An Investigation on the Moral Value of Life

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Introduction

Why write about the value of life?

Certainly we consider issues like abortion, infanticide and euthanasia to be significant, not only to the people directly involved, but also important topics in the public sphere. Ordinary citizens, policy makers, religious leaders: all have a saying on such matters of life and death; but what about the philosopher? Ronald Dworkin, one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, believed that such issues are based upon ″the sanctity or inviolability of human life″, and about ″how and why human life has intrinsic value″ (1993:24). He held that most people, if not all, who take part in debates about abortion and euthanasia implicitly hold some concept of the 'sanctity' of human life (1993:68-69). Another winner of the prestigious Balzan Prize, Professor Edward Shils was even more emphatic in pointing out the same thing: as he writes, ″[t]o persons who are not murderers, concentration camp administrators, or dreamers of sadistic fantasies, the inviolability of human life seems to be so self-evident, that it might appear pointless to enquire into it″ (1967:39).

Unfortunately, things are not that simple. Many ordinary people—being neither murderers nor deranged megalomaniacs—do not share the intuition that life is inviolable. And even worse for Dworkin and Shils, even philosophers are of two minds about this alleged 'inviolability'. Rachels for instance holds that human life has no intrinsic value whatever; for him, what has value is what life makes possible for the living individual, and so ″the importance of being alive is only derivative from the more fundamental importance of having

a life″ (1986:27).[1] But how does this square with Dworkin's assertion (1993:25) that many of ″our most profound convictions presuppose [that life has intrinsic value]″?

One way to bring the two sides together is noted by Moore, who in his preface to the first edition of *Principia Ethica* writes that most difficulties and disagreements in philosophy are due ″to the attempt to answer questions, without first discovering precisely *what* question it is you want to answer″ (1993:33). It might be the case that our intuitions regarding intrinsic value do not clash, but only seem to be competing because we are using 'intrinsic value' to refer to different things.[2] This is how Dworkin himself explains the huge controversy regarding life and death issues; what confounds the debate, he writes, ″is that we interpret the idea that human life is intrinsically valuable in different ways″ (1993:70).

But now another consideration is raised: why talk about 'intrinsic', rather than merely 'instrumental' value? There are a number of compelling reasons why philosophers are attracted to the idea of life's intrinsic value. For one thing, such value could be considered the 'Holy Grail' of environmentalists and animal rights advocates; to show that life has value, irrespective of whether it is human or animal life, would provide a powerful argument to respect the environment and the rights of non-human animals. Intrinsic value can also explain our intuitions in a number of cases where we deem that a life has no instrumental value—for the being living it—but is still worthy of respect; PVS patients and severely deformed infants are prime examples of such kind of intuitions.[3] A more general reason to aim at intrinsic rather than instrumental value, put forth by Aristotle in '*Nicomachean Ethics'* (1094a) is that the latter might lead to an infinite regress, where each end is only valuable derivatively, by reflecting the value of something else. If we want the best end, the *ariston*, we should aim at

[1] Of course not only Rachels, but many philosophers do not hold a doctrine of life's intrinsic value. I will discuss certain alternate accounts of life's—instrumental—value in Chapter 2.

[2] We will see in chapter 1 how I will use the notion of intrinsic value to mean something different from what it means in the traditional view.

[3] PVS is used to refer to Permanent Vegetative State, where the patient although not brain dead, is deemed impossible to improve.

hitting, like an archer, what is needed, i.e. intrinsic value. Lastly, the notion of intrinsic value is commonly taken to be intimately tied to moral significance.[4] Agar for instance (2001:ix) claims that showing that something has intrinsic value ″seems the most straightforward way of showing that they matter morally″.

These of course are not conclusive reasons to assume that life has intrinsic value, but are enough to justify a philosophical investigation into the matter, which is exactly the aim of this paper. The way I will proceed is this: Chapter 1 will involve a conceptual analysis of the notion of intrinsic value; by reviewing the traditional view, I will comment on where I depart from it and why, to show how I will use it and make clear what it means to say that life has such value. The next chapter will then build on the findings of the previous one, in demonstrating how life has such intrinsic value, and why this value provides a normative principle. Finally the last chapter will include a brief overview of competing theories in an effort to show why holding a theory based on the view proposed in this paper has certain advantages over its competitors.

Before moving on, I would like to clarify what my aim is, by making two remarks. The first is that I am interested in individual beings, the value of the life of being x, not with the value of an ecosystem, nor with 'life' as a biological phenomenon, in the sense that our world is made more valuable by the existence of life. The second point is that my main goal in this paper is to argue that life has intrinsic value. Thus the work that follows will be conceptual and theoretical, not dealing with any concrete, particular cases of life and death. Even though mention will be made as to what are the possible implications of a theory of life's value based on intrinsic value, said theory will still need to be supplemented and elaborated upon in order to have any 'say' in questions of applied ethics. To pursue such an endeavor is outside the

[4] cf. Lemos, 2005:28; Zimmerman, 2005:xii.

scope of this paper; what is inside its scope though, is to prove the viability of such a task by laying out for it a firm theoretical foundation.

Chapter 1

1.1: Preliminaries

To avoid the confusion Moore and Dworkin pointed out regarding intrinsic value, this chapter will be devoted to explaining my definition of intrinsic value, as the term is used in the literature in different ways. Drawing a distinction between value and valuation in section (**1.1**)[5], I will first talk about what it means to say that something *has* intrinsic value. I will then lay out the traditional view of intrinsic value as a background, in order to form my own conception of what this value *is*, by accepting certain features and arguing against others (**1.2**; **1.3**; **1.4**). Section (**1.5**) will return to the issue of valuation, by explaining how we can find whether something has intrinsic value and (**1.6**) how such value can be the basis for a normative principle. This discussion will be further carried on in the next chapter.

The common way into a discussion of intrinsic value is to treat it as a 'residue' of value, that is, negatively defining it by claiming that a thing is intrinsically valuable in the case that if we 'strip' it of all instrumental value, it still remains valuable; intrinsic value then, is just non-instrumental value. This might reveal what intrinsic value is not, but not what it actually is. To say that 'x has instrumental value' is to claim that we value x because it is conducive to a further valuable end. On the other hand, to say that 'x has intrinsic value' is to claim that *there is something in x worthy of valuing*, and not, as one would expect, that x is valuable by itself.[6] For example, saying 'x is sweet' can be taken as referring to the object, it has a certain

[5] Parentheses in bold refer to sections related to the context discussed.

[6] The difference between the two is that the first is a statement about the object, of the object having property x that is worthy of valuing, irrespective of anyone valuing it. The second statement refers to final value, to something being valued by itself.

kind of flavor based on its chemical composition, or it could refer only to the fact that x tastes sweet to us. Zimmerman notes on this difference that questions about value are either conceptual, concerned with what *is* intrinsic value, or substantive, concerned with what *has* intrinsic value.[7] According to the value/valuation distinction, to say that something has intrinsic value, in my view, is to say something about the object itself (**1.3**);[8] to say that it has instrumental value is to say something about how we value it.

Korsgaard makes a related point when she rightly claims that the distinction between intrinsic/instrumental with which I started erroneously conflates two different distinctions: the one between intrinsic/extrinsic and the other between final/instrumental value. The former distinction revolves around the location of value, whilst the latter about how we value something (1983:170). To talk about intrinsic value then, is to talk about value 'in' the object. This 'value in itself' is then contrasted with extrinsic value—value a thing gets from something wholly distinct from it—rather than with instrumental value, or the fact that it is valued only as a means to something else.

1.2: Traditional view and value simpliciter

According to Lemos (2005), the traditional view of intrinsic value—associated with Moore, Ross, Brentano and Ewing—displays these features:

1. Intrinsic value is value *simpliciter*, or from the general point of view. In other words something is intrinsically good when it is not merely 'good for me', 'good for you', good for the economy', etc., but ″intrinsically good, *period*″ (2005:17).

[7] For more in this distinction see Humberstone (1996), Dunn (1990), and Sider (1996).
[8] I will refer in this paper to the intrinsic value of objects but that does not mean that my arguments only relate to concrete objects; states of affairs for instance can have intrinsic value the same way objects can. Thus it would be more accurate to claim that to say that something has intrinsic value is to say something about the world, how the world is, and not only to how objects 'are'.

2. Intrinsic value is a non-natural property and it depends or supervenes on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question.
3. It is a cognitivist view about value; there are truths about value, irrespective of what we think of them.[9]
4. Intrinsic value is not dependent on any psychological attitudes.

The first feature has been attacked by several philosophers and from a number of different angles.[10] But what is important for my view of intrinsic value is the worry that in holding that something can be good without being good for anyone in effect we are creating a value—action gap. Saying that 'knowledge is valuable, period', might not be capable of motivating us to act on it (i.e., to protect, promote, pursue it, etc.). As Kraut puts it, ″we may wonder why we should allow ourselves to be attracted by something if it has no place in a life that is good to live—good *for* the person living it″ (2007:71).[11] Put another way, saying something about how the world is, does not directly translate to action, to how it ought to be. This problem will be addressed in chapter 2, where I argue that life's intrinsic value can connect to normative reasons for action.

1.3: Supervenience and truth-value

According to the second feature, a thing's intrinsic value supervenes on its intrinsic nature—which is another way of saying it supervenes on its intrinsic properties.[12] As Moore writes, *"[t]o say that a kind of value is "intrinsic" means merely that the question whether a thing possesses it, and in what degree it possesses it, depends solely on the intrinsic nature of*

[9] For the rest of the paper I will treat Moore as a fitting representative of the traditional view, and my discussion will rely on, and argue against, his views about intrinsic value.
[10] Geach for example argues that good simpliciter is reduced to attributive good, or 'a good F' (1956). Thomson (1997) on the other hand argues that such good is elliptical for welfare, or 'good for'.
[11] This is to say that claiming that 'knowledge is valuable' without being of any value to anyone, might not motivate us to act on it, regardless of the fact that we deem that knowledge is valuable *simpliciter*.
[12] As Zimmerman (2010 SEP) writes, "[e]ven nonderivative value is understood to be supervenient on certain nonevaluative features of the thing that has value."

the thing in question" (1922:260, author's italics). Such properties, following Korsgaard (1983:175), are primarily characterized as being (a) natural and (b) non-relational. The main distinction Moore draws to separate intrinsic natural from intrinsic non-natural properties is between descriptive and non-descriptive properties. Since I hold that intrinsic value does describe the object, as the statement 'x has intrinsic value' is about the object, whilst still being a non-natural property, I will treat natural properties as part of the fabric of the world and the non-natural properties as properties we ascribe to things, based on how we 'see' them (**1.4**).[13]

The non-relationality characteristic must mean something like this: In explaining a state of affairs, an intrinsic property refers only to the object in question. A relational property refers both to the object and to something outside of it. For example the property of 'being six feet tall' is an intrinsic property since it only refers to the object to describe the state of affairs that a thing is six feet tall. 'Being taller than John' though is a clear case of a relational property. If the properties upon which intrinsic value depended on were relational, then they would be subject to something outside of the object itself. That would mean that they would be subject to change *merely due to a change in the environment*. In the above case, 'being taller than John' relies both on how tall one is, and how tall John is; if John grows taller in the future, the property will be replaced by 'being shorter than John', without any change in the subject itself. Thus if intrinsic value depended on being taller than John, it would stop being intrinsic since it would not depend only on the object itself.[14]

[13] It is notoriously difficult to define natural properties, but some of their characteristics might be that they are observable, they can be discovered by the natural sciences, and they are mind-independent. Moore's view of 'description' might be that if we can list all the natural properties of a thing, we will have a complete description of it, thus any non-natural properties like goodness play no part in such a description. But Geach holds that good always describes something, even if used alone as a predicate (1956).

