Dehumanisation and Moral Silencing

A normative account with illustrations from the refugee crisis

Adrienne de Ruiter

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

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European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

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I, Adrienne Desirée de Ruiter, certify that I am the author of the work *Dehumanisation and Moral Silencing: A normative account with illustrations from the refugee crisis* I have presented for examination for the Ph.D. at the European University Institute. I also certify that this is solely my own original work, other than where I have clearly indicated, in this declaration and in the thesis, that it is the work of others.

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Abstract

What does it mean to fail to treat, perceive, or portray people as human? This is the central question of scholarship on dehumanisation. While empirical studies describe the process of dehumanisation in its practical facets, normative research analyses what renders dehumanisation morally wrong. The predominant approach in the normative field conceptualises dehumanisation as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity. In this thesis, I challenge the human dignity view of dehumanisation based on the idea that it depends on contentious claims about what it means to be human and fails to distinguish clearly between viewing people as less human and less than human.

As an alternative, I develop a normative account of dehumanisation that focuses on the difference between relating to people as fellow human beings and relating to them as animals or objects. I contend that this distinction is signalled by the question whether we view persons as being able to make moral claims on us. Human beings, I argue, share a discursive moral community through which they can make moral appeals on each other. Dehumanisation can therefore be conceived as a failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make such claims. The moral wrongness of dehumanisation then lies in moral silencing, which entails that people lose their ability to effectively make moral claims within their interaction(s) with the perpetrator(s) of dehumanisation. Moral silencing constitutes a unique moral wrong because it undermines the foundations of human morality, which is fundamentally enabled and shaped by the possibility of people to make normative claims on one another.

The thesis illustrates this view through the personal stories of refugees and asylum seekers of their experiences with dehumanisation and related practices of exclusion and rejection, such as humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment. Analysis of the interview material has served two roles: it supports the view that dehumanisation is unique along the spectrum of exclusionary practices and it helps to elucidate the relation between dehumanisation, fundamental rights violations, and the deprivation of basic needs in the refugee crisis.

Acknowledgements

Now that the process of writing the dissertation is completed, there are a few people I would like to thank. First of all, I am grateful for the support and encouragement I have received over the years from my supervisor Jennifer Welsh. I believe it is truly exceptional to be supervised by someone who not only takes the time to engage with one's work and provides inspiring, thoughtful, and insightful feedback, but also has a keen eye for her students on a personal level. I particularly admire Jennifer's unique talent to see something interesting and valuable in everyone and everything and I want to thank her for the great example she set for me as an academic.

My dissertation would not have been the same without the stories of the refugees and asylum seekers I interviewed about their experiences with practices of exclusion and disrespect. I want to thank all the persons I spoke with in Germany, Lebanon, and Italy for their willingness to share their experiences and viewpoints with me. I hope that the way in which I theorised their accounts in this dissertation does justice to the experiences they have lived through. I also would like to express my gratitude to the various organisations that helped me organise the interviews and with which I spoke to get a more general sense of the challenges that refugees and asylum seekers face. Special thanks are due to Rami Emad for being a great help to me as a translator and guide in Beirut.

I really enjoyed my time as a PhD student at the European University Institute. I especially appreciate the fact that the EUI allowed me lots of freedom in developping my research and provided me with the opportunity to study Arabic in Morocco and conduct fieldwork in Lebanon. The most rewarding aspect of being part of the EUI community, however, undoubtedly lies in the many friends I made in Florence. My thanks also go out to all those who have helped me along the way, including the staff at the EUI, the members of the Cluster of Normative Orders at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, and the professors of the Examining Board.

As always, I owe the greatest thanks to my family, in particular, my parents, who have always encouraged me to be curious and learn about the unfamiliar and who gave me the confidence to go out into the world and explore. I would not be where I am now if it were not for them. Lastly, I want to thank Matteo for having more patience with me than all the patience that was required to finish this dissertation.

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Introduction

> 'Humanity is in crisis – and there is no exit from that crisis other than solidarity of humans.'
>
> Zygmunt Bauman, *Strangers at Our Door*

'**Humanity washed ashore**'

On 2 September 2015, twelve people died when two boats carrying refugees sank in the Aegean Sea. Among the dead was three-year old Alan Kurdi whose body was found on the coast not far from Bodrum. A picture portraying the boy, who drowned together with his five-year old brother, Ghalib, and their mother, Rehan, while trying to reach the Greek island of Kos after the family had fled from Syria, was soon shared all over the internet and published by hundreds of newspapers. The little boy's body, lying face down in the sand of a Turkish beach, came to stand for the plight of refugees everywhere, facing severe risks to their life and safety in their attempts to reach secure grounds, even after they managed to flee from countries afflicted by war and violent conflict, or rife with persecution and severe human rights violations. In an outburst of indignation, the picture of Alan went viral on Twitter, as it was disseminated under the hashtag 'Humanity washed ashore' (*#KıyıyaVuranİnsanlık*).

The photograph and the discussion it sparked about the policies of (Western) countries regarding the accommodation of asylum seekers spoke of a failure to alleviate the suffering of people in difficult circumstances and to protect fundamental human rights. For a brief moment, the predicament of persons whose life and well-being were not secured by their country of origin, or in the places to which they had fled and who decided to undertake yet another dangerous journey to find a safe haven elsewhere, became the central point of focus in the popular media. News about the event replaced reports on concerns about the security of the local population or the allegedly detrimental effects that a great influx of asylum seekers might have on the economy and social cohesion of destination countries.[1] In his individuality, Alan appealed to empathy without diffusing this sense of identification through the abstraction of large numbers. In his innocence, he appealed

[1] For an analysis of the changes in news coverage in Europe in this period, see: Lilie Chouliaraki and Rafal Zaborowski, 'Voice and Community in the 2015 Refugee Crisis: A content analysis of news coverage in eight European countries,' *The International Communication Gazette* 79 (2017): 613-635. For an overview of the changes in media reporting and political policies one year after the event, see: Patrick Kingsley, 'The Death of Alan Kurdi: One year on, compassion towards refugees fades,' *The Guardian*, 2 September 2016, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/01/alan-kurdi-death-one-year-on-compassion-towards-refugees-fades [last accessed: 16 July 2018].

to compassion without raising difficult questions about the responsibility that migrants and asylum seekers themselves hold for their misfortune.[2]

This moment of widely shared grief was exceptional in that people from diverging political, social, and cultural backgrounds responded in seemingly similar ways to the powerful visual imagery of the dead child. Alan became the symbol of a loss of humanity. On the one hand, the evocative notion of 'humanity washed ashore' reiterated the fact that the little boy was himself part of humankind, who drowned in the sea. On the other, it provocatively suggested that human solidarity had come to nothing as the international community had failed to instil trust in his parents that an alternative was available, other than carrying their children on an unstable rubber boat to cross the sea. Notably, his family had asked for asylum in Canada, but their application had been declined as it was incomplete.[3]

Due to this general lack of international solidarity in the face of the hardships faced by asylum seekers, the refugee crisis has sometimes been called a 'crisis of humanity'.[4] One reason to speak of a 'crisis of humanity' is the scope of the refugee question, which affects people in all parts of the world. One only needs to glance at the list of countries that hosted the largest number of refugees at the peak of the crisis in 2015, led by Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, and Ethiopia, to realise the global dimensions of the issue.[5] A second reason why the dysfunctional political response to the unprecedented levels of mass displacement over the past few years can be considered a 'crisis of humanity' is that humanity as a moral ideal seemingly faltered, given that even countries that have vowed to safeguard human rights and protect the dignity and equality of all human beings look away as people continue to die in their attempts to find safety and meet increasingly stringent asylum requirements. Both of these aspects – that is, the global dimension and the apparent decline of humanity as a moral guideline for political action – are important for understanding the current crisis as a product of policies that seek to discourage potential asylum seekers from making onward journeys to safe havens, which seem to imply that asylum can only be won through risking one's life.

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[2] It is telling to note that Alan's father, Abdullah, was soon accused of having been a human smuggler, given that he steered the sinking boat. See: Richard Wheatstone, 'Tragic Aylan Kurdi's father was "people smuggler who led boat journey which killed his sons" – survivor claims,' *The Mirror*, 11 September 2015, available at: http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/tragic-aylan-kurdis-father-people-6426179 [last accessed: 1 February 2017].

[3] Jennifer Welsh, *The End of History: Conflict, migration, and geopolitics in the twenty-first century* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2016), p. 110.

[4] See: Zygmunt Bauman, *Strangers at Our Door* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p. 19. In a similar way, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker stated in an address to the European Parliament that dealing with this crisis is a 'matter of humanity and human dignity'. See: BBC, 'Migrant Crisis: EU's Juncker announces refugee quota plan,' 9 September 2015, available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34193568 [last accessed: 24 May 2017].

[5] For a global perspective on the crisis, see: Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the right to move* (London and New York: Verso, 2016).

Such policies suggest that the lives of the people involved are insufficiently valued as worthy of protection.[6]

The tragic death of Alan and so many like him thus reflects not only an incapacity to overcome domestic and international political cleavages and to uphold the moral and legal obligations that states have towards asylum seekers under the human rights framework, but may also entail a prior failure to engage with the pleas that refugees make on us as fellow human beings. In fact, one reason why the picture of Alan may have been considered so shocking by many is that it forcefully reaffirmed the fundamental similarity we share with people who for a long time have been portrayed predominantly as a risk to our way of life or as little more than pitiable creatures who in their despair do not constitute our moral counterparts. In the case of Alan, on the other hand, it was only too easy to imagine that he could have been one's son, brother, nephew, or grandchild.[7] Such identification generated an emotional engagement with his death, which does not usually befall migrants and asylum seekers. This thesis is concerned with this failure to attribute to people the moral status we ascribe to persons whom we consider fellow human beings and will critically assess whether such failures amount to dehumanisation.

A normative analysis of dehumanisation

The central aim of this thesis is to develop and defend a normative account of dehumanisation, illustrated by stories from the contemporary refugee crisis.[8] In reporting on the hardships that refugees and migrants face, several journalists and commentators have described these predicaments in the terms of dehumanisation - although not always rightly so, as I will argue in the thesis. For example, the rhetoric used by politicians to portray the arrival of migrants as natural

[6] This claim is supported by Tugba Basaran's insightful study of the way in which legal proceedings against people who have engaged in rescue at sea in the Strait of Sicily produces 'a distinction between worthy lives that fall within the duty to rescue and charitable lives becoming a question of benevolence' (205). See: Tugba Basaran, 'The Saved and the Drowned: Governing indifference in the name of security,' *Security Dialogue* 46 (2015): 205-220. The work of the political scientist Nick Vaughan-Williams on so-called 'push-back actions' and cases where irregular migrants are abandoned at sea also endorses this point. According to Vaughan-Williams, such cases reflect a political decision 'on the status of the lives of some "irregular" migrants as being unworthy of protection'. See: Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Europe's Border Crisis: Biopolitical security and beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 67.

[7] This sense of identification was also captured in the hashtag *#CouldBeMyChild*, which was used to spread the picture. See: Nadine El-Enancy, 'Aylan Kurdi: The human refugee,' *Law Critique* 27 (2016): 13.

[8] In the thesis, I will use the term 'refugee crisis' to refer to the chaotic political response in different parts of the world, but especially in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, to the rise in mass displacement occurring after the uprisings in the MENA region in 2011. It is important to note, however, that the term 'refugee crisis' has certain limitations as it has been rightly criticised for its Eurocentric focus and its depiction of loss of life and large-scale suffering as a consequence of unforeseeable catastrophe rather than as the outcome of (a lack of effective) policies (see: Chouliaraki and Zaborowski). The term has also been criticised for pointing to the arrival of large numbers of refugees, rather than the shortcomings of the existing asylum system, as the main cause of chaos (see: Patrick Kingsley, *The New Odyssey: The story of the European refugee crisis* (London: Guardian Faber Publishing, 2016), pp. 289-290).

disasters, the destitute living conditions in certain refugee camps, and the hostile policies devised by some countries to keep newcomers out have all been called dehumanising.[9]

In a similar vein, certain asylum seekers have decried the hardened treatment they have received at the hands of countries they believed would offer them protection. For instance, Hadish, a young Eritrean refugee, who lost his wife in a shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa in October 2013, tried to make his way to Switzerland, only to be returned to Italy where he was homeless and eating garbage. In detention in Germany, after a failed attempt to get to Sweden, he wonders why refugees and migrants are treated like this, asking '[a]ren't we human beings?'[10]

Another allusion to dehumanisation can be found in the testimony of Ibrahim, a detainee in one of the immigration detention centres off the shores of Australia, who speaks about having been treated worse than an animal. He claims that he needs '[t]o be respected as a human. To be treated as a human. So you can feel your humanity and dignity. […] they treated us as an animal, […] the manager of the camp has a dog, and I think the dog, he was luckier than me. Seriously.'[11]

These examples illustrate how the concept of dehumanisation features both explicitly and implicitly in commentaries on the refugee crisis and testimonies by refugees and asylum seekers.[12] This thesis will examine whether, in fact, we should speak of dehumanisation in these situations. It

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[9] See, for example: Jessica Elgot and Matthew Taylor, 'Calais Crisis: Cameron condemned for "dehumanising" description of migrants,' *The Guardian*, 30 July 2015, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jul/30/david-cameron-migrant-swarm-language-condemned [last accessed: 15 November 2016], Barçın Yinanç, 'Treating migrants like natural disasters "dehumanizing",' *Hürriyet*, 7 September 2015, available at: http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/treating-migrants-like-natural-disasters-dehumanizing.aspx?PageID=238&NID=88054&NewsCatID=359 [last accessed: 8 September 2017], Emina Ćerimović, 'Asylum Seekers' Hell in a Greek "Hotspot",' *Human Rights Watch*, 30 November 2017, available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/11/30/asylum-seekers-hell-greek-hotspot [last accessed: 1 December 2017], and Lauren Wroe, 'Social Workers Have a Duty to Speak Up About the Humanitarian Crisis in Calais,' *The Guardian*, 4 August 2015, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2015/aug/04/social-workers-humanitarian-crisis-calais [last accessed: 15 November 2016]. The question as to whether these different examples amount to dehumanisation will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

[10] Juliana von Mittelstaedt and Maximilian Popp, 'One Year After the Lampedusa Tragedy' (translated by Christopher Sultan), *Spiegel Online*, 9 October 2014, available at: http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/lampedusa-survivors-one-year-after-the-refugee-tragedy-a-994887.html, [last accessed: 8 September 2017].

[11] Lucy Fiske, 'Human Rights and Refugee Protest against Immigration Detention: Refugees' struggles for recognition as human,' *Refuge* 32: 22.

[12] In this thesis, the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' will be used for the most part interchangeably, although an asylum seeker officially becomes a refugee only after he or she has been granted this status by the authorities of the country of reception. It should be noted as well that there might be asylum seekers who are not refugees in the common-sense meaning of the term: that is, people who have fled their country of origin because of danger to their life or safety or the risk of persecution. In these cases, their claim for asylum will most probably be rejected but for as long as legal decisions are pending, they fall within the category of asylum seekers.

For the purposes of the thesis, both terms will be used to refer to people who have reached or are travelling towards a country that is not their country of origin and claim to have fled from persecution, armed conflict, or severe human rights violations, irrespective of whether the legal status of 'refugee' has been granted to them or not. In cases where people have not filed for asylum, the term 'refugee' will be used. In cases where people have filed for asylum but the grounds for these claims are less clear, the term 'asylum seeker' will be used. The term 'migrant' will be used only to refer to reports and scholarly works that do not focus specifically on refugees and asylum seekers but on people who move to and settle in countries for various reasons.

will do so by carrying out a conceptual and normative analysis of dehumanisation, the groundwork of which will be laid out in the first two chapters and which will be elaborated on in the subsequent chapters. While the treatment that asylum seekers and refugees receive may not be a classical case for the study of dehumanisation, as with genocide or slavery, I will suggest that the refugee crisis provides powerful illustrations of what it means to be perceived, portrayed, or treated as less than human.[13]

The concept of dehumanisation is also commonly used by scholars, journalists, and human rights activists to decry harmful forms of treatment to which asylum seekers and refugees are subjected. In many cases, however, as I will show in the third chapter, the concept is used in underdetermined, vague, or overly inclusive ways. This imprecise use, I will argue, obscures the precise meaning of the term and the unique moral wrongness of dehumanisation, which consists in excluding people from the moral community we share as fellow human beings through the failure to recognise them as interlocutors who can make normative claims. The refugee crisis therefore offers a rich context for scrutinising both how this term is commonly used and the practices and processes to which it refers.

Nonetheless, given that the central aim of this thesis is to develop and defend a normative account of dehumanisation, this study does not focus on analysing dehumanisation in the refugee crisis in general. The emphasis lies with identifying what dehumanisation entails and what its moral wrongness consists in through a conceptual analysis and normative theorising, rather than through conducting a comprehensive empirical study of the different facets of the dehumanising treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. The stories of refugees and asylum seekers that are presented in this thesis are therefore meant to serve as illustrations of the lived experience of dehumanisation that bring greater detail to the theoretical arguments developed in the earlier parts of the thesis.

Similarly, it is important to note that the analysis of dehumanisation that this thesis provides is normative, rather than descriptive. This means that I do not give a purely descriptive account of cases of dehumanisation, as historical and empirical perspectives generally tend to do, but rather endeavour to identify the moral wrongness of dehumanising practices.[14] Evidently, a normative

[13] In Chapter 3, I will show, however, that these examples do not always correspond to those practices that are most often considered to be dehumanising by scholars, journalists, and commentators.

[14] Some examples of descriptive accounts include a historical analysis of racist dehumanisation from the late 18th to mid-20th centuries in Europe and the United States, a linguistic study of different meanings of the concept that can be discerned in everyday language use, social-psychological surveys that examine how cultural background influences the shape that dehumanisation takes in different countries, and neurological research by cognitive scientists that identify the parts of the brain that are involved in dehumanisation.

See: Gustav Jahoda, 'An Anthropological History of Dehumanization from Late-18th until Mid-20th Centuries,' in Paul Bain, Jeroen Vaes, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens (eds.), *Humanness and Dehumanization* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 13-33, Karen Stollznow, 'Dehumanization in Language and Thought,' *Journal of Language and Politics* 7 (2008): 177-200, Paul Bain, Jeroen Vaes, Yoshihisa Kashima, Nick Haslam, and Yanjun Guan, 'Folk Conceptions of Humanness: Beliefs about distinctive and core human characteristics in Australia, Italy, and China,' *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 43 (2012): 53-58, Joonha Park, Nick Haslam, and Yoshihisa Kashima, 'Relational to the Core: Beliefs about human nature in

account needs to contain certain descriptive elements, just as a descriptive account of a morally laden concept such as dehumanisation cannot fully ignore normative considerations. Yet, the distinction lies in the fact that a normative study sets out as one of its explicit goals to establish why dehumanisation is morally wrong.

The relevance of humanity as a moral concept

In developing my normative account of dehumanisation, I will examine how people can fail to recognise the human status of persons through the way they perceive, represent, or treat them, either as individuals or as a group. It is important to note at the outset of the thesis that dehumanisation can be conceptualised in different ways and that this thesis does not pretend to develop a uniquely 'right' way of thinking about dehumanisation. Since people hold divergent views of what it means to be human and to be considered human, dehumanisation can mean different things to different persons. However, this does not entail that all these understandings are equally compelling. Some of these understandings, for example, will depend on controversial notions of what it means to be human, which exclude many individuals from the human category, while others may not be able to clearly explain why animals cannot be dehumanised.[15] A convincing account of dehumanisation, I argue, should be able to spell out what a failure to recognise people's humanity entails without drawing on vague, idealist, or otherwise controversial claims about what it means to be human.

The more specific aim of this thesis is to develop an account of dehumanisation that not only helps us understand what this failure to recognise humanity involves but also contributes to a better understanding of the unique moral wrong of dehumanisation and what should be done against it. In order to develop this account, the thesis will set out what the bare minimum of consideration is that people owe to one another and identify how this consideration manifests itself in the way we perceive, represent, and treat those persons we regard as human. The thesis will therefore first present a philosophical account of humanity as a normative notion, reflecting on what it means to be (considered) human.

In so doing, the thesis goes against a common current in contemporary philosophy, political theory, and history to reject substantive accounts of humanity. Approaches that seek to define what

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Japan, Korea, and Australia,' *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 43 (2012): 774-783, Anthony Jack, Abigail Dawson, and Megan Norr, 'Seeing Human: Distinct and overlapping neural signatures associated with two forms of dehumanization,' *Neuroimage* 79 (2013): 313-328, and Lasana Harris and Susan Fiske, 'Dehumanizing the Lowest of the Low: Neuroimaging responses to extreme outgroups,' *Psychological Science* 17 (2006): 847-853. For an accessible account of scientific findings on dehumanisation and anthropomorphism (i.e., the attribution of a human mind to objects, entities, and animals), see: Nicholas Epley, *Mindwise: Why we misunderstand what others think, believe, feel, and want* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014).

[15] More detailed counterarguments to alternative accounts of dehumanisation will be developed over the next chapters.

is fundamental to humanity have become suspect as scholars have claimed that they are often, if not always, too broad, encompassing more than just human beings, or too narrow, excluding people with more limited capacities. The philosopher Jacques Derrida stresses this point, for example, in his reflection upon the problematic character of accounts of humanity that focus on particular characteristics that all humans, and only humans, are supposed to possess:

> None of the traits by which the most authorized philosophy or culture has thought it possible to recognize this 'proper of man' – none of them is, in all rigor, the exclusive reserve of what we humans call human. Either because some animals also possess such traits, or because man does not possess it as surely as is claimed.[16]

In *The Politics of the Human*, the feminist political theorist Anne Phillips also argues that we should move beyond such substantive accounts because they function as markers of exclusion. She claims that 'the kinds of things humans are and do covers a vast (and often disturbing) range, and our judgements about which of these is essential to our humanity reflect, as much as anything, our preferences about how we like to see ourselves.'[17] Phillips simultaneously rejects the possibility of relying on minimalist conceptions of humanity, however, as she fears that this option would jeopardise the importance of difference and leave nothing more than 'a disembodied abstraction', which supports existing power relations.[18] Instead, she proposes that we should focus on a politics of the human, that is to say, on humanity as claim and commitment.

In a fairly similar way, the historian Michael Ignatieff argues in *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* against substantive groundings for human rights. He contends that foundational claims for human rights are confusing and controversial.[19] They are confusing because they do not make a clear distinction between what people factually are and what we would like them to be. When people claim, for example, that human rights are founded on the dignity of human beings they rely on an ideal of what people should be like, rather than on what they are in reality. Furthermore, such groundings are controversial because they depend upon metaphysical claims that can never be convincing to all. Ignatieff explains that when we ground human rights in the notion that human beings are sacred, for instance, this may be persuasive to believers, but less so to atheists. He concludes therefore that we should let go of such groundings and proposes instead to build a

[16] Jacques Derrida, 'Violence against Animals,' (translated by Jeff Fort), Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco (eds.), *For What Tomorrow… A dialogue* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 66.
[17] Anne Phillips, *The Politics of the Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 8-9.
[18] Idem, p. 14.
[19] Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 54.

defence for human rights based on their pragmatic value. He contends that 'people may not agree why we have rights, but they can agree that we need them.'[20]

Given the problematic track record of substantive accounts of humanity, Phillips and Ignatieff may well be right in favouring more practice-orientated approaches to justifying human rights, humanitarian aid, and global justice. At the same time, however, I argue that it would be unwise to abandon our attempts at clarifying what humanity consists of in a time when inhumanity looms large. The question of what humanity amounts to in a moral sense gains a particular urgency in a context where the Taliban carries out attacks on schools in order to keep pupils from receiving education, stones women to death for adultery, and cuts off the fingers of men who vote.[21] Similarly, an illustrative warning against complacency regarding the acceptance of human rights and the general moral framework that supports them can be found in practices in the Islamic State, where mass executions of so-called apostates, journalists, and dissenters are staged, the slave trade of Yazidi women and children is facilitated, and homosexuals are pushed of rooftops as a form of capital punishment.[22]

One might argue that the Taliban and Islamic State are precisely the kind of exceptions that prove the rule, given the general shock and indignation with which their barbarous acts are met. However, it is important to highlight that the notion of humanity may be jeopardised by more nuanced mechanisms of moral exclusion as well. In this way, the general failure of states to set up an effective system to prevent refugees and migrants from drowning in the Mediterranean forces us to reconsider what shared humanity in a normative sense amounts to in the contemporary world. Similarly, the general difference in moral outrage in Western countries in response to the massacre of twelve cartoonists, editors, and police officers by Muslim fundamentalists at *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, on the one hand, and the murder of 147 students and university workers by the terrorist group Al-Shabaab at Garissa University in Kenya, on the other, raises issues about how people experience the suffering of others who are differently situated from themselves. This difference in emotional engagement may simply follow from the fact that people generally feel more connected to victims who are closer and more similar to themselves. However, we should also consider the

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[20] Ignatieff, p. 55.

