

GRZEGORZ HOŁUB<sup>1</sup>

## Human dignity, speciesism, and the value of life

### Summary

This paper deals with a discussion concerning the value of life. Specifically, it addresses the idea of speciesism, a term coined by Peter Singer, whereby human life is endowed with special significance because of its membership in the species *Homo sapiens*. For Singer, it is an example of erroneous thinking. On such an account, the idea of human dignity seems to be highly problematic. In this article, the author directs a number of critical voices, both methodological and ontological, toward scepticism concerning a species belonging. He argues that natural species play quite important roles in the existing reality. The author further tries to prove that the realm of life should be associated with a so-called intrinsic value. In the light of that, any living entity possesses its axiological importance and should be considered and treated accordingly. Human dignity is a corollary of the special place accorded in such reasoning by the value of human life. The article concludes with a thesis that the stance arguing for human dignity is still unthreatened and ready for further development.

**Key words:** human dignity, speciesism, value of life, naturalism, personalism

### 1. Introduction

Thinking in terms of human dignity seems to be an indispensable part of Western culture. The concept of dignity appears in preambles of constitutions, important documents, and declarations; it is also

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Philosophy, The Pontifical University of John Paul II, ul. Kanoniczna 9/203, 31-002 Cracow; grzegorz.holub@upjp2.edu.pl

widely used in political and ethical discourses. One of the reasons for this is that human dignity as such caters to our intuition of the special position of human beings in the world<sup>2</sup>. It seems that the only problems with it have to do with a better understanding of the notion and its practical application. However, the context where dignity plays its role and is subsequently considered and advanced is much more complex. Besides being invoked and dealt with theoretically and practically by some philosophers, human dignity is also played down and even rejected by others.

In this paper, we intend to concentrate on the latter tendency, and particularly on questioning the rationale of human dignity called speciesism. It was coined by Peter Singer in the course of his attempt to define animal life and is used as a basis for determining ensuing rights. He questioned the special status of human being in the world calling it unfounded, and, although not using the term “dignity” Singer refuted any special value ascribed to human beings. In this article, we are going to look critically at Singer’s proposal – later also undertaken by other philosophers – and assess how coherent and credible it is. Then, we will try to establish whether the speciesism makes narration about human dignity impossible. For Singer and philosophers sympathetic with his thinking, the term “speciesism” conveys a fallacious attitude and the speciesism project aims at detecting and exposing the alleged error. For Singer’s critics, in turn, species differentiation and speciesism are not erroneous and even inevitable. In the paper, we will oscillate between these two views.

---

<sup>2</sup> Putting it succinctly, we can characterize human dignity and, stemming from it, obligations in the following way: “Human dignity is a moral property innate to all humans. Because all humans are equally human, there is no single person whose dignity is superior or inferior to any other. Because humans never metamorphose to something else, there humanness is permanent. Because human dignity is derived only from this humanness, human dignity is irrevocable. All humans are equally expected to respect the human dignity of each other; all people should be treated equally in matters of human dignity” (Barilan 2012: 93).

## 2. Speciesism: its understanding and consequences

In analyzing the value of life, Peter Singer holds that it is vitally contingent on whether a given entity possesses interests such as avoiding pain and seeking pleasure. Thus, creatures able to experience pleasure and pain are legitimate candidates for pronouncements concerning values and rights; we can determine their preciousness and speculate about their rights. Such creatures belong to various natural species inhabiting the world. However, in Singer's opinion, mere species does not play decisive roles, especially as far as moral values are concerned. He openly rejects moral relevance of belonging to the human species claiming that "the biological facts upon which the boundary of our species is drawn do not have moral significance. To give preference to the life of a being simply because that being is a member of our species would put us in the same position as racists who give preference to those who are members of their race" (Singer 1993: 88). Other discriminatory attitudes can be pointed here too, namely sexism (Singer 2009: 9) and maybe nationalism. Thinking in terms of speciesism leads to a kind of exaltation of individuals of a given species over individuals of other species. Hence, whenever we claim that the human being is endowed with dignity and that guarantees his special position in the world, we are prone to be dubbed speciesists, namely those who exalt human beings only because of their membership in one of the natural species, *Homo sapiens*.