[14] In my view, the main characteristic of natural properties is that they are metaphysically mind-independent, and for non-relational properties that they describe a being whilst only referring to the being itself. So for the remainder of this paper, when I write about natural or non-relational properties I will only be referring to those characteristics.

My conclusion on feature (2) is that intrinsic value depends on the intrinsic nature of the thing, which consists of natural, non-relational properties, meaning that it is (a) mind-independent, and (b) described only by how the object, and nothing wholly distinct from it, is. The intrinsic nature of a thing then is an objective fact; since intrinsic value is grounded on it, it can be held that such facts can act as the truth-makers of propositions regarding such value—this is feature (3).

The last thing I want to mention is that intrinsic value is an intrinsic property despite being a non-natural property—since it is not mind-independent in the sense of other natural intrinsic properties (**1.4**); this is because it is non-relational, grounded as it is on intrinsic nature and can only change when that nature changes, and thus it is described by referring only to the object itself.

1.4: Mind-independence

In the traditional view, this feature is meant to keep intrinsic value from being subjective.[15] But we have already seen that intrinsic value is grounded on objective facts (**1.3**), and that ought to guarantee its objectivity. My position then on the fourth feature of the traditional view is to hold that intrinsic value is not dependent on psychological attitudes for its existence as an intrinsic property of the object, or how the object actually is, but does depend on them for its *'worth' or valuation*. That is to say that the 'physical' elements are there, but the 'interpretation' is missing.

[15] Moore argues against the subjectivity of value using this feature and the distinction he draws between objectivity and intrinsicality in 1922:254.

For instance a mushroom has the property 'being toxic' based on the chemical structure of one of the substances found in its body.[16] This property is mind-independent, objective, and it describes how the object is. The same is true for saying that something 'has intrinsic value'; such a property is mind-independent since it is grounded on a natural intrinsic property of the object, and it also describes how an object is, rather than how we see it. In contrast, saying that the mushroom 'is poisonous' or that a thing x 'is valuable' are both evaluative judgments, or non-natural properties; this means that if no humans existed, or if they were 'constituted' differently, then the mushroom would not be considered poisonous, and likewise x would not be considered valuable, even though in both cases the natural properties of the mushroom and x, would be exactly the same.[17]

1.5: Searching for intrinsic value

Moore's way of determining whether a thing is intrinsically valuable in the *'Principia Ethica'* is the test of isolation.[18] In this test intrinsically valuable things are such that, ″if they existed *by themselves,* in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good″ (1993:236). This suggests that the isolation test can show whether x is valuable *by* itself, i.e., has final value, but might not support Moore's claim that x is valuable *in* itself, i.e, have intrinsic value, or an intrinsic property that grounds such value.[19] In Korsgaard's terminology,

[16] Where the toxic substance (cyclopeptide) interferes with DNA transcription, in effect inhibiting the formation of healthy new cells.

[17] To say that the mushroom is toxic is a way to describe and categorize it (toxic or non-toxic mushrooms), based solely on how the mushroom is. The property of 'toxicity', or 'being poisonous' is relational. Thus to say that 'a mushroom is toxic' might refer to taxonomy, that it has property T that classifies it as toxic, or it might refer to the effect T has on certain beings.

[18] A more recent isolationalist about value is Chisholm, who initially takes a Moorean approach by writing that something is intrinsically valuable if it is valuable "no matter what else happened" (2005:1). He later shifts to a modified intentionally isolationist (Lemos 2005:23) position of treating intrinsic value in terms of appropriateness of certain intentional attitudes, or as he puts it, of intrinsic preferability (Chisholm 2005:15) thus coming closer to a fitting attitude theory of value.

[19] The obvious reply for the isolationalist is to claim that the test shows that any reason the valuer has for his evaluation is due to the nature of the thing itself, since nothing else exists, either objects or other states of affairs, i.e. consequences. This demonstrates that evaluative attitudes are, at best, merely a criterion of value and never a source of value (Moore 1993:187-8). But the problem cannot be solved this way because intrinsic

we can say that it shows when something is valuable finally, without it also necessarily being intrinsically valuable. This is important because final value may be subjective, whilst we saw that intrinsic value is not subjective, even though related to valuation. In effect then, the isolation test reveals (i) final value of x, and (ii) natural, non-relational properties of x.

Since Moore did not distinguish between final and intrinsic value, showing that something has the former value is tantamount to showing that it has the latter value. But bearing in mind the distinction of final/intrinsic value, something can be valued as a final end, without necessarily having intrinsic value. For example I can value an antique car as a final end, i.e., without it having any instrumental value, even though the car might not give me a reason to value it just by the fact that it is constituted the way it is.[20]

Even if we accept that the isolation test reveals intrinsic rather than final value, it still does not show why a thing having such value ought to be considered valuable; it does not give us reasons to think it valuable and thus to have a positive attitude towards it, unless we assume that the mere knowledge of a thing possessing intrinsic value is enough for us to positively evaluate it as a thing that ought to be promoted as an end by itself.[21] Going back to the mushroom example, the fact that it is toxic does not by itself warrant the characterization 'poisonous' or 'dangerous', unless it is shown to have adverse effect on us.[22] Thus even assuming the isolation test might succeed in identifying *what* things have intrinsic value it does not go, so to speak, 'the extra mile' in revealing *why* we should value them. As we saw in section (**1.2**), we could be disinterested in things found to have intrinsic value in isolation.

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value is not a part of a thing's intrinsic nature since it is not a non-natural property; thus what causes the favorable reaction is not intrinsic value of x *per se*, but a natural property of x we deem valuable. This second operation though—the first being to ascertain that x has this natural property—of *judging that a natural property is valuable*, is surely dependent on valuation; we judge a property valuable, so a thing which has this property in itself is intrinsically valuable, it has value by its very constitution, irrespective of any outside circumstances it might find itself in.

[20] The car is then extrinsically valuable, getting value by the state of the world, of being manufactured at a certain time, in certain quantities, etc. (in a sense, its 'antique' status is due to how the world is).

[21] This is to hold a kind of intrinsic value internalism.

[22] Again this goes to 'toxic' referring to taxonomy or to its effect on us.

This gap between axiology and deontology is not peculiar to Moore but stands for every objectivist—as Korsgaard (1986) puts it—theory of value. More specifically, Frankena (1942) argues that Moore is faced with a dilemma: Either intrinsic value is not a normative notion, so does not provide us with any direction of action and, *a fortiori,* no moral 'oughts'; or intrinsic value is a reason to desire something as an end, so intrinsic value is not a simple, unanalyzable idea.[23]

1.6: Finding intrinsic value

If I am right that the isolation test cannot reveal intrinsic value, how can we discover it then? Consider a detective trying to find a murderer; what he starts with is the assumption of murder but what leads him to the murderer is not the assumption itself, but clues that point towards the guilty party. And what are clues other than good reasons, to believe that x is indeed the murderer? Even though the clues are what are important in the uncovering of the murderer, still *they draw all their importance from the fact that they are clues towards finding the murderer*. Without a murder, there are no clues, just facts that have no bearing towards a specific target of inquiry.

Could it be the case that the detective starts not with an assumption, but knowing from the start who the murderer is, and then gathering evidence against him? Here we can rightly ask how the detective reached his knowledge without first relying on evidence. In the absence of evidence—i.e., good reasons—the detective by necessity must rely for his 'knowledge' on either wrong reasons, or no reasons at all.[24] Even supposing that the detective did indeed

[23] Moore's view that value or goodness is unanalyzable goes back to the naturalistic fallacy and the 'open question argument'.

[24] In this discussion I treat a 'good' reason as a 'true' reason, or a reason grounded on how the object actually is. In that sense, we can have convincing reasons to believe something, but if they are not connected to the

capture the right suspect—relying on intuition rather than good reasons—and did find truly incriminating evidence after the arrest, that still does not justify his attitude—prior to uncovering true evidence—towards the suspect. That is because we normally think that intuition alone cannot justify holding someone as guilty.

In investigating what has intrinsic value, we are in the same position as the detective; we start our inquiry by assuming there is intrinsic value and then we investigate whether an object, or a suspect x, has it. In our investigation of x, we must be led by and rely on, good evidence or reasons that show that our initial attitude towards x, of thinking it a suspect—of possessing intrinsic value—is fitting or justified by our findings. In the end, since regrettably our suspect will not confess by herself, we must conclude, based solely on good reasons—and their quality is dependent on their connection to the suspect—whether the suspect does indeed possess intrinsic value.

But regardless of our reliance on evidence, evidence alone will not make a suspect guilty, if she is not guilty already; evidence might lead us to the guilty party, but by themselves they can never be responsible for 'guilt' where there is none.[25] Good reasons serve to justify our evaluative attitude that x has intrinsic value, where such reasons derive their worth primarily from x itself; for if x has no intrinsic value, then no reasons that can justify our positive evaluation of x—regarding intrinsic value—can be 'good' reasons.[26] Thus we cannot justify our evaluation, that x has intrinsic value without having good reasons to argue that x indeed has such value, where the 'goodness' of the reasons depend primarily on x's having intrinsic value. But it is not the case that because we have good reasons to hold that x has value, that by this fact alone x does indeed have value.

actual state of affairs I would not classify them as 'good' reasons. Thus if the suspect is not guilty, even though we might have very convincing incriminating evidence, we still do not have 'real' evidence that she is guilty.

[25] Similarly, judging that a thing is valuable in isolation will not make it intrinsically valuable.

[26] This is the realist or cognitivist element of the traditional view.