[21] See: Jon Henley, 'The Taliban's "Alarmingly Efficient" War on Education,' *The Guardian*, 21 December 2014. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2014/dec/21/taliban-alarmingly-efficient-war-education-peshawar-attack [last accessed: 2 March 2016], and Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2015: Afghanistan*. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/afghanistan [last accessed: 2 March 2016].

[22] See: UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, *Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria*, 14 November 2014, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469b2e14.html, [accessed 30 May 2017] and UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Human Rights Situation in Iraq in the Light of Abuses Committed by the So-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Associated Groups*, 13 March 2015, A/HRC/28/18, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/550ad5814.html [accessed 8 February 2017].

possibility that this lesser concern for deaths in Africa in Western countries may result from a failure to attribute to these individuals a minimal level of moral consideration that they are due as fellow human beings.

These reflections bring into sharp relief the question of what it means to be human, and to be considered human, and point out why it is problematic to forgo analyses of how our shared humanity ties us together in bonds of mutual obligations. To understand how dehumanisation affects these situations, we need a normative account of what it means to treat people as less than human, to deny their human identity or qualities, and to fail to attribute to them a certain minimum of moral consideration that is their due. This is not possible, however, without qualifying what humanity entails. In short, we cannot make sense of dehumanisation without a more detailed moral account of humanity.

In order to develop this normative account, I will engage in a semantic analysis, which yields the preliminary conclusion that dehumanisation consists in a process or practice that negatively affects humanity. To clarify what 'humanity' means in this context, three different forms of human status will be considered that relate to a biological, attributional, and normative conception of humanity, which are central to popular accounts of dehumanisation. By examining the implications of conceptualising dehumanisation on the basis of these three notions of humanity, I will argue that the central characteristic that renders acts dehumanising is the failure to recognise the *moral* standing that people hold as human beings. The thesis then turns to elaborating what constitutes this failure to recognise people's moral status. Through a philosophical analysis of the distinction between recognising people as fellow human beings and regarding them as animals or objects, I will suggest that this failure of recognition can best be understood through the theoretical lens of an exclusion from acts of moral claim-making. The conclusion that I will draw from this analysis is that dehumanisation involves a particular form of moral exclusion that consists in the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make normative claims.

This account of dehumanisation, which I call the 'moral interlocutor view', will be defended and developed further in the second part of the thesis. This part will bring greater detail to the argument through illustrations provided by first-hand accounts of refugees and asylum seekers of their experiences with dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, which were gathered during interviews. The third part will conclude the dissertation by specifying what the moral wrongness of dehumanisation consists in. Dehumanisation contains a unique moral wrong, so I will argue, because it undermines the very foundations of human morality in denying people the authority to make normative claims.

The need for a new account of dehumanisation

In presenting the moral interlocutor view, this thesis seeks to contribute to the academic literature by providing a normative account of dehumanisation that does not rely on any vague, idealist, or otherwise controversial claims about what it means to be human. With this account, the thesis seeks to remedy certain shortcomings in two distinct subfields of scholarship on dehumanisation. On the one hand, I emphasise the need to develop a normative account of dehumanisation as a necessary partner for prevailing empirical approaches by pointing out that the wrong done to people who are dehumanised is not simply a product of dehumanisation but constitutes part of its conceptual core. On the other hand, against the predominant approach in normative theorising on dehumanisation, which conceives of dehumanisation as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity, I highlight the importance of construing an account of dehumanisation that is clear and compelling by avoiding premises that are parochial or contentious.

To see how the moral interlocutor view can offer new insights into dehumanisation, it will be helpful to discuss a few recent developments in the field. An important shift in the study of dehumanisation occurred at the start of the millennium when a group of social psychologists, led by Jacques-Philippe Leyens, suggested that denials of humanity could be examined not only in contexts marked by extreme hostility, such as war or genocide, but also in more ordinary settings where prejudice and discrimination lead people to see others as inferior.[23] This less explicit form of denial of people's humanity was named *infra-humanisation* to emphasise the comparative dimension through which people perceive of others as lesser human beings. This account stood in contrast with previous scholarship on dehumanisation, which had concentrated almost exclusively on the role that propaganda, ideology, and euphemistic language play in the commission of genocide and mass atrocities. The pioneering work of the social psychologist Herbert Kelman is typical in this respect in its focus on dehumanisation as a contributing factor to the perpetration of state-sanctioned massacres.[24]

By emphasising the need to study less explicit and conscious denials of humanity as well, Leyens and his colleagues opened up new avenues for inquiry. The line of thought set out in their work has been successfully pursued by the social psychologist Nick Haslam who has developed a highly influential account of dehumanisation that focuses on the denial of unique and essential human

[23] Jacques-Philippe Leyens, Paola Paladino, Ramon Rodriguez-Torres, Jeroen Vaes, Stéphanie Dumoulin, Armando Rodriguez-Perez, and Ruth Gaunt, 'The Emotional Side of Prejudice: The attribution of secondary emotions to in-groups and out-groups,' *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 4 (2000): 186-197.

[24] Herbert Kelman, 'Violence Without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the dehumanization of victims and victimizers,' *Journal of Social Issues* 29 (1973): 25-61.

traits.[25] Haslam also argued that denials of humanness can take a variety of forms, which are not all captured effectively by the categories of infra-humanisation and dehumanisation.[26]

In highlighting the continuity between extreme and subtle denials of humanity, the contributions by Haslam and by Leyens et al. have provided an important stimulus for the field of dehumanisation studies and facilitated the operationalisation of dehumanisation as a factor in empirical research.[27] Yet, a drawback to this emphasis on the similarity between extreme and more subtle denials of humanity is that it makes it more difficult to see how dehumanisation differs from other exclusionary practices that attribute people an inferior social or moral status, such as discrimination, marginalisation, and stigmatisation. Moreover, the uniqueness of dehumanisation as a practice of moral exclusion becomes less apparent when it is conceptualised as being situated on a conceptual continuum where no clear boundaries exist between dehumanisation and infra-humanisation, as Haslam proposes.[28] This thesis seeks to resolve these problems by identifying what distinguishes dehumanisation from related exclusionary practices and by determining what constitutes the moral wrong of dehumanisation.

It is important to address this lack of conceptual clarity because it leads to misunderstandings about what dehumanisation entails and why it is morally wrong. This can be concluded from the fact that academics, journalists, and human rights activists alike have failed at various occasions to recognise that the normative implications of being considered or treated as *less than* human are importantly different from those of being considered or treated as a *lesser* human being, as will be discussed in more detail in the first chapter.

This lack of clear conceptual distinctions has also led to a discrepancy between the way in which dehumanisation is commonly conceived and the manner in which its moral wrongness is often accounted for. While dehumanisation is usually characterised by a denial of human identity or characteristics, thereby marking victims as less (than) human, the normative implications of dehumanisation are often described in terms that emphasise exclusion from a moral order shared by human beings.[29] However, if people are viewed, treated, or portrayed as *less* human, rather than as less *than* human, they are not actually excluded from the human moral order, but only attributed an

[25] Nick Haslam, 'Dehumanization: An integrative approach,' *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10 (2006): 252-264.
[26] Nick Haslam, 'What is Dehumanization?' in Paul Bain, Jacques-Philippe Leyens and Jeroen Vaes (eds.), *Humanness and Dehumanization* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 34-48
[27] Haslam's conceptual work on dehumanisation has formed the basis for several empirical studies, examining, for example, whether difference in cultural background affects understandings of 'humanness' (see: Bain et al. and Park, Haslam, and Kashima) and how these different forms of dehumanisation may be expressed in subtle ways, such as through discrimination and devaluation of members of outgroups (see: Paul Bain, Joonha Park, Christopher Kwok and Nick Haslam, 'Attributing Human Uniqueness and Human Nature to Cultural Groups: Distinct forms of subtle dehumanization,' *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 12 (2009): 789-805).
[28] Haslam, 'What is Dehumanization?', p. 35.
[29] Sometimes these issues are obscured by the use of the term 'subhuman', which can mean both 'less human' and 'less than human'.

inferior position within this order. Therefore, there is a mismatch between the way in which dehumanisation is commonly conceptualised and the moral consequences that dehumanisation allegedly produces.[30]

Furthermore, this misconception of what dehumanisation entails leads to mistaken ideas of how it should be countered. If our understanding of dehumanisation includes viewing, portraying or treating people as *less human* (and is thus not restricted to viewing, portraying or treating people as *less than human*, as I propose), this leads to an overly demanding view of how to respond to dehumanisation. After all, it would not suffice to guarantee all human beings a minimal recognition of their moral status as fellow human beings. Rather, all human beings should be considered equally human. In upholding this more ambitious idea of what it means to prevent or redress dehumanisation, a basic fact of human sociality is lost from sight, namely that people often fail to attribute an equal status to others, even if they do recognise these others as fellow human beings.[31]

It is crucial to pay attention to these normative considerations because dehumanisation is not used solely as a descriptive marker to make sense of psychological, social, or representational processes through which people (come to) attribute lesser humanity to people, but also – and importantly – as a term to denounce particular ways in which people are treated.[32] When people are said to dehumanise others, this is in the first place a reproach. To understand better this accusative function of the term, we need to analyse how dehumanisation wrongs or harms people.[33] The central focus of this thesis is therefore to formulate an answer to this question, which can help us understand better where the boundary between dehumanisation and infra-humanisation should be drawn and what is morally at stake in dehumanisation.

Regarding normative scholarship on dehumanisation, the predominant view in this field conceptualises dehumanisation as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity.[34] The notion

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[30] This tendency can be seen at work, for instance, in an article by human rights scholars Lisa Hartley and Caroline Fleay on the dehumanising effects of asylum-seeker policies in Australia. Based on Haslam's account, Hartley and Fleay define dehumanisation as 'the psychological process of attributing lesser humanity to others, where "humanness" refers to attributes that define what it is to be human' (48-49). Yet, later in the article they suggest that dehumanisation entails being excluded from the human category in arguing that 'dehumanisation involves presenting people as outside of the moral community' (61) and claiming that victims' appeals to human rights should be read as attempts of 'realigning themselves to the human category' (61). However, if people are only attributed 'lesser humanity' and not necessarily considered less than human, people are thereby not presented as being outside the moral community (of human beings) and victims would therefore not have to attempt to realign themselves with the human category. See: Lisa Hartley and Caroline Fleay, '"We Are Like Animals": Negotiating dehumanising experiences of asylum-seeker policies in the Australian community,' *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 36 (2017): 45-63.

[31] The existence of unequal relations of recognition between people will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

[32] On this function, see: Stollznow: 177-178.

[33] In this thesis, the distinction between 'wronging' and 'harming' is understood as follows: 'wronging' entails treating someone in a way that is not good from a moral point of view, whereas 'harming' entails injuring someone.

[34] The centrality of human dignity in contemporary normative accounts of dehumanisation derives for the most part from the enduring influence of Kantian ethics, which posits that humanity, whether in oneself or in another person, should always be treated as an end, and never merely as a means. Another important source for the prevalence of human dignity

of human dignity is central, for example, to the influential account of Kelman, mentioned above, who defines dehumanisation as a violation of human dignity that consists in ignoring differences that make persons unique individuals or overlooking similarities that bind people together in a human community.[35] Human dignity also plays a key role in studies of dehumanisation in medical ethics.[36] Furthermore, human dignity based accounts of dehumanisation have been used to condemn a wide array of practices as dehumanising, including torture,[37] rape,[38] and pornography.[39]

The notion of human dignity is important not only for many scholarly works on dehumanisation but for common understandings of this term as well. This can be concluded, for example, from the fact that people who feel dehumanised frequently describe this experience in the terms of a loss of dignity. This tendency can be seen, for instance, in the testimony of Roula, a Syrian refugee who lives in one of the reception centres on Lesvos, called Moria. Roula ties dehumanisation and dignity closely together when she states that 'there is no peace, no safety, no dignity in Moria. It's worse than jail. We are not treated as belonging to society, as human beings.'[40] Given the centrality of human dignity in scholarly – as well as popular - accounts of dehumanisation, it will be an important task of this thesis, in the second chapter, to consider the degree to which human dignity accounts can help clarify what dehumanisation entails and how it wrongs or harms people.[41]

This discussion will proceed from the idea that tying dehumanisation to violations of human dignity seems promising, at least at first sight, because the concept of universal human dignity speaks to the notion of an intrinsic and inalienable worth that people possess by virtue of being

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in western accounts of dehumanisation are Christian doctrines, which maintain that human dignity is bestowed on people because they have a soul and free will, which make them hold a special position in the divine order of things. A more detailed discussion of human dignity accounts of dehumanisation will be provided in Chapter 2.

[35] Kelman, 'Violence Without Moral Restraint' and Herbert Kelman, 'The Conditions, Criteria, and Dialectics of Human Dignity: A transnational perspective,' *International Studies Quarterly* 21 (1977): 529-552.

[36] Jacques-Philippe Leyens, 'Humanity Forever in Medical Dehumanization,' in Paul Bain, Jacques-Philippe Leyens and Jeroen Vaes (eds.), *Humanness and Dehumanization* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 167-185.

[37] David Luban, 'Human Dignity, Humiliation and Torture,' *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 19 (2009): 211-230 and David Luban,'Treatment of Prisoners and Torture,' in Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword and Dietmar Mieth (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 446-453.

[38] Jeroen Vaes, Steve Loughnan and Elisa Puvia, 'The Inhuman Body: When sexual objectification becomes dehumanizing,' in Paul Bain, Jacques-Philippe Leyens and Jeroen Vaes (eds.), *Humanness and Dehumanization* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 186-204, John Gardner and Stephen Shute, 'The Wrongness of Rape,' in Jeremy Horder (ed.), *Oxford Essays in Jurisprudence: Fourth series* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 193-217, and Sophie Oliver, 'Dehumanization: Perceiving the body as (in)human,' in Paulus Kaufmann, Hannes Kuch, Christian Neuhäuser and Elaine Webster (eds.), *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization: Human dignity violated* (Library of Ethics and Applied Philosophy) (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London and New York: Springer, 2010), pp. 85-100.

[39] Andrea Dworkin, 'Against the Male Flood: Censorship, pornography, and equality,' in Drucill Cornell (ed.), *Feminism and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Linda LeMoncheck *Dehumanizing Women: Treating persons as sex objects* (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985).

[40] As cited in: Ćerimović.

[41] While the notion of human dignity is central to many studies that take a normative approach to the study of dehumanisation, some notable exceptions to this rule include the work of Judith Butler, Richard Rorty, Axel Honneth, and Mari Mikkola, which will be discussed in later chapters.

human, which proscribes particular ways in which human beings may be treated. One could therefore argue that people are wronged when they are dehumanised because their human dignity is undermined or violated, as their intrinsic worth as human beings is not recognised. Understanding dehumanisation in terms of a fundamental violation or deprivation of universal human dignity thus captures the idea that dehumanisation revolves around degrading the normative status of victims as human beings, which corresponds to the emphasis placed on moral devaluation in testimonies by victims of dehumanisation.[42]

However, I will suggest that such human dignity based accounts of dehumanisation are problematic because the concept of universal human dignity is itself controversial. One important critique of this notion claims that it remains elusive what the concept of human dignity expresses that cannot be expressed by a concrete description of the nature, or features, of human beings.[43] If human dignity simply refers to a particular quality to human life or certain traits that human beings factually possess, it is unclear why we need the separate notion of human dignity. If the concept captures something more that cannot be fully expressed by reference to the quality of human life or the traits that human beings actually have, this raises the question of where human dignity derives from. If this 'something more' cannot be captured by reference to a quality or trait that can be described concretely, it seems that it amounts to a dogma, rather than a moral argument that holds persuasive force.[44] These considerations raise doubts about whether human dignity can form a stable foundation for our conception of dehumanisation.[45]

This brief review suggests that what the academic literature needs is a normative account of dehumanisation that does not depend on any such controversial foundations. We should move beyond theories that rely on abstract or idealist sources, such as the notion of human dignity, to ground our understanding of dehumanisation. As a more promising alternative, I argue for and present the moral interlocutor view as an account of dehumanisation that builds upon the interpersonal relations and interactions that underpin human morality.

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[42] The idea of moral devaluation is central to many accounts of survivors of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. See, for example: Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: The classic tribute to hope from the Holocaust* (London: Rider, 2008), Primo Levi, *If This is a Man / The Truce* (translated by Stuart Woolf) (London: Abacus, 1991), and Robert Antelme, *The Human Race* (translated by Jeffrey Haight and Annie Mahler) (Marlboro: Marlboro Press, 1998).

[43] This critique is voiced by Phillips, p. 86.

[44] Regarding this point, Peter Singer has argued that '[p]hilosophers frequently introduce ideas of dignity, respect, and worth at the point at which reasons appear to be lacking, but this is hardly good enough. Fine phrases are the last resort of those who have run out of arguments.' See: Peter Singer, *Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 228.

[45] This critique, as well as two other critiques that focus on vagueness and idealisation, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

New insights into dehumanisation

This thesis presents three important new insights into dehumanisation. The first novel idea that I introduce is that dehumanisation consists in a failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims. The dissertation thereby offers the first analysis of dehumanisation as an exclusion from discursive normative interactions.

The moral interlocutor view of dehumanisation is derived through a series of four argumentative steps, starting out with the semantic analysis of the first chapter, described above, which yields the insight that dehumanisation can be tentatively defined as a practice or process that negatively affects humanity. The second step in the argument, which is also performed in the first chapter, specifies how humanity is to be understood in this definition. Through a comparison of three conceptions of humanity that are central to popular accounts of dehumanisation (i.e. the biological, attributional, and normative conception), I will argue that dehumanisation should be conceived as a failure to recognise the *moral* standing that people hold as human beings.

The third step in the argument will identify what distinguishes relating to people as fellow human beings (in a moral sense) from relating to them as animals. To do so, I will compare normatively laden relations and interactions that (can) exist and take place between people with those that are conceivable between human beings and animals.[46] Drawing on important works in philosophy, biology, and developmental psychology, I will conclude in the second chapter that human normative interactions are importantly characterised by the fact that human beings can express normative claims to one another in a way that is not similarly conceivable between people and animals. While this step identifies a discursive factor as central to recognising people as human beings, the fourth, and last, step in the argument highlights the importance of attributing normative force to such acts of claim-making.

The final step in constructing my normative account focuses on the difference between relating to people as human beings and relating to them as objects. This last step takes as its starting point the conclusion from the proceeding step, according to which the relations and interactions that (can) exist and take place between people differ from those that are conceivable between human beings

[46] In the thesis, the term 'animals' will be used to refer to non-human animals. I prefer the term 'animals' for brevity's sake, but this is not to deny that human beings are also a particular type of animal. It should also be noted that the term 'animals' is a broad category that groups together very dissimilar beings, such as chimpanzees, mice, and worms, and can be used, as Derrida has insightfully pointed out, as a vague concept that obscures the great similarities that exist between human beings and those animals most similar to human beings. In order to set up a more difficult test for my account, I will therefore compare, whenever possible, the interactions and relations that (can) exist and take place between human beings with interactions and relations that are conceivable between people and those animals that are most similar to human beings, such as chimpanzees, rather than use the general and less precise notion of 'animals'.

See: Jacques Derrida, 'The Animal that Therefore I Am (More to Follow)' (translation by David Wills) in Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 400.

and animals because of the fact that people can make claims on one another, whereas human beings and animals cannot. This last step will address the question as to whether the proposed view of dehumanisation as an exclusion from acts of moral claim-making can also account for the difference between regarding people as human beings and relating to them as objects. The answer I will formulate to this question concentrates on the idea that while certain objects – such as robots or computers – can be programmed to make claims on people, these claims cannot be considered *moral* claims for as long as they are not grounded in a basic understanding of what is good and bad, and right and wrong, as well as a concern for the (potential) suffering and well-being involved. What this helps us see is that it does not suffice to merely view people as claim-makers but that their claims also need to be considered *moral* claims if people are not to be dehumanised. Based on these four argumentative steps, I will define dehumanisation as a form of moral exclusion that consists in the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

The second original insight that the thesis presents is that the moral wrongness of dehumanisation is *sui generis* because it consists in 'moral silencing'. Moral silencing entails that people lose their voice as moral interlocutors, at least within their interaction(s) with the perpetrator(s) of dehumanisation. This constitutes a unique moral wrong because it undermines the very foundations of human morality, which is fundamentally enabled and shaped by the possibility for people to make normative claims vis-à-vis one another.

An important implication of this account is that the moral wrongness of dehumanisation significantly differs from that of other exclusionary practices, such as marginalisation or stigmatisation. This is the case, as I will argue in the third chapter, because dehumanisation does not simply weaken people's position within a given social or moral community, as related exclusionary practices do, but entails that victims are no longer recognised as moral counterparts in any significant sense, as they fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make normative claims. This constitutes a fundamental difference because only when people are dehumanised, do they lose the ability to effectively stand up for themselves and call perpetrators into account. It is thus wrong to view, portray, or treat people in ways that fail to acknowledge their human status in a moral sense – that is to say, that do not recognise them as interlocutors who can make moral claims – because this undermines the basis for normative interactions between people.

This insight is relevant not only for understanding what distinguishes dehumanisation from related exclusionary practices, but also for comprehending how dehumanisation facilitates the perpetration of forms of mistreatment that otherwise would not be deemed acceptable forms of conduct towards fellow human beings. Several scholars of dehumanisation have observed that exclusion from the moral order that people share as human beings can lead to severe forms of

mistreatment.[47] Yet, the notion of moral exclusion is often in itself taken to be a sufficient explanation for why mistreatment becomes conceivable in the eyes of the perpetrator(s), rather than as a first step in a larger argument that specifies the dynamics of this exclusionary process. The moral interlocutor view spells out in more detail how dehumanisation facilitates the infliction of mistreatment through the argument, developed in the sixth chapter, that norms that set limits to the treatment of fellow human beings are set, negotiated, and upheld through discursive interactions from which the dehumanised are excluded.

The third important contribution of the thesis is to clarify how dehumanisation should be conceived of within the context of the refugee crisis. The principal argument here is that dehumanisation does not consist in viewing, portraying, or treating people as *less* human, but only in viewing, portraying, or treating them as *less than* human. This occurs when people are viewed, portrayed, or treated in ways that fail to recognise their status as interlocutors who can make moral claims. Based on this idea, the thesis will challenge prevalent views of the dehumanisation of refugees and asylum seekers by revealing their limits. More specifically, the second part of the thesis will show why dehumanisation should not be conflated with fundamental rights violations or the deprivation of basic needs. In the fourth chapter, I will argue that fundamental rights violations cannot be held to be identical to dehumanisation because forms of dehumanisation exist that do not take the form of a violation or infringement of a (legal) right. Moreover, not all fundamental rights violations necessarily entail a failure to regard or treat victims as interlocutors who can make moral claims. In some cases where fundamental rights are violated, people may still be perceived as partaking in acts of moral claim-making, although in a limited sense, whereby their appeals can easily be discarded or dismissed.

In the fifth chapter, I will argue that deprivation of basic needs does not necessarily amount to dehumanisation either. This is the case because deprivation may result from a lack of resources, emergency situations, bad planning, or even a lack of concern for the well-being of the people concerned, due to forms of moral exclusion that fall short of dehumanisation, such as discrimination, marginalisation, stigmatisation, or infra-humanisation. These causes do not require that people fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims. After all, the claims of refugees and asylum seekers can be considered, though not met, because of inability, inefficiency, or indifference.

