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Research Article

Animal Respect and the Light Triad: Humanism, Faith in Humanity, and Human Attitudes Toward Animals

Szacunek wobec zwierząt a Jasna Triada: humanizm, wiara w ludzkość oraz postawy człowieka wobec zwierząt

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Abstract

This study examined whether animal respect is associated with selected prosocial dispositions measured by the Light Triad Scale and whether women report higher animal respect than men. An online questionnaire survey was completed by 294 adults. Animal respect was measured with the AniRe-Que, while prosocial personality was assessed using the Light Triad Scale, with particular attention to Humanism and Faith in Humanity. Because the Kantianism subscale showed insufficient internal consistency in this sample, the interpretation focused primarily on Humanism and Faith in Humanity. The results showed that animal respect was positively associated with the original Light Triad composite, Humanism, and Faith in Humanity, and these associations remained significant after controlling for age and gender. Women reported higher animal respect than men. In regression analyses, Humanism emerged as the only robust unique predictor of animal respect. The findings suggest that the humanistic dimension of prosocial personality is more closely linked to positive human–animal relations than the Light Triad construct as a whole and should be interpreted within broader frameworks of empathy, moral expansiveness, and speciesism.

Keywords

attitudes toward animals, animal respect, animal ethics, prosocial personality, human–animal relations, Light Triad Scale, Humanism, Faith in Humanity, speciesism, moral expansiveness

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem badania było ustalenie czy szacunek wobec zwierząt wiąże się z wybranymi dyspozycjami prospołecznymi mierzonymi Skalą Jasnej Triady (Light Triad Scale) oraz czy kobiety deklaruja wyższy poziom szacunku wobec zwierząt niż mężczyźni. Badanie przeprowadzono metodą internetowego sondażu kwestionariuszowego wśród 294 osób dorosłych. Szacunek wobec zwierząt mierzono za pomocą kwestionariusza AniRe-Que, natomiast osobowość prospołeczną oceniano z wykorzystaniem Skali Jasnej Triady. Ze względu na niewystarczającą rzetelność wewnętrzną podskali Kantianizm, w badanej próbie interpretację wyników skoncentrowano przede wszystkim na wymiarach Humanizm i Wiara w ludzkość. Wyniki wykazały, że szacunek wobec zwierząt dodatnio korelował z ogólnym wynikiem Skali Jasnej Triady, a także z wymiarami Humanizm i Wiara w ludzkość. Zależności te pozostały istotne statystycznie po uwzględnieniu wieku i płci. Kobiety deklarowały wyższy poziom szacunku wobec zwierząt niż mężczyźni. W analizach regresji jedynym istotnym i niezależnym predyktorem szacunku wobec zwierząt okazał się Humanizm. Uzyskane wyniki sugerują, że humanistyczny wymiar osobowości prospołecznej jest silniej związany z pozytywnymi relacjami człowieka ze zwierzętami niż konstrukt Jasnej Triady jako całość. Wyniki należy interpretować w szerszym kontekście empatii, rozszerzania wspólnoty moralnej (*moral expansiveness*) oraz gatunkowizmu (*speciesism*).

Słowa kluczowe

postawy wobec zwierząt, szacunek wobec zwierząt, etyka zwierząt, osobowość prospołeczna, relacje człowiek–zwierzę, Skala Jasnej Triady, humanizm, wiara w ludzkość, gatunkowizm, rozszerzanie wspólnoty moralnej

Introduction

“Compassion for animals is closely linked to goodness of character
and one may confidently assert
that whoever is cruel to animals cannot be a good person.”
(Arthur Schopenhauer)

Animals as sentient beings capable of experiencing pain, joy, sorrow, or fear pose a major challenge to human morality. Kundera described the human–animal relationship as one of humanity’s fundamental “moral tests.” In his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, he wrote: “A person’s true goodness can manifest itself in complete purity and freedom only toward someone who represents no force. The true moral test of humanity—the most fundamental one (laid down so deeply that it escapes our sight)—rests on our relationship to those who are at our mercy: animals.” (2006, 308). Schopenhauer expressed a similar view two centuries earlier when he linked compassion for animals with goodness of character, as noted in the epigraph to this study.