To conclude, the intrinsic value of x is primary; it is what accounts for reasons being good or bad, or being fitting to the value or disvalue of x. But without such reasons, we cannot properly justify how our evaluative attitude towards x is caused by—or fitting on—the intrinsic nature of x itself. Thus we can answer Frankena by accepting the view that intrinsic value is analyzable, even though not always analyzable as final value.[27] A proper analysis will reveal what things have intrinsic value—since the grounding property of such value will give us an objective reason to positively evaluate the object—and how such value can be normative. So far I have argued for the first part, that is, analyzing what it means for a thing to have intrinsic value, and how do we find which things actually have such value. The next step is to find what property grounds the intrinsic value of life and how such value relates to normative reasons for action.

[27] Consider a knife that has intrinsic value. This value might be grounded on the knife's property of 'being sharp'—where for the sake of the example I treat 'sharpness' as non-relational. This intrinsic value of the knife might give us a reason to value it finally (saying for example something like 'this is one of the sharpest knives ever made'), but more often than not it will give us a reason to value it instrumentally, as valuable for the purpose of cutting things.

Chapter 2

2.1: On the grounding property

So far I have identified what it means to say that something has intrinsic value. To complete the argument that life does indeed have such value, two things remain: First, to find an intrinsic property life has that 'grounds' intrinsic value, and then to account for the gap between value and action. According to Agar, these two issues relate to the two dimensions of intrinsic value, the descriptive and the normative: the first ″guides us in our application of the concept [of intrinsic value]″ whilst the second ″establishes appropriate connections to overtly moral notions such as ″warranting respect″ and ″worthy of protection″ (2001:13). With these aims in mind, in sections (**2.1**; **2.2**) I claim that 'capacity for flourishing', or CF—a being leading a life with CF will be able to achieve certain valuable ends—should be regarded as the grounding property of life's intrinsic value. Following that, in sections (**2.3**) to (**2.6**) I give an argument as to how we can value CF from a general— or moral— point of view. In (**2.7**) I examine an argument against such a move in an effort to show why my attempt fails, and what is needed for it to work. Thus the argument for the moral valuation of the intrinsic value of life will be concluded in chapter 3, and more specifically in section (**3.9**).

Based on chapter 1, the criteria that will be used in judging the appropriate 'grounding' candidate x will be: (i) Is x a natural property of life? (ii) Is x a non-relational property of life? (iii) Is x a property we value or ought to value? And (iv) is it common to all life? As a first candidate we could consider the property of 'opening possibilities' or OP. Intuitively, the

existence of some possibilities where previously there weren't any is a good thing. OP is also natural and non-relational, so that life, even in isolation, has OP.[28]

The problem with OP comes from criterion (iii). For we can conceive of a living organism, say a lab-rat, which is brought to life by experimenters and genetically modified so that necessarily the only possibilities open to it are bad possibilities. It can be thought of as not having any functioning senses that could connect it to the physical world, cannot grow skin to protect its internal organs and its nerve endings from painful contact, and is so internally deformed that it lives in perpetual agony, even drawing breath is an exercise in enduring torment. Bringing such a thing to life surely opens up some possibilities for it that previously did not exist. But is that a good thing for it, when all the possibilities opened are necessarily painful?[29] And they are necessary in the sense of being intrinsic, since even in isolation such a thing would only be able to 'live through' painful possibilities. I believe that such a life, even having OP is not worth having, and death or not being born is preferable.[30]

As far as such a life is necessarily steeped in 'bad' possibilities, it is plausible to deny any intrinsic value to it, and thus OP is not something we ought to value unconditionally. We must modify our view to take into account the *kind* of life that is valuable. The second candidate I propose, and the one I think is up to the task, is the property of 'having capacities for flourishing', or just 'capacity for flourishing' (CF). I take 'flourishing' at this point in the most minimal and basic sense, so that what is important is that the life-form we are

[28] Even though in such an environment, most if not all of the possibilities opened cannot be actualized; but that is a contingent matter, owing to the environment and not to OP itself.

[29] I take 'pain' to indicate bad possibilities but the badness of possibilities is not exhausted by painful possibilities. For a human being bad possibilities are also those that do not allow for the fruition of life projects, meaningful interpersonal relationships, etc.

[30] To argue that we need not look that far to find lives that are intuitively valueless, for example the lives of pigs, chickens, etc. that live in modern factory farming conditions, would be to change the topic from discussing about the value of OP to the value of the living conditions. Animals living in such appalling conditions are leading a contingently 'valueless' life; but since I am interested in necessarily 'valueless' lives, I would contend that an animal under such living conditions still leads a life that can have value for it.

investigating has some biological ends, such as survival, nourishment, procreation—and possibly growth, comfort, and absence of harm—and that CF opens possibilities that some of those ends, or interests, are not necessarily closed.[31]

Based on the above characteristics of a life capable to be valued, I would say that we are interested in a '*natural'* kind of life—which from now on will be treated as a technical term, synonymous with 'a life that has CF', in contrast to a non-natural kind of life where all or a significant proportion of biological ends are necessarily closed. This distinction between kinds of life has one advantage and one disadvantage. The disadvantage consists in the fact that we have failed to show that all biological life has value. But this is counterbalanced by the fact that almost all life-forms that we find in nature, under this conception, have intrinsically valuable lives. Non-natural, i.e. intrinsically valueless life, even if it regrettably escapes the realm of conceptual possibility, arguably makes up for a miniscule percentage of the total life found on our planet.

CF is a natural property, in the sense that it is mind-independent and it describes a kind of life, dubbed 'natural'. Such a life is valuable for the being living it, even if the being itself does not perceive it or judge it as such; the natural life of a unicellular organism is valuable for it—since it possesses CF and this is an objective fact—even though by itself, the organism cannot comprehend its value, as valuing something is in the exclusive domain of humans. So CF fulfills criterion (i).

CF is also non-relational, in the sense of describing a life as valuable without referring to anything outside of the life of the organism in question. Thus 'discovering' CF comes only

[31] Some remarks are needed here. First, 'survival' is not flourishing *per se*, but a prerequisite for flourishing. I include it in the list of flourishing possibilities or biological ends because it is necessary for any flourishing. Second, I would say that each of the ends mentioned is insufficient by itself to give value to a life, although taken together, some of them are jointly sufficient. What is jointly sufficient for a life to be deemed natural will involve a lengthy discussion and will be relative both to the kind of an organism whose life is under scrutiny, and, in the case of humans, what the particular human whose life is evaluated takes, with good reason, to be adequate for his flourishing.

by examining a living organism, and not its living conditions.[32] CF then fulfills criterion (ii), where this fact, together with criterion (i) jointly inform us that CF is part of the intrinsic nature of the natural life of a living organism. Lastly we saw that criterion (iv) ought to be dropped as it is too strong. As a way of further developing the notion of CF, I will next examine two objections that can be raised against it.[33]

2.2: Objections to CF

First, it could be argued that merely having certain capacities is not valuable in itself, if we stay that is at the level of mere capacities. For example, having the capacity of 'being able to swim' might not be deemed valuable if none of the possibilities it provides are never acted upon, or actualized. If we never avail ourselves of such a capacity—maybe because of a fear of water, maybe from just plain boredom—then the 'opening of it', i.e. learning to swim, might seem less than valuable. This is close to what Leslie (1983:331) points to when he writes that ″mere possibilities cannot have any real moral importance because a mere possibility is something as empty as you can get.″

My reply to this is that the capacities I am referring to in the most basic level of flourishing are such that by themselves they tend towards actualization—we will see that this view will be expanded later on. Such capacities for survival, nourishment, and procreation,

[32] The independence of the intrinsic value of a thing is due to such value only depending on the intrinsic nature of said thing. Thus if the intrinsic nature changes, so can intrinsic value change. Going back to the example of height (**1.3**), if intrinsic value was grounded in height, then an animal growing taller would reflect a change in its intrinsic value, a change that again is only due to how the object, and nothing wholly distinct from it, is.

[33] A very interesting objection raised by Simon Rippon at this point goes like this: My claim is that natural life is intrinsically valuable because it has CF. But by this reasoning sentient theorists (**3.3**) could also claim that sentient life is intrinsically valuable; why hasn't this made explicit by sentient theorists? The distinction I drew is between something that is always valuable to have in contrast with not having it; the life of x which has CF is always more valuable than x's life without CF. Sentient theorists cannot make the same claim for two reasons: First, it is not clear that a sentient life is always more valuable than a non-sentient one; the capacity to feel pleasure or pain might not add value to the life of a tree or a micro-organism. Second, even if does always add value, presumably it does so because the amount of pleasure is greater than the amount of pain. Thus it is not sentience *per se* that grounds value, but the property of 'feeling more pleasure than pain'. Such a property is difficult to conceive as intrinsic, meaning that it depends only on how the organism is.

are not inert, depending on the organism's conscious goals and intentions, but rather 'push' the organism to fulfill them, on a level that is not even reflexive—since microorganisms do not possess what we would label as reflexes—but almost 'mechanical'(**3.6**).

A more central worry is that even if one accepts the value of CF, it can be argued that such value derives from the actualization of the possibilities themselves, and so CF and by consequence the value of life dependent on it, is valuable instrumentally. For example, someone can hold that personhood 'gives' life value, whilst still conceding that the capacity for personhood is also valuable—provided it tends naturally towards actualization—but it, and the life as a biological phenomenon who provides it, are only instrumentally valuable.[34] Putting the same worry without mentioning personhood, we can claim that if, for example, we value the caterpillar's capacity to become a butterfly—that is, intrinsically—it is only because we value butterflies more, as valuable by themselves.[35]

If I am right that CF is an intrinsic property of life, and that it gives us a good reason to value life, then it seems that life can be intrinsically valuable. To say that life is instrumentally valuable is to say how *we* value life, not *why* it has value (**1.1**). It is a shift from questions about value, about objects, to questions about valuation, or about our relation to such objects.[36] Nevertheless, some things add value to life—things like driving expensive cars, reading good books, or enjoying the company of friends—and anyone would be hard-pressed to show that such activities only *seem to*, but *do not actually* make our life more valuable. With this I agree completely; without a doubt, there are things that give life instrumental

[34] We saw in the introduction how Rachels (1986) holds this view. Personhood theory will be explored in (**3.4**).
[35] Singer makes this point in Kuhse, 2002:223
[36] We can value something instrumentally without it having instrumental value. But that cannot be because the thing has instrumental value *by* itself; this is a contradiction. For example I can value a banknote instrumentally, until I realize it is a counterfeit. Thus I can be wrong to value the banknote instrumentally but that does not mean that it has instrumental value by itself, regardless of how I value it. That is because banknotes have instrumental value in regards to how we conventionally value them in a capitalist economy. A banknote in such an economy, if not a counterfeit, has instrumental value regardless of how I, personally, value it. But this value is not because of something *in* the banknote, but only on how the society values it.

value, but it would be wrong to deduce from this that life has instrumental value *rather than intrinsic*.