[47] Accounts that maintain that dehumanisation facilitates the mistreatment of the dehumanised through moral exclusion include, for example, Kelman, 'Violence Without Moral Restraint,' Susan Opotow, 'Moral Exclusion and Injustice: An Introduction,' *Journal of Social Issues* 46 (1990): 1-20, and Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: How good people turn evil* (London: Rider, 2007), pp. 307-313.

Normative theorising and interview methods

The prevalent approach throughout this thesis is that of normative theorising. 'Theorising' consists in formulating a conceptual framework for understanding a particular subject matter. 'Normative' refers to what is (considered) good and bad or right and wrong. 'Normative theorising' therefore involves the practice of developing an account of the evaluative characteristics of a subject matter in ethical terms. The aim of this thesis is thus to set out what dehumanisation entails with particular attention to its moral dimensions. The outcomes of this process can be evaluated on the basis of the consistency of the developed arguments, the relation between the premises and observations of facts or general knowledge about the world, and the extent to which the conclusions reached appear reasonable and acceptable to us. What is produced by this method is a theory that provides an account of the analysed subject matter that can be considered more or less persuasive. This corresponds to the claim, made above, that this thesis does not pretend to offer a uniquely 'right' way of thinking about dehumanisation. Rather, it aims to provide an account that is compelling to a large and diverse audience by avoiding, as much as possible, controversial claims about what it means to be human.

The conviction that normative theorising should focus on providing arguments to convince people of reasonable conclusions, rather than endeavour to uncover moral truths, follows from my meta-ethical standpoint. While, on the one hand, I hold that there exist no moral facts in the Platonist sense of the term, on the other hand, I maintain that moral norms and principles are not completely relativist either. Moral norms and principles, in my view, are sustained by universal characteristics of human existence and generally seek to promote peaceful coexistence (at least between members of one's social group) and lessen suffering (of those who are considered worthy of moral consideration). Moral norms and principles thus neither mirror moral truths that are accessible through pure reason, nor consist of subjective opinions. Rather, normativity arises in an intersubjective way as moral norms and principles are established, negotiated, and rejected through interpersonal processes of claim-making, as I will set out in more detail in the sixth chapter.

To develop my normative account of dehumanisation, I base my arguments not only on general knowledge, experience, and observation, but also on studies in developmental psychology, biology, and philosophy. These studies provide insights in what characterises human beings and their (normative) relations and interactions and can therefore be useful in constructing an account of what dehumanisation entails. The account that this thesis presents also draws from stories of refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, as either victims or witnesses. These stories serve to illustrate and refine the moral interlocutor view of dehumanisation.

This approach is fairly similar to the one employed by the political theorist Michael Walzer, who draws on historical illustrations to develop and clarify his normative arguments on the ethics of war in *Just and Unjust Wars*.[48] An important difference lies, however, in the fact that this thesis does not make use of historical examples but draws from personal stories, which were recounted to me during interviews that I conducted with refugees and asylum seekers. This interview material is complemented with first-person accounts that have been published in newspaper articles, scholarly works, and reports by international organisations, such as UNHCR and Human Rights Watch.[49]

For this thesis, I interviewed thirty refugees and asylum seekers in Germany, Lebanon, and Italy.[50] The aim of the interviews was to learn about their experiences with dehumanisation and related practices of exclusion and disrespect. [51] To this end, the participants were asked questions about what it means to them to be a refugee, how their life has changed since they became a refugee, what challenges they face as a refugee, etc.[52] Given that the purpose of the interviews was to understand better how refugees and asylum seekers experience dehumanisation and other forms of exclusionary treatment, the most suitable approach for the interviews was deemed to be interpretative phenomenological analysis.[53] This approach focuses on the way in which people make sense of important events in their lives.

From interpretative phenomenological analysis, this research took the interview procedure of one-on-one semi-structured interviews and the approach to drawing up the interview guide with questions that encourage participants to speak at length about the phenomenon under study. The interview guide therefore included predominantly open questions that allowed participants to recount detailed stories and indicate which topics they felt comfortable speaking about. Follow-up questions were asked to encourage participants to speak about issues that were particularly relevant for the research. The three main themes that emerged from the interviews were the loss of a sense of value, the violation of fundamental rights, and the deprivation of basic needs.

The three chapters that make up the second part of the thesis pay particular attention to these themes. The material gathered during the interviews was thus helpful in structuring this part of the thesis by highlighting themes that asylum seekers and refugees hold to be central to their

[48] Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A moral argument with historical illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).
[49] The large majority of the refugee stories recounted in this thesis derive from the interviews I conducted with refugees and asylum seekers. Whenever an account derives from a different source, this will be indicated by footnotes.
[50] For this thesis, 30 refugees and asylum seekers were interviewed in Frankfurt am Main from 12 until 20 June 2017, in Beirut from 12 until 28 July 2017, and in Milan on 26 and 27 September 2017. Most of the interview participants came from Syria, but I also spoke with people from Iraq, Pakistan, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, and Gambia. The interviewees included refugees and asylum seekers who were living in Lebanon at the time of the interview or reached Europe through the Balkan or Libyan route.
[51] For a more detailed description of the interview methodology, see Appendix 1.
[52] For the interview guide, see Appendix 2.
[53] Jonathan Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, method and research* (London: Sage, 2009).

experiences with exclusionary practices. It is important to emphasise, however, that the interviews did not serve as the basis to develop an inductive account of dehumanisation in the refugee crisis but rather to illustrate the workings of the moral interlocutor view of dehumanisation in more detail.

Outline of the thesis

The central aim of this thesis is to develop and defend a normative account of dehumanisation. To this end, the first chapter will engage in a semantic analysis of dehumanisation that forms the basis for an inquiry into how humanity can be negatively affected through processes of representation, perception, and mistreatment. This chapter will examine three different types of human status, which relate to a biological, attributional, and normative conception of humanity. The main argument that this chapter develops is that the central characteristic that renders acts dehumanising is the failure to recognise the *moral* standing that people hold as human beings.

The second chapter further develops this notion of a failure to recognise the moral standing of human beings. This chapter criticises accounts that view dehumanisation as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity, arguing that while this perspective rightly highlights the fact that dehumanising practices revolve around disregard for the moral standing of people, it depends on a controversial notion that fails to offer a stable foundation for our understanding of dehumanisation. As an alternative, the failure to recognise human moral status that is central to dehumanising practices can better be understood through the theoretical lens of an exclusion from acts of moral claim-making. Drawing on this approach, I will argue that dehumanisation should be seen as a failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral appeals.

The next part of the thesis will illustrate and deepen the moral interlocutor view through first-person accounts of refugees and asylum seekers regarding dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices. The main objective of the third chapter is to draw important conceptual and normative distinctions between dehumanisation and related processes of exclusion and disrespect, such as humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment. The defining aspect of dehumanisation, I contend, is the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims. Failing to view people as counterparts in a moral community of communication entails that their appeals become inaudible or lose their force as moral appeals.

The fourth chapter challenges views that conflate dehumanisation with fundamental rights violations. While I argue that fundamental rights violations do not necessarily entail dehumanisation, given that some forms of dehumanisation do not take the form of a violation of (legal) rights and not all fundamental rights violations entail a failure to regard the victim as an interlocutor who can make moral claims, I contend that at least two types of violations of fundamental rights are per definition

dehumanising, namely, slavery and torture. Slavery and torture constitute dehumanisation *ipso facto* because these practices cannot occur without failing to recognise the victims as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

The fifth chapter scrutinises the relation between dehumanisation and the deprivation of basic needs. Here, I argue that dehumanisation always entails a certain type of deprivation of basic needs because being recognised as a moral interlocutor is a basic human need. However, deprivation of basic (material) needs does not necessarily amount to dehumanisation, given that such deprivation does not require that people fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

Based on the insights drawn from the preceding chapters, the last part of the thesis will return to the original theoretical arguments and refine the account of what dehumanisation entails and what its moral wrongness consists in. Dehumanisation, so I will argue in sixth chapter, contains a unique moral wrong because victims fail to be considered as counterparts in a shared discursive moral community. Unlike humiliation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation, which still presume the inclusion of the victim in a moral community of communication, although in a weakened position, dehumanisation entails the rejection of the victim as a moral interlocutor. The moral wrongness of dehumanisation therefore lies in 'moral silencing', which entails that people lose their voice as moral interlocutors within their interaction(s) with the perpetrator(s) of dehumanisation. Moral silencing constitutes a unique moral wrong because it undermines the very foundations of human morality, which is fundamentally enabled and shaped by the possibility for people to make moral claims on one another.

PART I

1. Dehumanisation and Moral Status

'This something in front of me belongs to a species which it is obviously opportune to suppress.'

Primo Levi, *If This is a Man*

Dehumanisation and humanity

Dehumanisation involves the paradoxical perception, portrayal, or treatment of a human being as something that is not human. In his chilling recollections of life and death in Auschwitz, Primo Levi offers an intriguing account of this strange phenomenon when he recounts his meeting with Dr. Pannwitz, the head of the chemical department who was to evaluate whether Levi might be of use to the Nazis as a chemist. Levi recalls how the look Pannwitz gave him suggested that they belonged to different worlds, as if they were members of different species:

> Pannwitz is tall, thin, blond; he has eyes, hair and nose as all Germans ought to have them, and sits formidably behind a complicated writing-table. I, Häftling 174517, stand in his office, which is a real office, shining, clean, and ordered, and I feel that I would leave a dirty stain whatever I touched. When he finished writing, he raised his eyes and looked at me. […] that look was not one between two men; and if I had known how completely to explain the nature of that look, which came as if across the glass window of an aquarium between two beings who live in different worlds, I would also have explained the essence of the great insanity of the third Germany.[1]

The insanity that bewildered Levi concerns the question of how it was possible for Nazi ideology to distort human relations to such an extent that it allowed people to view other human beings as fundamentally different from themselves. Many aspects of the scenario that Levi sketches invoke the human dimensions of the scene taking place: the neat office, Levi's nervous concern about his dirty state, the objective of assessing the practical value of Levi's chemical expertise for the Germans. Yet, Pannwitz considered the subject in front of him as something altogether distinct from himself. As Michael Ignatieff puts it, '[h]ere was a scientist, trained in the traditions of European rational inquiry, turning a meeting between two human beings into an encounter between different species.'[2]

This situation speaks to the paradox of a human who is not considered human. The story raises the question of what kind of creature Pannwitz believed he was speaking to as he interviewed Levi about his education and research experience. Did he genuinely believe that Levi was something less than human, or could he perhaps have considered him a lesser form of human? Moreover, it may

[1] Levi, *If This is a Man*, pp. 111-112.
[2] Ignatieff, p. 3.

strike us as disconcerting how a belief in the fundamentally different nature of the Jews could be upheld in view of the fact that they lived, spoke, and died just like other human beings.

The distancing glance that mystified Levi not only constitutes a key element to understanding how the atrocities of the Nazis against the Jews, gypsies, gays, and disabled could be perpetrated, but also allegedly played a role in the gruesome deeds that were committed during the Rape of Nanking, the massacre at My Lai, and the Rwandan genocide, to name only few examples. The paradox of a human who is not considered human continues to unsettle our understanding, as grave violence is being done to people to this day. Although people may also treat each other abysmally when they recognise each other's humanity, dehumanisation often appears to be a factor in facilitating massacres and genocide.[3] Therefore, understanding dehumanisation may indeed help explain, as Levi claimed, the essence of the great insanity that lies at the heart of some of the worst atrocities committed against human beings.

Levi's reflections point to the relevance of comprehending what occurs in cases of dehumanisation, but also to the striking complexity of this task. This chapter addresses these issues by engaging in a semantic analysis that yields an understanding of dehumanisation as a process or practice that negatively affects humanity. Considering three conceptions of humanity, the main argument of this chapter is that dehumanisation should be understood as a failure to recognise the *moral* status that people hold as human beings.

This argument is directed against two popular ways in which dehumanisation is often viewed by the general public and in the social sciences. In common understandings, dehumanisation is mostly seen as a denial of people's *biological* humanity that may take the form, for example, of persons being represented as cockroaches or treated as cattle. Social psychologists, on the other hand, often assume that dehumanisation is not usually directed against the biological status of those who are dehumanised, but targets particular human *attributes*, such as rationality or civility. According to this perspective, people are dehumanised when they are viewed, portrayed, or treated as beings that lack fundamental human characteristics.

This chapter contends that although both of these accounts yield valuable insights into dehumanisation, these perspectives should be seen as describing particular subtypes of

[3] Dehumanisation is often identified as a factor that facilitates the perpetration of massacres and genocide, for example, in the work of genocide scholars Gregory Stanton and Rowan Savage. It should be noted, however, that the link between dehumanisation and massacre is not deterministic. As the sociologist Leo Kuper has insightfully pointed out, 'there may be dehumanization without massacre – this is surely the general case – and presumably massacre without dehumanization' (p. 92). See: Gregory Stanton, *The Eight Stages of Genocide*. First Working Paper of the Yale Program in Genocide Studies, 1998, available at: http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/8StagesBriefingpaper.pdf [last accessed: 29 November 2016], Rowan Savage, 'Modern Genocidal Dehumanization: A new model,' *Patterns of Prejudice* 47 (2013): 139-161, and Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its political use in the twentieth century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). For a further discussion and list of references on the link between dehumanisation and the perpetration of mass atrocity crimes, see: Chapter 4, footnote 17.

dehumanisation, which is better conceived as a failure to recognise people as human in a normative sense. Therefore, dehumanisation should be viewed as a failure to recognise the *moral* status that people hold as human beings, which may include, but is not limited to, particular ways of portraying humans as animals or considering them as being deprived of fundamental human qualities.

Defining dehumanisation through a semantic analysis

To come to a better understanding of what dehumanisation entails, it will be helpful to consider first what the term itself can teach us.[4] The three elements that make up the word 'de-human-isation' indicate that it refers to a process or practice that negatively affects humanity. To start with the last component, the suffix ' –isation' refers to a process or practice, or the result of a process of production, as is the case for 'colonisation', 'civilisation', 'generalisation', and 'radicalisation'. The term 'human' indicates that this process relates to the quality of being human, or 'humanity'. The prefix 'de' denotes the negativity of this process or practice. This prefix indicates opposition, negation, privation, removal, or separation, in part or in whole, as can be seen in 'deconstructive', 'deforestation', and 'decapitation'. Dehumanisation can thus be tentatively defined as *a practice or process, or its result, which negatively affects humanity*.

When we consider this definition, much still remains unclear about the meaning of the term. It is not apparent, for example, in what way practices of processes of dehumanisation can negatively affect humanity. Does dehumanisation take humanity away or should we rather think of it as a failure to acknowledge a status from which people cannot, in any real sense, be deprived? We could think of dehumanisation, on the one hand, as a denial of human status, which may take the form of likening people to cockroaches or treating them as if they were dogs. On the other hand, we might think of dehumanisation as a process that attempts to take the human out of the human being, for example, by forcing people to live under conditions of severe destitution or terror, which makes it impossible for them to engage in meaningful human activities. In his testimony of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps, Levi describes, for instance, the condition of certain inmates who were unable to longer resist the Nazi attempt to break their will, claiming that 'their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before being snuffed out, they had already lost the ability to observe, to remember, compare and express themselves.'[5]

It seems evident that in the cases that Levi describes, the lives of people had lost their human dimension. Yet, it would be more controversial to claim that these people themselves had also lost

[4] In his influential studies on conceptual analysis, the political scientist Giovanni Sartori claims that the word itself should form the starting point for any search for the meaning of a concept. He thus argues that '[w]e express what we mean (what we have in mind) by picking from within the ambit of our natural language the "right words"' (p. 17). Although not all words follow this pattern of expressing the meaning of an idea in a self-evident way, 'dehumanisation' clearly contains semantic meaning. See: Giovanni Sartori, *Social Science Concepts: A systematic analysis* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1984).
[5] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (translated by Raymond Rosenthal) (London: Abacus, 1989), p. 64.

their humanity. After all, if people can lose their humanity through this type of mistreatment, the Nazis were right in their conviction that people can be reduced to something less than human by manipulating the conditions under which they are placed. This historical example thus raises doubts about what it means to be human. Is 'human' something that we intrinsically are, or is it a quality to our life and existence that may be lost if the conditions under which we find ourselves deteriorate significantly? Although these questions are fundamental, they cannot yet be answered at this point in the thesis.[6]

For now, I conclude that we may need to conceive of dehumanisation as a concept that holds different meanings, rather than view it as a univocal notion. In a linguistic analysis of the various senses of the concept that can be discerned in everyday language use, the linguist Karen Stollznow argues in a similar vein that dehumanisation should be understood as a polysemous term that has three interrelated meanings.[7] According to Stollznow, dehumanisation can refer to a process of *mechanisation* through which a human element is taken out of a process, for example, when manual labour is replaced by robotic technology. Dehumanisation can also take the form of *objectification/animalisation*, through which people are identified with animals or objects and thus perceived as less (than) human. Lastly, dehumanisation can entail *brutalisation*, which means that people come to possess or display less humanity through the numbing of their feelings of compassion and empathy for others.

Since this thesis analyses the dehumanisation of people (rather than processes), mechanisation is not of interest to this study. Animalisation, objectification, and brutalisation, on the contrary, provide interesting conceptual starting points to think about what the dehumanisation of persons entails.[8] Animalisation draws on a biological sense of humanity, which is negatively affected when people are likened to non-human animals, such as rats or cockroaches. Objectification revolves around viewing, portraying, or treating people as objects, lacking in fundamental human traits or qualities, such as a will of one's own or (deep-felt) emotions. Brutalisation, lastly, speaks to a normative sense of humanity. Through brutalisation, people allegedly become less human(e), in the sense that they become (largely) insensitive to the suffering of fellow (human) beings.

These three processes correspond to three ways in which dehumanisation is commonly perceived. Animalisation speaks to a failure to acknowledge people's biological humanity, which is central to

[6] To foreshadow my argument on this issue, I will place emphasis on the aspect of recognition and defend a view of humanity as a particular status, which people may fail to recognise.
[7] Stollznow.
[8] I deem it helpful to separate animalisation and objectification because the sense of humanity that is affected through these forms of dehumanisation appears to be different. Following a useful distinction proposed by Haslam, animalising forms of dehumanisation deny that people are rational and civilised, whereas mechanistic forms of dehumanisation deny that people experience deep-felt emotions and have a distinct personality. See: Haslam, 'Dehumanization'.

popular understandings of what it means to be dehumanised. Objectification refers to a failure to recognise particular human traits, which plays a key role in how studies in social psychology tend to conceptualise dehumanisation. Brutalisation, lastly, highlights the importance of moral status for the notion of dehumanisation, which is the focal point in normative studies of dehumanisation. It is important to note, however, that normative studies generally conceive of dehumanisation in a somewhat different way, namely as a failure to recognise the moral status of the victim, rather than in terms of brutalisation - which assumes that people become less human(e) when they lose their empathy.

Based on these reflections, we can conclude that at least three senses of humanity can potentially be involved in dehumanisation: namely, a biological, attributional, and normative one.[9] These three conceptions of humanity can inform our understanding of dehumanisation because it is possible to conceive of dehumanisation as comprising acts that exclude people from the human race, from the group of creatures that purportedly share particular features that render us human, or from a moral sphere that we participate in as fellow human beings. This semantic analysis thus suggests that dehumanisation may be conceptualised as a practice or process (or its result) which negatively affects humanity in a biological, attributional, or normative sense, although these different understandings of dehumanisation are not equally compelling, as I will argue in the remainder of this chapter.

Regarding the different mechanisms through which the biological, attributional, or moral status that people hold as human beings can be negatively affected, three options are conceivable here as well. The humanity of people can be negatively affected because they fail to be *perceived* as human beings, because they are *represented* in ways that fail to recognise their humanity, or because they are *treated* as if they were not human. Perception, I understand here as the viewpoints that people hold. Dehumanising perception refers, then, to viewpoints that fail to recognise people as human, in either a biological, attributional, or normative sense. Representation involves the way in which things or beings are portrayed. Dehumanised or dehumanising representation thus entails that people are portrayed in ways that do not acknowledge their humanity, in either a biological, attributional, or normative sense. Treatment means acting with and on others. Dehumanising treatment therefore involves treating people in ways that fail to recognise their humanity, in either a biological, attributional, or normative sense.

[9] These three senses correspond to perspectives that have been presented in the academic literature as well. The philosopher Jonathan Glover alludes, for example, to the difference between the biological and normative sense of humanity when he explains that his work focuses on 'the twentieth-century moral history of the human race. But "humanity" is also being used in a different sense, in which it is contrasted with inhumanity' (p. 18). The attributional sense of humanity is central to social-psychological studies of dehumanisation, most notably those by Haslam, which seek to clarify how dehumanising processes revolve around denials of 'humanness', i.e. unique or fundamental human traits. See: Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A moral history of the twentieth century* (London: Pimlico, 2001).

These three mechanisms can be derived from reflections on the question of what examples come to mind when we think of concrete practices or processes which may negatively affect the human status of people. Some might think here of situations similar to the one described above with Primo Levi and Dr. Pannwitz, where people apparently perceive of others as something less than human. To others, examples of animalising propaganda may spring to mind through which people are portrayed as monkeys or rats. Others again might think of forms of treatment, as exemplified by slavery, through which people fail to treat others as fellow human beings.[10] All of these seem plausible examples of practices or processes through which the human status of people can be negatively affected. Therefore, I argue that dehumanisation can take the form of a perception, representation, or treatment.[11]

It is not always easy to separate the aspects of perception, representation, or treatment in practice. After all, dehumanising treatments usually seem to be supported by dehumanising perception, which itself may be brought about through dehumanising representations. Furthermore, it is unclear whether people can hold dehumanising perceptions of others without expressing these views in how they treat and speak about them. Although it may therefore be complex to distinguish between these different aspects of dehumanisation in concrete cases, using these various aspects as tools for conceptual analysis is nonetheless conducive, I argue, because it facilitates the study of dehumanisation as a multifaceted phenomenon.

First, is important to consider the aspect of treatment because there may exist ways of treating people that in and of themselves fail to acknowledge their human status, independently from the intentions, viewpoints, or beliefs held by the perpetrator(s). This entails that people may treat others in ways that negatively affect their humanity without intending to do so. Second, the perceptions held by the perpetrator(s) should be taken into account because they allow for distinctions to be made between cases where people are treated in cruel and degrading ways because they are perceived as inferior human beings and cases where mistreatment results from a perception of the victims as less than human. This difference matters, not only for understanding the precise wrong that is done to people, beyond the cruelty and degradation inherent in the treatment, but also for deciding how to dissuade perpetrators from continuing inflicting this type of treatment.[12] Third,

[10] This argument will be developed in further detail in Chapter 4.

[11] It is important to note that to my knowledge the distinction between these different aspects of dehumanisation has not been made previously in the existing literature. Yet, it seems probable that distinguishing between these various forms will help clarify the meaning of the concept of dehumanisation, given that perception, representation, and mistreatment are practices that each are governed by their own logic.

[12] A focus on human equality and human rights may be helpful in the first case, where the victims are viewed as inferior human beings, but not in the second case, given that the victims are excluded from the moral category of humanity. This argument corresponds to the claim made by Judith Butler that judgements about who is considered human are fundamental to settling the question of who is entitled to human rights. See: Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is life grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2010), p. 75.

analysing dehumanisation as representation is important because dehumanising views spread, at least in part, through portrayals and depictions. Limiting this analysis to the study of dehumanisation as perception and treatment would therefore entail ignoring how views of dehumanisation disseminate.

This semantic analysis suggests that different understandings of dehumanisation are conceivable, which view it as a process or practice through which people are perceived, portrayed, or treated in ways that negatively affect their humanity in a biological, attributional, or normative sense. In the remainder of this chapter, I will argue that dehumanisation should be understood as comprising acts that fail to recognise the *moral* status that people hold as human beings through discursive, cognitive, or physical means. In what follows, I will provide a critical analysis that rules out the biological and attributional conception of humanity as views that can underpin a compelling account of dehumanisation by showing how a normative conception of humanity is always needed to highlight what renders processes or practices that negatively affect people's biological or attributional humanity dehumanising. Furthermore, I will argue that it is necessary for a process of practice to amount to dehumanisation that it *fails to recognise* people's moral human status.[13] It is not sufficient that such processes or practices merely negatively affect this moral status. This would be the case, for example, when the moral human status of people is negatively affected when they are treated, viewed, or portrayed as *less human*. Dehumanisation occurs, so I will argue, if and only if people fail to be recognised as morally human.