The research on human–animal relations has expanded markedly over the past decade rather than remaining marginal. Recent work has examined social identification with animals, speciesism, anthropomorphism, meat-related cognition, and cross-cultural variability in animal attitudes (Amiot and Bastian 2015; Amiot et al. 2020; Caviola et al. 2019; Ruby et al. 2023; Trenkenschuh et al. 2024). Within this growing field, a central question is why some people extend stronger moral concern to nonhuman animals than others.

The present study addresses this question from the perspective of selected prosocial personality dispositions. More specifically, it examines whether dispositions captured by the Light Triad Scale are associated with greater animal respect. This expectation is theoretically plausible only if kindness toward humans generalizes beyond the human ingroup. Several sources suggest such a pathway: empathy is positively related to animal attitudes (Taylor and Signal 2005; Eckardt Erlanger and Tsytsarev 2012), broader moral circles predict greater willingness to include nonhuman entities within moral concern (Crimston et al. 2016; Waytz et al. 2019), lower speciesism predicts more prosocial choices toward animals (Caviola et al. 2019), and stronger identification with animals predicts concern, helping intentions, and action on their behalf (Amiot et al. 2020). Recent work also suggests that empathy with animals can mediate the link between pro-animal attitudes and empathy with humans (Gu et al. 2024).

In this framework, animal respect can be understood as a morally evaluative orientation that rejects unnecessary harm, domination, and the instrumentalization of animals while affirming their worth as sentient beings. The AniRe-Que operationalizes this construct as a composite of cognitive, affective, and conative tendencies toward animals (Kaliský and Kaliská 2020; Kaliský 2022). The Light Triad, in turn, comprises Kantianism, Humanism, and Faith in Humanity, and is intended to capture a prosocial and morally mature understanding of human nature (Kaufman et al. 2019). Previous studies have linked Light Triad traits to compassion and other adaptive prosocial outcomes (Lukić and Živanović 2021; Krok and Tkaczyk 2024).

Not all determinants reviewed in the human–animal literature are equally central to the present hypotheses, but two contextual influences remain relevant. First, direct and positive contact with animals is consistently associated with more positive animal attitudes and, in some studies, with higher empathy toward both animals and humans (Paul and Serpell 1993; Liang et al. 2024; Gu et al. 2024). Second, the social representation of animals is shaped by anthropomorphism and perceived human–animal similarity, both of which are tied to more favorable moral evaluations of animals (Amiot and Bastian 2015; Gómez-Melara et al.

2021).

Cultural context further conditions these processes. Cross-cultural work shows that animal attitudes vary across societies, and that the psychological pathways linking modernization, anthropomorphism, mutualism, and positive attitudes toward animals are culturally mediated rather than universal (Sinclair et al. 2022; Gómez-Melara et al. 2021; Oxley Heaney et al. 2025). Related intergroup work suggests that the human–animal boundary is itself psychologically constructed and that people may detach from animals when humans are treated as the prototypical ingroup (Trenkenschuh and Landmann 2026).

These findings imply that any association between the Light Triad dispositions and animal respect is unlikely to be a simple trait-to-trait link. Rather, it should be interpreted as part of a broader system involving empathy, perceived similarity, inclusion within the moral circle, and culturally shaped beliefs about how humans ought to relate to other animals.

In ideological terms, narrower moral concern has been linked to domination-oriented views of social relations. Social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism predict greater animal exploitation and meat consumption, while 4N-rationalizations of meat consumption (“4N” beliefs: natural, normal, necessary, nice) predict reduced moral inclusion of animals (Dhont and Hodson 2014; Dhont et al. 2016; Piazza et al. 2015). These findings make it theoretically meaningful to ask whether positive, non-dominating dispositions should show the opposite pattern.

Personality research is broadly consistent with this expectation. More favorable attitudes toward animals have been linked to traits such as Openness, Agreeableness, and compassion-related aspects of personality, whereas darker and more callous dispositions predict more negative attitudes toward animals (Reist et al. 2023; Branković and Međedović 2023; Trenkenschuh et al. 2024; Tan et al. 2025). Gender differences in animal attitudes have also been reported repeatedly, with women often showing higher concern for animals, although the size and specificity of the effect can depend on the kind of animal attitude being measured (Carnovale et al. 2022; Gu et al. 2024; Suárez-Yera et al. 2024).