Say that I am totally ignorant regarding art and paintings and I have in my possession a very good copy of the Mona Lisa, with all the artistic excellences of the original. For me, this painting has a sole value of hiding an ugly stain on my bedroom wall, so that is only instrumentally valuable—I do not take pleasure in it, I am unaware of its artistic value and frankly, I do not like it all that much. But we cannot go further and claim that the painting does not have intrinsic value as well, irrespective of how I value it, finally or instrumentally.

2.3: Argument for the normative force of CF, step 1

In the discussion above I described the position of someone who holds that life has no intrinsic value, even though CF might be considered valuable. This leads back to one of the most basic assumptions I have made so far, namely that CF is valuable; for one can clearly deny that this is so and then my argument for the intrinsic value of—natural—life crumbles. In essence, I have to argue that CF fulfills the last criterion remaining in order to ground life's intrinsic value on it: This is the third criterion, of whether CF is or ought to be valued from the general point of view.

The first step in my argument is to show why flourishing is valuable for the organism whose flourishing is in question. It is plausible, even though not uncontroversial, that all living beings have biological ends and interests, meaning that they have a teleology of their own and it is in their interests that some things happen. For example sunlight is valuable for a plant since it allows it to satisfy at least one basic end, namely, nourishment. Thus flourishing itself is valuable for the plant since a life in which the plant flourishes is more valuable for it

than a life in which it does not.[37] This holds for all creatures, so that a life is more valuable for the creature if it can flourish, i.e., achieve certain basic biological ends than if not.

2.4: Step 2

The second step of the argument is this: I have mentioned previously that the components of flourishing are not inert but will tend by themselves, or will prompt the organism by themselves, in order to be satisfied, so that the capacity of flourishing implies the actualization of said flourishing, provided certain conditions obtain.[38] Now the order is reversed; if I am right in arguing in the first step that we actually value our basic flourishing in a mechanical sense, i.e., we have an explanatory reason to act, then we can, at the very least, value the possibility of our flourishing, in a contemplative sense as well. This explanatory reason is what Williams termed a ″sheer reaction drive to self-preservation″ (1973:86). Williams thought about this drive in terms of desires, of what the most basic categorical desire might be—where a categorical desire is a desire not conditional upon being alive—in, as he writes, ″the impoverished side of things″ (1973:86).

I take it that all living beings, even ones incapable of desires have such a drive to live or to flourish; and since humans are living beings, they too share this mechanical drive to live.[39] That is to say that we have a—now justificatory—reason to value the possibility of our own basic flourishing, our own welfare; thus if some things are good for me, and I care about my own welfare, I have a normative reason to care about the possibility of those things being

[37] This is not to say that a flourishing life is valuable, so that we ought to bring more such life into being. The claim is that, starting with the fact that the plant is alive, it is better for it if it can flourish.

[38] Even capacities, like possibilities, can be mere capacities, in the sense that having a capacity does not entail that it will be satisfied or utilized. My body's capacity of metabolism will not be utilized unless (i) there is some x out there that my body can metabolize, and (ii) I can obtain x. So normal conditions for my capacity to flourish would entail that such evolutionary adapted capacities are relative to the environment to which I find myself, and from which, or for which, they were adapted, to serve my survival. That is just to say that my capacities for flourishing will tend to actualize themselves if I am living in an environment in which I have access to water, solid food, interaction with others, shelter, etc.

[39] With one qualification mentioned in the next page.

'open' to me. That is because if possibility implies actuality (fn.35), actuality logically entails possibility. Nothing strictly impossible can actually happen, for then it would not be impossible by definition. Thus we have a reason to value CF.[40]

2.5: Step 3

The third step is rather short and straightforward. I have argued that CF is valuable subjectively, for the being whose life has CF. The next step is to show that if I have a reason to value my own life, others have the same reason to value their lives as well, so that if Smith's life has value for Smith, Tom's life also has value for Tom.[41] If my analysis of intrinsic value is correct, and such value depends on an objective fact about the life of a particular being, then if Smith is prompted by that fact to value his life, and that very same fact is found in the life of Tom, then it stands to reason that Tom will also have a reason, the same reason, to value his life the same way Smith values his, even though he may not actually choose to do so.

A nihilist for example, based on his informed beliefs, can reject that his life, or any other life for that matter, has any value whatsoever; such a person can rightfully be said to not value CF. This possibility is not inconsistent with my view. What would be problematic would be to say that such a person does not even have a *prima facie* reason to value flourishing, and thus the possibility of flourishing. And for that to happen, I would claim that the person must need a reason to disregard flourishing relative to the most basic circle, of

[40] Not all will have a reason to value CF, as the nihilist example will show; but most of us do care what happens to us and we do value the possibility that good things will or might happen to us.

[41] This point is about value, about what has value, and not about valuation, for we have seen how the two can come apart. Thus to say that Tom's life has value for him is to give an objective reason to Tom to value his life, but that does not entail that Tom in fact will be swayed by that reason to value his life.

mechanical movement designed for self-preservation or self-propagation. Such a reason cannot be given by any beliefs, but only by pathological causes.[42]

2.6: Step 4

So far we have seen that all living organisms leading a natural life have biological ends, the achievement of which, and the capacity to achieve them, makes such a life valuable for them. Now the question becomes whether the subjective value of a life provides a reason for anyone else to treat it as valuable *simpliciter*. This is not so much a question about value, as it is about valuation. As such it involves only beings that can adopt the objective viewpoint (Nagel 1986:149-152). As only humans—and only a subset of them—can decide on what is good in general, it is them that will 'measure the world'.[43]

I have argued that someone, say Smith, has a 'mechanical' reason, or drive, to value his own life, based on the value of a flourishing life in contrast with a non-flourishing one.[44] This gives Smith a motivating reason to act in an appropriate manner, e.g., to protect his life. I have also argued how such a reason can engender a normative reason to value one's natural life. In order to reach the conclusion that every valuer has a normative reason to protect Smith's life, we must ask how the reason Smith has to protect his life can be squared with the view that he has no reason to demand that others protect his life. The argument runs like this:

1. If the value of life is only relative to the life-form, say Smith, living such a life, then Smith has a motivating reason to protect his life, but no reason (i.e. a justification) for others to protect it (**2.3**).

[42] This has the following corollary that if someone cannot value her own flourishing, does not care about what happens to her because of a physical or psychological impairment, she might not properly value CF from a moral point of view.

[43] Paraphrasing Kekes, man might not be the measure of things, but he is the measurer of things (1983:282). So for this step in the argument I will only talk about humans, as possibly the only beings capable of having or responding to normative reasons.

[44] The argument that follows is based on Nagel's 'dissociation' argument in 'The View from Nowhere' (1986:156-162), although departing from it in certain important respects.

2. Smith *has a normative reason* to value and protect his life since his life has CF intrinsically, and value depends on this natural property (**2.4**).[45]
3. Everyone has a normative reason to protect his/her own natural life (**2.5**).[46]
4. Smith, or anyone else for that matter, *does not have any reason* for having others value and protect his life, since its value is only relative to him.
5. But this shows that Smith holds a *dissociated* view towards his own life-value, where Nagel describes this dissociation as a break between the objective self and the subjective individual (1986:160). If we want to avoid holding such a view, we must accept that others also have a reason to value one's life.

In the case of life's value, we have seen how it depends on the objective property of CF. Because such a property is an objective fact about the world, it not only gives me a reason to value my life, but it might also provide me with a reason to value CF irrespective of whether the life that has CF intrinsically is mine or someone else's. Similarly, the fact that CF is the source of value for me, and a source of valuation for others, also might provide every valuer capable of detecting that property in my life, a reason to value it. It seems then that CF not only gives me a reason to value my own life, it might also give me a reason to value all life that has CF.[47] Unfortunately there is a problem here: saying that CF provides a reason for everyone to value it, irrespective in whose life it is found, is not the same as saying everyone has a reason to value *the fact that a particular life has CF*.

For example say that I have a copy of the Mona Lisa hanging in my office. Suppose still that it has intrinsic value, due to the arrangements of colors and lines on its surface. If I am an art-lover, I will have good reason to positively evaluate the Mona Lisa because of its intrinsic

[45] Provided as we saw that Smith does actually care about what happens to him and whether his natural capacities can be utilized.
[46] With the proviso so far that the person will also be motivated to look after her own basic interests.
[47] It is important to note that the argument gives us a reason to value all natural lives, not all individual natural organisms leading such lives. Thus I can value the life of a criminal, even though I do not value the criminal himself, his actions, his personality, or anything about him.

value, so that my valuation is not subjective, not a matter of personal taste. What happens if I walk into the next office and see the same copy of the Mona Lisa hanging on the wall? To say that I do not have a reason to value *it* because it is not mine seems both like bad reasoning and a character flaw. But how do I actually evaluate *it*?[48] Can I claim, based on my own experience, that my co-worker merely has a reason to value the painting as valuable for him? Yes and no. I can say that he has, because if he is like me, viz., an art-lover, he ought to value the painting for the same reason I do. But I cannot say that he has a conclusive reason to value it because of its intrinsic value. The painting might not be valued by my co-worker, but based on the observation above, I can say that it might be valuable simpliciter since it gives every competent valuer a reason to value it, i.e., irrespective of who owns it. But what I cannot claim *is that I should value that my co-worker has a copy of the Mona Lisa, even if it is exactly like mine, or that everyone else having the same copy should value the fact that I have one too*. Thus we see again how we can value CF, or a life that has intrinsic value, without thereby being under any moral obligation to act on such judgment. Something more is needed for my argument to work.

We can see what is missing from the argument by seeing why this objection might be leveled against it: It might be argued that the fact that I value my life because of its objective property of CF is not enough to support the claim that others should also value it, merely because of its objectively having CF.[49] Thus if I am a pyromaniac I can value cigars partly because of their objective property of being flammable, but that does not give anyone else a reason to value them for the same reason I do.

