Is There a Right to Respect?

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Many moral philosophers assume that a person is entitled to respect; this suggests that there is a *right to respect*. I argue, however, that there is no such right. There can be no right to respect because of what respect is, in conjunction with what a right demands and certain limitations of human agency. In this article, I first examine the nature and ontological basis of rights. I next consider the notion of respect in general; I adduce several varieties of respect, then present a primary distinction needed to discern the notion of respect relevant to the putative right. Then I propound the argument that there can be no right to respect and consider some means of challenging its conclusion. In closing, I trace some of the consequences of this argument and suggest how it might motivate a different approach to understanding our most basic obligations to one another.

INTRODUCTION

Many moral philosophers assume that a person is entitled to respect. Kant's moral system is complex, but it is plausibly interpreted as resting upon this assumption. Others, some sympathetic to a Kantian approach to ethics and some explicitly critical of such, rely on the assumption that persons are owed respect in order to argue for a great variety of ethical claims or even as the means of understanding morality itself.[1] The notion of being entitled to or owed respect suggests that there is a *right to respect*, that is, that among our most basic perquisites as the sort of beings we are is the respectful regard of others and, correspondingly, that one of our most basic obligations is to regard one another with respect.

Many find the claim that there is a right to respect obviously true (and are appalled at the suggestion that there is no such right). On the other hand, once isolated, many find the suggestion that there is a right to respect far-fetched, and reject it on the grounds that the relatively high opinion that is the mark of or corollary to respect is something that a person must earn and is not merely owed. Or the suggestion is dismissed on the grounds that no statute or constitution, in any

[1] The assumption is widespread. For just a sample of those who have employed it, see S. Buss, 'Respect for Persons', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 29 (1999), pp. 517–50, at 517; W. Frankena, 'The Ethics of Respect for Persons', *Philosophical Topics* 14 (1986), pp. 149–67; R. Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), p. 182; A. Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago, 1977), p. 66; R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York, 1974), p. 32; J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 337–8; B. Williams, 'The Idea of Equality', *Moral Concepts*, ed. J. Feinberg (Oxford, 1970), pp. 158–61; R. S. Downie and E. Telfer, *Respect for Persons* (London, 1969), pp. 88–94; D. Gauthier, *Practical Reasoning* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 119–20.

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jurisdiction, requires the respectful regard of others. Such objections, however, indicate misunderstanding regarding the relevant notions of a right and of respect. Thus, in order to evaluate the claim that there is a right to respect, one must first examine and clarify these notions.

Ultimately, I do not think there is a right to respect. This is not because I take a dim view of the value of human persons, nor because I think one should be able to despise one's peers with impunity. Rather, there can be no right to respect because of what respect is, in conjunction with what a right demands and certain limitations of human agency. The claim, however, that there is such a right is not summarily dismissible; it requires careful consideration of the relevant notions and their relations. This consideration can provide insight into our basic obligations to one another and, in so far as it challenges the prevalent assumption that there is a right to respect, perhaps provide a new perspective on the foundations of morality.

In this article, I examine the notion of a right, in order to determine what a right is supposed to be and the ontological basis of such things. I next consider the notion of respect in general. I adduce several varieties of respect, then present a primary distinction needed to discern the notion of respect relevant to the putative right. Then I propound the argument that there can be no right to respect; once I have clarified the pertinent notions, the argument is fairly simple and direct. After propounding this argument, I consider some means of challenging its conclusion. In closing, I trace some of its consequences and suggest how the argument might motivate a different approach to understanding our most basic obligations to one another.

ON RIGHTS

The normative notion of a *right* is of crucial importance in political and legal theory, as well as in moral philosophy more generally. The notion is multifarious; it is put to a great variety of uses in these domains and can be construed in a number of ways. An influential and widely accepted means of analysing the notion is the framework provided by the legal theorist Wesley Hohfeld.[2] Hohfeld distinguishes between applications of the notion that attribute to individuals *privileges* (also known as *liberties*), *claims*, *powers*, or *immunities*; these four benefits are 'Hohfeldian incidents'. A right is supposed to be one of the incidents – with respect to a certain action or thing – in itself or a complex of more than one incident. Thus, one can be viewed as having a right to φ if and only if one has no duty not to φ – this is the *privilege* (or *liberty*) to φ – and one can be viewed as having a right to φ if and only if no one has

[2] See W. Hohfeld, *Fundamental Legal Conceptions*, ed. W. Cook (New Haven, 1919).

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the authority within a set of rules to alter one's ability to φ – this is an *immunity* in regard to φ-ing. Some rights, such as the right to property, are interpreted as a complex of claims and powers.

What the right to respect is (and what it entails)

The incident relevant to present purposes is that of a *claim*. One person has a claim on another – or a thing, such as a state – if and only if grounds exist that impose upon the latter a duty to the former to act in a particular way. The most natural interpretation of the putative right to respect is as the simple claim one person has on every other to be regarded with respect; such a right entails a duty to each to regard that person with respect. This interpretation illuminates the familiar talk of being owed or entitled to respect by showing that if a person is indeed owed such a thing, others have an obligation – a duty – to provide it. In light of this obligation, it seems that any lesser attitude in regard to a person *qua person*, even ones not manifestly pernicious, such as indifference and fondness, is impermissible.

This, therefore, is what the putative right to respect is supposed to be, and what it entails. One can challenge the existence of a specific right in several ways. One strategy is to consider the basis of rights in general and argue that such considerations preclude there being such a right (or, at least, indicate that no such right exists). Although I do not believe there is a right to respect, my reasons do not stem from a consideration of the ontological basis of rights. On the contrary, once one understands the supposed nature and source of the right to respect, such considerations, if one is at all sympathetic to there being rights of this kind, might lend credence to the claim that there is, specifically, a right to respect.

The basis of rights

Since it is presumed that each person has the duty to regard every person with respect and, in turn, is to be held in the same regard by all others, if there is a right to respect, the right is universal. It is universal in the sense that all human beings are to honour and enjoy it, regardless of status, abilities, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality or any other individuating characteristic. Rights universal in this sense are taken to be *human rights*.

Human rights are distinguished in their universality from those rights based on some particular legal status or arrangement, such as being an employee or ownership, and those special obligations that arise from certain relationships such as parenthood or friendship. There are two conceptions of human rights; one is legalistic and political, the other metaphysical. On the former conception, human rights are explicit legal or policy norms that are supposed to be

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applicable across the jurisdictions of particular states and, ideally, throughout the world. Human rights acquire their normative force via a process of international agreement by which states pledge to adopt domestic policies, legislative or otherwise, to establish and promote the rights (it is in this sense that they are political).

