be aided, then this person can reasonably reject principles that would require not taking this impersonal value into account (Scanlon 1998, 221). It is denied, however, that we can reasonably reject principles that *permit* one to fail to take into account the value of non-human animals (and other impersonally valuable

BENJAMIN ELMORE

things). This caveat is presumably meant to protect one's liberty of conscience. There are other types of impersonally valuable things, such as the Grand Canyon, which, it would seem, we ought not be required to treat as valuable in our lives, at least insofar as our disregard for its value does not involve our depriving others of valuable ways of living, such as by destroying the Grand Canyon, thus depriving others of the ability to experience its grandeur.

There seem to be two reasons for supposing we do not owe moral duties to non-human animals. First, the trustee account itself appeals exclusively to the rejection of principles that cause non-human animals pain, which makes the practical difference between the broader and stricter sense of moral wrongness very minimal, and thus unnecessary. Secondly, the moral status of humans is significantly different than that of non-human animals, even in the case of infants, children, and the disabled (Scanlon 1998, 185).

The second reason requires a bit of explanation. Human beings generally have the capacity to form judgement-sensitive attitudes. To better understand why it is denied that we owe duties to non-human animals, it will help to better understand what judgment-sensitive attitudes are, or at least what Scanlon has in mind when using the term. To this end, it is helpful to consider Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion of "reasons for action" (MacIntyre 1999, 53-61). Against the rather implausible view that non-human animals cannot have reasons because giving reasons is necessary for having reasons, and giving reasons requires the possession of a language, MacIntyre, following Aquinas, argues that non-human animals do have reasons. According to MacIntyre:

BENJAMIN ELMORE

Nonhuman animals are, he [Aquinas] allowed, “moved by precepts” and on occasion learn from past experience to recognize this or that as a friendly or hostile. In virtue of their nature and of such capacity for learning as they have, they are able to make what Aquinas calls “natural judgments.” So they do exhibit what Aquinas calls “a semblance of reason” and “they share in” what he calls “natural prudence” (MacIntyre 1999, 55).

Non-human animals do have reasons that guide their actions. But, according to MacIntyre, humans have the further rational capacity of being able to reflect upon their reasons for action and make judgments about them. In order for one to have judgment-sensitive attitudes in Scanlon’s sense, the claim seems to be that the further rational capacity of reflecting upon one’s reasons is necessary. If a being cannot reflect upon its reasons for action, then it makes no sense to require them to justify their reasons for action, or to justify our reasons for actions to them. Because we cannot justify ourselves to non-human animals, or require justification from them, we do not owe justification to them, nor they to us. Because we do not owe justification to them, we do not owe moral duties to them.

Infants, young children, and the disabled do not have this capacity. Infants and young children, however, will normally develop such a capacity, and thus are said to not be “separate kinds of creatures” from adults who currently have this capacity (Scanlon 1998, 185). The case of the disabled, particularly those who never develop the capacity for having judgment-sensitive attitudes, may seem a bit trickier. Scanlon, however, thinks that we “clearly do” have reason to treat the severely disabled as his account requires for others who are merely biologically human (Scanlon 1998, 185). The reason is

that such beings are born to humans. The relation of being born to humans is said to provide a strong reason for applying the trustee account to such humans, even if the trustee account does not apply to non-human animals. Counterfactually, such humans would be able to reasonably reject certain principles, so they have the moral status required for being owed duties in themselves. The idea seems to be that, since the severely disabled are born human, they would have normally been the types of beings which would have developed the requisite faculties, even though that is not how it turned out. Non-human animals, however, do not normally develop such faculties, so they are denied such robust moral status. Being biologically human thus suffices for being owed moral duties, a fact that is denied as being a case of the prejudice known as speciesism. If, however, being biologically human, i.e. being a member of the human species, suffices for being owed moral duties, quite apart from one's actual or future capacities, then I agree with Matthew Talbert that Scanlon's denial of speciesism falls flat (Talbert 2006, 210).

Companion Animals and Relationships

Scanlon himself provides some of the material for believing he is mistaken about denying moral duties to non-human animals in the discussion of companion animals. As was mentioned above, we generally take companion animals to be capable of reciprocal affection, expectation, and rich emotions such as disappointment, anger, sadness, etc. These capacities are relational capacities, i.e. those that make it possible for us to have rich relationships with non-human animals. In attributing these capacities to non-human animals, experience seems clearly to affirm that we are correct. When the human of a companion animal is in pain or perceivably harassed or assaulted by another person, it is known through experience that, say, a dog,

BENJAMIN ELMORE

can rush to its human in order to comfort them, or attack or bark at the assailant. No doubt this has to do with the fact that the human has shown affection to the dog over the years in petting them, providing food and shelter, and playing with them. A bond has been formed that influences how both the dog and the human behave.