For my argument to work, i.e., that others have the same reason as me to value CF, those others must be the same as me in certain relevant respects; someone who is not an art-

[48] The problem can be stated thusly: the first 'it' here refers to the Mona Lisa. But to pass to the normative sphere we must hold the second 'it' to refer to the fact that my co-worker has a copy of the Mona Lisa.
[49] This observation and the example that follows are due to Simon Rippon.

lover will not value the intrinsic value of the Mona Lisa, whilst on the other hand, a pyromaniac like me will have the same reason as me to value a burning cigar. For CF, the relevant respect is valuing one's own welfare (**2.4**; **2.5**). For people who do not care about their personal welfare and so are not motivated to act on it, the existence of CF in someone else's life might leave them disinterested.[50]

Based on the whole discussion, we can find these restrictions to the range over which the intrinsic value of life has any normative force: (i) It ranges over agents free from pathologies, who can be motivated, by a self-preservation drive, to value their own actual welfare, and (ii) agents who do actually value CF in their own lives, that is, they have a normative reason to act on their possible, and not only actual welfare. But still, even if both of these criteria are satisfied, we cannot pass from an agent having a reason to value a natural life x because it has CF, to the same agent having a reason to value the fact that x does have CF. Put in terms of the Mona Lisa example: I have a reason—being free of pathologies to make aesthetic judgments, and an art lover—to value my copy of the Mona Lisa, the same as I have a reason, and everyone else like me having the same reason, to value any copy of the Mona Lisa, even if it belongs to someone else. *But I do not, and neither does anyone else, have a reason to value the fact that someone owns a copy of the Mona Lisa*. This second valuation can act as a moral principle, to the effect that if I value such a state of affairs, i.e., that someone should have a copy of the Mona Lisa, I have a normative reason to act so as to provide him with one.[51]

[50] But this is not necessary. Mother Teresa is the obvious example of someone not caring about one's own welfare whilst working for the welfare of others.

[51] The first valuation, 'that the Mona Lisa has intrinsic value' is a statement about the world and cannot provide a normative reason by itself. This is Hume's view that we cannot derive an 'ought' from an 'is'. For example the statement '1.5 million children die every year from starvation' will not provide me a reason to act unless I hold that it is bad that this happens and we ought to provide for such children.

2.7: Argument against dissociation

In the search for that crucial component that is missing from my argument, I want to examine Kraut's disagreement with Nagel's dissociation argument. Seeing why he objects to it will be helpful in modifying my own argument for the moral value of natural life. First of all Kraut claims that there is a gap between the *value of x* and *x's value providing a reason* to do x, protect x, promote x, etc. (2007:61). In this he disagrees with Nagel who seems to hold that values are strongly connected with reasons and suggests that the goodness or badness of a thing consists in nothing more or less than a reason to pursue or avoid it (1986:142-3). For Kraut though, value does not reduce so straightforwardly to reasons to act because even if we grant that pain, for example, is always bad for the subject, we can still deny Nagel's conclusion to the effect that the person has a reason to want the pain to stop (Kraut 2007:63-4). Thus for Kraut, Nagel makes two mistakes: First in supposing that the subject of a disvalue always has a reason to avoid it, alleviate it, etc., and second in inferring that everyone else also has a reason to act on account of anyone else's suffering a disvalue (2007:64). The moral he draws from this, keeping in line with his distinction between the value of x from x's value providing a reason for action, is that bad things should not occur, but from this it does not immediately follow ″that someone has a reason to do something about them″ (2007:64).

I agree with Kraut's distinction between value and reasons to act; the gap between axiology and deontology in general, has already been broached (**1.5**), and the conclusion drawn was that action does not 'flow' directly from intrinsic value. From the example of the Mona Lisa, we saw how this is possible.[52]

[52] More specifically, action *can* 'flow' directly from CF, when it is my life that is in question. I can be motivated to act on my basic flourishing, but I don't have a reason to act on behalf of another's flourishing, just because his life has intrinsic value.

In the example of pain that Kraut discusses, I would then side with Nagel to claim that pain *always* provides one with a good reason to avoid it.[53] But this reason should not be held as an *ultima facie* one, so that a person in pain should always act as to avoid/alleviate pain. For example a bodybuilder might willingly subject himself to pain in order to achieve some long-term goal, but that does not mean that he does not have even a *prima facie* reason to avoid pain; after all pain is most of the times and for most of us, uncomfortable and a thing to be avoided. More generally, I would claim that an agent satisfying the two restrictions set in page 26, always has a reason to act on his flourishing. But this reason to act is by no means a conclusive one; other reasons can, and sometimes ought to, supersede it.[54] So now we have a further restriction, this time not on the range of subjects, but on the normative force of the intrinsic value of life. Thus reasons to act derived from the value of life are reasons that can be superseded.

Kraut accused Nagel of making two mistakes: (i) that a person in pain always has a reason to avoid it, and (ii) that we all have a reason to help the person in pain. In the above paragraph I sided with Nagel against Kraut's first 'accusation'. In this paragraph, I agree with Kraut that someone suffering a disvalue does not give me a reason to act on it. This emanates from the discussion of my argument in (**2.6**), that in effect there is a gap between saying that I have a reason to disvalue pain and saying that I have a reason to help those in pain. In order to reach my intended conclusion, i.e., that everyone has a reason to value the fact that a being's life has the possibility of flourishing, from my starting premise that everyone has a reason to value their own possibility of flourishing, a further premise is needed, a premise that in effect will claim that everyone is committed to holding a normative principle that they ought to value all life that has intrinsic value, or that they ought to value all natural lives as valuable *simpliciter*.

[53] Again with the proviso that such reasons range over certain agents (p.26).
[54] This will be explored more fully in (**3.5**).

By accepting this principle, or something resembling it, one can go from valuing his own welfare, through the view that everyone has at least a reason to value his own welfare, to the conclusion that we have a reason, as creatures capable of adopting the objective viewpoint, to value the fact that a being has a natural life.[55]

My claim then is weaker than Nagel's in that it requires an additional normative commitment: the intrinsic value of a natural life gives everyone living such a life a reason to value it. But in order for the same value to provide a universal reason for everyone to value—and to act on such moral value—every natural life, one must hold the principle of equal flourishing, where we ought to value and promote the equal flourishing of all beings leading a natural life.[56] Since this principle is discussed in (**3.9**), I will delay finishing my argument about the normative force of intrinsic value till then.

[55] Again we have to be careful that 'everyone' in question refers to every agent satisfying the two restrictions.
[56] And again we have to bear in mind that the 'everyone' ranges over beings that have the characteristics mentioned in p.29.

Chapter 3

3.1: Biocentric egalitarianism

In the preceding chapter I argued that a kind of life, termed 'natural', has intrinsic value. I then proceeded to give an argument as to how that intrinsic value can give a reason to everyone to value it from the general point of view, although I did not finish it. In this chapter I will use a different strategy to show that the value of life can depend on CF: In sections (**3.1**) to (**3.4**) I will first briefly discuss certain contemporary views of life's value, in order to tease out some interesting points.[57] In sections (**3.5**) to (**3.9**) I will then sketch out an alternative account based on the value of CF. And in the last section, (**3.10**), I will argue why holding such a CF-based account of life's—intrinsic—value has certain advantages over its competitors

The first value theory I want to discuss is the 'organic life' theory (Warren 2003), or 'biocentric egalitarianism', followed closely by 'biocentric individualism' (Varner 1998; Agar 2001). The core idea behind both is that, following Taylor (1986), living organisms are teleologically organized systems, working for their own ends and wellbeing, and as such they deserve our moral respect. Taylor wants to spread this moral concern to all living things so he distinguishes between an entity having an interest in something, and something being in an entity's interest. Thus even a non-sentient organism can be a being to have a good of its own and yet lack interests, in the sense that it does not, in fact cannot, care for what happens to it

[57] I will not critically discuss such views at great length, as my objective is just to highlight their respective strengths and weaknesses in order to show how my theory can, hopefully, do better in accounting for life's value.

(1986:63).[58] Taylor does not talk about the well-being of rocks and ice-crystals, as most famously Schweitzer does (Rachels 1986:22-25), although his view is almost as demanding, to the effect that *all* living organisms have equal moral status. Taylor argues that we do not have a good justification to treat our uniquely human abilities/characteristics of rationality, aesthetic creativity, etc., as more valuable than other species-specific abilities, like web-spinning, photosynthesis, echolocation, etc., from the general point of view (1986:130).

It is no wonder that Taylor's view is mostly criticized for its demandingness; as Warren argues, ″human beings cannot give equal respect to all living organisms, while still surviving and living tolerable lives″ (2003:443). Washing our hands, cooking food, growing crops, all result in humans unintentionally killing other living organisms;[59] a normative theory that would thus forbid such mundane activities is surely not an ethic to live by. Thus Warren concludes that ″while life can reasonably be viewed as sufficient for some minimal moral status, it is not sufficient for full and equal moral status″ (2003:443).[60]

3.2: Biocentric individualism

Biocentric individualism is based on Taylor's insights but tries to overcome some of the problems besetting biocentric egalitarianism. Here the conception of life used is something resembling what Agar calls the 'autopoietic' conception, where an ″autopoietic system manages its own growth and maintains its structure, resisting the insults and assaults of the environment and, when damaged, striving to repair itself″ (2001:67). This is in accord with Taylor's view that teleological ends need not be tied to psychological states. Where the two

[58] This is very close to my view that beings such as plants and micro-organisms have interests without being interested in them.

[59] Even when argued that we are justified unintentionally killing organisms for our self-preservation, how can this square up with biocentric egalitarianism, when for the sake of one human life, thousand non-human ones have to be killed?

[60] I agree with Warren that life does not lead to equal moral status. My view is that a being leading a natural life is, by that very fact, eligible for moral consideration, but the question of the moral significance of the being's life will be determined by the principle of equal flourishing (**3.9**). I discuss the two different criteria in the Concluding Remarks.

theories diverge considerably is not so much the conception of life they use to base value, but the normative implications of such value. Thus biological individualism is not as demanding as Taylor's view, since it distinguishes moral considerability from moral significance: the fact that x is a living organism confers moral considerability, but only minimum moral significance; other factors, like sentience and self-consciousness also add value to a life, over and above mere biological ends (Goodpaster 1978). This raises a different problem of justifying why sentience and rationality add value, since what is fundamental is, and still remains, the notion of biological ends.

Moreover, Goodpaster's view that we should adopt other values to supplement life's teleological value, requires a further justification as to why we hold that sentience and consciousness are valuable, and more importantly, to find an acceptable way to measure which value is greater, biocentric or anthropocentric value. The objection runs like this: If we grant that persons are more morally significant than merely morally considerable trees, then in every conflict of interests between them it seems the more significant moral rights of persons will prevail over the rights of trees. The mere fact that we passed from a monistic theory of value to a pluralistic one, just so that we can accommodate the 'greater' significance of humans over non-human animals, is presumably what prompts Agar to hold that such value pluralism will almost always ″allow the greater intrinsic value of the rational and conscious to outweigh the value of the merely alive″ (2001:80).[61]

3.3: Sentience theory

Moving on to theories that do not hold that life is intrinsically valuable, one of the most widely-held is the 'sentience theory'. According to this view what is morally important is

[61] I believe that Goodpaster's view can be defended when cast in terms of a CF theory account. Such an attempt is discussed in (**3.5**).

sentience, or consciousness, where both are defined broadly as the capacity to experience pleasure, pain, and other qualitative mental states (Warren 2001:442). A well known advocate of this theory is Peter Singer who writes—in a passage about abortion—that ″the minimal characteristic needed to give the embryo a claim to consideration is sentience, or the capacity to feel pleasure or pain″ (2002:197).