The best perspective on this conception is afforded by certain documents promulgated by the United Nations, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), published, following the Second World War, by the newly founded organization. This declaration asserts a panoply of rights to be enjoyed by all human beings, from the right to life to the right to periodic holidays with pay; it was intended to affirm the importance of the notion of human rights and to provide guidelines for promoting them. Whereas the UDHR was merely a declaration, it provided the basis for two treaties, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The ICCPR specifies which (civil and political) rights all humans are to have. The covenant garnered enough support among the nations of the world to go into effect in 1976[3] and serves as the legal basis – and thus, on this conception, the ontological basis – of many human rights. Given this conception of human rights, in order to assess the claim that there is a right to respect, one need only peruse the treaties that have the requisite international standing, ICCPR, for example, in order to determine if any such treaty includes this right. But one does not find the right to respect in the ICCPR, the ICESCR, the American Convention on Human Rights or in any other treaty.[4] Therefore, on the legalistic conception of human rights, it is clear that there is no right to respect.

In some jurisdictions, some rights are thought to be implicit in the codified law. An explicit right might be regarded as having a

[3] Incidentally, the United States ratified it, with a number of reservations, in 1992.

[4] In the ICCPR and in the American Convention on Human Rights, one does find the basis for the right of treatment 'with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person' (ICCPR, Article 10, 2; American Convention on Human Rights, Article 5, 2). But this right to respectful treatment is distinct from any putative right to respect (the former, it seems, would be grounded on the latter). Furthermore, this particular right is reserved for those who are 'deprived of their liberty' as a result of arrest or detention; hence, it lacks the universality that the putative right to respect is supposed to have. One also finds, in the American Convention on Human Rights, Article 4, 1, the assertion that 'Every person has the right to have his life respected.' To have one's life respected, however, is different from having one's self or one's nature as a person respected. These documents are reprinted in M. Ishay, *The Human Rights Reader* (London, 1997).

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'penumbra', formed by 'emanations' that help make it vital in society.[5] A genuine right might exist unarticulated in the penumbra of an explicit right. One might suggest, then, that the right to respect exists in the penumbra of some right included in, for example, the ICCPR or in the penumbra of all the rights articulated in the ICCPR taken collectively. Such a suggestion would be misguided. Even if a right to respect were explicitly enumerated in a treaty, such a right could not be the putative claim one person has on every other to be regarded with respect (with the correlative duty on all to regard one with respect). This putative right to respect is supposed to comprise relations and obligations between *individuals*. Treaties, however, do not establish such bonds. In general, treaties establish relations (and obligations) between *states*. Human rights treaties are significantly different in that they establish relations between states and individuals. States party to a human rights treaty typically commit themselves to respecting and ensuring, through domestic policies, those rights of individuals designated by the treaty. Therefore, a treaty could not establish the right to respect, at least on its most natural interpretation.

These weighty difficulties for the right to respect on the legalistic conception are hardly surprising; those who take seriously the notion of a right to respect seem to hold that this right is of a different order from any provided by a legal document or statute. They seem, then, to be employing a different understanding of the nature and basis of human rights (and, more generally, a right).

This different understanding is not unfamiliar in the context of a discussion of rights. On this alternative conception, the basis of human rights is not some legal document but is, rather, the very nature of human persons. In particular, it is the rational capacity of such beings – their ability to respond autonomously to reasons rather than merely being compelled by brute internal or external forces – that imposes certain obligations on them and endows them with corresponding claims. This conception of rights is intimately related to the notion of *natural law*, the idea that there is some inherent order in the world that can be discerned and should be recognized in the comportment of human beings, the interactions among them and in the laws that the legislative bodies they establish make. This order, then, underlies not only legitimate positive law, but also all of morality. Hence, it is from the very nature of humans qua rational beings that rights arise.

[5] The right to privacy in the United States is thought to be a right that exists in the penumbras of the specific guarantees in the Bill of Rights. The famous terminology, 'penumbras, formed by emanations', comes from Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas's opinion in *Griswold v. Connecticut* 381 U.S. 479 (1965).

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This natural or metaphysical conception of human rights has roots that can be traced back to antiquity, but it appears in a modern and somewhat familiar form in Locke. Locke believed that all human beings are equal in the natural order:

> there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection.[6]

He also believed that the rational capacity, by which the order that governs the world is discerned, 'teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions'.[7] The right to respect seems to be premised on such considerations of the metaphysical nature of the world and, more specifically, the equality of human persons.

This metaphysical conception has a claim of being the primary conception of human rights, for on the legalistic conception one will always be confronted by the residual question of which rights are legitimately promulgated by international treaties (and consequently respected and ensured by the policies of states). If all there is to creating a human right is to have the assertion that there is such a right be suitably recognized by the international community, questions about the justification and appropriateness of such rights will linger. Given the vagaries of politics, any asserted benefit might be elevated to a right by this process. The unwillingness of some countries to ratify the ICESCR, based in part on the reluctance to accept periodic paid vacations and other such economic or social rights as legitimate human rights, seems to indicate the presence of some deeper understanding of the notion of a right. The metaphysical conception provides such an understanding, one embedded in the natural order of the world, rather than the contingencies of modern industrial society.

Of course, this conception of rights is not free from difficulties; a number of metaphysical and epistemological concerns can be marshalled to challenge it. For example, it is not at all obvious how features of the natural world – or of human beings in particular – can, in themselves, impose obligations and endow claims. Nor is it clear by what means the natural order inherent in the world is discerned (mere perception does not seem to suffice) nor how it is known that the rational capacity of human beings is the morally relevant feature that gives rise to rights. Furthermore, there are the vexed questions of precisely which rights follow from the morally relevant features of human persons and

[6] J. Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government* (1690), §4.
[7] Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, §6.

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how to go about resolving disputes regarding conflicting rights human persons seem to have.