Among the three Light Triad dimensions, Humanism appears especially relevant to animal respect because it emphasizes the worth and dignity of others, compassion, and egalitarian concern. Faith in Humanity may matter insofar as generalized trust in people extends beyond the boundaries of personal self-interest, whereas Kantianism is theoretically important because it rejects using others merely as means. At the same

time, this last dimension is also the most psychometrically fragile one in several adaptations of the scale, which makes it essential to separate the theoretical appeal of Kantianism from its empirical performance in a given sample (Gerymski and Krok 2019; Stavradi et al. 2023; Maralov 2024).

Accordingly, the present study did not treat gender differences as its main contribution. Rather, the central question was whether animal respect is associated with prosocial dispositions, especially the more interpretable Light Triad components of Humanism and Faith in Humanity, in a Slovak adult sample. Animal respect was operationalized using the AniRe-Que-15, a scale grounded in zoocentric egalitarianism and the ethics of respect for life (Kaliský and Kaliská 2020; Kaliský 2022).

Given the limited direct evidence linking the Light Triad to animal respect, one confirmatory hypothesis and three primarily exploratory research questions were formulated:

RH: Women exhibit a higher level of animal respect than men.

RQ1: Is animal respect associated with the original 12-item Light Triad composite and, more specifically, with Humanism and Faith in Humanity?

RQ2: Do these associations persist after controlling for age and gender?

RQ3: Does the original 12-item Light Triad composite predict animal respect after controlling for age and gender, and do Humanism and Faith in Humanity account for unique variance in animal respect?

1. Methods

A quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted combining one confirmatory comparison (gender differences in animal respect) with exploratory correlational analyses of the relation between animal respect and prosocial personality dispositions. Because the literature directly linking the Light Triad to animal respect is still limited, the dimensional analyses were treated as exploratory and interpreted primarily in terms of effect sizes and construct validity rather than as a strict test of a fully established model.

Animal respect was measured using the AniRe-Que-15 questionnaire (Kaliský and Kaliská 2020). The instrument contains 15 statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); three items are reverse-coded. It is intended to capture respectful orientations toward animals, that is, the extent to which a respondent rejects unnecessary harm, cruelty, and the reduction of animals to mere human use. The final score is computed as the mean of the items, with higher values indicating greater animal respect.

Prosocial personality dispositions were assessed using the Light Triad Scale (LTS; Kaufman et al.

2019) in its Slovak version. The instrument contains 12 items distributed across three 4-item factors: Faith in Humanity, Humanism, and Kantianism. Respondents rated their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Previous work supports the general construct and predictive validity of the LTS, but several adaptation studies also indicate that Kantianism is often the most psychometrically vulnerable component of the scale (Gerymski and Krok 2019; Stavradi et al. 2023; Maralov 2024). In the present sample, internal consistency was acceptable for the total score, Humanism, and Faith in Humanity, but inadequate for Kantianism (Table 1). For transparency, the total score reported in this article reflects the original 12-item composite. However, because that composite necessarily includes the unreliable Kantianism items, results involving the total score are interpreted cautiously, whereas interpretation at the dimension level focuses on Humanism and Faith in Humanity.

The sample comprised 294 respondents, including 174 women (59.2%) and 120 men (40.8%). Participant age ranged from 18 to 76 years ($M = 39.5$; $SD = 15.74$). Participants were recruited using a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling; the only inclusion criterion was being an adult. The sample was determined by feasible recruitment rather than by a pre-registered target. A sensitivity calculation indicated that, with $N = 294$ and $\alpha = .05$, the study had approximately 80% power to detect two-tailed correlations of about $|r| = .16$ and between-group standardized mean differences of about $d = 0.33$. The design was therefore adequately sensitive to small-to-moderate bivariate effects, but more modest effects may have gone undetected. Data were collected online via Google Forms and distributed through social media. Participation required providing informed consent online; participation was voluntary and respondents could discontinue the questionnaire at any time without giving a reason. Data were collected anonymously, without identifying information, and were processed and stored in accordance with data protection principles (GDPR). The study was performed in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Data were processed in JASP, and all respondents completed online versions of the questionnaires. The dataset is available from the authors upon request. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω . Descriptive statistics were computed first, and distributional characteristics were inspected using skewness, kurtosis, graphical diagnostics, and the Shapiro–Wilk test. Given the ordinal response format and the observed departures from normality, gender differences were tested using Welch's t -test and associations were estimated with Spearman correlations; partial correlations controlled for age and