There are two main arguments to support the importance of sentience in moral deliberation, one from the subjective the other from the objective point of view. The 'subjective' argument is put very simply by Warren (2001:442) like this: ″all and only sentient beings can mind what happens to them″. Singer (2002:118) is a little more explicit, as he introduces 'interests' in his argument: ″as long as a sentient being is conscious, it has an interest in experiencing as much pleasure and as little pain as possible″. The use of 'interests' raises a possible problem for all three theories mentioned so far. This is due to the fact that we can talk about interests of living organisms but we can also talk about the 'interests' of a car to be lubricated, or a company's 'interest' that its products sell, and we need a principled way to distinguish between interests and 'interests'. As Singer (1993:277) makes the point, to ″extend an ethic in a plausible way beyond sentient beings is a difficult task…Sentient beings have wants and desires…There is *nothing* that corresponds to what it is like to be a tree dying because its roots have been flooded.″[62]

But Singer does not believe this to be a problem for the sentience theory because of the 'objective' argument in its favor. This argument makes the case that the most obvious reason why we ought to value conscious life is that if we value our own pleasurable experiences—

[62] In effect, the debate is about how we define interests. Feinberg, according to Goodpaster (1978), insists that interests logically presuppose desires or wants or aims. Goodpaster himself on the other hand takes a broader, or we might say more basic, view of interests—which I share—so that ″psychological or hedonic capacities seem unnecessarily sophisticated when it comes to locating the minimal conditions for something's deserving to be valued for its own sake″ (1978:320). What separates interests from 'interests' in B.E. and B.I. is that the former interests serve in a real, concrete way a being's own welfare. In contrast, a car's 'interest' to be lubricated serve's the owner's interest to have a well-running car, and the company's 'interest' in its sales is only the interest of its stockholders, or its employers.

from the subjective viewpoint—we should also value such experiences when had by others—from the objective viewpoint (1993:101). Nagel (1986:160) makes the same point when he writes that ″pain can be detached in thought from the fact that it is mine without losing any of its dreadfulness. It has, so to speak, a life of its own.″[63] Presumably, the same holds for pleasure as well.

Putting aside the source of value for now, Warren (2001:442) mentions two attitudes a sentience theorist can hold in regard to the normative dimension of her position: The strong conception where all sentient beings have equal moral status, and the weak conception where moral significance varies according to degree of sentience. We have already seen that equal moral status for all—irrespective of the source of the moral status—is too strong; we ought to be able to open our window on a hot summer night without being held morally accountable, neither for the pain nor for the death of the insects flying into the burning lamp.

The weak version has a different problem. Even though it can justify the view that an elephant might be more morally significant than a horse-fly, it is difficult to translate this 'grading' of sentience into moral significance. Suppose a horse-fly is less sentient than an elephant; is an elephant more or less sentient, and thus morally more or less significant than an octopus? And is a lady bug more morally significant than an oyster? Even granting that certain natural categories of sentient creatures are more sentient than others, what is the criterion used? If presumably a falcon is more sentient than a fly, because we hold that birds are more sentient than insects, what scale of sentience are we using? Does the falcon 'feel' more pleasure? Does it feel 'better' pleasure, or pleasure in a 'better' way? Does it have other qualitative states that the fly lacks?

[63] But we saw in (**2.5**; **2.6**) how this might be problematic.

Lastly, even granting that a proper criterion can be found to translate degree of sentience to degree of moral importance, this view still has the worrying consequence that upon discovering a new species of being, we must put it to the test—not content with the plausible view that sentience only confers to it moral considerability—to discover how much we ought to respect it. This suggests that it would be more helpful to treat sentience as conferring moral value to a life, without trying to decide how much value.

Most commonly though, attacks against the sentience theory follow arguments used against hedonism, to the effect that such experiences like pleasure are (i) not valuable in themselves—or intrinsically so—and (ii) ought not to be valued only as final goods, or ends by themselves.[64] Rachels (1986:45-49) and most influentially Nozick (1974:42-45) argue for the first point. According to hedonists, the value of friendship, knowledge, achievement, etc., is due to the pleasurable experiences they provide. But if such things are virtual rather than veridical, the value we ascribe to the pleasure they provide will be greatly diminished, if not completely taken away. This suggests that the value of pleasurable experiences is not intrinsic but depends—or at least partly depends—on something 'outside', namely the link with the physical world. In other words, the *cause* of the brain state that leads to a pleasurable experience contributes to that pleasure, much like the *qualitative 'feel'* of such experiences does.

For the second claim, Varner (1998) and Goodpaster (1978) argue that such pleasurable experiences might be better thought of as having instrumental rather than final value. For instance Goodpaster makes the convincing claim that sentience has evolved for the express purpose of acting as a warning system to the sentient organism, pleasure indicating a life-conducive act, pain a life-threatening one. This suggests that ″the capacities to suffer and to

[64] Although we must be clear that sentience theory neither entails, nor is entailed by hedonism (Goodpaster 1978:321).

enjoy are ancillary to something more important rather than tickets to [moral] considerability in their own right" (1978:316). For example I might buy a beautiful car and value it just because of its beauty. But the car has a different value as well, as a means of transportation; I can wake up a half-hour later each morning since using my car to go to work is faster than taking the bus. And I do not have to limit my choice of destinations for a Sunday excursion to just those that are serviced by public transportation. These considerations, and many more like these, suggest that even though I can value my car in one way, i.e., because of its beauty, I can presumably also value it for its usefulness, and for what it allows me to do.[65]

3.4: Personhood theory

The last theory of life's value I will discuss is the 'personhood theory'. Personhood takes us deep into the domain of anthropocentric value since the measure of the value of all life is here taken to be the degree of resemblance to a person, where a person is more often than not taken to be a normal human adult.[66] Different thinkers describe a 'person' differently; for instance Agar claims that what we commonly hold as the most important characteristic of a person is that it has a mind (2001:15).[67] Continuing his analysis, he writes that what is important in having a mind can be accounted for in two different ways: The first is by a hedonistic justification, which connects naturally with the sentience theory; the second is by a rationalistic justification where what is at the heart of value is the capacity for intentional states, such as desires, hopes, and beliefs (2001:16). Along the same lines, Singer defines a person as a rational and self-conscious being (1993:87-90), whilst Tooley, in his

[65] The problem with this analogy is that pleasure is not so clearly useful for our biological needs. A lot of harmful things are pleasurable, whilst beneficial things are, more often than not, disagreeable or just plain painful. Still, if we accept that the evolutionary purpose of such qualitative states is the survival of the being, we can hold that pleasure and pain might still be considered valuable because they are instruments for survival, together with holding them valuable for their qualitative 'feel'.

[66] Still this account is not speciesist since most personhood theorists hold that some animals are persons, and some humans are not persons (for example see Rachels 1986:33; Tooley 1972:65).

[67] But see Kavanaugh (2001) for a personhood account based on the body and the concept of 'personal embodiment'.

influential 1972 paper 'Abortion and Infanticide', argues that what grounds a right—broadly construed—to life is ″the self-conscious requirement: An organism possesses a serious right to life if it possesses the concept of a self as a continuing subject of experiences and other mental states″ (1972:62).

Rachels (1986) starts his account of life's value a little differently. Like Agar (2001) and I, he wants to define first the conception of life he will use, a conception that must be amenable to valuation.[68] Thus he distinguishes between a biological life—which is purely descriptive and contrasted with death—and a biographical life, where to be the subject of such a life is ″to have the mental wherewithal to have plans, hopes, or aspirations″ (1986:26). It is these characteristics that give life its value, so that any value biological life might have ″is only derivative from the more fundamental importance of having a [biographical] life″ (1986:27).[69]

Now that we have seen what a person is, two questions need to be answered: First, personhood theorists must justify their claim that the status of 'person' is the *source of value* for a life. And second, they must answer the *normative question* of whether personhood is the only value—so that only persons are morally considerable—or is it a value among others, which only adds value to a life. If the second view is preferred, we then have to make clear whether all persons are equally valuable—in a personhood egalitarianism—or is it the case that the 'more x is a person', the more valuable x's life ought to be held.[70]

[68] Agar mentions the autopoietic conception of life (**3.2**), and I use the term 'natural' life (**2.1**).
[69] From the treatment of the concept of personhood discussed above, these key elements in personhood emerge: (i) rationality, (ii) self-consciousness, (iii) ability to form long-term plans, and (iv) capacity for a variety of intentional mental states.
[70] The awkward statement 'the more x is a person' can be translated in a number of ways, owing to the different elements that 'make up' a person. Thus it can be translated as 'x is more rational', 'x is more self-conscious', 'x has a greater ability to form projects', or 'x has a greater capacity to experience intentional mental states'. Of these interpretations, I think that only the first two are helpful.

Regarding the first question, Agar is right to point out that it does not directly follow from the fact that persons are more rational or more self-conscious than non-persons, that it is the case that the former are, or ought to be treated as, more morally important than the latter (2001:17). An interesting defense of personhood is that taken by Tooley who argues that rights are corollaries of desires.[71] Thus more desires lead to a larger number of ends that are valued and that means an increase of moral rights in order to possibly achieve them.[72] Postponing my criticism of Tooley's view for section (**3.8**), the reference to valuable ends with regard to personhood leads to a further problem that is worth bringing up, because now it seems that personhood is only instrumentally valuable, relying on some further valuable ends—valuable only for persons—for its own reflected value. But then any particular end, or any list we might draw up of ends suitable to be valued by persons, will be disputable unless it only includes, according to Glover (1977:51-52), intrinsically valuable things. This point raises some very difficult questions; for instance how do we choose which ends ought to be in the list? Who makes the list? And if I am not one of the persons making the list, do I have any say in what goes in the list of—my—valuable ends?[73]

Going into the normative dimension of personhood theory, both options—of person egalitarianism and value coming in degrees—face difficulties. The egalitarian for example will have to argue against Taylor (**3.1**) to the effect that rationality is more morally important, from an objective viewpoint, than any other animal ability found hitherto. This view leads to other problems as well. Consider the case where two persons are drowning, a monkey and a human, and we can only save one. Personhood egalitarianism gives us no principled way to decide, *ceteris paribus*, which of the two to rescue. But I take it that most of us would rather

[71] Rights as broadly construed, as moral rights distinct from legal rights. Desires on the other hand must be construed narrowly, since Tooley holds that only self-conscious beings can have desires appropriate to connect to moral rights (1972:65).
[72] See also Singer (1993:97-98) for a brief discussion of Tooley's view.
[73] Crisp (1997:58-59) raises some of these same questions with regard to this 'ideal' account of welfare.

save the human over the monkey. A plausible reasoning behind such a decision could be that the monkey, even though rational and self-conscious, cannot be *as* rational and *as* self-conscious as a human; it cannot form *such* valuable projects and life-plans as a human could. So in the end, the monkey cannot be *as much* a person as a human can, even though it is still a person.[74]

If we hold this reasoning, we reach the second normative option, of treating personhood in degrees, where if we hold, together with Tooley (1972), that more rationality equals more rights, it would lead to the problematic conclusion that the cleverest person, or the most self-conscious one, or the one with the greatest plans for the future—depending on the view one holds of what is the criterion for the degree of personhood— would be morally unaccountable, in the sense that his moral rights would trump the rights of every other living being. Since his power of moral authority would be absolute, he could 'do no harm'; no one could blame him and he would only answer to a higher power.[75] This looks a bit more Nietzschean than most people would be comfortable with.