Without attending to these basic difficulties, I think the question of whether there is a right to respect can be answered with plausible definitiveness. I deny that there is a right to respect. The purpose of this section is to clarify the notion of a right to the extent that what is being denied is pellucid: I deny that there is a right, based on the nature of human persons (or the natural order inherent in the world), that provides each person with a claim on all others to be regarded with respect; consequently, I deny that each person is obligated to respect all others. Although I do not doubt that there are some rights that arise from the nature of human persons – however this comes to pass and however the presence of such rights is accessible to beings with our cognitive capacities – I think that an examination of the notion of respect itself provides sufficient grounds for thinking that there can be no right to respect.

ON RESPECT

The notion of respect warrants and receives a good deal of attention. This is because it is both a notion that, to many, has been familiar since childhood, when it was employed to induce appropriate attitudes or behaviour, and also one of great significance in the sophisticated moral theories of many philosophers, most notably Kant. The notion of respect, like that of a right, is multifarious; there are several different kinds of respect.

Respect in general

Despite the attention that the notion of respect traditionally receives, there are relatively few accounts of respect in general. One such account, which has proved to be influential,[8] is propounded by Carl Cranor.[9] The essence of Cranor's account is that respect is a complex relation between a person (the respector), some thing (the respected object), some feature of that thing in virtue of which it is respected, and some evaluative point of view from which the object is respected. The relation holds when (i) the respector believes the respected object bears a certain feature and that its having that feature is a good thing from some relevant evaluative point of view and, moreover, appreciates

[8] In so far as it grounds or informs the discussions in, for example, S. Darwall, 'Two Kinds of Respect', *Ethics*, 88 (1977), pp. 36–49; Frankena, 'Respect for Persons'; and R. Dillon, 'Respect and Care: Toward Moral Integration', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 22 (1992), pp. 105–32.

[9] In C. Cranor, 'Toward a Theory of Respect for Persons', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1975), pp. 309–19.

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why the respected object's having that feature is a good thing (from the relevant evaluative perspective) and (ii) the respector is disposed to act in ways appropriate to his appreciation of the particular nature of the respected object.

Different varieties of respect

Different, more specific, varieties of respect have been distinguished on the basis of the origin or role of the pertinent feature of the respected object. Thus, Stephen Hudson distinguishes between (i) *obstacle respect*, the sort of respect one has for things that might be harmful or prevent one from attaining one's objectives; (ii) *directive respect*, the sort of respect one has for things, such as commitments, requests, promises, rights, that serve to guide one's behaviour; (iii) *institutional respect*, the sort of respect one has for society or important societal practices and the representatives of each; and (iv) *evaluative respect*, the sort of respect one has for things that are deemed outstanding examples of their kind.[10] In addition to these four varieties, Robin Dillon proposes a fifth: (v) *care respect*, the sort of respect one has for things that one deems to have unique value and thus require protection and nurturing.[11]

The primary distinction: appraisal and recognition respect

In light of these varieties of respect, one can discern a primary distinction, namely, the distinction between a sort of respect that *consists in appraising a thing as an excellent or otherwise remarkable example of its kind* and a sort of respect that lacks this relative estimation and instead *consists simply in a disposition to include the recognition of some feature of a thing in one's deliberations and to act accordingly*. This crucial distinction was proposed by Stephen Darwall; he called the former sort of respect, the one requiring an estimation of the respected object relative to other things of its kind, *appraisal respect* and the latter, *recognition respect*.[12] Of the varieties of respect enumerated above, (iv) provides an example of appraisal respect and (i), (ii), (iii) and (v) are examples of recognition respect.

Regardless of whether the right to respect supposedly enjoyed and owed to all persons is construed as a right to one of the specific varieties of respect enumerated above, it is clear that if there is such a right, it is a right to some variety of recognition respect. This is because respect is thought to be owed to each person regardless of any distinctive feature

[10] In S. Hudson, 'The Nature of Respect', *Social Theory and Practice* 6 (1980), pp. 69–90.

[11] In Dillon, 'Respect and Care'.

[12] See Darwall, 'Two Kinds'.

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of that person and, in particular, whether that person is outstanding in any way. One is supposed to regard someone with respect merely because he or she is a human person and one is supposed to include the recognition of his or her humanity in the deliberations leading to any course of action that might affect that person (or might reasonably be expected to affect that person).

This, therefore, is the relevant notion of respect that must be borne in mind when evaluating the claim that each person enjoys a right to respect.

WHY THERE IS NO RIGHT TO RESPECT

In this context, the relevant notion of respect is a variety of recognition respect. Hence, if there is a right to respect, each person is entitled to have some feature of himself or herself recognized, in an appropriate way, in the deliberations of other agents. The nature of respect in general, as discussed in the preceding section, provides some insight into what constitutes appropriate recognition. In so far as one's attitude is respect – rather than, for example, fear or prudence – to recognize appropriately some feature of a person, one cannot merely believe that a person bears that feature and act in a way that takes that feature into account; rather, one must believe that his or her having that feature is a good thing (from some evaluative point of view) and, moreover, appreciate why the respected person's having that feature is a good thing. The appropriate recognition that is essential to recognition respect seems to require that this evaluative judgement and consequent appreciation inform the respector's deliberations.

Since the operative notion of a right, in regard to the right to respect, is the metaphysical one – not the legalistic one – the right is supposed to arise from and to be owed to each person merely in virtue of his or her nature as a human being. Thus, the feature to which each is entitled appropriate recognition must be some feature intimately connected, if not essential, to humanity itself. I suggest that this feature is the rationality inherent in each human person. Rationality is the capacity a person has in virtue of which he can be motivated by reasons, rather than solely by appetitive drives; it is the capacity that enables one to adopt and rank goals and devise projects, more or less sophisticated, to obtain them.

This suggestion that it is rationality that is the feature of humans that demands appropriate recognition if the right to respect is to be observed is plausible and is consonant with the thought of those who presume that there is such a right. But exactly which feature of persons must be recognized is actually beside the point for the purposes of the present discussion. I assume rationality is the relevant feature simply

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for the sake of argument against the right to respect, in order to provide it with sufficiently specific focus. The argument is not based on the criticism that those who suppose that there is a right to respect are mistaken about the feature of a person that is supposed to be the basis of this right, rather the argument is based on the requirements that the attitude of respect imposes – whatever the grounds of respect happen to be – and the limitations of human agency.