If the human were, say, to kick the dog in the teeth, this action will seem to violate a duty to the dog not merely because it will cause the dog pain, but because it will violate the relationship that has been formed. The trustee can thus reject principles that would endorse or allow the violation of the relationship of reciprocal affection and mutual expectation between the dog and its owner. Such an explanation, moreover, seems to not only apply in the case of direct harms such as striking one's companion animal, but also in the case of failures to aid them.

Those who have had dogs in their family know that they can ask us to do things for them. Dogs can know where the leash is kept, and can gesture in the direction of the leash, and then look back at the owner. The action indicates a desire to go for a walk. This is also done when the dog knows where their canned food or other treats are. It is also well known that dogs will whine to be let outside, or to be petted. In doing these things, the dog is requesting something of their owner with the expectation that the request will be fulfilled. If the owner fails to fulfill such requests, especially without good reason, then they will plausibly have wronged the dog because of the established relationship, not merely because it will foreclose on the dog's experience of pleasure, or cause distress. Moral principles that endorse or allow such neglect will be rejected by the trustees of dogs.

BENJAMIN ELMORE

Scanlon provides us with a way of knowing this to be the case. Scanlon posits what he calls a *remorse test* which we can use to show us to whom we owe moral duties and in what way we owe them (Scanlon 2017, 15-16). In the case of humans, when we wrong them, we feel a kind of remorse over the fact that "...an individual who is affected by our action has a reason for objecting to it that cannot be answered satisfactorily" (Scanlon 2017, 16). In the case of companion animals, many of us have a feeling of remorse when we harm or neglect them that indicates to us that we have wronged them. For example, when I am in a bad mood and yell at my dog over a trivial matter, I feel that I have wronged her, and try to make it up to her through petting or a treat. The feeling of remorse in this case can perhaps, to some people, be neutral over the question of owing duties to our companion animals, and thus not be necessarily tied to a trustee account. But the feeling of having wronged our beloved companion animals *in themselves* rather than in a general, detached way, is potent evidence to us that we do in fact owe duties to them.

It will, of course, be objected to my use of the remorse test that not everyone feels this way when they yell at their companion animals, or otherwise violate their relationships with them. I do have an error theory here. In my view, when humans do not feel that they owe moral duties to their companion animals (or non-human animals more generally, as will be made clear later), it is because of anthropocentric cultural biases that have influenced them, either in their generally unreflective moral judgments, or in their reflective acceptance of an account of morality that denies moral duties to non-human animals. These are biases that should in fact be rejected.

BENJAMIN ELMORE

Violations of the relationships we have with non-human animals do in fact provoke experiences of disappointment, betrayal, or sadness in them. We can, for example, see dogs sulking around. Such capacities are far more sophisticated than merely having the ability to experience pain. This is why we are capable of forming relationships with non-human animals that are obligating of us. I do not want to deny, however, that sentience itself is an important capacity that, combined with an undefined number of other capacities, allows us to form relationships with non-human animals. Nor do I want to deny that sentience is enough to impose moral duties on us towards non-human animals.

In fact, I agree with Christine Korsgaard that in having in common with non-human animals the state of being a conscious animal, we have in common being *someone* with them (Korsgaard 1996, 153). Moreover, Korsgaard is quite right that in experiencing physical pain, non-human animals perceive a reason for action to relieve that pain (a threat to their physical identity), and the recognition of this pain causes further emotional pain, and these give rise to cries (and other behaviors) from which we perceive such reasons. As Korsgaard says, we perceive the reasons in these cries through pity, and they impose moral duties on us to the animals themselves to relieve this pain. I think what Korsgaard says here is similar to an adoption of Scanlon's remorse test. If we failed to aid non-human animals in pain, we would experience remorse that indicates moral duties towards them that have been violated. It is not clear, however, that sentience in this sense (combined with the ability to express distress) occurs divorced from other capacities that jointly make non-human animals capable of having rich relationships with us. If it did, perhaps it would still be enough to impose moral duties on us towards them. So, even if

BENJAMIN ELMORE

Scanlon were correct about pain being the only type of thing the experience of which trustees could object to in rejecting principles in the stead of non-human animals, it seems that the trustee account would still be preferable over construing the moral status of non-human animals in the broad sense.