3.5: CF theory

Now that we have seen the prevailing strategies for accounting for life's value, we can sketch a CF theory of life's internal value based on the conceptual and theoretical work in the first two chapters.[76] In this account, all natural life has intrinsic value, meaning that it is

[74] A more cynical justification could be that if I were the one drowning, I would prefer that someone choose me over the monkey. By the same reasoning, a fellow human could save me, whilst the monkey would not even try to do so, so my best bet would be to save the human, in case I myself need rescuing in the future.

[75] We might hold that the criterion and the degree of personhood only apply over species and not inside species. Thus humans are more morally significant than fish, but inside the domain of humans, something different accounts for moral significance. But I think that if a personhood theorist wants to hold true to the moral significance of personhood, his criterion for inter-species significance might levitate towards an 'ideal' account of welfare, and the problems such an account faces.

[76] I have tried to present the different theories and the problems they face without going into any depth into how philosophers have tried to answer them, except where such solutions are helpful to illuminate the CF account. In section (**3.9**) I will argue how such an account can respond to the different problems raised for a theory of life's value.

valuable for the subject of such a life irrespective of whether it, or anyone else, values it;[77] such value is grounded on the capacities for flourishing, CF, a natural life has. CF then gives us a good reason, i.e., a reason connected to how the world actually is, to value a life that has it (**3.9**), albeit not always a conclusive reason to act on it, since it will often be superseded by considerations relative to higher-circle interests (**3.6**; **3.7**).

CF is a monistic theory, holding that there is only one source that grounds the intrinsic value of life, and that is the capacity for flourishing, tied intimately to its actualization (**2.4**).[78] It also is an interest-based account of welfare: what is good for the organism is that certain interests, viz., connected with flourishing, can possibly be satisfied. This intrinsic value does not operate—or manifest itself—equally across the board, but comes in degrees of strength. In order to assess the different 'pull' CF has across different lives and different species, we have to find a common denominator, a common thread running through all such lives. For Singer (1993:106-107), this ″neutral ground″ is 'strong imaginability': one can imagine being a horse and being a mosquito and so can value them objectively and choose which life is more valuable. I take something more basic as the common ground, and that is the capacity for flourishing all such lives have intrinsically. As the complexity of interaction changes, CF—even though remaining common in form—gets 'enriched' in content and that provides us with certain distinct categories of morally valuable lives. There are two criteria to evaluate when CF gets enriched in content: the first is consciousness or sentience, the second is self-

[77] In the example of the Mona Lisa (**2.6**), my fellow co-worker has a reason to value his copy—provided he is an art-lover—and so his copy is valuable to him, irrespective of the fact that he might not think so; for instance he might be mistaken about its aesthetic properties, or he might trust the word of an 'expert' who told him that his copy is flawed.

[78] Even though CF allows that other values come into play, like sentience and personhood, the importance of such values is ultimately derived by their importance to CF and the equal flourishing principle. For example the value of sentience is translated in terms of its value to CF, by opening new capacities and 'demanding' by the equal flourishing principle that such capacities be protected.

consciousness or rationality.[79] Before elaborating on the two shifts of CF, I will first discuss the most basic form of it.[80]

3.6: Sub-consciousness

Thinking of all natural life enclosed in three concentric circles, the most basic content of CF will be in the smallest, innermost circle. At this level we have non-sentient flourishing, possibly only encompassing the valuable capacities for survival, nourishment, and procreation. Beings in this circle have interests, and immediately act on them when the opportunity arises (**2.3**).[81] Flourishing is limited to basic biological ends and every action is merely a reaction, a causally determined fact of the world, where 'choice' is totally absent and there are no individual preferences or different reactions to same stimuli within the same species or kind, which cannot be accounted for by just the totality of physical facts. Thus the way a particular plant, or a particular microorganism of kind x will react to stimuli S will be almost identical across the species or kind. Beings of the innermost circle are caught in brute causality and that accounts for one of the difficulties in defining life as a biological phenomenon. As Singer (1993:272) rightly points out, if we go 'below' sentience, ″the boundary between living and inanimate natural objects becomes more difficult to defend.″[82] This is Williams' ″impoverished end of things″ (1973:86); in this circle, humans have only an instinctive drive to act on their interests.[83]

[79] I will treat consciousness with sentience, and self-consciousness with rationality, as coextensive terms, using the terms best fitted in the context of the discussion. Of course both pair of terms can 'break', resulting in a conscious creature incapable of feeling pain, or an irrational self-conscious being. Despite that, I will assume a strong connection between them.

[80] The account that follows echoes, at least in certain respects, Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 2, ch.47 (1956:142-143).

[81] This division according to complexity and response to outside stimuli can also be read in Bergson (1991, Ch. 1).

[82] It is in referring to this level of life, Lovecraft's famous couplet—at least the first part—rings most true: "That is not dead, which can eternal lie, And with strange aeons even death may die" (2008:141).

[83] It is important to mention that even though I have classified living beings according to their level of complexity of interaction, so that persons are in the third circle and sentient animals in the second, all circles,

3.7: Consciousness

Moving into the second circle, we break away from mechanical determinacy due to the advanced level of complexity or sophistication of interaction with the physical world, including one's own physical form. More advanced—in this sense—organisms are those that can perceive, react, and shape the world around them in more—and more sophisticated—ways. In this circle we are dealing with sentient creatures which interact with their environment in more complex ways than sub-sentient organisms. I take sentience as the defining *moral* characteristic of delineating a circle of its own for two reasons: Sentience, as the ability to experience certain qualitative mental states provides an organism—among other ways to experience the world and thus to obtain more ends—with a special category of interests, viz., *interest in its interests*; conscious beings care whether their interests are satisfied or not, feeling pleasure when they do, sadness if they do not.[84] By this I mean that sentient beings might have an emotional connection to the satisfaction of their interests, not that this connection will always take place, nor that it will necessarily take the form 'pleasure from achieving an end, sadness from failing to achieve an end'. By contrast, non-sentient organisms do not care about anything, even what is in their own interest. This leads to the conclusion that conscious beings can be harmed in more ways than non-conscious ones and thus we must make allowances for their protection from such kind of harm.

The second reason is that in keeping with an interest account of welfare, what is important in experiences of pleasure and pain is not so much their qualitative 'feel' but their connection with reality. We saw in (**3.3**) how Goodpaster (1978) links the two in holding an

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and thus all living things, share one common centre, which is the ends of basic flourishing. All living creatures thus have these drives to survive, feed and procreate. This is why I talk about interests tied to concentric circles and not a hierarchy of interests where each tier is totally cut-off from the others.

[84] As more possibilities open, we have room for diversity of valuable ends inside species. A sentient being x might have valuable ends A, B, C, whilst being y—of the same species as x—can have B, D, F. This diversity of valuable ends is more apparent in the third circle. But all beings, no matter which circle expresses them best, will still 'value' basic flourishing.

evolutionary origin of such feelings. If we treat sentience as—for the greater part—instrumentally valuable for flourishing, then the link with CF is preserved. Sentient creatures are those that are motivated by basic and sentient possibilities for flourishing; their level of complexity opens up new possibilities and it allows them to act on them in a reflexive, rather than a merely mechanical way. For example a female dog will try to protect her litter against other animals, even though this might go against her basic flourishing. But she will do so motivated by her sentient flourishing, where she might find the motivation not merely to procreate, but protect her progeny until they can fend for themselves. The reason why I call this behavior reflexive rather than mechanical is because when found in the same situation, different dogs might respond in different ways, depending on the dog's 'personality'.[85] This is another instance how basic flourishing can be overridden by considerations relative to a more advanced circle.

Concluding on this second circle, we see how the source of value of all opened possibilities, both basic and sentient, still remains the value of CF. What adds value to such lives, more than sub-sentient ones is (i) the fact that such beings can be hurt in more ways, and (ii) that they have a larger number of valuable ends that must be morally accounted for.

3.8: Self-consciousness

The third circle of complexity is the one occupied by self-conscious or rational creatures. Rationality is a still more advanced survival mechanism than mere sentience and it also provides a greater number of valuable ends. As rational creatures interact with their environment in many complex ways, they need more 'room' to properly flourish, i.e. to

[85] That is to say that all the physical facts might not explain behavior. A dog's previous history and experiences also play a role in behavior, by inculcating reflex behaviors. But such behavior still falls short of 'reflective' behavior.

actualize their diverse capacities for flourishing.[86] As with sentience, I hold rationality or self-consciousness as morally significant because (i) it adds more flourishing possibilities that must be respected, and (ii) it adds a different kind of interest. Non-conscious organisms have interests whilst disinterested; conscious beings have basic interests plus interests towards their interests, and self-conscious creatures have both kinds of interests together with a further kind, namely, *interests in themselves*. For example it is in a plant's interest to get enough water, even though it is not interested in it. A dog might be interested in eating chocolate even though it is poisonous for it. A rational creature though cares whether it poisons itself, to the extent that it is rational.[87]

This extra layer of interests opens new flourishing possibilities—e.g., of conceiving long-term projects—but it also opens new possibilities of harm—viz., to such projects. Mirroring the case with sentience, rational beings will have some ends, conducive to their welfare, which can only be valued by them, over and above any valuable ends they have from the first and second circle. This means that their needs for a proper flourishing will be greater still; if plants require sun and water to flourish, rational beings require a lot more to *equally* flourish. These extra needs must be protected, if we are to value the equal flourishing of all natural lives.

[86] This complex interaction involves mental as well as physical elements. A rational person can be appalled by a mutilated animal body the way 'lower' animals cannot. Persons can react with disdain towards other persons, with anger to perceived insults, and with longing towards a future event. All these reactions are inaccessible to less complex beings.

[87] This is not to claim that a rational creature will never poison itself deliberately. But the reasons to take one's life must come from a higher circle of complexity, either from the second (i.e., because life involves a tremendous amount of pain, sadness, etc.), or from the third (i.e., because of an inability to achieve personhood-related ends, long-term goals, etc.). This shows again how a person's reasons to act from the first circle might be superseded by ends relative to other circles.