gender. Linear regression models were then used to estimate unique predictive effects. Measurement invariance of the AniRe-Que and the LTS across gender and age was not tested and is therefore addressed as a limitation rather than assumed.

2. Results

Reliability of the questionnaires was examined using Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω . The AniRe questionnaire showed good internal consistency. The original 12-item Light Triad total score, Faith in Humanity, and Humanism reached acceptable values. By contrast, Kantianism showed clearly inadequate internal consistency in the present sample ($\alpha = 0.47$; $\omega = 0.48$), and corrected item–total correlations were low. This finding is theoretically consequential because Kantianism is the Light Triad dimension most explicitly concerned with treating others as ends rather than means. Accordingly, Kantianism was not interpreted as a stand-alone predictor in subsequent analyses, and any inference based on the total Light Triad composite must be treated as provisional because the composite still includes the psychometrically weak Kantianism items.

Descriptive characteristics and normality test results are summarized in Table 1. Distributions were assessed using skewness and kurtosis, graphical diagnostics, and statistically significant departures from normality as indicated by the Shapiro–Wilk test ($p < .05$). Based on these criteria, as well as the ordinal nature of the scales and deviations from symmetry, the following tests were used for inferential statistics.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, normality indicators, and internal consistency estimates for the study variables (N = 294)

This table presents descriptive statistics, normality indicators, and internal consistency estimates for the main study variables: Animal Respect, the original 12-item Light Triad composite, Faith in Humanity, Humanism, and Kantianism. It shows the basic distributional properties of the variables and indicates that Kantianism demonstrated clearly weaker reliability than the remaining measures.

Variable	M	SD	Me	min–max	W	p	Skewness	Kurtosis	α	ω
Animal Respect	3.78	0.66	3.80	1.80–5.00	0.99	0.003	-0.33	-0.22	0.84	0.85
Light Triad (total score)	3.76	0.59	3.83	1.00–5.00	0.97	< 0.001	-0.54	0.86	0.79	0.81
Faith in Humanity	3.37	0.82	3.50	1.00–5.00	0.98	< 0.001	-0.34	-0.20	0.70	0.71
Humanism	3.99	0.67	4.00	1.00–5.00	0.95	< 0.001	-0.83	1.33	0.64	0.67
Kantianism	3.92	0.68	4.00	1.00–5.00	0.96	< 0.001	-0.47	0.38	0.47	0.48

Note. *M* = mean; *Me* = median; *SD* = standard deviation; *W* = Shapiro–Wilk statistic; α = Cronbach's alpha; ω = McDonald's omega.

Additional note: The Light Triad total score is reported for comparability with the original instrument, but because it includes the unreliable Kantianism items, it should be interpreted more cautiously than the Humanism and Faith in Humanity subscales.

Table 2. Animal Respect by gender: descriptive statistics and Welch's t-test results (N = 294)

This table presents descriptive statistics for Animal Respect separately for men and women, together with the results of Welch's t-test and effect-size estimates. It shows that women scored higher than men on Animal Respect and that the difference was statistically significant and of substantial magnitude.

Sex	n (%)	M (SD)	Me	ΔM (Men–Women) [95% CI]	min–max	Welch t-test (df)	p	g [95% CI]	CLES
Men	120 (40.82)	3.49 (0.69)	3.47	-0.50 [-0.65; -0.35]	1.80–5.00	-6.66 (217.78)	< .001	-0.82 [-1.08; -0.58]	0.71
Women	174 (59.18)	3.99 (0.55)	3.93		2.40–5.00				

Note. *M* = mean; *Me* = median; *SD* = standard deviation; g = Hedges' g ; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval.