Dehumanisation and biological humanity

When people think of dehumanisation, the first thing that generally seems to come to mind is the way in which humanity can be denied through the act of identifying people with animals.[14] This association is understandable, given that many of the most typical and well-known historical cases of dehumanisation include the use of animal analogies or metaphors to justify the commission of

[13] I will use the term 'failure to recognise people's human status' to describe the type of 'negative affecting of humanity' that is characteristic of dehumanisation. This failure can take the form of an active and intentional denial, or refusal, to recognise people's human status or a more passive and unintentional cognitive or behavioural failure of recognition. While most of the examples in this chapter speak of more active and intentional denials of people's human status, this does not entail that dehumanisation requires such intentionality, as I will explain in more detail on pp. 32-33. The intention to deny the normative human status of people is a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition of dehumanisation.

[14] 'Denial' is a particular form of a 'failure to recognise'. I take 'denial' to mean the action of refusing to acknowledge human status, either in statements, perceptions, or through treatments. In this section, I will use the term 'denial' to indicate forms of dehumanisation through which people intentionally view, treat, represent, or view others as if they were not human. As perception, 'denial' takes the form of a refusal to see others as human. As treatment, 'denial' entails treating people in ways that communicate a refutation of the human status of others. As representation, 'denial' means the act of portraying people in ways that refute their human status. In this section, I more frequently use the term 'denial', rather than 'failure to recognise', because forms of dehumanisation that are directed against the biological sense of humanity, such as, for example, war propaganda which depicts enemies as animals, usually are intentional.

atrocities against human beings.[15] In this way, the radio channel *Radio-Télévision Libre* des *Milles Collines* in Rwanda has become infamous for its insistent use of the word '*inyenzi*' (cockroaches) to refer to the Tutsis in the days leading up to and during the Rwandan genocide.[16]

The perspective of dehumanisation as a denial of biological humanity therefore forms the logical starting point for this analysis. The biological humanity of persons can be denied not only when people are portrayed as animals or other non-human creatures or entities, but also when they are perceived as such, or are treated *as if* they were not a member of the human species. Dehumanisation, in this sense, can thus take the form of a perception, representation, or mistreatment of a human being as non-human in a biological sense.

Although the notion of a denial of biological humanity is central to common ways of thinking about dehumanisation, certain problems arise when we contemplate what it means to view, portray, or treat people as biologically non-human. Let us consider first the act of *representing* a person as an animal or non-human object. This seems a straightforward act of biological dehumanisation. Yet, it turns out upon further reflection that the non-human representation of the other is not a sufficient condition for an act to be dehumanising. Here we may think, for example, of the fact that people often liken humans to animals or objects without this being objectionable, as is the case when we use nicknames for our friends or dote on a person we love. When a mother calls her child 'honey', for example, it is evident that she does not dehumanise, even though she identifies the infant with a non-human entity.[17] We could say then that the depiction of the other as something non-human should have a derogatory function. If this were the only criterion, however, this would imply that many insults amount to dehumanisation. This does not seem correct either. When a person calls someone a 'chicken', for instance, the point is to insult the person by calling him or her a coward, not to deny his or her humanity.

To see this point more clearly, we may consider cases where people use animal representations to deny the human status of others. War propaganda, which portrays enemies as contemptable, disgusting, or threatening animals, provides a good example of this. In *Less than Human*, the philosopher David Livingstone Smith recounts, for example, how Japanese soldiers participating in the Rape of Nanking 'called the Chinese "chancorro" […] that meant below human, like bugs or

[15] For a large sample of examples of this practice, see: Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the hostile imagination* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991).

[16] Lynne Tirrell, 'Genocidal Language Games,' in Ishani Maitra and Mary Kate McGowan (eds.), *Speech and Harm: Controversies over free speech* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 197.

[17] The point that animal metaphors are not always dehumanising has also been made by Nick Haslam, Steve Loughnan, and Pamela Sun in a study on when people consider acts of likening people to animals to be offensive. The authors note that certain attributes of animals are viewed as positive and metaphors that refer to these animals are generally not held to be offensive. By contrast, likening people to animals that are seen as disgusting or using animal metaphors in a way that is considered degrading is held to be offensive. See: 'Beastly: What makes animal metaphors offensive?' *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 30 (2011): 311-325.

animals. […] The Chinese didn't belong to the human race. That was the way we looked at it.'[18] In a similar way, American propaganda portrayed the Japanese during the Second World War in animalising ways. Smith observes, for instance, how '[t]he "Japs" were considered animals, and were often portrayed as monkeys, apes, or rodents, and sometimes as insects'.[19]

A couple of distinctions with the above-mentioned example of the chicken-insult demand our attention. In the case where a person is called a 'chicken' only one person is addressed, whereas in the last two examples a group of people is likened to animals. Furthermore, the insult seems to be more limited in scope, in the sense that it applies to only one aspect of a person's identity, whereas in the case of animalistic representations in war the derogatory label seeks to reduce the identity of the targeted group through the metaphorical identification with animals. In addition, many of the animals to which enemies in war are likened, such as bugs, rodents, and insects, elicit disgust in people, whereas chickens usually do not. What is more important, however, is that the representation of people as animals in the case of war propaganda serves to reduce moral restraints against the infliction of violence. When I call someone a 'chicken' as a mode of indicating cowardice, I do not thereby imply that it would be acceptable to kill him or her, beat him or her up, or fail to provide him or her with assistance if he or she would be in danger. On the contrary, when the Japanese called the Chinese 'bugs' or the Americans portrayed the Japanese as rodents, this served as a psychological mechanism for moral disengagement that was to reduce the restraints that people normally feel in committing grave violence against other human beings.[20]

What distinguishes these cases, I argue, is that animalising propaganda seeks to deny the moral status that people hold as human beings since this facilitates severe forms of violence and abuse that are (to be) inflicted on the victim. The author Aldous Huxley has proposed an insightful account of this process in a speech, given in 1936, on the way in which dehumanising propaganda seeks to reduce the natural inhibitions that people generally have against the severe mistreatment of others:

> Most people would hesitate to torture or kill a human being like themselves. But when that human being is spoken of as though he were not a human being, but as the representative of some wicked principle, we lose our scruples. […] All political and nationalist propaganda aims at only one thing; to persuade one set of people that another set of people are not really human and that it is therefore legitimate to rob, swindle, bully, and even murder them.[21]

[18] David Livingstone Smith, *Less than Human: Why we demean, enslave and exterminate others* (New York: St. Martin's, 2012), p. 18.
[19] Ibid.
[20] The work of the psychologist Paul Bloom indicates that the act of likening people to animals that are considered disgusting is particularly relevant here, given that disgust 'makes us indifferent to the suffering of others and has the power to incite cruelty and dehumanization.' See: Paul Bloom, *Just Babies: The origins of good and evil* (New York: Broadway Books, 2013), p. 133.
[21] Huxley, as cited in Smith, p. 21.

Huxley thus persuasively argues that dehumanising propaganda aims at convincing the audience that certain people are not truly human in order to lessen the restraints that people normally feel in committing atrocities against fellow human beings. This effect has also been observed in experiments carried out by the psychologists Albert Bandura, Bill Underwood, and Michael Fromson, which demonstrate that dehumanisation can indeed function as a mechanism of moral disengagement that renders violent conduct permissible in the eyes of perpetrators.[22] The social psychologist Susan Opotow has similarly argued that dehumanisation entails a process of moral exclusion through which people are placed 'outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply'.[23]

The foregoing discussion suggests that not all acts of likening people to non-human animals or objects can be considered dehumanising, given that not all of these acts challenge the human status of the other. Therefore, what renders such portrayals dehumanising, I contend, is not the denial of biological humanity in itself, but the denial of normative human status that this denial of biological humanity in some cases entails.[24] It is this denial of normative status that allows dehumanisers to engage in transgressive forms of behaviour that do not correspond to general moral standards that prescribe how humans ought to treat one another.

In the examples discussed above, the intentions of the perpetrator(s) play a central role in distinguishing between dehumanising and non-dehumanising forms of representing people as non-human animals. In these cases, intentionality is key to identifying dehumanisation as a denial of biological humanity. It is important to note, however, that, while the intention to deny the normative human status of people is a sufficient condition for a failure to recognise humanity to amount to dehumanisation, it is not a necessary one. This is the case because it is also possible for people to dehumanise others by failing to recognise their humanity without intending to so. With regard to the biological sense of humanity, we can think here, for example, of the case of a discovery of an indigenous tribe by western anthropologists. In such a case, it would be conceivable that the indigenous people unintentionally fail to recognise the westerners as fellow human beings in perception, representation, and treatment. This failure to recognise others as human in a biological sense would entail a failure to recognise them as human in a moral sense as well since moral human status cannot be attributed to people in the absence of recognition of their biological human status.

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[22] Albert Bandura, Bill Underwood, and Michael Fromson, 'Disinhibition of Aggression through Diffusion of Responsibility and Dehumanization of Victims,' *Journal of Research in Personality* 9 (1975): 253-269.

[23] Opotow: 1.

[24] One could argue that a portrayal that does not (seek to) challenge the human status of the other cannot be categorised as a denial of biological humanity. This is an objection that does not significantly change the outcome of the argument that not all acts of likening people to non-human animals or objects can be considered dehumanising, however, because it would still stand with the slight modification that what characterises such acts as a denial of biological humanity is a denial of moral status, which accounts for the dehumanising nature of such acts.

The western anthropologists would therefore be unintentionally dehumanised by the members of the indigenous tribe.[25]

When we consider dehumanisation as *treating* people as if they were not human, this turns out to be complex as well. Let us reflect, for instance, on the popular idea that treating people like animals is dehumanising. There are two problems with this idea. First, people are a particular type of animals and we are therefore in many ways similar to non-human animals. For example, as sentient beings, we are similarly vulnerable to physical suffering. If treating human beings like animals thus meant that we give people food when they are hungry, provide them with water when they are thirsty, and take care of them when they are ill, this clearly would not be dehumanising. Not all ways of treating people like animals can therefore be considered instances of dehumanisation. We should thus focus on cases where people are treated like animals where they ought to be treated like human beings.

This is where the second problem presents itself, namely that people are often not actually treated like animals in such cases, but *as if* they were animals. The philosopher Avishai Margalit carefully develops this point in his account of dehumanisation as a special type of humiliation. Reflecting on the way in which the inmates of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps were treated, he argues that '[t]he special cruelty toward the victims in the forced-labor and death camps – especially the humiliations that took place there – happened the way it did because human beings were involved. Animals would not have been abused in the same way.'[26]

Margalit contends that it would not make sense to abuse animals in the same way because, unlike human beings, animals are not vulnerable to transgressions of their semiotic and moral sensibilities.[27] An illustration of this tension at the heart of animalising dehumanisation can be found in efforts by perpetrators to force people to resemble the non-human life forms with which they identify them in an attempt to demonstrate the fundamental difference that divides them. The paradoxical nature of this desire has been noted by Robert Antelme, a survivor of the Dachau concentration camp, who rightly observed that, no matter how one may manipulate the way in which people behave and thus make them resemble lower animals, it is impossible to change them into another species. This insight formed the basis for his critique of the Nazi ideology, according to which the Jews were of a different race:

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[25] It should be acknowledged that cases of people unintentionally failing to recognise others as biologically human are very rare indeed. It therefore seems justified to generally speak of representations, treatments, and perceptions that fail to acknowledge the humanity of people in a biological sense as intentional practices of dehumanisation, which actively seek to refute the human status of the victims. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that while such intentionality is a sufficient condition for dehumanisation, it is not a necessary one, given that unintentional failures to recognise the humanity of people are possible.

[26] Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society* (translated by Naomi Goldblum) (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 112.

[27] Idem, p. 85.

> We have come to resemble whatever fights simply to eat, and dies from not eating; come to where we exist on the level of some other species […] Yet there is no ambiguity: we're still men, and we shall not end otherwise than as men. The distance separating us from different species is still intact. It is not historical […] there are not several human races, there is one human race. It is because we are men as they are that the SS will finally be powerless before us.[28]

As Antelme notes, biological humanity is not contingent. It cannot be changed by the conditions under which persons are placed. Therefore, people cannot take away others' humanity in its biological sense. Even though the Nazis believed that the human species consisted of different races, they were incapable of rendering people less human through the manipulation of their environment or conduct.

It should be noted, however, that, while Antelme was right in contending that the Nazis were not capable of changing the inmates of the camps into something biologically less than human, the treatment that they were given nevertheless did turn them into something less than human in a moral sense, at least in the eyes of the perpetrators. For even if dehumanisers are not capable of truly transforming their victims into something biologically different from themselves, their efforts often seek to achieve at least a visible differentiation, which jeopardises the victim's human status in its normative sense.[29]

This point shines through in Levi's observation that imposed nudity visually distinguished the inmates of the camps from fellow human beings:

> One entered the Lager naked: indeed more than naked, deprived not only of clothing and shoes (which were confiscated) but of the hair of one's head and all other hairs. Now a naked and barefoot man feels that all his nerves and tendons are severed: he is a helpless prey. Clothes, even the foul clothes which were distributed, even the crude clogs with their wooden soles, are a tenuous but indispensable defence. Anyone who does not have them no longer perceives himself as a human being, but rather as a worm: naked, slow, ignoble, prone on the ground. He knows that he can be crushed at any moment. [30]

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[28] Antelme, p. 218.

[29] One could argue that contemporary technological developments have made the statement that people cannot be expelled from the human race in a biological sense much less certain than it was a few decades ago. Not only is it possible to meddle with our DNA, but we can now also replace body parts with mechanical substitutes, raising the question where our humanity begins and ends. While it is still easy to recognise the humanity of a person with a prosthetic leg or arm, it would be more difficult to view someone with a robotic brain implant as biologically human. Although the current level of development in science and medicine does not yet allow for such interventions, it is conceivable that in the future it would be possible to expel people through scientific and technological means from the human race. On the issue of post- and transhumanism, see: Nick Bostrom and Julian Savulescu (eds.), *Human Enhancement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Allen Buchanan, 'Moral Status and Human Enhancement,' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37 (2009): 346-381.

[30] Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 90.

Levi notes that the stripping of their clothes and shoes and the shaving of their hair made it difficult for the inmates to perceive of themselves as human. Although the physical appearance of the prisoners was still that of a naked man or woman, and not of a worm, this humiliating physical aspect reduced the status of the victim from that of a person to that of a worm, that is to say, to the status of a creature that can 'be crushed at any moment'.

The point was not simply to make the prisoners feel like they were less than human and to humiliate them, however. This treatment also served to set them apart from human beings in the eyes of those who were to murder them. Franz Stangl, one of the commanders of Treblinka and Sobibor, confirmed that the inmates had to undergo the degrading treatment in the camps to disinhibit moral strain on the side of the persons who were in charge of the execution process. He claimed that the inmates were subjected to this treatment 'to condition those who were to be the material executors of the operations. To make it possible for them to do what they were doing'.[31]

This argument provides support for the idea that moral status is at stake, not only in cases of dehumanisation where people are *portrayed* as animals, but also when they are *treated* as such. The analysis above also makes it doubtful that dehumanisation would often take the form of *perceiving* of people as non-human in a biological sense. After all, many cases of dehumanising treatments and representations allegedly seek to humiliate the victim by degrading the status people hold. This attempt to humiliate requires a certain recognition of the other as a human being who at least needs to share particular sensibilities that make it possible to bring about a sense of humiliation to which dehumanisation as a form of mistreatment often, if not always, strives. Margalit argues that this notion of humiliation reveals a tension at the heart of dehumanisation, which consists in the fact that dehumanisation seeks to expressively deny the humanity of the other, but simultaneously acknowledges that humanity in this very act of ceremonial denial.[32]

While I find the argument compelling that dehumanisation presupposes a certain degree of awareness of the sensibilities that perpetrators share with their victims without which the humiliation of the latter would not be possible, I believe that it should be granted - at least as a theoretical possibility - that dehumanisers may perceive of their victims as creatures that are biologically less than human but share a psychological subjectivity similar to that of human beings. Imagine, for example, a being that would look just like a human and could in many ways act and speak like a human but that actually would be of a different biological nature. This corresponds to the Nazi ideology, which maintained that Jews were sub-humans. This belief was supported by an understanding of the human species as consisting of different races, of which only some were

[31] Gitta Sereny, *Into that Darkness: An examination of conscience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 101.
[32] Margalit, p. 109.

genuinely human. An ideological pamphlet from 1942, which elaborated on the relation between human beings and their sub-human copies, reflected this logic in the following way:

> The sub-human, that biologically seemingly complete creation of nature with hands, feet and a kind of brain, with eyes and mouth is nevertheless a completely different, dreadful creature. He is only a rough copy of a human being, with human-like facial traits but nonetheless morally and mentally lower than any animal.[33]

Clearly, this form of propaganda portrays the Jewish people as less than human in a biological sense and may therefore reinforce the idea that it is possible to maintain a non-paradoxical dehumanising perception that holds victims to be biologically inferior to human beings. This idea is undermined, however, by the fact that these representations showed major inconsistencies. As Margalit and Motzkin point out, Nazi propaganda simultaneously portrayed the Jews as inferior human beings and as beings excluded from the human race.[34] This suggests that it is difficult to uphold the belief that those who are considered subhuman are less than human in a biological sense.

Finally, there is still another way in which people may be perceived to be less than human in a biological sense. This is by viewing them as lagging behind from an evolutionary perspective. Drawing on a (historically incorrect) visual representation of evolutionary development from apes to humans, the social psychologist Nour Kteily and his colleagues conducted a research in three countries where individuals were asked to rank different peoples according to their advancement on an evolutionary scale.[35] The outcomes showed that Americans ranked Muslims, Arabs, and Mexican immigrants significantly lower than Americans, Europeans, Swiss, or Japanese.[36] Although these results are shocking, the relative closeness on the scale between the least humanised group and the most humanised group (13.6 percentage points) seems to indicate that Muslims are not viewed as fundamentally different from an evolutionary perspective, but rather as inferior human beings.[37]

Based on the foregoing analysis, I conclude that dehumanising acts through which people are portrayed as animals or other non-human creatures or entities, perceived as non-human in a biological sense or treated *as if* they were not a member of the human species fail to recognise the moral status that people hold as human beings. By likening people to creatures that are considered vile, filthy, or dangerous, or to subhuman objects or entities, practices of dehumanisation negatively

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[33] Clarissa Henry and Marc Hillel, *Of Pure Blood* (translated by Eric Mossbacher) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), p. 32.
[34] Avishai Margalit and Gabriel Motzkin, 'The Uniqueness of the Holocaust,' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 25 (1996): 71.
[35] Nour Kteily, Emile Bruneau, Adam Waytz, and Sarah Cotterill, 'The Ascent of Man: Theoretical and empirical evidence for blatant dehumanization,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 109 (2015): 901-931.
[36] Muslims received the lowest score of 77.6 compared to 91.5 for Americans.
[37] I draw this conclusion based on the fact that these scores still correspond to images on the 'human' side of the spectrum. This suggests that the participants did not perceive of these groups as more similar to monkeys learning to stand (as displayed as a visual representation on the low side of the spectrum) than to human beings walking up right (as displayed as a visual representation on the high side of the spectrum).

impact on the perceptions that people have of others and thereby weaken the moral and emotional restraints that people generally experience in severely mistreating fellow human beings. The conception of humanity that is at stake in many, if not most, of these cases is therefore not the biological, but the moral one.

Dehumanisation and human attributes

While the biological sense of humanity is central to 'everyday' understandings of dehumanisation, social scientists have mostly concentrated on particular traits that allegedly render us human. According to this attributional view, dehumanisation consists in viewing, portraying, or treating people as lacking in key human features. A highly influential account in this field has been proposed by the social psychologist Nick Haslam, who claims that people are dehumanised through denials that they possess unique or essential human attributes, such as rationality, civilisation, or empathy.[38]

According to Haslam, 'humanness' is not a univocal term, but invokes two different understandings of what it means to be human that relate to two different types of dehumanisation. Whereas *animalisation* refers to the denial that people have particular uniquely human traits, relating to an Enlightenment understanding of humanness, such as rationality and civility, *mechanisation* corresponds to a denial of traits that are characteristic of human nature, relating to a Romantic sense of humanness, such as empathy and individuality.[39] Dehumanisation can thus revolve either around likening people to animals, when they are viewed, portrayed, or treated as irrational, savage or barbarous, or around identifying them with objects or automata, lacking in feeling and personality.

The distinction that Haslam draws between animalisation and mechanisation helps to explain the different manifestations of dehumanisation. What diverse cases of dehumanisation have in common is that they contain a denial of humanness. Yet, what distinguishes the different cases is the sense of humanness that is denied. Following this logic, perceptions or portrayals of people as coarse, instinctive, irrational, immature, or lacking in culture presents them as animal-like, whereas perceptions or portrayals of people as inert, cold, rigid, or passive depict them as object-like.

There are two points that I wish to raise about Haslam's account. The first is that, although Haslam prioritises attributes in his theory of what dehumanisation entails, it is important to note that

[38] Haslam, 'Dehumanization'.
In this section, I follow Haslam's terminology, which describes dehumanisation as a 'denial of humanness'. It should be noted, however, that Haslam does not seem to consider the term 'denial' to imply intentionality. This can be concluded from the fact that he includes in his account subtle denials of humanness, which he distinguishes from explicit denials by characterising them as 'private, hidden, and cognitive' instead of 'blatant, manifest and verbalized' (Haslam, 'What is Dehumanization?', p. 43).
[39] Haslam, 'Dehumanization': 257.

the attributes that are singled out are relevant for being considered normatively human.[40] Therefore, his account provides, in my view, a particular account of what it means to deny the normative status that people hold as human beings.[41] Haslam's account could then be described as a normative account that presents itself as an attributional view.

The second point concerns the fact that Haslam's focus on the denial of human attributes allows for the inclusion of more subtle, implicit denials of humanness in our understanding of dehumanisation, as I set out in the introduction. According to Haslam, dehumanisation not only occurs when people are explicitly likened to animals or other nonhuman entities, but can also take the form of a subtle denial of particular human attributes.[42] As I argued in the introduction, a problematic effect of this line of reasoning is that it obscures the boundaries between viewing people as less human and less than human.

Let me explain this concern at the hand of an example. Consider, for instance, the long history of the racist dehumanisation of African people.[43] On the one hand, African people have been explicitly dehumanised through portrayals that presented them as apes, which constitutes an absolute denial of their biological humanity. On the other hand, African people have also been stigmatised through claims that they were mentally greatly inferior to Europeans and Americans, which undermined their attributional sense of humanity by presenting them as animal-like. A concrete example of such stigmatisation can be found, for instance, in the following reflections by Thomas Jefferson, published in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), on the mental capacities on African Americans: 'Comparing them by their faculties of memories, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.'[44]

In severely downplaying the faculties for reason and imagination of African Americans, Jefferson implied that these people were more similar to animals than to Americans of European descent. Following Haslam's account, these statements provide an illustration of animalising dehumanisation

[40] Smith notes, for example, that 'the ability to dance the samba or memorize the libretto of *La Bohème*' are also uniquely human characteristics (p. 93). Yet, these are not singled out as traits that are important for what it means to be human. Haslam's account thus provides, what Smith calls, 'a stereotypical image of what a human being is – a kind of model or paradigm' (p. 93). This model, in my view, is a normative model.

[41] I will elaborate on this argument in more detail shortly, in my discussion of the work of Bandura, which is similar to Haslam's in this regard.

[42] Haslam, 'Dehumanization': 259, Haslam, 'What is Dehumanization?', p. 35, and Steve Loughnan, Nick Haslam and Yoshihisa Kashima, 'Understanding the Relationship between Attribute-Based and Metaphor-Based Dehumanization,' *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 12 (2009): 747-762.