The obligations of respect

If there is a right to respect, each person has a duty to respect each human being. One is thereby obligated to do what such a duty conceptually and practically entails. Therefore, given what respect is, the existence of a right to respect imposes at least three related types of obligation on all agents: (i) to believe that some feature of a person is a good thing (from some evaluative perspective); (ii) to appreciate why the respected person's having that feature is a good thing; and (iii) to include that appreciation in one's deliberations, that is, to use that appreciation as guide and motivation for one's subsequent actions. Assuming that rationality is the relevant feature, each agent is obligated to believe that a human person is rational, to believe that being rational is a good thing, to appreciate why being rational is a good thing, and to include this appreciation of the rationality of a person in one's deliberations with respect to those actions that might affect that person.

The essential cognitive nature of respect (and its obligations)

Clearly, then, respect is an essentially cognitive phenomenon. This claim is explicit in the discussion of those who have considered the notion of respect in general and is borne out by the more specific considerations of the putative right to respect above. To discharge the obligations imposed by a right to respect, one must have several specific beliefs regarding a particular human person (or human persons in general). One must have the crucial belief that the person is rational. One must believe that being rational is, in some sense, a good thing. To the extent that genuine appreciation of the goodness of rationality is impossible in the absence of certain beliefs, such as that rationality is, in some sense, a worthy or significant thing and that being rational distinguishes humans from things such as furniture, the obligation to appreciate rationality requires additional beliefs. Furthermore, as one is obligated to include this appreciation of rationality in one's deliberations, one must include these beliefs in one's deliberations; perhaps, as a matter of practical necessity, additional beliefs as to why this inclusion is morally requisite are needed.

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Thus, if one did not believe a person were rational or believed he were rational, but did not believe that rationality is somehow good or if one did not have the beliefs necessary genuinely to appreciate rationality, then one could not respect a person in virtue of his or her rationality. The failure to have these beliefs is something, if there is a right to respect, for which one is morally culpable. The variety of recognition respect required by the putative right to respect, therefore, places many doxastic obligations on the respector. Since each person is to respect all others, these *doxastic obligations are placed on each and every human person*.

The argument against the putative right

Perhaps, by this point, one is able to anticipate the argument against the putative right to respect. It rests on the venerable principle that *ought implies can*, the principle that an obligation to perform some action necessitates, in either a conceptual or metaphysical sense, the capability to do so. Hence, if one lacks the capability to perform some action, this either indicates the conceptual incoherence of the claim that one ought to perform that action or, more simply, demonstrates that one cannot be obligated to do so.

Given the pertinent notion of a right, a right to respect would impose on one the obligation to respect each person. As noted above, in order to respect something, one must have specific beliefs about that thing – if one is to respect a person in virtue of his rationality,[13] one must believe he is rational and believe that rationality is in some way a good thing, etc. It seems obvious, however, that a human agent does not have the capability to choose his beliefs. If one does not believe that a certain person is Austrian, nor that being Austrian is, from some perspective, a good thing, then one cannot just choose to have these beliefs. Similarly, if one does not believe that a certain person is rational – nor that human persons, in general, are – nor that rationality is a good thing, one has not the capability simply to do so.

In so far as respect necessitates certain beliefs, and in so far as the presence of a right obligates an agent to do whatever that right conceptually or practically entails, a right to respect would obligate one to have certain beliefs. But if one does not have the capability to choose one's beliefs, then, given the principle that ought implies can, one cannot be obligated to have any particular belief. There can, therefore, be no right to respect.

Nota bene: even if, contrary to fact, everyone had the beliefs needed to respect all others, there still could not be a right to respect. An action

[13] Again, the specific feature in virtue of which a human person warrants respect is irrelevant to this argument.

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or relation can be regarded as obligatory only if it can legitimately be required both in those situations in which it happens to be present and also in those situations in which, for whatever reason, it does not. Since anyone might lack the beliefs needed to respect all others (or lose them if one now has them), given the doxastic limitations of human agents, having the beliefs cannot be obligatory. The problem for the putative right to respect is not merely the practical one of imposing obligations on an agent to acquire or maintain the beliefs requisite for respect, where these obligations might go unmet because of the limitations of human agency. Rather, the real problem for the putative right is the conceptual one of necessitating obligations to do things beyond the capabilities of a human agent – regardless of whether or not anyone actually finds himself in the position of having to do something he cannot do. Hence, since a right to respect would impose on each person essential doxastic obligations, then, because human agents are severely limited in the control they have over their beliefs, there can be no right to respect.[14]

ATTEMPTS TO DEFEND THE RIGHT TO RESPECT

The conclusion that there is no right to respect is somewhat radical, for it challenges much traditional moral philosophy and perhaps even common wisdom. It is to be expected, then, that the conclusion and the argument on which it is based will be vigorously challenged.

It does not seem feasible to challenge the argument by dispensing with the account of respect on which it is premised; this account, prevalent in the literature, is independently plausible and seems to capture very well our intuitive and reflective understanding of the notion. If this is so, the strategies for challenging the argument are scarce. They seem limited to arguing that: (i) one can be obligated to do something that is beyond one's capabilities; (ii) one does indeed have the capability to choose one's beliefs; or (iii) even if one does not have the capability to control one's beliefs completely, one has enough control to meet the obligations imposed by the right to respect.

Rejection of the venerable principle, ought implies can

If one attempts to defend the putative right to respect by insisting that one is indeed obligated to do something that is beyond one's

[14] Respect also requires appreciation, specifically an appreciation of why the respected object's having the feature that warrants respect is a good thing. To the extent that appreciation is an affective phenomenon, if one does not have the capability to choose one's emotions, then one cannot be obligated to appreciate. Since the right to respect would impose an obligation to appreciate as much as it would impose an obligation to have specific beliefs, this line of thought provides additional reason for thinking that there is no such right.

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capabilities – to wit, simply adopt beliefs that one might not have – then one must reject the principle that ought implies can.

The normative notion of *ought* is relative to some set of standards; since there are different kinds of standards, there are different senses of ought.[15] On some of these, it might be plausible to reject the principle that ought implies can. Given the norms of prudence, a person in a capsized boat ought to hold his breath until he is no longer under water; this seems to be so, even if he cannot hold his breath that long. Similarly, given the (somewhat odious) norms of high fashion, a person ought to have a lithe physique; this is perhaps so, given these norms, even if one's natural features make this impossible. However, the standards relevant to the obligations imposed by the putative right to respect are clearly the norms of morality.