Speciesism is put on the same footing as racism and sexism. However, skin color and sex are not factors which play major roles in establishing the status of a given entity; they are understandably secondary; we will elaborate on this remark later on. Moreover, they are not helpful in a course of ethical thinking. As Ronald Sandler puts it, "they do not constitute or track anything ethically significant – for example, moral agency, autonomy, types (or range) of interests, or ability to participate in social (and ecological) relationships." As a result, skin color and sex are not moral status relevant properties" (Sandler 2012: 161). In this approach, a similar reasoning obtains when we consider membership in *Homo sapiens*. Human beings differ from

other creatures, and that is obvious when we inquire into human genetic make-up. But resulting differences are not so important morally. Sandler claims that a set of biological differences “is not sufficient to establish that it is a nonarbitrary basis for moral status differentiation, any more than it is for skin color or sex. *Homo sapiens* species membership is a justified basis for moral status differentiation only if it constitutes or tracks something morally significant” (Sandler 2012: 161).

What are the features that help us to grasp and describe moral status?<sup>3</sup> So far there have been suggested several factors, namely possession of interests, moral agency, and autonomy. In Singer’s approach, it is centered on two understandings of human being: a member of the species *Homo sapiens* and a person (Singer 1993: 86f). The former acquires his interests when is able to feel pleasure and pain. Only then can he be accredited with a kind of value and consequently with a moral status. The latter, in turn, is valuable because he is a rational and self-conscious individual. The value and moral status of the person are always stronger than the value and moral status of the member *Homo sapiens*<sup>4</sup>. In Sandler’s opinion, in turn, moral status is “*a capacities- and relationships-oriented approach*”; that means that

---

<sup>3</sup> Discussions concerning moral status are very advanced. Some philosophers introduce a distinction between moral status and moral standing; the former has a broader scope than the latter, including works of art or inanimate objects (see Morris 2011: 256). Other philosophers use these terms interchangeably. It is highly controversial whether we can talk about moral status in this broader sense. Hence, in this paper, we are going to stick to the latter approach, that is using moral status and moral standing interchangeably and in reference to living things. Thus, we can characterize moral status in the following way, “an entity has moral status when, in its own right and for its own sake, it can give us reason to do things such as not destroy it or help it” (Kamm 2007: 229).

<sup>4</sup> The more a given entity is rational and conscious, the higher its standing. Singer puts it this way, “in general it does seem that the more highly developed the conscious life of the being, the greater the degree of self-awareness and rationality and the broader the range of possible experiences, the more one would prefer that kind of life, if one were choosing between it and a being at a lower level of awareness” (Singer 1993: 107).

“individuals have moral status by virtue of the capacities that they possess and their historical relationships with other entities [...], social (and ecological) situatedness” (Sandler 2012: 163).

Basically, these two positions coalesce in that they maintain that what really matters, in terms of moral status, are certain functions and characteristics. Their scope ranges from basic ones, like the ability to feel pain and pleasure, up to the very advanced, like those connected with consciousness, self-consciousness, and the ability to establish relationships. Only these functions and characteristics bring about a possibility of talking about various levels of preciousness; in a sense, they are value-laden. Helga Kuhse identifies this stance with a position opposed to the sanctity-of-life doctrine, which draws strongly on the concept of human dignity. Thus, anyone who opposes the latter will be sympathetic with Kuhse’s opinion: “If one takes this approach, then one is not saying that human life has sanctity, but rather that rationality, the capacity to be self-aware, moral or purposeful, and so on, have ‘sanctity’” (Kuhse 1987: 212).

However, this approach brings with it some radical consequences. Moral status is established by recognizing an actual level of relevant functions and characteristics. Thus, case-by-case comparisons between creatures are necessary and in effect they may lead us to surprising conclusions. Singer gives us an example of that approach claiming that when we take into account such features as rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, autonomy, pleasure and pain, the calf, the pig, and the chicken “are well ahead of the fetus at any stage of pregnancy” (Singer 1993: 151). Even a human life after birth does not live up to the levels of the features typical for adult animal individuals<sup>5</sup>. As to moral status, Singer concludes in the following way: “My suggestion [...] is that we accord the life of a fetus not greater value than the life of a nonhuman animal at a similar level of rationality,

---

<sup>5</sup> Neonatal human individuals are not self-conscious and autonomous; their level of rationality and awareness is quite low. That is why some philosophers, sympathetic with Singer’s thinking, consider their status as closer to foetuses than to babies (see Giubilini, Minerva 2012: 1-4).

self-consciousness, awareness, capacity to feel” (Singer 1993: 151). Rejection of the notion of human dignity and the replacing of it with the concept of moral status fundamentally changes our anthropological and ethical assessment of human life.