Descriptive characteristics by gender and the analysis of gender differences in animal respect assessed by AniRe-Que using Welch's t-test are presented in Table 2. Women scored higher on animal respect than men ($t(217.78) = -6.66, p < .001$; Levene's test: $W = 6.59, p = .011$). The effect size was large ($g = -0.82, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.08; -0.58]$), indicating a high probability that a randomly selected woman will obtain a higher score than a randomly selected man. The CLES further indicated that, when randomly selecting one man and one woman, the woman will have the higher score in approximately 71% of cases (CLES = 0.71).

Table 3. Spearman and partial correlations between Animal Respect and selected Light Triad indicators (N = 294)

This table presents bivariate Spearman correlations between Animal Respect and the Light Triad indicators retained for interpretation, as well as partial correlations controlling for age and gender. It allows direct comparison of the strength of associations for the total Light Triad score, Humanism, and Faith in Humanity.

Variable	ρ	p	95% CI
Light Triad (total score)	0.54 (0.50)	< .001 (< .001)	[0.45; 0.61]
Humanism	0.45 (0.41)	< .001 (< .001)	[0.35; 0.54]
Faith in Humanity	0.33 (0.29)	< .001 (< .001)	[0.22; 0.42]

Note. ρ = Spearman correlation coefficient; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval.

The correlational analyses addressed the association between animal respect and the original 12-item Light Triad composite, as well as the more interpretable Humanism and Faith in Humanity dimensions (Table

3). Animal respect showed a positive correlation with the total composite ($\rho = 0.54$, $p < .001$), with Humanism ($\rho = 0.45$, $p < .001$), and with Faith in Humanity ($\rho = 0.33$, $p < .001$). These associations remained significant after controlling for age and gender. Because the total composite includes the unreliable Kantianism items, the dimensional results are theoretically more informative than the total-score correlation.

Table 4. Linear regression models predicting Animal Respect (N = 294)

This table presents three linear regression models predicting Animal Respect. It shows the effects of age and gender alone, then the added contribution of the original 12-item Light Triad composite, and finally the separate contributions of Faith in Humanity and Humanism.

Predictor	Model 1 (Age, gender)	Model 2 (+ Light Triad)	Model 3 (+ Faith in Humanity, Humanism)
Age	0.009*** (0.002), $\beta = 0.22$	0.005** (0.002), $\beta = 0.13$	0.007** (0.002), $\beta = 0.16$
Gender	0.470*** (0.076), $\beta = 0.35$	0.319*** (0.065), $\beta = 0.24$	0.347*** (0.068), $\beta = 0.26$
Light Triad		0.523*** (0.058), $\beta = 0.47$	
Faith in Humanity			0.067 (0.047), $\beta = 0.08$
Humanism			0.339*** (0.059), $\beta = 0.35$
R ²	0.19	0.38	0.33
Adj. R ²	0.18	0.38	0.32
ΔR^2 (vs. Model 1)	—	0.20	0.15

Dependent variable: Animal Respect. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The regression analyses first tested multicollinearity diagnostics, which indicated no problematic collinearity among predictors. Variance inflation factors (VIF) ranged from 1.05 to 1.12, well below commonly used thresholds (e.g., $VIF < 5$), indicating that the regression estimates were not affected by multicollinearity. The regression analyses then tested whether the original 12-item Light Triad composite predicted animal respect after controlling for age and gender. Model 1 (age, gender) was significant and explained 19% of the variance in animal respect. Adding the composite in Model 2 increased the explained variance to 38%, and the composite was a significant positive predictor ($B = 0.52$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = 0.47$, $p < .001$). This result is reported for completeness and comparability with the original instrument, but it should not be overinterpreted because the composite includes the psychometrically weak Kantianism items. Model 3 therefore provides the more substantively robust test: when Humanism and Faith in Humanity were entered simultaneously, the explained variance reached 33%, Humanism remained a significant positive predictor ($B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$), and Faith in Humanity was not significant ($B = 0.07$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = 0.08$, $p = 0.162$). Humanism and Faith in Humanity were moderately correlated (0.55), indicating shared but

not redundant variance. Multicollinearity diagnostics ($VIF \approx 1-2$) did not indicate problematic collinearity. Our interpretation is thus more narrowly focused than the conclusion that the “Light Triad predicts animal respect”: in this sample, the clearest unique signal comes from Humanism.