An excellent point that Talbert makes about Scanlon's contractualism is that the broader theory is like the trustee account in that it involves positing a type of ideal rationality in other normal adult humans that they may not have, essentially treating them as their own trustees (Talbert 2006, 212-213). Scanlon's theory does not depend on humans actually reasonably rejecting the principles of our actions for them to be wrong. Rather, we think about which principles they could in fact reasonably reject if they were sufficiently thoughtful. This means that contractualism is not generally based on the actual exercise of judgment-sensitive attitudes, but being aware of the interests that others have from their own viewpoint. Talbert takes this as further reason to construe non-human animals as being included within those to whom we owe moral duties, because, like Korsgaard says, they do have interests. I agree with Talbert that it is arbitrary to use the trustee account specifically, or contractualism more generally, to account for the moral duties we owe to humans, but deny such duties to nonhuman animals. I will further argue, however, that contractualism does not adequately account for many of our moral duties to non-rational beings, so we have to go beyond it. The capacities that the trustee account would have to take into consideration are tied instead, in many cases, into my hierarchical, relational account of moral duty.

Non-human Animals More Generally

Given the discussion of capacities to form relationships with us that non-human animals have, we should go further and say that it is not *only* an actually established relationship we have with non-human animals that imposes moral duties on us towards them. Rather, the capacities that give non-human animals the capacity to form relationships, and this further capacity itself, impose moral duties on us to treat non-human animals in certain ways. This allows us to extend duties we owe to non-human animals beyond those owed to companion animals. Indeed, it would seem rather arbitrary to say our companion animals are owed duties, whereas others just like them but not in such relationships are not owed duties.

Scanlon's own discussion of friendship can help us see one reason why it is problematic to afford moral duties to our companion animals but not to non-human animals with similar capacities that the former have. Scanlon considers the case of a friend who is willing to steal a kidney from another person in order to aid you (Scanlon 1998, 164-165). In such a case, the victim of the theft is the same type of being which you yourself are, but your friend is willing to treat them in ways that you yourself would not want to be treated as that type of being. This shows that your friend does not afford moral status to you for what you are, but only because "he happens to like you" (Scanlon 1998, 165). If you were to lose favor in the sight of your friend, he might just as easily do whatever he wants to you, which seems to imply a fundamental lack of respect for you. The case seems parallel to that of companion animals, a relationship which is very much like friendship with other humans.

BENJAMIN ELMORE

We generally treat dogs well (at least in many parts of the world), but animals such as pigs, who are commonly thought to be of comparable, perhaps even greater intelligence than dogs, exist, for the most part, only to be preyed upon by us in our societies. We even feed pigs to our dogs in food and chew toys. Pigs could just as easily have been our companion animals (and sometimes are) if history had unfolded differently, and dogs could be our food (as they are in some parts of the world). Our historically contingent different treatment of these two types of non-human animals seems very arbitrary from a moral point of view. It seems at face value to indicate that we value dogs because we happen to like them, but not because they are the kinds of beings capable of having these types of relationships with us. Dogs themselves are unaware of this fact, but we can be aware of it.

I do not think that this is quite correct. I think our relationships with dogs (and other companion animals) allow us to recognize, at least implicitly, that the kinds of capacities that they have afford them moral status in a more than broad sense. I think the problem is that we do not reflect on this fact sufficiently enough, and thus fail to extend our moral duties to other animals with similar capacities. We thus practically treat our companion animals in ways that Scanlon's organ-stealing friend treats us, but on reflection, we would, I hope, be more likely to change our behavior. In so doing we will treat all non-human animals with the requisite relational capacities in ways that they deserve, including even our own companion animals, whom we often love like human members of our families.

Impersonal Reasons Revisited

Another objection to Scanlon's view of the moral status of non-human animals lies in his discussion, mentioned above, of

BENJAMIN ELMORE

impersonal and personal reasons. Since Scanlon does not favor the trustee account, but rather the approach of construing the moral status of non-human animals in the broader sense, they only give us impersonal reasons. This means that the reasons non-human animals give us cannot directly allow us to reject principles. A very troubling, implausible consequence of this view is that it puts non-human animals in the same general moral category as inanimate objects like the Grand Canyon, forests, or monuments. To be sure, non-human animals could still be said to be more valuable than such things, but their value is still the source of the same general, impersonal type of reason.