### 3. A critical look at the speciesism project

The view that we should not accord anthropological importance and moral value to an individual because of his membership of a species is not free from inner conceptual problems. Firstly, we should question the rationale of putting speciesism in the same category as racism, sexism, and maybe nationalism, by association thereby classifying speciesism as a negative attitude. As Carl Cohen claims, such an association uses “an insidious analogy that is rhetorically effective because of the nastiness of the vice to which speciesism is linked” (Cohen 2014: 288). The vice, in author’s opinion, starts from racism. It exalts one race over the other by drawing on secondary or accidental features. Similar errors are committed by adherents of sexism and nationalism: they put one sex or nation over the other without adequate justification. However, looking critically, we must stress that thinking in terms of species differentiation operates according to a different logic: one species of creatures is accredited a higher standing than the other because of essential differences<sup>6</sup>. For instance, one is more complex in its basic structure (e. g. powers, faculties) and hence able to perform more sophisticated actions than the other. Thus, we cannot

---

<sup>6</sup> Racism and sexism are examples of nasty attitudes within the same species; whereas speciesism concerns relationships between individuals belonging to different species. Singer’s description of these attitudes reveals that incongruence: “the racist violates the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of his own race when there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race. The sexist violates the principle of equality by favouring the interests of his own sex. Similarly, the speciesist allows the interests of his own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case” (Singer 2009: 9). However, the latter conclusion is based on an unjustified simplification and thus it is definitely faulty.

reasonably claim that the similarity between racism, sexism, nationalism, and speciesism obtains: putting them at the same level amounts to a category mistake.

A second doubt concerning the speciesism project is entertained by environmental ethicists, especially by those who are dubbed biocentrists. They also oppose the view that the human being has a special standing in the world. For instance, Paul Taylor directly points out that “to view the place of humans in the natural world from the perspective of the biocentric outlook is to reject the idea of human superiority over other living things” (Taylor 1986: 45). But at the same time, biocentrists do not agree with the thesis that only sentient creatures should be put in the center of attention. What really matters to environmental ethicists is the conglomerate of all living things, which Taylor calls the Earth’s Community of Life (Taylor 1986: 44). Members of such a community are living creatures and they include, besides human beings and animals, microorganisms and plants. However, life here is implicitly a broader category, including processes of life connected with *bios*. Thus, even as Singer and his followers call the adherents of the concept of human dignity “speciesists,” so they themselves are called “sentientists” by the biocentrists (Willott, Schmidtz 2002: xix) who consider that the latter accord an unjustified preference to sentient creatures at the expense of other living things, which are devoid of sentience.

These critical remarks highlight the fact that we do not know why this or that feature makes a given entity equal or unequal with the other nor what or who is to decide which level of existence should be accepted as a common platform of comparison for all creatures; or, what is a basis on which we should establish basic interests. Singer and his followers point to abilities associated with the nervous system and with conscious life; whereas biocentrists find such a basis in the realm of fundamental processes of biological life. The latter proposal relies on more basic dependencies than the former, but itself can be also relativized by the ecocentrist stance<sup>7</sup>. At any rate, Singer’s narrative

---

<sup>7</sup> We can always claim that what joins all existing things is not a biological process of life but something more basic. Such a suggestion appears in the project of land

on speciesism seems to be quite an insecure position and far from obvious in the discussion on the value of life.

#### 4. Beyond the speciesism project

Playing down the role of the natural species in favor of concentrating on individuals and their abilities brings further complications. The fundamental, metaphysical borderline between various creatures or things could disappear. For instance, if entry to a particular category were determined by selected characteristics, robots, machines, and computers could, in some circumstances, be included in the same phylum (see Dolby 1989). While they may lack relevant features, such as the ability to feel pleasure and pain, they could at the same time surpass living creatures in traits, such as their level of intelligence. Taking into account the unresolved issue of who or what counts as a person in the bundle theory of personhood (Singer's thinking about the person apparently subscribes to this theory)<sup>8</sup>, we would be obliged to ascribe moral status to things that go far beyond any natural species.