Considering these norms, it does not seem at all plausible to think that one can be morally obligated to do something that it is simply beyond one to do. Presumably, one has an obligation to help those in need. But in those extraordinary cases in which the only means of doing so are beyond one's capabilities – e.g. quelling an inferno, turning back a tsunami, preventing a disabled airplane from crashing to the ground – it seems one has no obligation to act; the duty, in such cases, has disappeared. Thus, in particular cases, incapacity seems to subvert obligation. Moreover, incapacity seems to stultify obligation when considering general moral norms: one has perhaps an obligation to feed someone who is starving, but one certainly does not have the obligation to feed every starving person in the world. It is impossible for one to do so, and this is the best explanation for why the notion of obligation seems misapplied here.

These examples serve to illustrate both the principle itself and its usefulness in explaining certain moral intuitions. These intuitions are widespread, for many philosophers simply take the principle for granted. Kant is an example of one.[16] However, like any other philosophical principle, the principle that ought implies can has also

[15] Walter Sinnott-Armstrong denies that *ought* has different senses, but this seems mistaken for the reasons given in the text. See W. Sinnott-Armstrong, '"Ought" Conversationally Implies "Can"', *The Philosophical Review* 93 (1984), pp. 249–61, at 254.

[16] Kant relies on the principle at many points in the development of his moral views; see, for example, I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy* (New York, 1956), pp. 190, 218. Another example is I. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (London, 1930), p. 192, where he writes: 'Love is good-will from inclination. Now whatever depends upon my inclination and not upon my will cannot be laid upon me as a duty. I certainly cannot love at will, but only when I have an impulse to love.' In so far as Kant would have said something similar about belief (one cannot believe at will, but only when one is led to believe or is impelled by the world to believe), the central argument of the present article shows that if the right to respect is a tenet of Kant's moral theory, the theory appears to be internally inconsistent. (For a discussion of the uses to which Kant

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been rejected. John Martin Fischer rejects it on the basis of 'Frankfurt-type' cases,[17] in which it seems an agent is responsible for an action although no alternative course of action is possible. Fischer argues that since in some Frankfurt-type cases one finds the agent blameworthy for his action, one must reject that ought implies can for there is a violation of duty despite the incapacity to perform that duty (because the alternative action required to do so is not possible).[18] Walter Sinnott-Armstrong rejects the principle in light of cases involving promises.[19] For example, one person promises to meet another at time, *t*, but then purposely does something that puts him too far away to meet at *t* (in other words, he purposely does something that makes fulfilling his promise impossible). In this case, Sinnott-Armstrong contends that the former still has the obligation to meet at *t* – despite the impossibility of doing so – and thus concludes that ought does not imply can.[20]

I do not find the considerations adduced by either Fischer or Sinnott-Armstrong against the principle to be compelling. In both cases the reasons for rejecting the principle seem tenuous and much more controversial than the principle itself. With respect to Fischer, it is hard to determine what exactly Frankfurt-type cases demonstrate. Discussion of Frankfurt's cases has generated a large and subtle literature that raises many perplexing questions, which, unfortunately, I have not the space here to consider in any detail. I can say, however, that it does seem unpromising to rely on contentious discussion of such intricate and sophisticated cases to repudiate a basic and intuitively compelling moral principle. Similarly, with respect to Sinnott-Armstrong, it seems just as plausible to assess his cases in

puts the principle that ought implies can, see J. Silber, 'Kant's Conception of the Highest Good as Immanent and Transcendent', *The Philosophical Review* 68 (1959), pp. 469–92.)

[17] So called because they are introduced and discussed in the famous paper, H. Frankfurt, 'Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility', *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969), pp. 829–39.

[18] See J. M. Fischer, 'Recent Work on Moral Responsibility', *Ethics* 110 (1999), pp. 93–139, at 124. Fischer is responding to arguments in D. Widerker, 'Frankfurt on "Ought Implies Can" and Alternative Possibilities', *Analysis* 51 (1991), pp. 222–4; I. Haji, 'Alternative Possibilities, Moral Obligation, and Moral Responsibility', *Philosophical Papers* 22 (1993), pp. 41–50; and D. Copp, 'Defending the Principle of Alternate Possibilities: Blameworthiness and Moral Responsibility', *Noûs* 31 (1997), pp. 441–56. Copp, for one, explicitly accepts the principle that ought implies can (which he dubs 'the Maxim') and uses it in an attempt to undermine conclusions drawn by some in light of Frankfurt-type cases.

[19] See Sinnott-Armstrong '"Ought" Conversationally Implies "Can"'. As the title of his paper suggests, Sinnott-Armstrong accepts that ought conversationally implies can; what he denies, for the reasons sketched in the text, is that ought entails can. Thus, he rejects the principle as I and others construe it.

[20] John Kekes also rejects the principle that ought implies can in J. Kekes, '"Ought Implies Can" and Two Kinds of Morality', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1984), pp. 459–67. His argument against it, though, seems rather hasty.

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the following way: the person who puts himself too far away to fulfil his promise to meet at t does *not* have, at t, an obligation to meet (at t), though at some point he might have had this obligation. The undeniable sense of wrongdoing in the case can be attributed not to the shirking of an impossible duty at t, but to the actions that purposely destroyed an obligation by rendering it impossible. The principle that ought implies can seems to me to be deeply intuitive, with a basic role in any familiar account of obligation. Although the principle has been disputed and even rejected, the reasons given for doing so seem much less secure than the principle itself. Hence, I find unpromising the strategy of defending the putative right to respect by rejecting this principle.

One might suggest that the principle of ought implies can should be retained, but weakened, in that the capacity to perform one's duty need not be present at the moment of obligation – if there are things one can do subsequent to that moment to acquire that capacity. If this is so, one might indeed have an obligation at a particular moment, m, despite lacking the capacity to discharge that obligation *at* m. Hence, one might argue, employing this weakened principle, that it might be true that one is obligated to respect (all persons) although one lacks the beliefs requisite to do so, because there are actions that one can undertake to acquire the relevant beliefs.

As a principle used to determine whether it could be true (or otherwise apt) to assign a duty to an agent in a particular circumstance, however, ought implies can need be rather precise; it must be applied to an agent in a particular circumstance, at a particular moment. If an agent lacks the capacity to perform – in that circumstance, at that moment – a putative duty, then (according to the principle) the agent lacks that duty. Thus, if an agent, A, lacks the beliefs requisite for respect in c (at m), A is incapable of respect in c (at m) and so does not – could not – have the duty to do so. This is true, and thus sufficient to show that that there is not a right to respect, even if it is the case that there are things A can do subsequent to c (m) to acquire the beliefs needed to respect all persons. (Of course, this ignores the concern, discussed below in the context of weakened versions of doxastic voluntarism, that there is no guarantee that A can indeed acquire the necessary beliefs.) Until A has those beliefs, he is incapable of respect and, hence, at each of those moments lacking the obligation to respect. This is incompatible with there being a right to respect that each person enjoys vis-à-vis all others, for this would require in each circumstance (at each moment) the obligation to respect.