3.9: Equal flourishing principle

But to remain at this point, together with Tooley (**3.4**), and hold that more interests require more rights would be wrong. We need to supplement Tooley's account with the fact that as rationality leads to more rights, it also leads to more duties. If we accept the notion of equal flourishing, so that our moral rights are granted, in a sense, by a concession on the part of other beings so that we may all equally flourish, then we must also accept the duties incumbent on it, i.e., to protect the possibility of equal flourishing for all living creatures; to do otherwise would be morally wrong.

Tooley seems to hold that we can take advantage of our increased moral significance due to our having more needs whilst disregarding our, alleged, duties. But then why try to justify our moral rights in the first place, if we do not care what morality demands? It is like trying to hold only the 'good' part of the Golden Rule, to impose duties that others treat us well, whilst still allowing us the freedom to treat them as we please. But that is not a 'moral' justification at all: it is holding the principle that 'might makes right'.[88]

The GR prescribes both moral duties and rights; to hold only one part of the equation defeats the whole purpose of GR as a principle of morally right acts, or as a justification of moral rights. By the same reasoning, if we take advantage of the principle of equal flourishing, or PEF, to justify the *moral* protection of our rights, we should also accept that lower beings depend on us for the *practical* protection of theirs.

Holding PEF also allows us to finish the argument started in (**2.5**), for the normative force of intrinsic value. Briefly stating the argument we see that:

[88] If the GR is 'Treat others as you would wish them to treat you', then to hold only one end is to claim that I have a right that 'others ought to treat me good', without also holding the duty that I should treat others the same way. This applies if we treat the GR as a general moral principle that everyone ought to hold, not only as a personal code of conduct.

1. Flourishing is valuable for all creatures in the sense that x's flourishing life is more valuable to x than x's non-flourishing one (**2.3**).
2. Regarding humans, if (1) is true, then this might provide a normative reason for all—restrictions holding—to value CF as well, and thus a reason to act so as to ensure that their respective lives have a possibility of flourishing (**2.4**; **2.5**).
3. If we hold PEF then the fact that all natural lives have CF can provide to all—restrictions holding—a moral reason to value and protect any life that has intrinsic value, or CF.

3.10: Why we ought to hold a CF theory of value

The aim of this chapter was to provide an argument as to why a CF-based account of life's value is both consistent and to be preferred over other life-value theories. The first reason why we ought to hold a CF account hinges on its explanatory power, as it is a unifying theory concerning the source of life's value of all living organisms, be they non-sentient, sentient, or rational. As Kraut suggests, a moral theory that does not place our moral judgments involving humans in a different category from moral judgments about all other living beings, ought to be, *ceteris paribus*, preferred (2007:148).

A second reason comes from the fact that it incorporates some of the most important intuitions we share about what makes life valuable, intuitions upon which other theories have been built, whilst at the same time avoiding objections raised against these theories. For instance it incorporates the position of biocentric egalitarianism that all life has value—albeit with a small concession (**2.1**)—without being too demanding, since it allows that 'reasons' from the first circle are only *prima facie* reasons, and that the moral rights of such lives might be 'sacrificed' on the altar of equal flourishing for all (**3.8**). It avoids the problem of

comparing different values that biocentric individualism faces, and answers why sentience and rationality 'add' value to a life based on the intrinsic value of CF (**3.7**; **3.8**).

It also stays clear from the problem of finding a link between sentience and moral considerability (**3.3**) since it allows that the only criteria that decide such considerability are (i) the circle which a being 'inhabits', or the kind of interests it has—sub-conscious, conscious, and self-conscious, and (ii) the level of protection such ends require so that the being can equally flourish.[89] It also avoids having to provide a list of ends that would make personhood valuable (**3.4**).

[89] Difference in moral considerability is then due to a being's ends that have to be protected so that it can equally flourish with other, more 'self-sufficient' beings. Thus in general, as the circles expand, so do moral rights—and in the third circle, rights are correlated also with duties (**3.8**). Even inside the circles, what determines rights is protection of the 'right of equal flourishing'.

Concluding Remarks

I started this paper by explaining how I will use the notion of intrinsic value. Staying close to the traditional view, I treated intrinsic value as a property that primarily belongs to objects, to the world; to say that something has intrinsic value is to claim that it is constituted in such a way that it gives us a good reason to positively evaluate it—where a good reason is one grounded on how the object actually is.

This reason is prior to how we see or evaluate the object (**1.6**), as it is that which guides our evaluation. For instance a shovel might give me a good reason to positively evaluate it if I am looking for something to dig a hole. This valuation though is not prior to my reasons, but depends on my ends; the constitution of the shovel itself will not prompt me to value it unless I want to use it. Thus I value the shovel instrumentally. A painting on the other hand can give me a reason to positively evaluate it just by its constitution.[90] But intrinsic value is still not 'transformed' to final value automatically; the Mona Lisa example in (**2.2**) shows that something can have intrinsic value without us necessarily valuing it as a final end, or even more, valuing it at all.

Concluding, 'x has intrinsic value' means that x's nature might give us a reason to evaluate it (finally or instrumentally) without us having any independent reasons to value it at all. As the evidence do not make a suspect guilty if she is not, so do reasons to value x do not

[90] Provided I satisfy the criteria mentioned in (**2.5**).

make x intrinsically valuable.[91] Rather, it is x itself that gives me a reason to claim it has intrinsic value, much like the suspect's guilt giving me a reason to proclaim her guilty (**1.6**).

In chapter 2 I sketched an argument as to how the intrinsic value of life, grounded on CF, can give us a reason to value all natural lives from a general—or objective—point of view. Even though I have not accounted for the intrinsic value of all life, this 'failure' of my theory is justified for two reasons.

Intuitively, the kind of life termed 'non-natural' is not valuable, neither for the being living it, nor from the general point of view (**2.1**). Such a life ought not to come into existence in the first place, and even though I will not make the claim that it ought to be destroyed where found—as the morally right thing to do *for* the suffering creature—I will assert that such a life has no value, intrinsic or extrinsic, and so it makes no demands on us that we respect it.[92]A second reason to hold the distinction between natural/non-natural life, is that despite its 'failure', it still succeeds in accounting for the intrinsic value of the life of almost all living creatures.

In chapter 3 I proposed and defended a unifying theory to account for the value of all 'natural' life, explaining why we are not required to treat all living beings equally, since not all kinds of interests ought to be valued the same, and so not all kinds of beings have the same rights, or duties.[93] This theory is by no means complete; certain important elements, like the notion of equal flourishing, must be examined and expanded in order for a CF account to be

[91] For example I might value a painting—which has intrinsic value—for reasons prior to its value. I might be influenced by the experts, or I might have valued the artist's previous paintings and so come to value all his next ones as well, without being led in my judgment from the intrinsic value of the paintings themselves.

[92] Such a life might still have instrumental value, but only for us, so we can experiment on it. For the lab-rat, its life has neither intrinsic value—since it is lacking CF—nor extrinsic value, since nothing can add value to such a life for the being living it.

[93] There is a difference between saying that we are not required to treat all living things equally from claiming that we have a duty to promote equal flourishing for all. In many cases, our duty towards equal flourishing will demand that we treat some living beings unequally. For instance we might be justified in killing thousands of mosquitoes in order to stop them spreading diseases. In this respect we do not treat the mosquitoes equally with humans, but our behavior towards them is justified by PEF.

equal to the task of providing answers to questions of practical deliberation. As stated in the introduction, what I was mainly interested in doing was to provide a criterion of moral considerability and not of moral significance, which is something quite different (Goodpaster 1978:311). Nonetheless, something has to be said about the latter, which is the criterion used in conflicts of moral interests.

I will briefly examine then two cases to see how intrinsic value might connect to our rights and duties. I have already argued that the criterion of moral considerability is CF, or the intrinsic value of a natural life. Thus we have a *prima facie* duty to protect and respect all intrinsically valuable life. So what are the implications of holding a CF-account in matters of abortion?

It seems at first glance that the life of the fetus, provided it is healthy, demands our respect as intrinsically valuable.[94] Does that make abortion morally reprehensible in all situations? Plausibly no, because the possibilities of flourishing of the people influenced by the coming baby also weigh in the equation of what is morally right to do. For example the mother might want an abortion because a child would be a hindrance to her future career prospects. But the fetus's possible career prospects must be protected as well. Under PEF, we have no reason to respect one set of interests over the other, if both beings would equally flourish by having the same possibility open to them. So the claim is that the interests of the mother in keeping open certain kinds of valuable possibilities cannot ever justify disregarding the fetus's interests in keeping open those very same kinds of possibilities.

But this does not make abortion morally reprehensible in all situations. I have mentioned that reasons to value and act stemming from intrinsic value are weak reasons; thus a mother's inability to provide for a child, meaning that the child will not actually be able to realize a minimum of opened possibilities for its flourishing, might provide a good reason to

[94] Where 'healthy' means it leads a natural life.

stop such a life from coming into being. These considerations though relate to contingent matters; they relate to the child's extrinsic value of life, where such a life 'takes' value from something outside of it, from the actual achievement of valuable ends. Thus a life can have intrinsic value but still be considered morally acceptable to terminate it, on the grounds that it is, or will be missing, all extrinsic value.

To sum up, the intrinsic value of the natural life of the fetus can never be superseded by the interests of the mother. What can weigh for or against it are considerations regarding the extrinsic value of the fetus's future life, and how it might not be 'guaranteed' in actualizing a minimum of valuable ends so that it can equally flourish with other beings.

The second case I want to investigate comes from the implications of holding a CF theory relative to the first and second circles of complexity. Here we are talking about respect of non-human life. The problem with CF relative to non-human life is to decide what 'equal flourishing' entails. For example does our need for paper books outweigh the interest of trees not to be cut down? That would depend on how such books further our equal flourishing with trees. Certainly the acquisition and storage of knowledge served by books is an important human flourishing end that must be protected; surely human life without any possibility of advancement of knowledge would be as impoverished as a life of a plant given only minimum sunlight would be stunted. Thus according to PEF, we have the right to cut down trees in order to achieve our valuable ends, insofar as we also have a duty to protect the ends of trees, by not destroying the environment from which trees are dependent to achieve their own valuable ends.[95] We have a reason then, provided by PEF, to override some of the rights of other living things in order to flourish equally with them. But we do not have any justification to override these rights in a pursuit of ends not regarded as generally valuable to flourishing,

[95] We have a right to cut down trees, provided all other alternatives of pursuing and storing knowledge that do not clash with the interests of other living beings are inaccessible to us.

nor are we ever justified not attending to our duties towards nature, so that it may equally flourish as we do.

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