---

ethic by Aldo Leopold, when he claims that “the land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (Leopold 2002: 28). Similar suggestion, namely that all existing things are connected and rights should be accorded not only to living creatures but also to rivers and mountains, is a part of the deep ecology project promoted by Arne Naess (Naess 1973).

<sup>8</sup> Among naturalists there is a dispute on a number of personal characteristics, which make a given entity a person. As it has been pointed out, Singer takes into account only two: rationality and self-consciousness; this can be understood as a minimal set. However, others like Joseph Fletcher point out to a fifteen-element set of those characteristics, namely intelligence, self-awareness, self-control, sense of time, sense of futurity, sense of the past, capacity to relate to others, concern for others, communication with other persons, control of existence, curiosity, change and changeability, balance of rationality and feeling, idiosyncrasy, and neocortical function (Fletcher 1972: 1-4). The discrepancy concerning what qualifies to the world of persons is here striking.



Singer's speciesism argument was basically devised to change the relationship between the human beings and other sentient creatures. Nevertheless, its potential goes beyond this specific relationship and touches on relationships between non-human sentient individuals as well. Inasmuch as being antispeciesist consists in refraining from valuing a human individual as having higher status, including moral status, because of his species membership, it equally requires us to apply the same regard to animals in their mutual relationships. Hence, we are to consider animal individuals case by case in order to establish their metaphysical and moral standing and belonging to a natural species should not be taken into account. However, such a move has dire implications when it comes to our human ability to deal properly with a non-human world. As Cohen daringly puts it, "differences among animals are of the greatest *moral* importance. Refusing to attend to those differences would lead to grave moral error. It would be wrong to treat dogs as we treat mice, or mice as we treat cockroaches, because the *natures* of dogs, mice, and roaches are relevant in determining the care and treatment they deserve. This is obvious to any person of good sense. Being a speciesist, as Singer uses that term, is not only not a fault but a necessary condition for humane moral conduct" (Cohen 2014: 288)<sup>9</sup>.

In fact, Cohen's reference to the nature of various creatures suggests a general approach, which should be taken in dealing critically with the speciesism project. In the interpretation of speciesism intended by the latter, the notion of the nature as such is non-existent or, at most, is implicitly associated with the concept of species. In denying the significant role of individual species, we question the notion of

---

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Kaczor gives us two examples of possible complications when the speciesism project is considered right. He claims that "first, if speciesism is wrong, then we should not grant special protection to animals that are members of endangered species because being a member of a particular species is morally irrelevant. Second, if speciesism is wrong, then we should also refrain from helping animals of a particular species that are suffering from overpopulation because that, too, would involve treating some animals differently than others in an ethically significant way based on species membership" (Kaczor 2013: 25).

the nature of its members. There is also one more possibility in this stance. We can suspect that adherents of the speciesism project are interested in specific natures of creatures given *ad hoc*, namely as current constellations of abilities and characteristics allowing a discourse about moral status. Nevertheless, such natures are far from stable structures: they are changeable and even transient.

However, the understanding of nature, established in the metaphysical tradition, for instance in the Aristotelian philosophical tradition, provides further insights. It helps us to grasp a given individual as having a fundamental and stable structure revealing its essence. Thus, the nature of mouse is its mouseness, of dog is its dogness, and of human being – his humanness. In the latter, his nature is additionally experienced in a unique way, hence to be a human being is also to be a person. In this position, the constellation of relevant features reveals the nature of a creature but does not constitute it. Moreover, from this position we cannot agree with Singer's claim that a family of such natures, namely a species, is to be characterized only by biological facts. Individuals belonging to a species can indeed be characterized by the same biological facts but they also share something more, namely a common way of existence in the world. In the case of a human being, the latter characteristic goes clearly beyond what stems from mere biology. In general, adherents of the speciesism project deny the existence of the natures of creatures and hence the importance of individual species is questioned. This latter approach, however, is not so obvious and we can equally accept the opposite view, namely that the nature of a given entity is important for its dealing with the world.