Therefore, it seems that the capacity to perform one's duty relevant to the principle of ought implies can need be present at the moment of obligation. To deny this, to weaken the principle by considering a

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notion of capacity that spreads across time – including entirely different abilities acquired by various processes – would be to reject the principle all together.

Doxastic voluntarism

In light of the foregoing, one who maintains that there is a right to respect might concede that ought implies can – that an agent has, then, no obligations that exceed his capabilities – and yet insist that this is compatible with the putative right. For although the right imposes an obligation to have certain beliefs that one might very well lack, it is not beyond the capabilities of a human agent to adopt and reject beliefs at will. Hence, if one does not have the beliefs requisite for respect, one is simply obligated to adopt these beliefs.

This view of a human agent's capacities with respect to his or her beliefs is known as *doxastic voluntarism*. On doxastic voluntarism, one's control over one's beliefs is not significantly different from one's control over one's limbs in basic bodily movement. The view has received a good deal of attention in the history of philosophy because of its relevance to faith and religious belief. Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes and Kierkegaard have defended the view (though these philosophers thought that one's capacity simply to adopt or reject a belief was limited to those beliefs that do not appear clearly true or false to the agent).[21]

Interest in the view has recently been revived in a wider circle because of its apparent pertinence to the *deontological conception of justification*. On this conception, *requirement*, *obligation*, *blameworthiness* and other normative notions[22] are deemed crucial to a proper understanding of epistemological justification. Thus, one might try to develop a theory of knowledge by proposing that one is *required* to believe a proposition, p, when presented with compelling evidence for p or that one is *obligated* to believe in accordance to one's evidence; similarly, one might be regarded as *blameworthy* when one shirks such epistemic duties and believes a proposition without adequate evidence. Consequently, one can characterize a belief as justified when it arises while one is adhering to one's epistemic *duties*.

Critics of this conception of justification have argued against it on the grounds that deontological notions are appropriately applied only to behaviour that is under one's control: one cannot be obligated to

[21] I rely on William Alston's discussion of doxastic voluntarism for this historical background. See W. Alston, 'The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification', *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988), pp. 257–99, at 119. He cites in this connection L. Pojman, *Religious Belief and the Will* (London, 1986).

[22] Such as *prohibition*, *permission*, *reproach*, *responsibility*, *praiseworthiness*, *being in the clear* and *merit*. The list comes from Alston, 'Epistemic Justification', p. 115.

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do something beyond one's control, for this might obligate one to do something of which one is incapable.[23] Since such critics present compelling reasons for thinking that one's doxastic behaviour is not under one's control in the way that, for example, the movement of one's limbs is in typical bodily behaviour, they believe deontological notions are inapposite in this context. They conclude, therefore, that the deontological conception of justification is misguided.

Defenders of this way of understanding justification have countered that one's beliefs are, to a significant extent, under one's control, that is, they adopt some version of doxastic voluntarism. Carl Ginet and Matthias Steup have been led in this way to espouse doxastic voluntarism. Although William Alston and Richard Feldman reject the view, both concede that in certain cases one does indeed have control over one's beliefs.[24] What is important for present purposes is to determine whether the versions of doxastic voluntarism endorsed by Ginet and Steup or the limited control over one's beliefs acknowledged by Alston and Feldman are sufficient to ground the right to respect. If there is a right to respect, then one must have enough control over one's beliefs to be capable of adopting – by some act of will – those beliefs requisite for respect.

Alston regards it as incontrovertible that one lacks what he calls *basic control* over one's beliefs: one cannot simply believe or disbelieve a proposition at will. One also lacks basic control over such things as one's weight, blood pressure and disposition. But just as one has the capability to control, for example, one's weight, by performing some action (or set of actions) routinely over time, Alston suggests that one is similarly capable of controlling at least some of one's beliefs. Alston dubs this capability *long-range control* and suggests that by employing certain devices such as 'selective exposure to evidence, selective attention to supporting considerations, seeking the company of believers and avoiding nonbelievers, self-suggestion, and more bizarre methods like hypnotism',[25] one might be capable of getting oneself to believe some proposition that one now does not. Yet, as Alston himself notes, it is just as likely (if not more so) that one does not acquire the belief by such measures. Even if such control were perfectly reliable, it seems clearly false that one is obligated to adopt such measures in

[23] The basis of this critique is clearly the principle that ought implies can. Alston adopts the principle at Alston, 'Epistemic Justification', p. 118.

[24] See Alston 'Epistemic Justification' and R. Feldman, 'Voluntary Belief and Epistemic Evaluation', *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility and Virtue*, ed. M. Steup (New York, 2001), pp. 77–92. Incidentally, Feldman presents a persuasive argument that demonstrates that one can consistently adopt the deontological conception of justification and reject doxastic voluntarism.

[25] Alston 'Epistemic Justification', p. 134.

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order to ensure that one has the beliefs about human persons and value requisite for respect.[26]

Feldman maintains that there is a class of beliefs over which one has perfectly reliable control. Given that one's beliefs about one's immediate surroundings are very closely related to the ways those surroundings in fact are and, furthermore, given that one has strict control over many features of one's surroundings, it follows that one has control over the large class of beliefs that reflect one's surroundings. For example, my beliefs about the arrangement of objects on my desk mirror the actual arrangement of objects. I do not now believe that my dictionary is to my right. This, however, is a belief I can easily acquire if I am obligated to do so – I need only move the dictionary from one side of my desk to the other. Control of this sort is possible only because one has the power to perform certain actions whose consequences have an immediate effect on one's beliefs. So if this sort of control provides one with the capability to discharge the doxastic obligations imposed by the putative right to respect, one must be able to perform certain actions that immediately result in the beliefs that persons are rational, that rationality is somehow good, as well as any other beliefs needed genuinely to appreciate rationality. Unfortunately, it is obvious that there are no such actions. Therefore, neither this sort of control nor the long-range voluntary control suggested by Alston is sufficient to ground the right to respect.