[43] For a historical account of this issue, see: Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient roots of modern prejudice in western culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

[44] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes of the State of Virginia* (edited by William Peden) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955 [1785]), p. 139.

since they deny the uniquely human trait of rationality. When we consider the citation carefully, however, we note that Jefferson does not claim that African Americans are completely without reason or imagination, but that they are greatly inferior in reason and have a 'dull, tasteless, and anomalous' imagination. This suggests that, following the racist logic displayed by Jefferson, African Americans were *inferior* human beings, but not *less than* human.

This historical example raises the important question of whether viewing, portraying, and treating people as lesser human beings should be considered a form of dehumanisation as well. At the beginning of this chapter, dehumanisation was tentatively defined as a practice or process, or its result, which negatively affects humanity. According to this definition, the racist stigmatisation of African Americans by Jefferson clearly constitutes a form of dehumanisation, given that the human status of African American people was negatively affected through their portrayal as inferior human beings. Yet, a fundamental difference exists between viewing, portraying, or treating people as *lesser* human beings, on the one hand, or as *less than human*, on the other. After all, in the former case, the humanity of people is still recognised, even if only in a diminished form, while in the latter, people are no longer considered, portrayed, or treated as (normatively) human, if even in a minimal sense.

This argument resonates with the work of Leyens and his colleagues on the distinction between dehumanisation and infra-humanisation, which was briefly discussed in the introduction.[45] Leyens et al. explain that dehumanisation is not simply a more extreme form of infra-humanisation, but a qualitatively different phenomenon:

> [P]eople are inclined to perceive members of outgroups as somewhat less human, or more animal-like, than themselves; such a view corresponds to the word infra-humanization (although we could also have used "subhumanization"). By contrast, dehumanization of an outgroup implies that its members are no longer humans at all.[46]

The work by Leyens et al. on infra-humanisation lends support to the idea that the difference between viewing people as less human or as less than human is not a matter of degree, but marks a qualitative difference. This distinction, I argue, is not only conceptually, but also normatively, relevant. It matters significantly whether someone is subjected to infra-humanisation or to

[45] Leyens et al., 'Infra-Humanization: The wall of group differences'. On the concept of infra-humanisation, see also: Brezo Cortes, Stéphanie Demoulin, Ramon Rodriguez, Armando Rodriguez and Jacques-Philippe Leyens, 'Infra-Humanization or Familiarity? Attribution of uniquely human emotions to the self, the ingroup, and the outgroup,' *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31 (2005), Tendayi Viki, Laura Winchester, Laura Titshall, Tadios Chisango, Afroditi Pina, and Rebecca Russell, 'Beyond Secondary Emotions: The infrahumanization of outgroups using human-related and animal-related words,' *Social Cognition* 24 (2006): 753-775, and Emanuele Castano and Roger Giner-Sorolla, 'Not Quite Human: Infrahumanization in response to collective responsibility for intergroup killing,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 (2006): 804-818.

[46] Leyens et al., 'Infra-Humanization': 143.

dehumanisation because someone who is dehumanised is no longer considered normatively human and thereby loses the moral protection that this label provides. To be considered a fellow human being guarantees people inclusion in an order that governs interpersonal relations. This point has been highlighted by the political theorist Norman Geras, who insightfully points out that '[t]he widespread tendency to dehumanize potential victims tells […] that the notion "(fellow) human being" – as opposed to infidel dog and devil, to demonic force or poison, to parasite, to vermin – is, for human beings, an extremely powerful mode of moral inclusion.'[47] It is necessary, therefore, to revise our tentative definition, drawing from the insight that the prefix 'de' in dehumanisation entails a radical negation. Dehumanisation should then be seen as a practice or process, or its result, which fails to recognise the moral human status of people (rather than merely negatively affecting it).

The foregoing discussion highlights the importance of distinguishing between viewing people as less human and regarding them as less than human. It also implies that a normative conception of humanity is central to an attributional understanding of dehumanisation. To make this point more explicit, it will be helpful to consider the account of the psychologist Albert Bandura, who conceives of dehumanisation as the act of depriving people of their human attributes. In an important early analysis, Bandura argues that dehumanisation consists in the act of 'divesting people of human qualities'.[48] In a similar way to Haslam, Bandura explains that this denial of humanness can take the form of a denial that people have human feelings – viewing them as objects – or ascribing to them animal-like qualities:

> Once dehumanized, they are not longer viewed as persons with feelings, hopes, and concerns, but as subhuman objects. They are portrayed as mindless "savages," "gooks," "satanic fiends", or other despicable wretches. If dispossessing antagonists of humanness does not sufficiently blunt self-reproof, it can be eliminated by attributing bestial qualities to them. They become "degenerates", "pigs" and other bestial creatures.[49]

According to Bandura, this act of divesting people of human qualities leads to moral disengagement. In my view, this moral element is not a result of dehumanisation, however, but it is a central aspect of the failure to recognise human status that defines dehumanisation. It is not that people are divested of arbitrary human qualities and therefore no longer considered as moral counterparts; it is through the fact that people are denied *morally relevant* qualities that their humanity is not acknowledged. After all, when people are portrayed as mindless 'savages', 'gooks', 'satanic fiends', 'degenerates', or 'pigs', human qualities are denied to them that are fundamental to the attribution

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[47] Norman Geras, *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind: The ungroundable liberalism of Richard Rorty* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 97.
[48] Albert Bandura, 'Selective Activation and Disengagement of Moral Control,' *Journal of Social Issues* 46 (1990): 38.
[49] Ibid.

of the moral standing of human beings. Divesting people of human qualities, in the case of dehumanisation, thus always already entails divesting people of *moral* qualities.

This moral status can be negatively affected, not only through *perceptions* and *representations*, but also through *mistreatment*. The centrality of normative status for dehumanisation stands out when we consider cases of dehumanisation that take the form of divesting people of the attributional sense of humanity. Following the logic of the attributional view, dehumanisation can consist in a form of mistreatment, which involves treating people as if they do not possess fundamental human traits, impeding people from manifesting certain capacities and traits that supposedly render them human, or depriving them of these traits.

Treating people as if they do not have fundamental human traits does not seem a useful means of dehumanisation, given that dehumanisation often, if not always, seeks to humiliate the victim and therefore implicitly needs to acknowledge the humanity of the victim, as Margalit argues. Simply treating people as if they were uncivilised, irrational, or lacking in empathy therefore does not correspond to dynamics that generally characterise dehumanising treatment.

If civility and refinement give expression to humanity, however, people may appear or perceive of themselves as less human when they are hindered from manifesting these qualities. Levi recalls, for instance, how during the transports to the concentration camps not even a bucket was provided for the people in the wagons, forcing them to either defecate in a corner or wait for the scarce stops the trains made.[50] He recounts the humiliating scenes that occurred during these moments:

> The doors were opened another time, but during a stop in an Austrian railroad station. The SS escort did not hide their amusement at the sight of men and women squatting wherever they could, on the platforms and in the middle of the tracks, and the German passengers openly expressed their disgust: people like this deserve their fate, just look how they behave. These are not *Menschen*, human beings, but animals, it's clear as the light of day.[51]

Impeding people from demonstrating a certain level of refinement and civilisation thus functions as a marker of difference that negatively impacts on the human status of the persons affected as it elicits disgust.[52] People come to be perceived as more akin to animals than human beings, which in turn opens the way for treatments that normally would not be inflicted on fellow humans.

Dehumanising treatment may not only impede a person from manifesting certain traits, however, but can also fundamentally affect these qualities themselves. Consider the example of torture. According to documents of the US Senate Intelligence Committee, the Central Intelligence Agency

[50] For a study of the deportations that focuses on the transgression of physical taboos, see: Simone Gigliotti, *The Train Journey: Transit, captivity, and witnessing in the Holocaust* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).
[51] Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, pp. 88-89.
[52] Bloom comments on the relation between these two elements when he argues that 'disgust leads you to construe the other as diminished and revolting, lacking humanity.' See: *Just Babies*, p. 140.

sought to induce 'learned helplessness' in prisoners to facilitate interrogations, which meant that 'torturers break down an individual's self-control, until he or she is emotionally and psychologically unable to disobey'.[53] As Spencer Ackerman recounts, '[d]etainees in Afghanistan would cower when the doors to their cells opened. Some, in the opinion of one CIA interrogator, "literally looked like a dog that had been kennelled".'[54] Breaking down self-control severely affects a person's psychological integrity as it seeks to eliminate free will. Furthermore, psychologists have noted that torture has detrimental effects on a person's capacity to maintain social relations, as it oftentimes invokes depression and anxiety, which numb the victim's feelings and lead to an inability to trust other persons.[55] If we hold free will and a capacity to interact with others to be fundamental to humanity, torture can indeed be said to undermine humanity, given that physicians have confirmed that torture can gravely affect people's capacity for agency, as well as the way they relate to others.[56]

The discussion of these cases confirms that dehumanisation can indeed take the form of divesting people of fundamental human qualities. However, the human traits that are affected by these acts are traits that matter significantly for our moral lives. The cruelty of these acts derives, at least in part, from the fact that people need a certain level of autonomy, empathy, and trust in others to be able to participate with their fellow human beings in a moral community. This reinforces the idea that a normative sense of humanity plays a central role in dehumanisation.

Consider, for example, that it would be equally possible to impede people from engaging in activities that are similarly uniquely human (or perhaps even more so), such as playing the piano or painting a landscape. Keeping people from these enterprises allegedly would not be as detrimental to their humanity as keeping them from engaging in moral interactions with their fellow human beings. After all, people can be fully human without playing the piano or painting a landscape. On the contrary, when one's self-control is undermined, one's feeling of empathy is severely distorted, or one's trust in other persons is shattered, one's humanity in a moral sense is challenged through the frustration of qualities that are central to engaging in moral interactions. These qualities are fundamental to our humanity since they are indispensable for normative personhood. What makes these cases dehumanising is therefore not the fact that people are impeded from manifesting

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[53] Spencer Ackerman, 'Torture Victims Will Bear Psychological Scars Long After CIA Report Scandal Fades,' *The Guardian*, 13 December 2014, available at: http://www.theguardian.com/law/2014/dec/13/learned-helplessness-enduring-effects-torture-haunt-victims [last accessed: 2 March 2016].

[54] Ibid.

[55] Physicians for Human Rights, *Broken Laws, Broken Lives: Medical evidence of torture by US personnel and its impact*, June 2008, available at: https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_Reports/BrokenLaws_14.pdf [last accessed: 3 March 2016], pp. 91-93.

[56] Ackerman notes that medical experts affirm that '[m]en and women who have experienced torture are most often irrevocably changed.' In this sense, torture may also be seen as a form of trauma, of which, as Judith Herman notes, 'the core experiences […] are disempowerment and disconnection from others'. See: *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 133.

uniquely human qualities, but that their moral standing as human beings is undermined as their capacity to engage in normative interactions is thwarted.

Dehumanisation and the normative sense of humanity

The foregoing discussion of the biological and attributional views of dehumanisation suggests that the central aspect to understanding dehumanisation is not to be found in biological humanity, nor in particular attributes that human beings supposedly share, but in the normative status that we ascribe to people as fellow human beings. Dehumanisation, then, should be understood as comprising acts that fail to recognise the *moral* status that people hold as human beings through discursive, psychological, or physical means.

People can be *portrayed* as lacking the moral standing that normally characterises human beings, for example, when they are represented as garbage. They can be *perceived* as being less than human in a moral sense, for instance, when they are viewed as pollutants or diseases. This logic can be seen at work, for instance, in the justification that Fritz Klein, the camp doctor from Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, gave for his participation in the Holocaust: 'My Hippocratic oath tells me to cut a gangrenous appendix out of the human body. The Jews are the gangrenous appendix of mankind. That's why I cut them out.'[57] Lastly, people can be *treated* as lacking in human moral status, for example, when they are disposed of without concern. This account thus mirrors in important ways Opotow's view of dehumanisation as an extreme form of moral exclusion through which people are perceived as 'nonentities, undeserving, or expendable', which can be harmed and exploited without concern because they fall outside the circle of persons whom we care about, if only in a minimal sense.[58]

This normative perspective captures what is fundamental about denials of both the biological and attributional sense of humanity. When persons are likened to animals that are considered vile, filthy, or dangerous, for example, this undermines the moral status they hold as people, thus weakening the normative restraints that individuals generally experience in severely mistreating fellow human beings. Similarly, when persons are treated *as if* they were rats, the point is to humiliate them by

[57] As cited in: Robert Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical killing and the psychology of genocide* (London: Basic Books, 1988), p. 232.

[58] Opotow: 1. This theory is powerful in accounting for forms of dehumanisation that facilitate the perpetration of mistreatment. I have some reservations, however, about its exclusive focus on this type of dehumanisation. It is important to note that dehumanisation does not always take on such detrimental forms. For example, dehumanisation can also entail an extreme form of moral exclusion through which people are not perceived as subhuman, but as supra-human. Margalit discusses, for instance, the case of the Egyptian pharaohs who were seen as deities (p. 90). In such exceptional cases, people are not perceived as 'nonentities, undeserving, or expendable' but as more deserving and worthy than human beings. Opotow's characterisation of dehumanisation does not capture this dimension of dehumanisation in focusing on forms of moral exclusion that facilitate the infliction of harm. However, the general view of dehumanisation as a denial of moral human status can accommodate for perceptions of people as supra-human, given that individuals who are perceived to be supra-human are also denied moral human status in being attributed a higher one.

denigrating their moral standing as people. Concerning the attributional sense of humanity, the denial that certain persons are rational, civilised or empathic equally serves as a means to lower a person's moral status since people often consider these traits fundamental to ascribing people human standing. Furthermore, acts that seek to undermine uniquely human qualities can be considered dehumanising only in so far as these traits are indispensable for maintaining normatively guided interpersonal relations.

Dehumanisation may thus take the form of portraying, conceiving, or treating people as if they were animals or objects or lack particular fundamental human attributes, but what these different acts share is that they fail to acknowledge the moral status that people hold as human beings. What these various instances of dehumanisation have in common is that they inspire an attitude of indifference or hostility towards the well-being of the other. When the moral standing of humans is reduced to that of waste, it becomes unobjectionable to get rid of them. When people are represented as parasites or diseases, it becomes imperative to exterminate them before they can do harm.[59] Negations of normative humanity thus lead to a denial that we need to care for the other as our moral counterpart. In this way, the suffering of the other becomes, at best, something we do not need to be concerned about, and, at worst, something that we must inflict.

The idea that dehumanisation revolves around failing to recognise the moral status of people is not new. In the academic literature, various perspectives have been proposed that conceive dehumanisation as a practice or process that negatively affects humanity in a normative sense. The dominant perspective in this literature conceptualises dehumanisation as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity. Given the centrality of human dignity in moral status accounts of dehumanisation, the second chapter will be devoted to a critical discussion of the human dignity view and will present the moral interlocutor view as a more promising alternative.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will critically discuss the account of dehumanisation of the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty, which offers one of the most influential alternatives to the human dignity view.[60] The purpose of this discussion is to set out what I think the central aim of a normative account of dehumanisation should be by juxtaposing my position with a contrasting one. The viewpoint of Rorty is most typically characterised by a sceptical attitude towards foundational theories, such as those by Plato, Aquinas, and Kant, which presuppose a universally shared human

[59] For a reflection on the distinction between the different functions that dehumanisation can play in legitimising and motivating genocide, see: Savage.

[60] Other theories of dehumanisation that fall outside the category of human dignity views, including those by Hannah Arendt, Axel Honneth, and Judith Butler, will be discussed in later chapters. I choose to discuss the approach of Rorty here because it is most dissimilar to my own. This discussion can therefore be instructive in setting out my presuppositions about what a normative account of dehumanisation should be able to deliver.

essence that accounts for a special moral status that people allegedly hold as human beings. According to Rorty, no such essence exists and humanity – as a moral status - is therefore not something that is universally shared, but a more exclusive standing that we ascribe only to particular persons, namely those that belong to our group.[61] Dehumanisation, then, concerns the perception of people as outsiders, which coincides with an inability to feel for them and to include them in our moral community. The best way to counter dehumanisation, following Rorty, is therefore through a 'sentimental education', which consists in the recounting of people's life stories that nurture sympathy for others by extending the boundaries of the community of persons that are seen as 'people like us'.[62]

Studies in psychology of the perceptions that people hold of others and the attitudes they take towards them support many, if not most, of Rorty's claims. For example, in an insightful work with the telling title *Moral Tribes*, the experimental psychologist Joshua Greene sets out a compelling account of how people relate differently to members of the social group(s) they belong to in comparison to outsiders. Greene argues that common sense morality, which includes responses of empathy, shame, and guilt but also forgiveness and loyalty, evolved to overcome the selfishness of the individual and facilitate cooperation between in-group members.[63] These automated moral responses were directed towards people who belong to the same social group. While common sense morality was thus beneficial for overcoming in-group conflicts, problems arose when people of various social groups encountered each other. Interests and values were pitted against each other as people of various religious, cultural, and social creeds entered into closer contact. It turns out that the automated moral responses, developed in a group context, often do not kick in, or work differently, for strangers, and can even aggravate tense situations because each social group tends to believe that they know what is good and bad, and right and wrong, whereas others are mistaken. Greene's account thus lends credibility to Rorty's claim that human beings often fail to feel sympathy for persons who are not considered 'people like us', although this does not necessarily entail that outsiders are dehumanised, as I will argue shortly.

Studies in history and developmental psychology provide further support for Rorty's argument that dehumanisation can be countered most effectively by efforts to evoke sympathy through the recounting of personal stories. These stories help people to take on the perspective of others. Scholars have identified this broadening of the sense of empathy as an important factor in moral

[61] Richard Rorty, 'Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality,' in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical papers. Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 167-185.
[62] Idem, p. 176.
[63] Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, reason, and the gap between us and them* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013).

progress throughout history. The historian Lynn Hunt contends, for example, that human rights could be envisioned in the eighteenth century only after people acquired a more generalised sense of empathy. This sense of empathy allegedly was supported by the rise of the novel that presented the inner life world of the protagonist in a way that made people understand that others, whom they previously believed to be quite unlike themselves, may be more similar than they initially thought.[64] In this way, as Bloom notes, 'much persuasion consists of trying to convince others that the potential targets of empathy really are familiar and similar.'[65] Language plays a key role in this process since it 'can draw us to see these individuals as if they were family or neighbors.'[66]

While these studies endorse the idea that people generally fail to feel sympathy for outsiders, they do not demonstrate that such failures amount to dehumanisation. The distinction between infra-humanisation and dehumanisation is important here. The problem of dehumanisation, I argue, does not lie with the failure to regard others as 'people like *us*', but with recognising them as '*people* like them'. People who fail to be regarded as 'people like us' can nonetheless still be regarded as people, albeit people who fall outside the group. It is only when others fail to even be regarded as '*people* like them', that is, as others who despite their difference(s) can still be recognised as holding a minimal moral human status, that dehumanisation occurs. The perspective that Rorty proposes therefore seems more accurate in describing infra-humanisation, through which people are regarded as inferior and therefore less deserving of sympathy, rather than dehumanisation, through which people are no longer seen as normatively human at all.[67]

Furthermore, it does not even seem evident that people necessarily are infra-humanised when they fail to be considered as 'people like us'. After all, viewing people as outsiders does not automatically entail that we regard them as inferior human beings.[68] The central aim of a normative account of dehumanisation, I argue, should therefore lie in specifying what it means for persons to

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[64] Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A history* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008).

[65] Paul Bloom, *Descartes' Baby: How child development explains what makes us human* (London: Arrow Books, 2005), p. 149.

[66] Ibid. See also: Bloom, *Just Babies*, p. 179.

[67] A further argument for maintaining this distinction between infra-humanisation and dehumanisation is that if Rorty were right in arguing that all those who fail to be considered 'people like us' would thereby be dehumanised, this leads to the counterintuitive conclusion that all individuals we consider 'other people' would be subjected to dehumanisation.

[68] For an insightful discussion of this issue, see: Marilynn Brewer, 'The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love and Outgroup Hate?' *Journal of Social Issues* 55 (1999): 429-444.

It is also interesting to note here that the failure to regard certain individuals as 'people like us' might be morally beneficial in certain ways. As Greene notes, belonging to a distinct social group plays an important role in developing common sense morality. If people would include all individuals in their category of 'people like us', it is difficult to conceive what kind of morality we would end up with, and if the outcome could be called human morality at all. In a similar way, Bloom points out that 'nobody knows whether a truly universalist ethic is humanly possible, whether we can be truly indifferent to ties of culture, country, or blood and still be good and decent people.' See: Bloom, *Just Babies*, p. 129.

fail to be considered as '*people* like them'. It is important, then, to answer the question of when people lose this minimal moral human status in the eyes of those who dehumanise them.

Towards an alternative account of dehumanisation

This chapter critically discussed common views of dehumanisation. Firstly, it rejected the popular conception of dehumanisation as a denial of biological humanity by demonstrating how a denial of biological humanity does not suffice to make acts dehumanising. It was argued that representations of people as animals or objects become dehumanising only when they entail a failure to recognise the *moral* status that persons hold as human beings. Similarly, when people are treated *as if* they are animals or objects, the point is not to deny their membership in the human species, but to negate their normative standing by treating them in ways that are inadmissible for human beings.

Secondly, the chapter argued against social scientific perspectives on dehumanisation that concentrate on fundamental human attributes by showing how these accounts cannot easily distinguish between dehumanisation and infra-humanisation. Furthermore, this chapter showed that the traits that are singled out as fundamental human qualities are those that are indispensable to normative personhood, reinforcing the idea that what is really at stake in cases of attributional dehumanisation is moral status.

This chapter therefore concluded that the normative sense of humanity should be given a central place in our understanding of dehumanisation. Whether 'dehumanisation' can be considered a valuable concept for moral analysis depends on the possibility of envisioning a normative account of humanity that can justify the attribution of a special moral status to human beings. A more thorough articulation of the notion of the failure to recognise human moral status is thus necessary because, without a clearer perspective of what this entails, it is not possible to determine precisely what dehumanisation is, or what is morally at stake in it. The next chapter will therefore turn to the question of how we should conceive of the failure to recognise humanity as a moral status that underpins dehumanisation.

2. Exclusion from acts of moral claim-making

> 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.'
>
> United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

The moral status of human beings

Dehumanisation is often conceived as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity. When we think of some paradigmatic historical cases that involved dehumanisation, such as the exploitation of the Amerindians by the Spanish *conquistadores*, the slavery imposed on African people in the southern American states, or the cruel treatment that was inflicted on the inmates of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps, it may strike us as self-evident that dehumanising acts and practices undermine or diminish the dignity that people hold as human beings. In fact, these concepts seem so intrinsically bound up that it may be difficult to imagine how dehumanisation can be understood independently from the notion of human dignity.

This view of dehumanisation seems promising, at least at first sight, because the concept of human dignity speaks to the idea of an intrinsic and inalienable worth that people possess by virtue of being human, which proscribes particular ways in which human beings may be treated. On the other hand, human dignity based accounts of dehumanisation may be problematic because human dignity is itself a controversial concept. Three critiques that have been waged against this notion – and that this chapter will elaborate on - point to its alleged ambiguity, transcendental character, and idealisation of human nature.

The first of these, which I call the 'vagueness objection', claims that the meaning of human dignity is uncertain, allowing for the term to be used in conflicting, and sometimes contradictory, ways. Following this line of reasoning, scholars have argued that the concept is 'underdetermined', 'virtually meaningless', or even 'stupid'.[1] Yet, the fact that human dignity may be understood in various ways does not necessarily discredit it as a valuable normative concept.[2]

A second critique - the 'objection from transcendentalism' – follows from the question of what the notion of human dignity expresses that cannot be expressed by a concrete description of the

[1] Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword and Dietmar Mieth (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. xviii, Mirko Bagaric and James Allan, 'The Vacuous Concept of Dignity,' *Journal of Human Rights* 5 (2006): 260, and Steven Pinker, 'The Stupidity of Dignity,' *The New Republic*, 28 May 2008.