The speciesism project stresses the importance of specific characteristics in order to establish moral status. We can ask: why are those characteristics by themselves considered essential? Why are some of them sacred, as Helga Kuhse puts it? The adherents of the speciesism project offer no clear-cut explanation. The chosen characteristics can be entertained by various entities, including humans, animals, machines and computers. Those features possess a descriptive character but in what way do they acquire axiological character? In other words, how are strictly biological and psychological functions

(and also artificial copies of these) made into traits determining the preciousness of an entity? Can we derive judgments on values from pure factual descriptions? These queries remain unanswered in the speciesism project; it seems that naturalistically-oriented philosophers are not enough attentive to naturalistic fallacy.

The adversaries of the speciesism project can equally be accused of committing naturalistic fallacy in that they pass from existing nature to value judgment. Although such a line of reasoning seems plausible, it cannot be confirmed positively. The reason for that has to do with the concept of nature. In this latter approach, the nature is not understood as a set of biological traits, i.e., descriptive facts only; nature is understood metaphysically. If we recall the rule that the being and the good are interchangeable concepts (*ens et bonum convertuntur*), then we do not derive what is moral from what is only descriptive; there is no such a division here. However, the moral thinking associated with the notion of nature could demand a further explanation, because some philosophers may still consider the above rule as a kind of naturalistic fallacy, namely metaphysical fallacy.

Thus, we can point to a reality of ontological value, which is not identified with but permanently associated with a given metaphysical structure. As some personalists claim, we always grasp a thing as an ontic unity and an axiological unity: entity that exists in itself and, at the same time, constitutes preciousness in itself. One is not derived from the other but given simultaneously. As to living things, it implies that we never get to know them as pure sets of empirical facts but, at the same time, always as axiologically important states. To shed more light on the relationship between the ontological and the axiological, the latter is given in the experience of the subject and then demands its rational justification. Relevant reasons, as a personalist philosopher claims, can be found in the metaphysical thinking, where the notion of nature plays an important role (Styczeń 1984: 126; see also Hołub 2012: 123-126). Thus, the notion of the nature supplies the justification for moral standing but the latter is not inferred from the former. This justification can be spelled out in this way: any kind of nature understood metaphysically constitutes the ground for an axiological

importance; the more complex and perfect the nature, the broader ground for what is morally important and thus a higher value can be grounded and instantiated.

Every living creature can be approached and understood in this dual way. Animals, plants, and other organism differ among themselves as to their respective natures. That can be inferred from observation and the analysis of characteristics and functions, which are typical for a paradigmatic representative of a given species. Thus, analyzing touchable phenomena, we can determine what constitutes the nature of dog, mouse, and other creatures. We can also compare their natures and conclude that one is more complex and highly developed than the other or just that they differ in kind<sup>10</sup>. In this way, we can ascribe adequate intrinsic values to all living creatures but, at the same time, remain aware that these values are not equal. Thus, we can acknowledge that these differences indeed constitute a compass for moral conduct on the part of the human being. In applying this logic to the human being we are led to discover his special status, in a metaphysical and also an axiological and moral sense.

## 5. Conclusions

The speciesism project is based on the nominalistic tendency to question the stable natures of things and, at the same time, to introduce their surrogates (i.e., current constellations of traits). It leads to a situation whereby the value of life is established according to individual abilities and characteristics, and not by kind. Hence, the value of a given living entity is rather changeable. It depends on a level of development, state of health, and acquired handicap. Moral standing becomes then a subject of never-ending debates and discussions. As

---

<sup>10</sup> As James Reichmann puts it, “‘species’ is not an accidental characteristic, but a substantial determinant of the kind of being one is. Hence, if there are many kinds of beings, then they must differ in an essential way. Some beings must simply be ontologically more than others in order to be different from them” (Reichmann 2000: 264).

we have shown, there are serious problems and doubts concerning this approach. At any rate, there are not compelling reasons to accept it unreservedly. Hence, the rejection of human dignity as declared by adherents of this position is substantially weakened. At least we have equally strong reasons to accept stable natures and talk about their intrinsic values by membership in natural species. The thesis about human dignity itself does not attenuate, let alone invalidate, the value debate on the evaluation of non-human living things. Proposing a special preciousness of any human being is not done at the expense of stripping off the value of other creatures<sup>11</sup>. The avenue of coming up with and developing the concept of human dignity is still open.