As mentioned above, both Ginet and Steup endorse doxastic voluntarism. Ginet's position is based on a number of cases that he believes plausibly show that an agent can simply decide to believe a certain proposition.[27] Ginet thinks that deciding to believe a proposition, p, is just deciding to act in such a way that one counts on its being the case that p, that is, that one acts without considering or preparing oneself for the falsity of p. Thus, he thinks that when deliberating whether to believe that one's opponent is bluffing, one can decide to believe this by deciding to meet the raise. Similarly, when deliberating whether to believe that one has locked the front door after leaving one's home far behind, one decides to believe this by deciding to continue one's journey. Crucial to recognizing, in circumstances such as these, that one has decided to believe a proposition is the surprise one would feel were that proposition to turn out to be false. Ginet's idea is that if one is not surprised upon discovering that the proposition is in fact false, then one did not really believe it; thus (the expectation

[26] This attenuated notion of control is considered again, in greater detail and from a slightly different perspective, in the section below.

[27] C. Ginet, 'Deciding to Believe', *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility and Virtue*, ed. M. Steup (New York, 2001), pp. 63–76, at 65.

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of) surprise at finding not-p is supposed to be an indication of the acceptance of p required by belief.

According to Ginet, in some circumstances, by coming to a decision on how to act, one decides to believe something. However, in the cases that he considers, there seems to be no reason to think that one is deciding to believe – and thereby acquiring a belief – rather than merely *acting as if* one had the relevant belief although one in fact lacks it. Acting as if one had a certain belief is a familiar phenomenon to anyone who has ever been tactful or put on a brave face. Given the implausibility of being able to decide to believe a great many, if not most, propositions, for example, one about the whereabouts of a friend to whom one has not spoken in years or the winner of next year's World Series or the number of grains of sand on Ajman beach, there seems to be little reason to think that one has this ability in the contrived cases that Ginet discusses. Moreover, it is easy, with the former examples, to describe how one could act as if one believed the relevant proposition (in the absence of such belief). It is possible, therefore, to account cogently for the cases presented by Ginet without recourse to the controversial position he is endorsing. As for the possible surprise at the falsity of a proposition, p, that Ginet takes to be indicative of belief of p, some surprise is entirely compatible with discovering the truth-value of a proposition on which one has suspended judgement. In light of these considerations, the sort of doxastic voluntarism proposed by Ginet is dubious.

Whereas Ginet accepts that belief is (to some extent) voluntary because one can simply decide to believe a proposition, Steup accepts that belief is voluntary because he thinks that at least some beliefs are acquired as a result of a deliberative process and that issuing from such a process is *ipso facto* voluntary.[28] According to Steup, in some cases, one deliberates about whether to believe a proposition, p, by weighing the evidence one has for and against it, and then makes a decision to believe p (or not-p). The resulting belief is supposed to be voluntary in just the way an action that results from an analogous deliberative process weighing possible actions is. Were one capable of deciding to believe – and thereby choosing one's beliefs – in light of one's deliberations, then such beliefs would clearly be voluntary. But whether one can actually choose to believe p is precisely the bone of contention.

To illustrate his position, Steup presents a case that is similar to those discussed by Ginet: one in which a person considers, in light of the available evidence, whether to believe that a particular

[28] See M. Steup, 'Doxastic Voluntarism and Epistemic Deontology', *Acta Analytica* 15 (2000), pp. 25–56.

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suspect committed a crime. Steup thinks the person can indeed actively decide and thus choose to believe that the man committed the crime. Assuming, however, that the person does come to have this belief subsequent to deliberation, it seems much more plausible to regard the situation as one in which he comes to a conclusion regarding guilt – and thereby *passively finds himself with a new belief* regarding the guilt of the suspect – rather than one in which he *chooses his belief*.

Certainly with respect to some propositions that one does not believe despite having evidence for them, it is clear that one cannot just choose to believe them. At least in my own case, this inability does not seem to be based on any general features of the propositions or the nature of my evidence for them. It seems, rather, to indicate a categorical cognitive limitation. If one lacks the ability to believe at will – in but one clear case – a proposition for which one has some evidence, this is strong reason for thinking there is no such ability. Thus, in so far as there is a plausible alternative account of the acquisition of the belief in the case presented by Steup, one, like that provided above, that does not require the supposition of voluntary doxastic action in light of deliberation, such an account is to be preferred.[29]

The existence of a right to respect would obligate each person to have certain beliefs that he or she might very well lack. If one were to lack the requisite beliefs, then, in order to discharge this obligation, one must be able to acquire the beliefs at will. Were doxastic voluntarism true, human persons would have the necessary control over their beliefs. But it seems quite obvious that one cannot simply decide to believe a proposition and thereby come to have this belief. Even granting the version of doxastic voluntarism that some figures have historically found attractive, namely, that one has control over one's belief in propositions that are not clearly true or false, the putative right to respect is still untenable. For the beliefs needed to respect a person (or persons in general) might indeed seem clearly false to one; under such circumstances a person would be saddled with an impossible obligation.

Furthermore, neither the defence of doxastic voluntarism proposed by Ginet nor the one proposed by Steup provides convincing reason for thinking that one has the ability to acquire or maintain beliefs at will. The sort of cases considered by both to illustrate it can be accounted for without positing such a peculiar ability, in terms of (i) the very familiar experience of acting as if one believed the world to be a certain way or (ii) simply finding oneself with a certain new belief. In conclusion, doxastic

[29] Richard Feldman criticizes Steup's doxastic voluntarism on the grounds that forming an intention is essential to a voluntary action and that one does not, except in rare and rather artificial circumstances, form intentions to believe. See Feldman, 'Voluntary Belief and Epistemic Evaluation', p. 85.

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voluntarism is quite at odds with one's commonplace experience as believer and agent; as such, it is implausible[30] and, hence, the strategy to defend the putative right to respect by adopting the view is idle.