It seems, however, that because non-human animals are so different from inanimate objects, they should not be construed as giving the same general type of reason. This is particularly poignant when considering the fact that Scanlon does not allow the rejection of principles on the grounds that they permit us to fail to regard or treat as valuable that which is valuable. It is implausible that we do not owe it to each other to treat non-human animals well, because, as Korsgaard's remarks indicate, non-human animals themselves are part of the "each other." They are "someone," not merely fixtures of our environment. Scanlon's discussion of personal and impersonal reasons does not honor this fact.

Infants, Children, and the Disabled

Now consider Scanlon's treatment of infants, children, and the severely disabled. As indicated, the account of our duties to such humans is essentially that they belong to a species, members of which normally develop judgment-sensitive attitudes, even though they may in fact lack this. Because of their membership in this species, the trustee account is to be applied to

BENJAMIN ELMORE

them. But is this species-membership plausibly why we do in fact owe duties to such beings? I think not. If, for example, I have a mentally challenged son, and he comes up to me, gesturing that I make him a sandwich, the primary reasons why I should refrain from hitting him in the face in response, or simply ignoring him, do not seem much different than the case of non-human animals. I have an obligating relationship with him to refrain from harming him, and to actually aid him, and the fact that he is capable of being in such a relationship with me, seems to ground my moral duties towards him in himself. The consideration that he belongs to a species that normally develops judgment-sensitive attitudes, even though he lacks them, seems rather weak. If it is acknowledged that such considerations as I have suggested apply in this case do in fact apply, then it is incredibly arbitrary to deny that they also apply in the case of non-human animals. So, the primary reasons we have to think we have moral duties to the disabled and children seem to also be reasons to think the same of non-human animals.

Is There Room for the Trustee Account and Contractualism Generally?

Another point is that, at least in many cases, the trustee account itself seems superfluous to add *for those particular cases*. It seems plausible that we do not need to appeal to principles trustees for non-human animals, children, or the severely disabled would reasonably reject in order to account for many of our moral duties towards such beings, nor does such an account naturally provide such grounds. Rather, relationships, the capacity to form relationships, and the capacities that undergird this capacity, seem to be what imposes moral duties on us towards these beings in themselves. It may be objected here that in focusing on the continuity between non-human animals and humans my account fails to take into consideration the

BENJAMIN ELMORE

real differences between the two. The fact that we may justify ourselves to one another adds a dimension of moral obligation not present in the case of non-human animals (Ashford and Mulgan, 2018). My account is consistent with this objection, so long as we do not make the distinction too sharp. It seems that non-human animals are the kinds of beings to whom we owe moral duties, and the ways in which we do seem to be the primary ways we have moral duties to infants, children, and the severely disabled as well. Scanlon's contractualism affords moral status in the narrow sense of what we owe to each other to all of these beings in a rather farfetched, weak way.

Should the same be said of the moral duties we have to humans more generally? No, I think contractualism does in fact have a legitimate contribution to make in the case of normal adult humans. As Scanlon points out, we do not generally think that it is problematic to interfere in the goal-directed activity of non-human animals, unless some further morally objectionable action is thus committed in doing this (Scanlon 1998, 184). Non-human animals, lacking robust rationality, may legitimately have their behavior altered by us for their greater good, such as through training them not to run in the road. Moreover, we can do things such as put heart-worm medication in their food, or have them spayed or neutered, without their knowledge or consent, and not be morally blameworthy for this. In the case of normal adult humans, if we kidnapped them and had them spayed or neutered, or put medication in their food without their consent, we would have committed actions which act according to principles that could reasonably be rejected. Normal adult humans may reasonably reject principles that allow their own wills to be manipulated or completely ignored. Accepting Talbert's construal of contractualism more generally as being akin to the trustee model, we can say here that

BENJAMIN ELMORE

normal adult humans have different “needs and interests” than nonhuman animals and other humans, i.e. to not be manipulated or treated unduly paternalistically (Talbert 2006, 213).