[2] Andrea Sangiovanni, *Humanity without Dignity: Moral equality, respect, and human rights* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 14.

nature, or features, of human beings. If human dignity simply refers to a particular quality to human life or certain attributes that human beings factually possess, it is unclear why we need the separate notion of human dignity. If the concept expresses something more that cannot be fully captured by reference to the quality of human life or the traits that human beings actually have, this raises the question of where human dignity derives from. If this 'something more' cannot be expressed by reference to qualities or traits that can be described concretely, the notion of human dignity risks becoming transcendental.[3]

A third concern arises from the question of why we should describe the alleged uniqueness of humans, as opposed to animals, as particularly dignified. Even though one could reasonably claim that human beings, generally speaking, are more rational, empathetic, and civilised than other animals, human beings are also uniquely capable of cruelty, humiliation, and barbarity. Why, then, value our humanness as a positive quality? This critique, which I call the 'idealisation objection', claims that there may also be reasons to think of humankind as possessing human '*in*dignity'. After all, the human race is responsible for violence, suffering, and destruction on a scale incomparable to any other species. People who uphold the notion of human dignity therefore seem to largely ignore these darker sides to human existence and draw on an idealised picture of humankind.

The main argument of this chapter is that universal notions of human dignity cannot provide a stable grounding for our understanding of dehumanisation. Taking the controversial aspects of the concept of human dignity into consideration, this chapter examines how we may conceive of dehumanisation as a failure to recognise normative human status in a different way. An alternative perspective, I will argue, can draw on the notion of an exclusion from acts of moral claim-making. According to this view, dehumanisation constitutes a form of moral exclusion that consists in the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

This alternative spells out more clearly why human beings have a particular moral status that should not be denied through dehumanisation. When we view dehumanisation as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity, it is unclear what distinguishes dehumanisation from related practices, such as marginalisation, stigmatisation, and infra-humanisation. Following the human dignity perspective, all of these practices severely violate or undermine a person's human dignity. For the moral interlocutor view, on the other hand, a qualitative difference distinguishes dehumanisation from such related practices, which is marked by the point where persons are excluded from the moral order of human beings, as they are no longer recognised as counterparts who can make normative claims.

[3] In this thesis, the terms 'transcendental' is used to refer to abstract and metaphysical accounts of moral human status, in contrast to accounts that depend on an empirical basis. It is not intended in the Kantian sense as pertaining to the conditions of possibility of knowledge.

Human dignity as a contested concept

If dehumanisation indeed involves a failure to recognise moral human status, as argued in the previous chapter, it is important to articulate what constitutes this status. A logical starting point for this analysis can be found in the notion of human dignity since this concept speaks to the idea of an intrinsic and inalienable worth that people possess by virtue of being human, which proscribes particular ways in which human beings may be treated.

Human dignity can be defined in different ways, given that it holds several meanings and serves various purposes. The concept can refer, for example, to the dignity of the human race in general or to the dignity of every single human individual.[4] It can be based on a notion of achievement – people possess dignity because of what they (can) *do* - or of human nature – people possess dignity because of what they *are*.[5] Human dignity can be seen as a quality that is intrinsic and inalienable or as an honourable status that can be gained and lost depending on circumstances and one's conduct.[6]

Given that our aim here is to evaluate whether the notion of human dignity can provide a conceptual basis for a normative account of dehumanisation, the most interesting perspective for the purposes of this thesis is the view of human dignity as a universal, basic, and equal moral status that all individual human beings possess simply because they are human, which precludes particular forms of treatment and requires a minimal level of respect. This notion of human dignity performs two functions. On the one hand, it establishes a minimal moral equality between human beings, thereby rejecting racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination between human groups or individuals. On the other hand, it sets human beings apart from animals (and objects), attributing to humankind a distinct moral status that requires special consideration.[7]

Although the notion of human dignity speaks in a powerful way to the moral imagination, the term can be considered perplexing in certain regards as well. For instance, the psychologist Steven Pinker has identified a tension in (the use of) the concept, which concerns the fact that dignity is

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[4] This distinction is made by the philosopher George Kateb, who refers to the first as the 'dignity of the human species' and the second as the 'dignity of the individual'. See: George Kateb, *Human Dignity* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard, 2011), pp. ix-x.

[5] Regarding the notion of dignity as something that results from what people (can) do, Margalit makes the further distinction between capacity traits and achievement traits where 'a capacity trait is the human potential to achieve a desired end' and 'an achievement trait is one in which a human capacity is put to use' (p. 70).

[6] The philosopher Michael Rosen highlights this difference in considering the possibility that '[i]nstead of dignity being a characteristic that all human beings have simply in virtue of being human, dignity is something more modest and restricted: an aesthetic quality that manifests itself in human behaviour or (if that is something different) a virtue'. See: Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its history and meaning* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 6.

[7] Kateb expresses this idea in the claim that '[a]ll individuals are equal; no other species is equal to humanity' (p. 6). In *One Another's Equals*, the philosopher Jeremy Waldron makes a similar distinction between the concept of *continuous equality*, which prescribes that all human beings should be attributed (at least) equal concern, and the concept of *distinctive equality*, which states that humans have a particular worth above other animals that justifies this special concern. See: Jeremy Waldron, *One Another's Equals: The basis of human equality* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2017), p. 49.

considered both inviolable and fragile.[8] While human dignity is often seen as an intrinsic and inalienable quality that all human beings possess, people also often think that it can be violated or even lost. This first notion of dignity can be found, for example, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that humans are born equal in dignity and rights. At the same time, however, human rights protect people against cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment because these acts violate human dignity. For an even clearer notion of the precariousness of dignity, we can consider the following observation by Victor Frankl, an Austrian psychologist who was imprisoned in Auschwitz and Dachau, that a man facing extreme suffering 'may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal.'[9]

One could argue that 'forgetting' about (one's own) human dignity does not entail losing it, but Frankl considers the possibility of people retaining their 'human dignity even in a concentration camp', implying the possibility of its loss as well. This ambiguity springs from the dual origin of the contemporary western notion of dignity. As the philosopher Jeremy Waldron has insightfully pointed out, this conception derives, on the one hand, from the metaphysical idea of 'worth', as found in Christian theology and Kantian ethics, which is equal for all human beings and can be traced back to a distinction between human beings and animals or objects.[10] On the other hand, it draws on the classical idea of 'honour', which has a social origin and is hierarchical in nature as it depends on the position one holds in society or one's demeanour. Waldron argues that our contemporary understanding of the term originates from an association of these two ideas, where 'the modern notion of *human* dignity involves an upward equalization of rank, so that we now try to accord every human being something of the dignity, rank, and expectation of respect that was formerly accorded to nobility.'[11]

According to Waldron this 'leveling up' of the status of the common people, or the generalisation of the elevated honour of the noble, is reflected, for instance, in the way contemporary law protects the integrity of the body of all people and indicts against humiliating and degrading treatment. He notes that this development can be observed in the laws of war, where Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions prohibits 'outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment,' whereas, '[i]n ages past, chivalry might require that noble warriors, such as

[8] Pinker.

[9] Frankl, p. 76.

[10] In Christian theology, this distinction derives from the different positions humans and animals hold in the Great Chain of Being and the idea that humans are made in the image of God, while in Kantian philosophy this distinction depends on the status of human beings as rational agents.

[11] Jeremy Waldron, *Dignity, Rank, & Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 33.

knights, be treated with dignity when they fell into the hands of hostile powers; but this was hardly expected in the treatment of the common soldier; they were abused and probably slaughtered.'[12]

Given that honour was historically reserved for the few, while worth (at least in its Christian meaning) only established a minimal sense of equality that did not correspond to an identical right to respectful treatment, the question is whether it is possible to draw in our contemporary understanding of human dignity on the high social status that characterised the classical conception of dignity as honour while retaining the universal application of the Christian-Kantian notion of dignity as worth.[13] It is evident that the Universal Declaration intended to join these two elements as the French representative to the drafting process, René Cassin, claimed that '[t]he text was trying to convey the idea that the most humble men of the most different races have among them the particular spark that distinguishes them from animals, and at the same time obligates them to more grandeur and more duties than any other beings on earth.'[14]

This statement raises the question of what 'the particular spark' is that allegedly distinguishes human beings from animals and obliges them with specific duties. If this spark consists in a concrete trait that people share, it may perhaps be found in reason or moral agency, for these are traits that often have been singled out as fundamental to humanity.[15] Yet, it seems risky to tie our moral status, as well as the respect and consideration that arguably follow from it, to traits that people do not equally possess. After all, it would then be only to easy to argue that those persons who are less reasonable or live lives that are less respectable from a moral point of view possess less dignity.

Furthermore, viewing human dignity as a moral status that derives from particular qualities that we possess as human beings is controversial because there may be no qualities that all humans, and only humans, possess, which can be considered of moral value. Several authors have emphasised the limits of approaches that seek to ground respect for human beings in such traits. Philosophers, such as Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, have argued that the notion of a normatively relevant characteristic with which all people are supposedly endowed is based upon an ideal rather than

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[12] Waldron, *Dignity*, pp. 34-35.

[13] This question is raised by Meir Dan-Cohen in 'Introduction: Dignity and Its (Dis)content,' in Jeremy Waldron, *Dignity, Rank, & Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 6.

[14] René Cassin, as cited in Charles Beitz, 'Human Dignity in the Theory of Human Rights: Nothing but a phrase?' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 41 (2013): 267.

[15] Philosophers, for example, often make appeals to reason to justify human rights. The work of the moral philosopher Alan Gewirth is illustrative in this sense as it ties human rights to rationality. Gewirth characterises human beings as 'rationally purposive agents,' who are in need of freedom and well-being in order to pursue ends in their lives. Studies in social psychology and biology sometimes present a focus on moral agency. The biologist Mary Clark maintains, for instance, that compassion is 'the primary characteristic of human kind'. See: Alan Gewirth, 'Human Dignity as the Basis of Rights,' in Michael Meyer and Willam Parent (eds.), *The Constitution of Rights: Human dignity and American values* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 10-27 and Mary Clark, *In Search of Human Nature* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 342.

reality.[16] Similarly, historians, such as Joanna Bourke, have argued that the dividing line between animals and humans has always been unstable and reflects more closely how we like to see ourselves than what we truly are like.[17] Feminist political theorists, such as Phillips, have further claimed that historical attempts at characterising the human through particular traits that are to be considered of moral importance have in practice served to establish the superiority of particular people over others.[18] It therefore would be problematic to tie our human dignity to a trait that all human beings are supposed to share.

If the 'particular spark' that allegedly unites human beings and sets us apart from animals cannot be found in concrete traits, then how should it be conceived? We might draw here from a metaphysical understanding, grounded in the Catholic tradition, which views human dignity as a value that is bestowed on people because they have a soul and a free will, which make them hold a special position in the divine order of things. The fact that Cassin claims that this spark attributes to us 'more grandeur and more duties than any other beings on earth' indeed resonates with the notion of the Great Chain of Being, where all creatures have their own position, which confers them with a particular role to play in the divine order. The problem with this account is, however, that it cannot convince those who hold worldviews that do not sustain the metaphysical notions of 'soul', 'free will', 'divine order,' or 'Great Chain of Being'.

Alternatively, we could dispense with the task of finding a 'particular spark' and focus instead on the observation that people *recognise* that human beings have human dignity. This is what Margalit has presented, but not endorsed, as the 'skeptical solution' to the problem of grounding respect for human beings.[19] According to the sceptic, the fact that we respect the dignity of all humans is itself the ground for acknowledging that people have a value by the mere virtue of being human. This argument might work if people would indeed respect the dignity of *all* human beings. The problem of dehumanisation, however, concerns precisely the fact that this is not the case. While it may not be necessary for the sceptical argument that everyone believes in human dignity, history shows that it is common for societies to uphold a universal understanding of human dignity in theory, but not in practice. Furthermore, the sceptical argument provides a fickle basis for justifying human dignity since it works also the other way around: if people would not respect of the dignity of all humans this would entail that people have no value by the mere virtue of being human. Neither the stated nor the actual beliefs that people hold about human dignity therefore seem to provide a reliable basis on which to defend the equal moral status of people.

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[16] Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism" (1946)' (translated by Frank Capuzzi), in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 239-276 and Derrida, 'Violence against Animals,' p. 66.

[17] Joanna Bourke, *What It Means to be Human*? *Reflections from 1791 to the present* (London: Virago, 2011).

[18] See: Phillips, p. 10.

[19] Margalit, pp. 76-84.

Given the challenges in identifying what dignity entails, some authors have drawn the conclusion that the notion of human dignity is practically devoid of meaning.[20] The philosopher Ruth Macklin argues, for example, that dignity is 'a useless concept', at least within bioethics, since it does not convey any idea that the notion of respect for persons and their autonomy cannot equally express.[21] Others see the concept of human dignity as problematic, not because it is devoid of meaning, but rather because it is too rich in meaning. The political theorist Charles Beitz has argued, for instance, that the issue is not that we have no idea of what the concept means, but rather that we have too many different understandings of its meaning.[22] This richness allows the notion to be taken in many different, and potentially conflicting, directions, leaving its meaning underdetermined.

This latter argument seems more compelling, given the many different ways in which the notion of human dignity is used in practice. Coming back to the examples with which we began this section, the first article of the Universal Declaration speaks to a conception of human dignity as a status that indicates that human beings are deserving of respect. The prohibition against cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment speaks to a value that people hold, which bestows us with a certain inviolability, while Frankl's reflections on life in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps conceives of human dignity as a quality of conduct that people can lose.[23] All of these uses of the notion of human dignity say something about our perceptions of the moral standing that humanity allegedly confers on us, which goes beyond mere respect for people as autonomous persons.

The notion of human dignity should therefore not be considered devoid of meaning, but its underdetermined nature poses a problem for our endeavour to ground the concept of dehumanisation. After all, if people can uphold widely diverging interpretations of this notion, it is difficult to determine what dehumanisation and entails and when it occurs. This conclusion points to a first problem with relying on human dignity to ground our understanding of dehumanisation as it suggests that human dignity cannot constitute a stable foundation for this notion.

The critiques of vagueness, transcendentalism, and idealisation

After this brief discussion of the shifting (historical) meaning(s) of the concept of human dignity, let us consider the above-mentioned critiques regarding its alleged ambiguity, transcendental character, and idealisation of human nature. The vagueness objection claims that the concept of human dignity

[20] See, for example: Ruth Macklin, 'Dignity Is a Useless Concept: It means no more than respect for persons and their autonomy,' *British Medical Journal* 327 (2003): 1419-1420 and Bagaric and Allan.

[21] Macklin.

[22] Beitz: 279.

[23] Together with rank/status, these three understandings are identified by Rosen as four strands of the concept of human dignity. It should be noted that these various strands have different implications because while all human beings may be believed to possess a certain value and deservingness of respect, the notions of rank/status and quality of conduct imply distinctions between human beings that affect our dignity.

cannot form a steady basis for our understanding of dehumanisation because of its underdetermined nature. How are we to evaluate this concern?

It is important to note that the fact that human dignity may be understood in different ways does not necessarily discredit it as a valuable normative concept. After all, indeterminacy is a common characteristic of normative concepts, as may be seen, for example, in ongoing debates in political theory and philosophy on the meaning(s) of the terms 'freedom' and 'equality'.[24] Nonetheless, the underdetermined meaning of the concept does justify a further inquiry into whether human dignity can form a stable basis for our understanding of dehumanisation. If people can uphold widely diverging interpretations of this notion, it may be difficult to reject limited and parochial understandings of the term. By providing a contentious foundation for the notion of dehumanisation, accounts that base their understanding of dehumanisation on the concept of human dignity thus risk exposing this understanding to controversy, disagreement, and confusion.

Related to this critique is the 'objection of transcendentalism', which follows from the question what the notion of human dignity expresses that cannot be expressed by a concrete description of the nature, or features, of human beings. If the concept of human dignity is not to be redundant, it should express an idea that goes beyond a mere description of the traits or capacities that human beings possess.[25] However, if the meaning of the concept cannot be defined through concrete descriptions of what people are like, it risks becoming transcendental.

To see this point more clearly, it may be helpful to consider a specific account of human dignity. The most famous indictment against dehumanisation, based on a view of human dignity, has been developed by Immanuel Kant, who maintains that there exists a universal moral law – the categorical imperative - that people can know through reason. The categorical imperative tells us in the formula of humanity that one needs to 'act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.'[26]

According to Kant, people possess an intrinsic worth as rational beings because they can set ends for themselves, that is to say, they can decide what they want to do with their lives.[27] Unlike animals, human beings are not compelled to follow their instincts, but are able to reflect on their existence and have a certain freedom to form their lives according to their will. The reason as to why people are not to be treated as mere ends is then that they are rational and can decide how to direct their

[24] Sangiovanni, p. 14.

[25] Phillips argues, for example, that the notion of human dignity is redundant because it does not express any idea that the notion of equality cannot express (p. 86).

[26] Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (translated by Lewis Beck) (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1959), p. 429.

[27] Immanuel Kant, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', in Mary Gregor (ed.), *Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 557.

actions. When we use other human beings as a mere means for the realisation of our own objectives, we thus undermine their intrinsic value as persons who can pursue their own aims.

Many scholars find the Kantian argument for human dignity persuasive but some worry that the central importance attributed to (moral) reason may exclude people who are unable to set ends for themselves.[28] Although the Kantian perspective has been influential in grounding the notion of human dignity and justifying the protection of human rights, certain authors have voiced the concern that the emphasis on reason risks jeopardising the status of individuals who are incapable of setting ends for themselves in an autonomous way.[29] How can we include small children, the severely mentally impaired, or the elderly with dementia in our moral considerations, if respect for humanity is supposed to be based on rational autonomy?

A common reply of Kantians to this concern focuses on the idea that it is the capacity for moral reasoning that matters and not the development of the trait itself. The philosopher Christine Korsgaard argues, for example, that 'the possession of humanity and the capacity for the good will, whether or not that capacity is realized, is enough to establish a claim on being treated as an unconditional end.'[30] Since small children, the severely mentally impaired, and the elderly with dementia are all human beings, they share a nature that is characterised by the capacity to develop the ability for moral reasoning, even if this capacity is not realised in the life of each individual.[31] The advantage of this perspective is that it attributes dignity to every human being, irrespective of his or her actual qualities. The downside of this perspective is, however, that it is unclear how such an unachieved capacity can form the ground for respect. As Andrea Sangiovanni argues, we generally do not value counterfactual abilities, but only the abilities that people can put into practice. Sangiovanni explains that if he would audition to become a goalkeeper for Arsenal, the football club would have sound reasons to reject him, given his actual inability to play as a professional goalkeeper and notwithstanding his counterfactual ability to do so:

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[28] Kantian accounts of human dignity have been defended, for example, by Alan Gewirth, Allen Wood, Christine Korsgaard, and Rainer Forst. See: Alan Gewirth, *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), Allen Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), and Rainer Forst, *The Right to Justification: Elements of a constructivist theory of justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). Critiques of the Kantian perspective of human dignity have been proposed, for example, by McMahan, Sangiovanni, and Phillips. See: Jeff McMahan, 'Cognitive Disability, Misfortune, and Justice,' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 25 (1996): 3-35.

[29] For a general discussion of the issue that mental impairment poses for moral philosophy, see: Eva Kittay and Licia Carlson (eds.), *Cognitive Disability and Its Challenge to Moral Philosophy* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[30] Christine Korsgaard, 'Kant's Formula of Humanity,' *Kant-Studien* 77 (1986): 197.

[31] See also: Samuel Kerstein, 'Dignity and Preservation of Personhood,' in Paulus Kaufmann, Hannes Kuch, Christian Neuhäuser and Elaine Webster (eds.), *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization: Human dignity violated* (Library of Ethics and Applied Philosophy) (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London and New York: Springer, 2010), p. 232.

> Why should anyone put any value on the fact – assuming it is a fact – that I could play like a premier leaguer if I had been unhindered by my lack of skills? Or that, in one (modal) sense of 'capacity,' I do have a capacity to keep goals out of the net since nothing in the laws of nature or logic prevents me from doing so?[32]

One may object here that this analogy is flawed because one needs exceptional skills to play as a professional goalkeeper, whereas it suffices in the case of (moral) reasoning to surpass a minimal level that qualifies one as a person who can set ends. However, the point is that some people do not even meet this basic threshold, nor have they met it in the past or will they ever meet it in the future. To nonetheless attribute human dignity to these individuals would therefore entail making an unsubstantiated move in the argument through which these people are included, regardless of the actual traits they possess. The problem with such moves is that they render the argument controversial because this argumentative strategy depends on hypothetical presuppositions about humanity, which no longer rely on descriptions of what concrete human beings are like or what they factually (are able to) do. Instead, such arguments draw on transcendental ideas about what makes humanity special that do not correspond to the diversity that characterises actual human beings.

A third concern arises from the question of why we should describe the alleged uniqueness of humans, as opposed to animals, as particularly dignified. It seems that the attribution of dignity to all human beings draws on an idealised image of what it means to be human. After all, people are not only capable of empathy, benevolence, and developing and following a 'good will', but of violence, abuse, and mistreatment as well. When people are attributed human dignity as a unique moral status that distinguishes them from animals, these negative sides to human existence seem to be largely ignored. It is interesting to note here that people sometimes assume that the violent tendency in humans arises from the animal side of our nature and that human reason allows people to transcend the barbaric state of nature. However, this argument overlooks the fact that human beings engage in forms of violence that are unknown to other species. The literary scholar Tzvetan Todorov thus rightly notes that 'torture and extermination have not even the remotest equivalent in the animal kingdom.'[33]

When we consider that human beings are the only creatures who can be immoral and mistreat each other in humiliating and atrocious ways, it becomes more difficult to uphold the idea that people deserve an elevated moral status above other animals. This concern poses a problem for our analysis as to whether human dignity can provide an appropriate grounding for a normative account of dehumanisation, because the moral status ascribed to people is supposed to limit the ways in which humans may treat one another. If we held that people possess 'human *in*dignity' or

[32] Sangiovanni, p. 50.

[33] Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme: Moral life in the concentration camps* (translated by Arthur Denner and Abigail Pollak) (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), p. 123.

that they hold no special moral status at all, there would be no specific reason not to mistreat, abuse, and exploit one's fellow human beings other than general indictments not to harm sentient animals or to avoid cruelty.[34]

This analysis of the concept of human dignity, although not exhaustive, raises some serious doubts about whether this notion can provide a stable foundation for our account of dehumanisation. The discussion suggests that the prospect of grounding a view of dehumanisation on the notion of human dignity depends on whether it would be possible to offer a clear account of the notion of human dignity, which can explain why human beings deserve a special moral status, as distinct from animals and objects, without relying on idealisations or transcendental moves in the argument.

Human dignity based accounts of dehumanisation

Having outlined in general terms why human dignity is a problematic normative concept, I will now go on to illustrate more specifically how it falls short in helping us to account for dehumanisation. As mentioned in the introduction, among the most influential authors that draw on a Kantian perspective of human dignity to clarify what dehumanisation entails is the social psychologist Herbert Kelman. In an article on state-sanctioned massacres, he argues that dehumanisation takes place whenever we fail to perceive of persons as being (fully) human, i.e. when we do not sufficiently attribute them individual identity or affirm that they belong to the same community of individuals as we do.[35] For Kelman, dehumanisation thus amounts to a violation of human dignity because he claims that treating a person with dignity means that when we 'accord him both identity and community – to respect his individuality and to care about his fate'.[36]

In other words, Kelman maintains that dehumanisation involves a violation of human dignity, which consists in ignoring differences that make persons unique individuals or overlooking similarities that bind us together in a human community. By pointing out the distinction between dehumanisation as a denial of individuality, on the one hand, and community, on the other, he provides valuable insights into the different forms that dehumanisation can take. In cases of genocide, for example, people are killed because of their identity as a group member. Individual differences fade from sight as the collective marker becomes central to defining *what* (rather than *who*) the person is. At the same time, however, this reduction of persons to a single aspect of their identity also works to exclude them from a community shared with others, which helps explain how

[34] This statement is supported by evidence from social-psychological studies that suggest that emphasising shared humanity can actually reduce the experienced level of empathy with a victimised group if the human category is framed in a negative way. See: Katie Greenaway, Winnifred Louis, and Michael Wohl, 'Awareness of Common Humanity Reduces Empathy and Heightens Expectations of Forgiveness for Temporally Distant Wrongdoing,' *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3 (2012): 446-454 and Haslam and Loughnan, 'Dehumanization and Infrahumanization,' p. 417.