Obligation via indirect control

A proponent of the right to respect might concede the essential point of the preceding discussion – that human persons lack sufficient doxastic control simply to choose to acquire specific beliefs – and maintain that one can nevertheless be obligated to respect all others. This is because although a person does not have *complete* or *direct control* over his or her beliefs, he nevertheless has enough *indirect control* to make the notion of obligation applicable to belief and, consequently, to respect. The proponent might argue that, like controlling one's weight or overall disposition, one can control one's beliefs by a series of concerted intentional actions.[31] One can discharge the doxastic obligations associated with the right to respect by undertaking these actions. Thus, by choosing situations that thwart beliefs inimical to respect for persons and by pursuing courses of action that lead to the acquisition of the beliefs needed to respect all others, one can enable oneself to perform the doxastic duties imposed by the right to respect. Given this sort of control, the difficulties for such a right are undermined, for any person who lacks the requisite beliefs to discharge the duty of respect is obligated to undertake this voluntary effort.

There is, however, an insuperable problem with this sort of defence of the putative right to respect. If there is any indirect control over one's beliefs, it is flimsy at best and without the control being stringent, the crucial problem for the putative right is still present. One can put oneself in certain situations or undertake actions with the *hope* of acquiring a specific belief. However, the outcome of such efforts can hardly be foreseen. One might acquire the belief; one might not. Given the whimsy of the world and the complexities of psychology, one's effort to put oneself in a situation that eliminates beliefs that forestall respect for all persons might very well have adverse consequences that reinforce the inimical beliefs, or add others. Thus, with indirect control, success certainly cannot be taken for granted.

Furthermore, the tenuousness of indirect control seems unavoidable, a necessary feature of the doxastic capacities of human persons.

[30] Cf. 'We have already noted that most of our beliefs spring from doxastic tendencies that are too deeply rooted to permit of modification by deliberate effort. Most of the matters on which we form beliefs are such that the project of deliberately producing belief or disbelief is one that is never seriously envisaged, just because it is too obvious that there is no chance of success.' Alston, 'Epistemic Justification', p. 136.

[31] As noted above, Alston calls such control *long-range control*. See Alston 'Epistemic Justification', p. 134.

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Consider: if one assumes that the degree of indirect control persons have over their beliefs is greater and, hence, that one can undertake the effort to acquire a certain belief with *knowledge* or *confident expectation* of success (rather than mere hope) the operative notion of belief is vitiated. For it is not feasible to think that one could really believe a proposition representing a standing recondite feature of the world – such as that human persons have little value – if one *knew* that there were means easily to rid oneself of that belief. Similarly, if one *knew* that one could acquire a particular belief about some standing recondite feature of the world simply by performing certain actions, then it seems that one does (or should) already have the belief in question. Thus, one does not – and could not – have significant indirect control over what one believes.

Given the inefficacy of indirect control over one's beliefs, the crucial problem for the right to respect remains: since anyone might lack or lose the requisite beliefs to respect all others, were there a right to respect, it would impose on human agents obligations that are impossible to meet, namely the obligations to acquire or maintain a specific set of beliefs. Thus, such a right is incompatible with the very notion of obligation.

THE UPSHOT

In the previous section, I canvassed the three most obvious sorts of response to the argument against the putative right to respect. I considered strategies based on rejecting the principle that ought implies can, on doxastic voluntarism, and on the claim that human persons have sufficient indirect control over their beliefs for the notion of obligation to be applied legitimately, and I determined that each strategy is futile. One might suggest that a consideration of *moral luck* – the issue of whether or how one can be held responsible for something outside of one's control – might provide the basis of another sort of strategy to undermine the argument. I think, however, this suggestion is incorrect.[32] Therefore, in light of the argument and the preceding considerations, I conclude that there is no right to respect.

[32] When I presented this article as a paper at conferences and in more informal settings, some raised the issue of *moral luck*, and seemed to think that consideration of this issue casts doubt on the basic argument against the right to respect. I must admit that I am unable to see the connection between this rich and perplexing issue and the particular argument that is the basis of this article. Crucial to this argument is the notion of control. It is because human persons do not have adequate control over their beliefs that they cannot be legitimately obligated to respect. The problematic, therefore, pertains to the connection between (lack of) control and obligation. Although the notion of control is certainly relevant to the issue of moral luck, the ethical implications of moral luck are best understood in terms of responsibility and moral assessment. The problematic here pertains to the connection between (lack of) control and responsibility. It is, perhaps, the case that one can be held responsible (and praised or blamed) for something beyond one's

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It seems to me that this conclusion is of the greatest importance to understanding the nature of our most basic obligations to one another. One might attempt to dismiss its significance by maintaining that the right to respect is itself unimportant, that what is essential to morality is not the putative right to respect, but rather the right to respectful treatment.[33] This reaction, though, is not apt. An agent cannot treat someone or something with respect, unless that agent is motivated by the particular beliefs and values requisite for respect and, thus, genuinely respects that person or thing. In other words, respectful treatment requires respect. If there is no right to respect, there is no right to respectful treatment and for precisely the same reasons. Perhaps one who urges a right to respectful treatment is insisting only that each human being has a right to be treated decently or well. But then such a right has nothing to do with respect.

The upshot of this, I believe, is that the attitude of respect plays no foundational role in morality – it might play no role whatsoever. To the extent that human persons ought to be treated in certain ways because of the singular valuable type of thing they are, the reasons for this treatment are not, in some sense, subjective or internal, based on one's representations or appreciation of this value. Rather, the reasons rest ultimately on objective or external features of the world, to wit, the nature of persons in themselves. These claims, however, must be elaborated and defended elsewhere.[34]

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control. However, the question of whether one is or is not responsible for the beliefs (or lack thereof) that prevent one from respecting all others is not pertinent to the argument against the right to respect. Regardless of how this question is answered, the problem remains: the putative right to respect would impose obligations beyond one's control. One might be responsible for something beyond one's control, but I cannot see how one can be obligated to do something beyond one's control. Thus, what eludes me, when the issue of moral luck is broached in this context, is a relevant connection between *obligation* and *being held responsible*.

[33] Sarah Buss observes that: '[i]n the philosophical literature on political and moral obligation it is a commonplace that people have a right to be treated with respect'. She then goes on to note that the distinctions between the attitude of respect, the belief that persons deserve to be treated with respect, and the mode(s) of treatment required by this attitude or belief are not always recognized. See Buss 'Respect for Persons', pp. 518–19.

[34] I would like to express my deep gratitude to Kevin Baumert, Anthony Brueckner and Mark Murphy for insightful and very helpful comments on an early draft of this article, and to Robin Dillon for discussion at the outset of the project. I would also like to thank Robert Audi, Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, John Martin Fischer, Margaret Gilbert and Frank Henderson Stewart for their interest in this article and stimulating conversations pertaining to it and related topics.

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