Discussion and Conclusions

The central finding of the study is not simply that a higher Light Triad total score is associated with animal respect, but more specifically that animal respect is most clearly related to the humanistic component of prosocial personality. This pattern fits theoretical accounts according to which prosocial concern generalizes to animals when people extend empathy, moral standing, and perceived similarity beyond the human ingroup. Research on empathy toward animals, moral expansiveness, speciesism, and identification with animals all points in this direction (Taylor and Signal 2005; Crimston et al. 2016; Caviola et al. 2019; Amiot et al. 2020; Gu et al. 2024).

Humanism showed both a moderate zero-order association and the only robust unique predictive effect in the multivariable model. Conceptually, this makes sense: Humanism captures compassion, egalitarian regard, and concern for the dignity of others, which are precisely the kinds of dispositions most likely to widen the circle of moral concern. Faith in Humanity was positively related to animal respect at the bivariate level, but its effect disappeared when Humanism was modeled simultaneously, suggesting substantial shared variance or a weaker conceptual proximity to animal respect. In practical terms, the present data support a more modest conclusion: they provide the strongest evidence for Humanism, limited evidence for Faith in Humanity, and no interpretable evidence for Kantianism as a separate subscale.

The Kantianism issue is therefore not a minor psychometric inconvenience but a substantive interpretive problem. Kantianism is the Light Triad dimension most directly tied to the idea of not using others merely as means, which is especially relevant to animal respect. Its poor reliability weakens any claim about the Light Triad as a fully functioning three-dimensional construct in this sample. Although several adaptations retain the three-factor solution, adaptation studies also frequently identify Kantianism as the weakest or most fragile component, which raises the possibility of translation sensitivity or broader cross-cultural non-equivalence rather than a purely local anomaly (Gerymski and Krok 2019; Stavradi et al. 2023; Maralov 2024). For this reason, the 12-item total score should be treated as provisional evidence only, and a direct comparison between the original composite and an 8-item Humanism-plus-Faith composite would be an important next

step before strong claims are made about the Light Triad as a whole.

The gender difference observed here is consistent with a substantial literature showing that women often report greater concern for animals, stronger empathy, and lower endorsement of exploitative attitudes; however, we regard this finding as a replication rather than the study's main theoretical contribution (Carnovale et al. 2022; Gu et al. 2024; Suárez-Yera et al. 2024). In the present sample, the effect was large enough to be practically meaningful, but its explanatory mechanism was not directly tested. Future work should examine whether this difference is mediated by empathy, social dominance orientation, diet, or the inclusion of animals within the moral circle.

Several limitations qualify the findings. First, the study used a convenience online sample and a cross-sectional self-report design, which limits generalizability and precludes causal inference. Second, although the sample size was sufficient for small-to-moderate bivariate effects, no full item-level sensitivity analysis comparing the 12-item Light Triad composite with a reduced composite was available in this revised report. Third, measurement invariance of the AniRe-Que and the Light Triad indicators across gender and age was not tested, so subgroup comparisons should be interpreted cautiously. Fourth, the study did not model other theoretically relevant variables such as pet ownership, diet, anthropomorphism, social dominance orientation, or direct empathy with animals. Finally, because cultural context shapes animal attitudes, the present Slovak findings should not be generalized uncritically to other settings (Gómez-Melara et al. 2021; Oxley Heaney et al. 2025).

In conclusion, the results support a cautious and more precise claim: animal respect is positively associated with selected prosocial dispositions, and especially with Humanism. The data do not justify an equally strong claim about the Light Triad as a fully interpretable three-dimensional construct in this sample. Framed this way, the study still contributes to research on how prosocial personality, empathy, and moral inclusion relate to human–animal relations, and it suggests that educational or intervention efforts aimed at expanding moral concern may benefit from targeting explicitly humanistic and anti-instrumental values.

Statements

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