### **Bibliography**

- Barilan Y. M., 2012, *Human dignity, human rights, and responsibility*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) & London.
- Cohen C., 2014, *We should not prohibit the use of chimpanzees and other great apes in biomedical research*, in A. L. Caplan, R. Arp (eds.), *Contemporary debates in bioethics*, Wiley Blackwell, Malden (MA), 281-290.
- Copp D., 2011, *Animals, fundamental moral standing, and speciesism*, in T. L. Beauchamp, R. G. Frey (eds.), *The oxford handbook of animal ethics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 276-303.
- Dolby R. G. A., 1989, *The possibility of computers becoming persons*, *Social Epistemology: Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy* vol. 3, iss. 4, 312-336.
- Fletcher J., 1972, *Indicators of humanhood: a tentative profile of man*, *The Hasting Center Report* vol. 2, no. 5, 1-4.

---

<sup>11</sup> Thus, the following thesis may be ambiguous and misleading: “the idea that morality is fundamentally concerned with the good of humans may seem to be ‘speciesist’” (Copp 2011: 277). Acknowledging the important role of species is not necessarily connected with the idea that morality is basically about the good of humans. Showing the importance of the idea of human dignity and stemming from it moral rights do not limit morality to the human world.

- Giubilni A., Minerva F., 2012, *After-birth abortion: why should the baby live?* Journal of Medical Ethics, Feb. 23, 1-4.
- Hołub, G., 2012, *Człowiek a świat naturalny. Wokół koncepcji egalitaryzmu gatunkowego Paula W. Taylora*, Logos i Ethos 1, 105-126.
- Kaczor C., 2013, *A defense of dignity. Creating life, destroying life, and protecting the rights of conscience*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame.
- Kamm F.M., 2007, *Intricate ethics. Rights, responsibilities, and permissible harm*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Kuhse H., 1987, *The sanctity-of-life doctrine in medicine: a critique*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Leopold A., 2002, *The land ethics*, in Schmidtz D., Willott E. (eds.), *Environmental ethics. What really matters, what really works*, Oxford University Press, New York, 27-32.
- Morris C. W., 2011, *The idea of moral standing*, in T. L. Beauchamp, R. G. Frey (eds.), *The oxford handbook of animal ethics*, 255-275.
- Neass A., 1973, *The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: a summary*, Inquiry 16, 95-100.
- Reichmann J. B., 2000, *Evolution, animal 'rights', and the environment*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D. C.
- Singer P., 2009, *Animal liberation*, Random House, New York.
- Singer P., 1993, *Practical ethics*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Sandler R. L., 2012, *The ethics of species. An introduction*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Styczeń T., 1984, *W drodze do etyki*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin.
- Taylor P. W., 1986, *Respect for nature. A theory of environmental ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Willott E., Schmidtz D., 2002, *Introduction. Why environmental ethics?* in D. Schmidtz, E. Willott (eds.), *Environmental ethics. What really matters, what really works*, Oxford University Press, New York, xi-xxi.

## **Ludzka godność, gatunkowizm i wartość życia**

### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł ten podejmuje dyskusję dotyczącą wartości życia. Szczególnie odnosi się on do idei gatunkowizmu – terminu sformułowanego przez Petera Singera. W jego intencji termin ten oznacza szczególne znaczenie życia ze względu na jego przynależność do gatunku *Homo sapiens*. Dla Singera jest to przykład błędnego myślenia. W tym ujęciu idea godności ludzkiej jest wysoce problematyczna. W artykule tym autor prezentuje liczne głosy krytyczne, tak o naturze metodologicznej jak i ontologicznej, skierowane przeciw sceptycznemu spojrzeniu na przynależność gatunkową. Autor utrzymuje, że gatunki naturalne odgrywają ważną rolę w istniejącej rzeczywistości. Próbuje on również wykazać, że dziedzina życia powinna być łączona z tak zwaną wartością wewnętrzną. W świetle tego każda żyjąca bytowość posiada swe znaczenie aksjologiczne i powinna być oceniana i traktowana w zgodności z tym. Ludzka godność – w tym myśleniu – łączy się ze szczególną pozycją nadawaną przez wartość życia. W artykule wysuwa się konkluzję, że stanowisko opowiadające się za ludzką godnością nie zostało zakwestionowane i może być dalej rozwijane.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ludzka godność, gatunkowizm, wartość życia, naturalizm, personalizm