[35] Kelman, 'Violence Without Moral Restraint': 48-49.

[36] Kelman, 'The Conditions, Criteria, and Dialectics of Human Dignity': 532.

dehumanisation can produce a loss of a sense of moral obligation that facilitates the perpetration of atrocities.

It should be noted, however, that this perspective sets out overly demanding criteria for perceiving someone as human because it focuses on what it means to recognise a person as *fully* human, instead of as *minimally* human. This focus on recognising people as fully human renders this account vulnerable to the critique of idealisation because it rests on an unrealistic view of human interactions. Kelman asserts, for example, that attributing 'community' to others implies that we experience their death as 'a personal loss'.[37] He thus views the attribution of membership in a community not as a minimal form of concern for the other, but as an extensive emotional engagement. It seems improbable that anyone can avoid dehumanising others when the criteria for recognising someone's humanity are set so high.

Indeed, as the political theorist Norman Geras has pointed out, most relations between people are characterised by, what he calls, 'a social contract of mutual indifference'.[38] Most people in the world are strangers to us. People therefore often do not care for each other, or at least not in the sense where the death of a person to whom we are unrelated would move us strongly emotionally. Consequently, the ensuing perspective on dehumanisation becomes too broad since it draws on an idealised image of what it means to be human, which does not reflect the lack of deep emotional engagement that generally characterises relations between strangers.

The concept of human dignity is also important to Margalit's account of dehumanisation as a severe form of humiliation, which consists in treating humans *as if* they were less than human, i.e. treating them as (nothing more than) objects, machines, animals, or subhuman (including treating adults as minors).[39] Margalit justifies the idea that people should not be humiliated based on a negative justification of human dignity, which means that he does not defend the idea that all people should be awarded a particular respect for the sole reason that they are human, but only that they should not be humiliated. The reason for this is that cruelty can be committed not only against our bodies, but also against our minds. As 'symbolic animals', humans can be tormented by words, gestures, and signs as well as by the infliction of physical violence.[40]

While Margalit avoids the critique of idealisation and transcendentalism by avoiding the use of a positive account of human dignity, this argumentative strategy nonetheless raises the problem of vagueness. If human dignity cannot be positively defined, it remains unclear what grounds the negative justification. After all, without a circumscribed idea of what the proper treatment of human

[37] Kelman, 'Violence Without Moral Restraint': 49.
[38] Norman Geras, *The Contract of Mutual Indifference: Political philosophy after the Holocaust* (London: Verso, 1999).
[39] Margalit, p. 89.
[40] Idem, p. 85.

beings ought to be (and why people deserve such treatment), it is difficult to pinpoint when people are humiliated (and why they should not be).[41]

Lastly, the cultural scholar Sophie Oliver has proposed an account of dehumanisation that focuses on the notion of a violation of human dignity as an embodied concept. She claims that abstract articulations of the concept of human dignity are precarious and that it is therefore important to pay attention to the concrete ways in which incursions against the human body can violate dignity. According to Oliver, dehumanisation should be seen first and foremost as a form of misperception through which victims are regarded as in- or subhuman. These perceptions in turn often lead to forms of denial of humanity that are enacted through the body:

> In order to murder, rape, and torture their victims, perpetrators must perceive those victims as sub- or inhuman, as outside the scope of moral responsibility. The violences enacted upon the body and person of the victim reinforce this (mis)perception in the perpetrator's mind, while all too often leading the victim him or herself to feel as if they were no longer part of the human community.[42]

An interesting aspect of Oliver's analysis is that it brings into focus physical aspects of dehumanisation, which testimonies of victims of dehumanisation also touch on. Yet, the attempt to 'embody' the concept of human dignity seems paradoxical, given that the body is precisely what human beings share with animals. Our embodied existence accounts for the animal side of our nature. It therefore seems unlikely that the body can form the basis for ascribing an allegedly distinct normative status to human beings as separate from other animals. The precise role that dignity as an embodied concept can play in accounting for dehumanisation therefore remains underdeveloped.

This critical discussion illustrates two key limitations in conceptualising dehumanisation through the lens of a violation of human dignity. First, it is difficult to distinguish between dehumanisation and infra-humanisation – the concept I analysed in the previous chapter - because a violation of human dignity does not allow for clear distinctions between viewing, portraying, or treating people as less than human or as inferior human beings. Human dignity mostly speaks to a 'full' human life, but when people are not seen as *fully* human, this amounts to infra-humanisation. It is only when people are not even recognised as *minimally* human (in a moral sense) that dehumanisation occurs. Human dignity thus seems too broad a notion to help us delineate the concept of dehumanisation.

Second, these accounts illustrate the general difficulty, set out in the previous section, in specifying what human dignity entails. For example, when dehumanisation is viewed as a failure to

[41] Margalit argues that the moral indictment against humiliation derives from the idea that cruelty is wrong (p. 88). The negative duty to avoid cruelty towards people (as well as animals), however, does not entail a positive duty to respect all human beings.

[42] Oliver, p. 93.

perceive of persons as (fully) human, which comprises the need to deeply care about the life of each human being, the threshold for not dehumanising people is set too high. This understanding of dehumanisation draws on an idealised view of humanity that people generally do not live up to. The ensuing perspective of dehumanisation therefore becomes too encompassing. When human dignity is viewed as an embodied concept, on the other hand, it remains unclear how dehumanisation involves a denial of something that is fundamental to humanity, given that humans participate in bodily existence in a similar way to other animals. In avoiding the critique of idealisation and transcendentalism by focusing on a concrete aspect of human existence shared by all human beings, this account becomes vulnerable to the critique of vagueness. In sum, the notion of human dignity does not seem appropriate for providing a firm grounding for our understanding of dehumanisation because it often, if not always, proves difficult to conceptualise human dignity in a way that avoids the critiques of vagueness, transcendentalism, and idealisation.

Relating to people as animals

If our perspective of dehumanisation cannot be based on the notion of human dignity, a different approach is needed to ground our conception of dehumanisation as a failure to recognise moral human status. The desiderata for such an alternative account should be the same as those for the notion of human dignity, namely that it offers a clear basis for our understanding of dehumanisation that helps to explain why human beings deserve a special moral status, as distinct from animals and objects, without relying on idealisations or transcendental moves in the argument.

To account for this idea of a distinct moral status that people should attribute to their fellow human beings, it will be helpful to take an approach based on more empirically grounded considerations of what distinguishes relating to people like human beings from relating to them as animals or objects. After all, if this account of a special moral human status is to be clear, determined, and non-transcendental, it cannot rely on abstract notions about what humans and humanity are like. Instead, a more promising alternative may draw on observations about what characterises the (normative) relations and interactions that can exist and take place between human beings.

Let us consider first the question as to how relating to people like human beings differs from relating to them as animals. It is important to note that the relations and interactions between human beings, on the one hand, and humans and animals, on the other, share important similarities. For example, humans and animals at times appear to care for each other. A study by the psychologist Carolyn Zahn-Waxler regarding the age at which children begin to console family members, for instance, inadvertently found that pets often show signs of concern and attempt to comfort

household members who pretend to cry or be in pain.[43] Human beings and animals at times stand in relations of dependency and trust as well. This is the case, for example, for pets and their 'owners' but also for small children who were raised by wild animals.[44]

Furthermore, studies in biology have reported animal conduct that shows remarkable similarities with behaviour that we would consider moral in human beings. For example, the primatologist Frans de Waal recounts several stories of altruism in animals. In his insightful study of animal empathy, he notes that there 'is an abundance of stories of human swimmers saved by dolphins or whales, sometimes protected against sharks, or lifted to the surface the same way these animals support one another.'[45] De Waal also tells the fascinating story of a whale that was caught in fishing nets. After the whale was released, she appeared to show gratitude to the people who had helped her: 'The most remarkable part came when the whale realized it was free. Instead of leaving the scene, she hung around. The huge animal swam in a large circle, carefully approaching every diver separately. She nuzzled one, then moved on to the next, until she had touched all of them.'[46]

These stories suggest that care, trust, altruism, and empathy are not unique to the relations and interactions between human beings. To account for a distinct human moral status and to specify what it entails to relate to people as human beings, it is important, then, to identify what is distinctive of the normative relations and interactions that can exist and take place between people.

One possible aspect in which human relations may be unique is suggested by the philosopher Judith Butler in her influential account of what it means to consider someone 'normatively human'. She argues that to be regarded as human in a normative sense entails that one's death would be considered 'grievable'.[47] At the basis of this conception of grievability lies the idea that human beings share a particular vulnerability to suffering which stems not only from the violence that can be done to our bodies, but also from the fact that, as socially constituted beings, we mourn the loss of others.[48]

Butler's account provides insight into what may be wrong about our inconsistent responses to suffering in the world. Although a Western audience may be excused for not having the same emotional response to catastrophes that take place in Asia or Africa as it does to those that hit closer to home, it becomes morally problematic when people do not experience any emotional reaction to

[43] As described in: Frans de Waal, *The Age of Empathy: Nature's lessons for a kinder society* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), pp. 92-93.
[44] Joanna Bourke discusses some historical cases of 'feral' children in *What It Means to be Human*?, p. 53.
[45] De Waal, *The Age of Empathy*, pp. 128-129.
[46] Idem, pp. 129-130.
[47] Judith Butler, 'Violence, Mourning, Politics,' in *Precarious Life: The powers of mourning and violence* (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 19-48, and Butler, *Frames of War*.
[48] Butler, 'Violence, Mourning, Politics,' p. 20.

such events. When we perceive the lives of people as already lost and therefore not worthy of mourning, we fail to acknowledge the humanity of the victims.

While this point is well taken, what it is that makes the loss of a *person*, rather than of any sentient being, particularly grievable remains underdeveloped in Butler's account. We could imagine, for example, that the death of pets should be considered grievable as well, based on the criteria that Butler sets out.[49] After all, domesticated animals are vulnerable to violence and maintain social relations with human beings, which accounts for the fact that people mourn their loss.[50] Yet, we probably would hesitate to claim that a failure to recognise the grievability of the death of a dog or a cat would be dehumanising to the animal. Perhaps this is so because the death of a pet becomes grievable because of the social relations in which the animal stands to human beings. We might say that whereas people mourn the loss of their animals, this is not reciprocal. However, this argument ignores those instances where animals appear to mourn the loss of their 'owner'.[51] Furthermore, there are animals who seem to grieve over the loss of members of their group without any human interference, as is the case for elephants.[52]

'Grievability' therefore does not seem to provide the right kind of ground for justifying the attribution of a special moral status to human beings. However, the relations and interactions between human beings differ from those between people and animals in other ways. For instance, the interactions and relations between people are characterised by moral standards, derived through reasoning, which aspire to a high level of objectivity, impartiality, and universality, as exemplified by the notions of rights and justice.[53] Another salient contrast concerns the fact that human beings can

[49] For a more in-depth discussion of this question, see: David Redmalm, 'Pet Life: When is non-human life grievable?' *Sociological Review* 63 (2015): 19-35.

[50] Based on these qualities, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka have argued that such animals may even have a right to citizenship. Donaldson and Kymlicka contend that domesticated animals are entitled to citizenship, similar to that of severely disabled humans, because they have interests as sentient beings that live within human society. See: Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A political theory of animal rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[51] Most famous among these are the story of Bobby, a dog in Edinburgh who would not leave the grave of his master, buried in 1858, and who died there after fourteen years, and that of Hachiko, the dog who waited every evening for his owner to arrive from work at the Shibuya train station in Tokyo and continued to do so for eleven years after his master died in 1925. See: De Waal, *The Age of Empathy*, p. 11.

[52] Mark Rowlands, *Can Animals Be Moral?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 3.

[53] This aspect is identified by De Waal as distinctively human in his argument that human morality consists of three levels, of which only the last is uniquely human. The first level involves so-called 'building blocks' of morality, such as empathy, retribution, and a basic sense of fairness. The second level relates to social pressure. The third level comprises judgement and reasoning. De Waal argues regarding the latter that 'this level of morality, with its desire for consistency and "disinterestedness," and its careful weighing of what one did against what one could or should have done' is to be considered 'uniquely human' (p. 75). This is the case because it 'lifts moral behavior to a level of abstraction and self-reflection unheard of before our species entered the evolutionary scene' (p. 75). See: Frans de Waal, *Primates and Philosophers: How morality evolved* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

cooperate with individuals to whom they are unrelated on a large scale.[54] Both of these facts result from the human capacity, mediated by language, to imagine union and community beyond the limits of bonds that tie people together in relations of kinship and tribe.[55] Through the sharing of narratives, people are able to partake in imagined communities and construct a collective sense of social reality, allowing for more complex and encompassing forms of community to develop than are conceivable among animals.[56]

The complexity of human language that mediates social relations has important consequences not only on the communal level, however, but also for the personal interactions that people (can) engage in. In particular, it makes discursive moral interactions possible between people in a way that is not similarly conceivable between humans and animals. This difference, I argue, signals a crucial contrast between relating to people as human beings and relating to them as animals, which lies in the fact that human beings can make moral appeals on one another, whereas people and animals cannot.[57] In my view, this aspect plays a central role in attributing to people a minimal moral human status.

The salience of moral claim-making

The fact that people generally can make claims on each other about what they consider to be right and wrong has been singled out as a key distinctive feature of human morality ever since Antiquity. One of the first and most famous expressions of this idea can be found in Aristotle, who claimed that humans possess speech, whereas animals only have a voice.[58] The difference, according to Aristotle, lies in the idea that speech can be used to profess ethical judgements, whereas a voice merely serves to indicate sensory experience. He thus argued that while animals can express pain and pleasure, humans are capable of distinguishing between what is good and bad, and right and wrong. Aristotle held that this moral dimension is what makes our lives genuinely human.[59]

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[54] Regarding this point, the economists Ernst Fehr and Urs Fischbacher assert that 'human societies represent a huge anomaly in the animal world' because 'they are based on a detailed division of labour and cooperation between genetically unrelated individuals in large groups.' See: 'The Nature of Human Altruism,' *Nature* 425 (2003): 785.

[55] The historian Noah Yuval Harari notes that the human ability 'to create an imagined reality out of words enabled large numbers of strangers to cooperate effectively.' See: *Sapiens: A brief history of humankind* (London: Vintage, 2011), p. 36.

[56] Benedict Anderson's, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006) is the key monograph on imagined communities. For a classical work on social reality, see: John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin, 1995)

[57] This argument does not exclude the theoretical possibility that animals may be able to make moral appeals towards one another. The central point is that human beings and non-human animals cannot articulate normative appeals to one another. This possibility to make discursive moral claims is therefore an important aspect that distinguishes interactions between human beings from interactions between people and animals.

[58] Aristotle, *Politics* I, 1253a, 9-17.

[59] It is important to keep in mind, however, that while Aristotle believed that human beings were fundamentally characterised by their capacity to reason, he maintained that people were unequally endowed with this quality or the possibility to pursue a life guided by reason. See: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.8 [1178a-1179a] and *Politics* I, 1260a, 12. For a discussion of this issue, see: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition. Second edition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), p. 27.

Notwithstanding the conceptual beauty of this distinction, biologists have challenged Aristotle's claim about the uniqueness of the human ability for moral evaluation through experiments that ostensibly show that certain animals can make basic normative judgements as well. An intriguing experiment, conducted by the biologists Sarah Brosnan and Frans de Waal, indicates, for instance, that capuchin monkeys may have an acute sense of fairness.[60] In the experiment, two monkeys in adjoining cages were asked to give a stone to a researcher. Each time they performed the task, the researcher gave them a piece of cucumber as a reward. However, at a certain point in the experiment, one of the monkeys did not receive a cucumber, but a much more desirable grape. When the other monkey gave a stone, the researcher handed it again a cucumber. The monkey, at first confused, would watch closely to check whether the other monkey was indeed given a grape. To make sure that it was not making a mistake, the monkey would take another stone and bang it on the cage floor to ensure it was a stone before handing it over to the researcher - only to be given another cucumber again! The monkey who received the less tasty remuneration would then throw it away in dismay, while shrieking loudly at the injustice incurred.[61]

Humans thus seem not to be alone in making moral judgements, although scientists have questioned Brosnan and De Waal's conclusion that a notion of fairness inspires the animal's angry reaction. Juliane Bräuer and her colleagues ran similar experiments with chimpanzees and argued that they reject food, not because they compare it to what others receive, but to what they expect to receive.[62] The issue as to whether moral evaluation is a quality unique to human beings is thus disputed. Yet, it seems uncontroversial to claim that what is distinct about the moral dimension to human life is the prevalence of highly complex forms of ethical practice as mediated through intricate language structures.

The existence of such intricate language structures seems indispensable for the development of full-fledged human morality, which is characterised not only by a concern for the fairness of one's own treatment, but also by a concern for impartiality and universality.[63] When people make moral

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[60] Sarah Brosnan and Frans de Waal, 'Monkeys reject unequal pay,' *Nature* 425 (2003): 297-299. See also the video in Frans de Waal, 'Moral behavior in animals,' *TED Talk* 2011, available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals [last accessed: 29 September 2016].

[61] One may argue that this experiment does not refute Aristotle's claims. After all, 'loud shrieking' may not exactly be what Aristotle had in mind when he talked about 'speech'. Yet, the conclusion that only human beings can form ethical judgements seems to be proven wrong by this experiment.

[62] Juliane Bräuer, Josep Call, and Michael Tomasello, 'Are Apes Really Inequity Adverse?' *Proceedings: Biological Sciences* 273 (2006): 3123-3128. For the purposes of the current discussion, it is interesting to note that even if Bräuer and her colleagues are right in claiming that the chimpanzees did not have a sense of fairness, the fact that the apes reject food offered to them seems to indicate that they have a sense of 'good' and 'bad', relative to their expectations. Emphasising this point, De Waal argues that expectations are the category that brings 'animal behavior closest to the "ought" of behavior that we recognize so clearly in the moral domain.' See: De Waal, *Primates and Philosophers*, p. 45.

[63] These concerns speak to the third, uniquely human, level of morality in the account of De Waal. At this level, people seek to attain a certain level of consistency and disinterestedness in their moral judgements through reasoning. See: De Waal, *Primates and Philosophers*, p. 75.

appeals on one another, call each other to account or give normative justifications for their conduct, they invoke a generalised standard of what is good and bad, or right and wrong. That is to say, when I make a *moral* demand on you to help me when I am in need, I do not simply convey the idea that I will get angry with you if you do not help me or that I want you to help me. Rather, my claim expresses the idea that helping me would be the *right* thing to do and that you, me or any other person should help not only me, but also anyone else, given the same circumstances. Similarly, when I seek to offer a normative justification for my conduct, I cannot simply state that I did what I did because I felt like it. A normative justification requires that I give reasons for my conduct, which I can expect to be acceptable to reasonable others.[64] The fact that morality can so easily be described in the terms of 'making a moral appeal', 'calling others into account', and 'providing justifications' emphasises the centrality of acts of claim-making for human morality.

The philosopher Stephen Darwall presents a compelling argument for the importance of such discursive acts for human moral interactions. In *The Second-Person Standpoint*, Darwall focuses on the interpersonal relationship between and 'I' and a 'you' who address normative claims and demands to each other.[65] This 'second-person view' of normativity is formulated against first-personal views of morality, such as the one proposed by Christine Korsgaard, which concentrates on the moral agent's endeavour to align one's will with the moral law,[66] or third-personal accounts, such as Thomas Nagel's, which develops the notion of an impartial 'view from nowhere'.[67]

In contradistinction to such single agent-focused or impartial views of ethics, Darwall defines what is central to (part of) morality in relational terms.[68] More specifically, he argues that normative interactions are importantly characterised by discursive practices through which people make moral claims and demands on each other. These practices, Darwall argues, imply a set of assumptions. First, in expressing a demand, the claimant assumes to have a certain authority to call others into account. Second, in addressing one's claim to the other person, the claimant presupposes that the addressee is a free and rational agent. Without this assumption, it would not make sense to present him or her with claims that (seek to) impel him or her to take particular actions or to refrain from taking particular actions.[69] Successful acts of interpersonal moral claim-making thus contain a particular

[64] This account of normativity is developed by Thomas Scanlon in *What We Owe To Each Other* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 1998).

[65] Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[66] Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*.

[67] Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[68] Darwall notes that some forms of morality do not take the form of such interpersonal encounters. The second-person standpoint does not provide an account of normativity as deriving, for example, from an external authority, such as divine law.

[69] Darwall defines a second-personal reason as 'one whose validity depends on presupposed authority and accountability relations between persons and, therefore, on the possibility of the reason's being addressed person-to-person' (p. 8).

normativity in that they require recognition of a distinct moral status of both the claimant and the addressee. Although Darwall does not address the question of how relations and interactions between people differ from those between human beings and animals, his argument that normativity is intrinsic to acts of moral claim-making provides further support for the idea that moral claim-making plays a key role in human normative interrelations.

Studies in developmental psychology lend additional credibility to this claim in highlighting the importance of acts of moral claim-making for the upbringing of children. Developmental psychologists emphasise that it is pivotal for moral socialisation that parents make appeals on their children.[70] The developmental psychologist Martin Hoffman argues, for example, that 'peer pressure *compels* children to realize that others have claims; cognition *enables* them to understand others' perspectives; empathetic distress and guilt *motivate* them to take others' claims and perspectives into account.'[71] In all three of these processes, the demands of parents or caregivers are needed to correct the behaviour of children. These demands often take the form of inductions to consider what they would feel if someone else did the same to them as they did to others.[72] Children come to understand that they are not privileged and that the claims of others matter as well through such repeated appeals. The guidance provided by moral claims and demands, as expressed by parents and caregivers, is thus considered indispensable for the development of a full-fledged sense of morality.

Building on these insights from biology, philosophy, and developmental psychology, I conclude that an important distinction between relations and interactions among human beings and those that are conceivable between people and animals concerns the fact that human beings can express discursive moral claims to one another, whereas people and animals cannot. A crucial contrast between relating to people as fellow human beings and relating to them as animals is then signalled by the question as to whether people are regarded as being able to express and understand such claims.[73] By implication, I argue that dehumanisation can be conceived as a failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

Relating to people as objects

Let us now consider the question as to how relating to people as human beings differs from relating to them as objects. An original account of this issue has been developed by the critical theorist Axel Honneth, who claims that dehumanisation involves a form of reification that consists in a forgetting

[70] Bloom, *Descartes' Baby*, p. 149.

[71] Martin Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for caring and justice* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 10-11.

[72] Bloom, *Descartes' Baby*, p. 149.

[73] The status of people who are unable to express and understand such claims, who may include, for example, small children, the severely mentally impaired, and elderly with dementia, will be discussed later in this chapter.

of an original form of recognition of the humanity of persons that characterises unaffected interpersonal relations.[74] Although this initially sounds abstract, the basic idea that Honneth expresses is that people naturally recognise each other's humanity and that it is only when social interactions become distorted that persons cease to acknowledge one another as fellow human beings. According to Honneth, we may 'forget' that the other is a fellow human being, for example, because we hold prejudices or stereotypes or because we develop an attitude that is too calculating and rationalistic through which we come to see others no longer as persons, but as mere objects that we can use to our own advantage. He thus explains that when we reify other human beings, '[w]e may indeed be capable in a cognitive sense of perceiving the full spectrum of human expressions, but we lack, so to speak, the feeling of connection that would be necessary for us to be affected by the expressions we perceive'.[75]

The difference between relating to people as human beings and relating to them as objects, according to Honneth, thus lies in the fact that when people recognise others as fellow human beings they automatically connect with and respond to their emotions and expressions. When we dehumanise others, on the other hand, our attitude towards them becomes similar to that of a psychopath: while we may register their emotions, we fail to be affected by them.[76]

This view resonates with certain witness accounts of the way in which the inmates of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps were treated. Levi recalls, for example, the reifying language that marked the roll calls: 'At the end the officer asked "*Wieviel Stück*?" The corporal saluted smartly and replied there were six hundred and fifty "pieces" and that all was in order.'[77] In the same passage, Levi also comments on the lack of emotion that characterised the use of violence in the camps: 'Here we received the first blows: and it was so new and senseless that we felt no pain, neither in body nor in spirit. Only a profound amazement: how can one hit a man without anger?'[78]

Honneth thus offers an insightful account of what it means to fail to recognise the moral human status of people by focusing on the failure to respond adequately to the expressions of the other due to an absence of a minimal emotional involvement. However, while this account is conducive in indicating how relating to people as fellow human beings requires a basic level of affective engagement, it overlooks the fact that we are emotionally engaged with others not only when we

[74] Axel Honneth, *Reification: A new look at and old idea* (Berkeley Tanner Lectures) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[75] Idem, pp. 57-58.
[76] The psychologist Jonathan Haidt observes, for example, that psychopaths 'feel no compassion, guilt, shame, or even embarrassment' and 'seem to live in a world of objects, some of which happen to walk around on two legs.' See: Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 72.
[77] Levi, *If This is a Man*, p. 22.
[78] Ibid.

care and are concerned for them, but also when we fear or hate them.[79] Although Honneth's theory captures well the idea of dehumanisation as indifference, it does not seem capable of accounting for forms of dehumanisation fuelled by hate, enmity, or fear. Yet, these elements appear to be at least as central to dehumanisation as indifference is.