This discussion leaves room for the possibility that contractualism, while not necessary or natural for construing many of the moral duties we owe to non-rational beings, could be used for other duties towards them. Such duties are paternalistic duties. We have duties to perform actions that are for the greater good of non-rational beings, especially when in relationships with them. In the case of infants and children, for example, we have to teach and shape them with an eye towards what they will become. Since they will become members of the moral community, the ways in which we shape them can plausibly be required to pass the test of not being tied to principles that can reasonably be rejected by members of the moral community. For example, a principle that allows us to teach our children to be racists can be reasonably rejected because, as future members of the moral community, they have a stake in becoming morally good rather than morally vicious people.

Moral Pluralism

As is clear in the preceding discussion, Scanlon himself views morality, and moral wrongness itself, in a pluralistic way. There are things which are wrong in the broad sense of being subject to serious moral objection, and things which wrong beings themselves which are “others” to whom we owe moral duties. My account further splits moral wrongness in the latter sense. We owe moral duties to non-human animals and other non-rational beings because of the relationships we have with them, their capacities for these relationships, and the capacities that undergird such capacities for relationships. This way of construing moral duty will also apply to rational beings insofar

as they have in common relational capacities with non-rational beings. There is a further grounds for moral duty that contractualism may provide in the case of members of the rational, moral community, as well as the case of future members of the moral community. The latter way of construing moral duties is not in itself good enough to naturally account for all moral duties we owe to others, even when its advocates want to try to do this. The resulting picture is less parsimonious than Scanlon's own account, but as he himself rightly says, "It would be a mistake to ignore judgments that we in fact take to be relevant just for the sake of greater neatness in our thinking" (Scanlon 1998, 99).

The Nature of Relationships and Capacities

Throughout the paper I have discussed relationships, the capacity for relationships, and the capacities that undergird the capacity for relationships that impose moral duties upon us. In this section, I will clarify these concepts. First, by relationships, I have in mind what Shelly Kagan calls a *special relationship* that imposes upon us a *special obligation* (Kagan 1998, 126). In taking a non-human animal into our care, we voluntarily accept a special obligation that does not apply to others who do not have this particular relationship with our particular companion animal. As time goes on, the relationship between human and companion animal deepens through shared experiences and affection, making transgressions of the relationship seem more heinous. The companion animal learns to depend upon their human for food, security, play, and affection. They become distressed when their human leaves the home, especially for prolonged periods, and display clear signs of excitement, such as jumping in the air and running around the house when their human returns. This reciprocal affection is similar to that between humans and other humans.

BENJAMIN ELMORE

The capacity to form relationships depends upon a cluster of other capacities. Some of these capacities may be present without enough of them to constitute the ability to form relationships. As mentioned, Korsgaard's discussion of pain, the recognition of pain, and the expression of pain (which clearly does not require human language) gives us some material here. Another important example is what MacIntyre calls the, "... conceptual capacity that makes language possible, what Heidegger calls "the as-structure"" (MacIntyre 1999, 46). The "as-structure" is the ability to conceptualize one's environment in such a way as to be able to recognize certain entities in it as distinct things, or kinds of things. MacIntyre attributes this capacity to dogs, higher primates, and dolphins, although lower animals of various kinds may lack it. This capacity is important in relationships because it allows, say, dogs to recognize their humans. Without the as-structure, any "relationship" would be a one-way street so to speak. But it is not clear that this capacity is a necessary condition of having an obligating special relationship. For example, elderly parents or grandparents stricken by Alzheimer's may not be able to recognize their family members in any significant way (Bernstein 1997, 56). Even so, we still take ourselves to have an obligating relationship with our parent or grandparent. This capacity in non-human animals is weaker than in humans. Non-human animals cannot, for example, classify things in metaphysical categories and recognize them as belonging to such categories, among other limitations (MacIntyre 1999, 47). This does not mean, however, that the as-structure is missing altogether. With it, non-human animals, to use a previous example, are able to be distressed at the absence of their humans and joyed at their return.

The capacities that give non-human animals the capacity for relationships, and this capacity itself, obligate humans in a gen-

eral rather than a special way. As obligating in a general way, they impose moral obligations on all beings capable of having moral obligations. In Kagan's terms, they are "owed by everyone to everyone..." (Kagan 1998, 127). So my account aims to explain both types of moral obligations we owe to non-human animals in themselves. Perhaps there are further reasons for believing we have moral obligations to non-human animals (and other non-rational beings). If so, I welcome them. Giving non-human animals as robust moral status as plausible (taking differences among different species into account) is a much-needed antidote to the many centuries of anthropocentrism we have inflicted upon them.

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BENJAMIN ELMORE

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