While the account of Honneth thus cannot serve as a general theory of dehumanisation, it helps explain what is distinctive to relating to people like objects. In my view, Honneth is correct in claiming that manifestations of dehumanisation that take the form of reification involve a failure to engage affectively with the pleas of others. This may be seen more clearly when we consider again the argument developed above that moral interactions between people are distinguished from those that are conceivable between human beings and animals by the fact that people can make moral claims on each other, whereas human beings and animals cannot.

At first sight, the proposed view of dehumanisation as an exclusion from acts of moral claim-making does not seem to be able to account for the distinction between relating to people as human beings and relating to them as objects. After all, certain objects are able to make claims on people. My laptop, for example, keeps insisting that I replace its battery every time I switch it on. Yet, I would hesitate to say that my laptop makes a moral appeal to me. For a claim to be moral, I argue, this claim needs to be grounded on a basic understanding of what is good and bad, and right and wrong. These judgements are based on evaluations of fragility, scarcity, and weakness. It is thus the bodily vulnerability people share with animals - or the way in which we can be similarly exposed to pain and suffering as a consequence of our sentient and embodied existence - which opens up the possibility of developing a moral consciousness.[80]

It could be argued, however, that my laptop too has a certain sense of 'badness' – which corresponds to the ill-functioning of the battery – and a conception of 'the good' – which consists in battery replacement. Furthermore, my laptop is vulnerable – it risks never turning on again if the battery would completely give in. Yet, it does not seem likely that my laptop is afraid of this possibility. For my laptop, making an appeal to me to replace its battery is as significant as signalling that the volume button is switched off. This is also why it would be a mistake of me to respond compassionately to the claims of my laptop: this reaction would entail confusing an object with a sentient being. This analysis suggests that *moral* claim-making entails making claims about something we care about. Without a sense of concern, or affective engagement with the plea we make, the

[79] This has been pointed out by Raymond Geuss and Judith Butler in their responses to Honneth's argument. See: Raymond Geuss, 'Philosophical Anthropology and Social Criticism,' in Axel Honneth, *Reification: A new look at an old idea* (Berkeley Tanner Lectures) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 120-130 and Judith Butler, 'Taking Another's View: Ambivalent implications,' in Axel Honneth, *Reification: A new look at an old idea* (Berkeley Tanner Lectures) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 97-119.

[80] The centrality of this bodily aspect is emphasised by studies in biology and developmental psychology, which suggest that empathy develops through physical mimicry. See, for example: De Waal, *The Age of Empathy*, pp. 46-83.

statement is nothing more than a factual transmission of information. What we can learn from these reflections is that dehumanisation can take the form not only of failing to view people as interlocutors, but also of failing to consider their claims as *moral* claims.

Moral claim-making should then be seen as the act that is most characteristic of normative interrelations between human beings. Given the centrality of acts of moral claim-making to human normative interactions, I argue that the special moral status that people generally ought to attribute to one another is connected to this distinctive feature of human moral interactions. The possibility of making moral claims differentiates the kind of normative relation that people can maintain with one another, as compared to the relations in which they can stand to animals or objects. More specifically, it is the possibility of making moral claims on one another that renders people normatively accountable to one another.[81]

This element of accountability characterises human moral interactions and marks people as counterparts in a particular moral order, which could be described in the terms of the philosopher Edmund Husserl as a 'community of communication' ('*Mitteilungsgemeinschaft'*), as distinguished from a 'community of compassion' ('*Einfühlungsgemeinschaft'*).[82] As Husserl notes, a community of communication is characterised by the fact that people engage with others as others, that is, as distinguished through a perspective of their own, which makes it possible for people to hold each other to account.[83] By contrast, members of a community of compassion identify with others and engage in affective forms of empathy through which the other is approached as similar to the self.[84] Drawing from Husserl's distinction, I argue that people generally ought to attribute each other a special moral status, as distinct from animals and objects, since they take part in a shared moral community of communication.[85] While the normative interrelations between human beings and certain animals can be characterised by acts of compassion, through which one emotionally resonates with the feelings of others, human normative interactions are specific in the sense that human beings are able to hold each other to account, given that accountability requires a shared language in which responsibility can be translated into discursive claims.[86] This possibility of entering

[81] This accountability does not require that people always give a moral account to others for their actions, but only that such an account could be given, if requested.

[82] Edmund Husserl, 'Phänomenologie der Mitteilungsgemeinschaft (Rede als Anrede und Aufnehmen der Rede) gegenüber der blossen Einfühlungsgemeinschaft (blosses Nebeneinander-sein). Zur phänomenologischen Anthropologie, zu Erfahrung (Doxa) und Praxis (13. April 1932 und vorher, Abschluss am 15. April 1932),' *Zur Phänomenologie der Subjektivität: Texte aus dem Nachlass Dritter Teil: 1929–1935* (Husserliana: Edmund Husserl – Gesammelte Werke - Band 15) (Leiden: Nijhoff, 1973), pp. 461-479.

[83] Idem, p. 472.

[84] Husserl notes that this type of empathy in which one identifies with the other (*Einfühlung*) succeeds for as long as one is capable of consequently understanding others as being similar to the self (p. 479).

[85] The moral status of people who are unable to partake in the acts of moral claim-making that form the basis of this moral community of communication will be discussed later in this chapter.

[86] My account of why people should be granted a distinct moral authority as claim-makers will be developed in more detail in Chapter 6.

into relations of accountability through acts of moral claim-making is the normative ground for attributing to people a special moral status, as distinct from animals and objects.

If moral claim-making is indeed central to normative interrelations between human beings, dehumanisation can be conceived of as involving an exclusion from this community of moral communication. Following this line of reasoning, dehumanisation should be understood as a form of moral exclusion that consists in the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims. People are thus dehumanised when they are not perceived, portrayed, or treated as capable of making normative appeals. By failing to regard, portray, or treat people as moral interlocutors, people relate to others as animals or objects, rather than as human beings, and the moral status of the dehumanised victim is thus put on a par with that of an animal or object.

Dehumanisation and related practices

An advantage of the moral interlocutor account, in comparison to human dignity views, is that it helps to delineate the realm of acts and practices that should be considered dehumanising, as it distinguishes dehumanisation from related practices, such as marginalisation, stigmatisation, and infra-humanisation. When we view dehumanisation as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity, it is unclear what distinguishes dehumanisation from these related practices. Following the human dignity account, all of these practices severely violate or undermine a person's human dignity. For the moral interlocutor view, on the other hand, a qualitative difference distinguishes dehumanisation from such related practices, which is marked by the point where someone is excluded from the moral community of human beings, as one is no longer recognised as a counterpart who can make normative claims.

Consider, for example, the (historical) case of the subjection of women. Women were – and often still are - not granted an equal status to men. For ages, women were subjected to the authority of husbands, fathers, brothers, or other male relatives. Furthermore, women were not granted the right to vote, thus denying them the status of an equal in the public realm. In the most extreme cases of female subjection, women held a position that was very similar to that of a slave.[87]

Following human dignity views, the subjection of women should be considered dehumanising. For example, according to the account of Kelman, female subjection is dehumanising since it constitutes a violation of human dignity, which consists in a failure to recognise a person as 'an individual, independent and distinguishable from others, capable of making choices, and entitled to live his own

[87] This may be seen, for example, in the fact that marital rape was for a long time not considered a crime, given that the body of the wife belonged to the husband. Another example may be found in legal trials on rape, where compensation was to be paid to the father, rather than to the woman in question, or where women were forced to marry their rapist. This communicates a lack of ownership over one's body that is characteristic of the position of a slave. For further discussion of the case of slavery, see Chapter 4.

life on the basis of his own goals and values'.[88] Although Kelman does not explicitly discuss the case of the subjection of women, his account suggests that this practice should be viewed as an example of dehumanisation.[89] This is the case because the human dignity of women is undermined when they are denied the status of individuals who are capable of making choices and who are entitled to live their lives according to their own goals and values.

For the moral interlocutor account, on the other hand, the subjection of women should not be considered dehumanising *ipso facto*. Although history knows many instances where women were dehumanised, the subjection of women does not logically require perceiving, portraying, and treating them as unable to voice moral claims. Rather, it entails a view of women as inferior moral interlocutors. The subjection of women generally revolved around the idea that the claims of women did not hold the same weight as those of men, not that women were incapable of making any such claims at all. This logic is illustrated, for example, in agnatic laws that determined succession in many European countries since ancient times, which stipulated that the heir of a monarch should be a male relative, but allowed for a female descendant to take up the throne if nobody in the male line survived. Another example may be found in Islamic law regarding testimonies before court, which lays down that the testimony of a man equals the testimony of two women. These examples indicate that the subjection of women often takes the form of attributing less weight to the claims of women, not denying that they can make any claims at all. In acknowledging that women can make claims, women were thus not dehumanised in these situations, even if their subjection often meant that they were seen as inferior human beings.

An important conclusion to draw from this analysis is that inclusion in this moral community of communication shared by human beings does not entail that all persons participate as equal moral interlocutors. Some people hold more authority than others. When the moral claims of particular persons are viewed as less important or deviant, they risk being marginalised and stigmatised within this moral order. The question of authority and power within the moral community of communication is therefore a question that pertains to the field of infra-humanisation, rather than dehumanisation. After all, it is only when people fail to be recognised as moral interlocutors at all that they are dehumanised, as they are excluded from shared practices of normative claim-making.

The limits of the moral interlocutor view

Defining dehumanisation as a failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims thus helps to account for the distinction between dehumanisation and related practices, such as

[88] Kelman, 'Violence Without Moral Restraint': 48.

[89] Provided, that is, that the 'his' in his description of dehumanisation can also be read as 'her'.

marginalisation, stigmatisation, and infra-humanisation.[90] Furthermore, this account is based on concrete observations about what characterises the interactions that take place between human beings and thereby avoids the critique of vagueness. The moral interlocutor view does not draw on an idealised notion of humanity either to argue for the view that people should be attributed a unique moral status. Instead, it presents the more limited argument that people hold a distinct normative value in the eyes of their fellow human beings, given that they construe a shared moral order through acts of moral claim-making.

The question is then whether my account also avoids making transcendental moves in the argument. This is a more controversial matter. After all, not all human beings are actually capable of voicing moral claims. It thus seems problematic to include people who are unable to make such normative appeals in this account of dehumanisation. In this way, we risk ending up in the same quandary regarding the moral status of small children, the severely mentally impaired, and the elderly with dementia that troubled the Kantian account of human dignity.

On the one hand, these groups might be included in the moral interlocutor view because when we fail to regard them as interlocutors who can make normative appeals, this falls within the proposed definition of dehumanisation. After all, in failing to recognise small children, the severely mentally disabled, or the elderly with dementia as moral interlocutors, we may be said to dehumanise them. On the other hand, it seems problematic to denounce people for failing to recognise certain persons as moral interlocutors, if these persons indeed are incapable of expressing normative claims.

This concern applies in particular to persons with severe mental impairments, who are unable to make moral claims, have never been able to do so in the past, and will probably not be capable of doing so in the future either. When we fail to recognise these persons as interlocutors who can make moral claims, we can thus say that we dehumanise them, but there seems to be something strange about assuming that we should view them as moral claim-makers, instead. After all, they do not participate in the discursive interactions that justify the attribution of a distinct moral status in the eyes of their fellow human beings.

The cases of small children and the elderly with dementia seem less problematic from this point of view. After all, it is to be expected that children will grow up to become moral claim-makers, while the elderly with dementia participated in the moral community of communication at an earlier stage of their lives and may, at times of lucidity, still voice moral appeals. To return to Sangiovanni's goalkeeper example, it does not seem strange to value a capacity in children that in all likelihood will soon be actualised. In a similar manner, Arsenal would hire an aspiring goalie who shows great promise, even if at the time of the audition, he or she has not yet developed the required skills.

[90] These distinctions will be elaborated on further in Chapter 3.

Furthermore, societies value people for their past achievements. In this way, Diego Maradona is still celebrated as a great football player, even though he probably would no longer be able to play a premier league match.

Small children are then dehumanised when they fail to be perceived, portrayed, or treated as people who will become interlocutors who can make moral claims. This may take the form, for example, of treatments that impede children's development towards becoming moral interlocutors.[91] Elderly in a far-developed stage of dementia are dehumanised when they fail to be perceived, portrayed, or treated as people who were – and at times might still be - interlocutors who could make moral claims.[92] People with less severe forms of mental impairment can also be included in this discussion. When individuals have trouble in forming and articulating their moral viewpoints in an autonomous way, they should be helped by those close to them.[93] Dehumanisation, in their situation, consists in regarding, portraying, or treating them in ways that fail to recognise their status as moral interlocutors who – with assistance from others – can make normative claims.

The case of the severely mentally impaired is more difficult to account for. On the one hand, one could argue that these people are dehumanised when people fail to recognise them as moral claim-makers, although this failure of recognition rests on a realistic observation of their actual situation. The 'failure' involved in recognition is therefore, in a paradoxical sense, accurate. On the other hand, one might claim that the situation of the severely mentally impaired implies that in some exceptional cases people cannot be dehumanised – in the sense that the status of moral interlocutors, which needs to be attributable for it to be denied, cannot be reasonably ascribed in these cases. This conclusion appears problematic as well because it suggests that the severely mentally impaired do not take part in the moral community we share as fellow human beings, which sets limits to the ways in which people may be treated.

The position I prefer is the second one, but with the important additions that the conclusion that the severely mentally impaired cannot be dehumanised does not entail that there are no moral bounds to the ways in which they may be treated or that it would not be wrong to deny that they are human like us. It is fundamental to remember here what the indictment against dehumanisation seeks to protect people from: it strives to guarantee all people a moral voice that enables them to stand up for themselves and call others into account, in particular with regard to the ways in which

[91] The treatment of children in orphanages in Ceauşescu's Romania, who were deprived of warmth, physical contact, and social interaction, should be considered as providing an example of this form of dehumanisation. As a consequence of this upbringing, deprived of bonding experiences and positive stimulation, as De Waal notes, the children 'were incapable of laughing or crying, spent the day rocking and clutching themselves in a fetal position […], and didn't even know how to play.' See: De Waal, *The Age of Empathy*, p. 13.

[92] This argument also applies to people in a coma or in other types of medical conditions that keep them from participating in acts of moral claim-making.

[93] It is important to consider here that none of us is able to engage in moral reasoning without the presence and support of others. In fact, questions of morality would not arise in the absence of other people.

they are to be treated. The severely mentally impaired have no use for this guarantee because they would not be able to use it, even if it were granted to them. Rather, the severely mentally impaired are in need of other safeguards for their well-being, in particular against forces that regard their lives as unworthy, inferior, or debased.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that the moral community of communication shared by human beings is far from the only moral community that people take part in, either actively or passively. Moral bonds are also established through relations of family, kinship, or religion, or more broadly, through vulnerability to suffering and pain that people share not only with each other, but also with other sentient beings. The severely mentally impaired are, then, entitled to our respectful and beneficial treatment as moral patients who are included in the various moral communities we share with them.

The last issue that deserves some concluding reflections is the question of whether the rejection of the universal notion of human dignity as a stable foundation for our account of dehumanisation entails that dehumanisation cannot be conceived as violating people's dignity. The testimonies of victims of dehumanising treatment reflect the fact that dehumanisation is often experienced as causing a sense of a loss of dignity. The moral interlocutor view can accommodate for this observation by viewing dignity as a personal quality. The sense of a loss of dignity, on the one hand, can speak to a feeling of individual humiliation brought about through dehumanisation. On the other hand, witnessing dehumanisation can lead to a broader feeling of a loss of dignity of the human collective, as reported, for example, by Levi when he recounts the appalled reactions of the Soviet soldiers entering the Nazi concentration and extermination camps after liberation.[94]

The notion of (human) dignity therefore does not need to be erased from our vocabulary altogether when we contemplate dehumanisation. To make sense of this phenomenon, it proves more productive, however, to use the conceptual lens of an exclusion from acts of moral claim-making. The moral interlocutor account constitutes a preferable alternative to the human dignity view, I argue, because it does not depend on contentious claims about what it means to be human, spells out more clearly why human beings have a particular moral status that should not be undermined through dehumanisation, and draws sharper distinctions between dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, such as marginalisation, stigmatisation, and infra-humanisation.

Considering respect, rights, and needs

This chapter critically discussed the possibility of grounding our understanding of dehumanisation in the notion of human dignity. Taking into account the critiques from vagueness, transcendentalism,

[94] Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 54.

and idealisation, I argued that human dignity does not offer a stable basis for our conception of dehumanisation. Instead, more promise lies in conceptualising dehumanisation as a failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

This alternative spells out more clearly why human beings have a particular normative status that should not be denied by dehumanisation. When we view dehumanisation as a severe violation or degradation of human dignity, it is unclear what distinguishes dehumanisation from related practices, such as marginalisation, stigmatisation, or infra-humanisation. Following the human dignity perspective, all of these practices severely violate or undermine a person's human dignity. For the moral interlocutor view, on the other hand, a qualitative difference distinguishes dehumanisation from such related practices, which is marked by the point where people are excluded from the moral community of human beings, as they are no longer recognised as counterparts who can make normative claims.

The next part of the thesis will illustrate and deepen the account of dehumanisation set out in this chapter through personal accounts of refugees and asylum seekers of their experiences with dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices in the contemporary refugee crisis. The next chapter will draw important conceptual and normative distinctions between dehumanisation and related processes of exclusion and disrespect, such as humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment. The fourth chapter will consider the relation between dehumanisation and fundamental rights violations, while the fifth chapter will reflect on the link between dehumanisation and the deprivation of basic needs. Drawing on the stories of refugees and asylum seekers, the following chapters will thus develop further the moral interlocutor view of dehumanisation.

PART II

3. Practices of exclusion and disrespect

'They put me behind bars. You could not call it a camp. I am a human! I am not going to kill people.'

Tariq, asylum seeker from Pakistan

Dehumanisation in the refugee crisis

Tariq is a refugee from Pakistan who left his country out of fear for persecution for his atheist worldview and who now lives in Italy.[1] He passed the border from Turkey to Bulgaria by foot, after which he was detained in a camp for irregular migrants. In his recollections about the month spent in detention in Bulgaria, Tariq alludes to the notion of dehumanisation, as he comments on the injustice of being detained in a prison-like camp without having committed any crime, emphasising his humanity and juxtaposing his position with that of a criminal. In reiterating his human status, Tariq suggests that the treatment that he was given in the immigration detention centre failed to recognise his moral standing as a human being. His testimony illustrates how asylum seekers and migrants at times feel maltreated in the contemporary refugee crisis.

A similar sense of exclusion and disrespect is reported in the accounts of other refugees and asylum seekers. Abdul, a young Syrian who works in a cafeteria in Beirut, recounts, for example, how certain people in Lebanon 'don't treat you nicely because you are a refugee. They insult you. They humiliate you.' In some situations, mistreatment takes on even more severe forms. Abdul describes, for instance, how youngsters beat him up several times when he was sleeping in the streets. He protests that they 'treat me inhumanely, like a dog'.

These testimonies suggest that asylum seekers and refugees are at times exposed to practices of social rejection and moral exclusion. On the basis of interviews I conducted with refugees and asylum seekers, I will identify in this chapter a variety of exclusionary practices, which range from humiliation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation to inhumane treatment and dehumanisation. The first aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that dehumanisation is unique along this spectrum of exclusionary practices. The main argument of the chapter is that dehumanisation is distinct from other forms of exclusion and disrespect since it excludes people from the moral order that we share as human beings rather than simply weakens their position within a given moral or social community.

The second aim of the chapter is to challenge the overly broad use of the term 'dehumanisation' in reporting on the refugee crisis. Scholars, journalists, and human rights activists have frequently called out against the precarious conditions under which refugees and asylum seekers sometimes

[1] The names of all participants in the interviews have been changed. For a detailed discussion of the interview methodology, see: Appendix 1.

live or the vilifying ways in which they are occasionally portrayed by the media. Although these publications perform an important function in raising awareness about the hardships that many asylum seekers and refugees encounter, clear distinctions are only seldom drawn between dehumanisation and related practices. As a result, 'dehumanisation' is frequently used in reports, newspaper articles, and scholarly publications as an umbrella term to denote a wide variety of exclusionary practices. Drawing on the conceptual distinctions between humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, inhumane treatment, and dehumanisation that will be developed in the first part of the chapter, the last part will spell out why it is problematic to uphold such overly broad views of dehumanisation.

Dehumanisation as an umbrella term

In recent years, much has been written on the position of refugees and asylum seekers in the contemporary world.[2] While some works expose injustices that mark current political regimes of dealing with people who are fleeing from war, persecution, or severe human rights violations,[3] others highlight how the stigmatisation of asylum seekers and migrants in popular media encourages moral disengagement, which makes populations of receiving countries less inclined to support accommodating policies towards people requesting asylum.[4] In this field, the term 'dehumanisation' is commonly used to denounce practices that are detrimental to the well-being of refugees and asylum seekers.[5]

While the concept of dehumanisation is often used or alluded to, it is rarely defined in writings on the predicaments that asylum seekers and refugees face.[6] A consequence of this general lack of deeper reflection on the meaning of the notion is that 'dehumanisation' is frequently used in an overly broad way to describe a variety of exclusionary attitudes, practices, and policies. In this way, not only acts of labelling people 'migrants,' 'frauds,' 'criminals,' or 'queue-jumpers' have been called

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[2] See, e.g.: Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge: Transforming a broken refugee system* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Alexander Betts and Gil Loescher, *Refugees in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), Michel Agier, *On the Margins of the World: The refugee experience today* (translated by David Fernbach) (Cambridge: Polity, 2008) and Michel Agier, *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee camps and humanitarian government* (translated by David Fernbach) (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).

[3] Médecins Sans Frontières, *Obstacle Course to Europe: A policy-made humanitarian crisis at EU borders*, January 2016, available at: https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/2016_01_msf_obstacle_course_to_europe_-_final_-_low_res.pdf [last accessed 19 February 2018] and Jones.

[4] Greg Philo, Emma Briant, and Pauline Donald, *Bad News for Refugees* (London: Pluto Press, 2013) and Roland Bleiker, David Campbell, Emma Hutchison, and Xzarina Nicholson, 'The Visual Dehumanisation of Refugees,' *Australian Journal of Political Sciences* 48 (2013), 398-416.

[5] See e.g.: Elgot and Taylor, Yinanç, Ćerimović, Wroe.

[6] Some notable exceptions include: Sverre Varvin, 'Our Relations to Refugees: Between compassion and dehumanization,' *The Academic Journal of Psychoanalysis* 77 (2017), 359-377, Victoria Esses, Scott Veenvliet, Gordon Hodson, and Ljiljana Mihic, 'Justice, Morality, and the Dehumanization of Refugees,' *Social Justice Research* 21 (2008): 4-25, Victoria Esses, Stelian Medianu, and Andrea Lawson, 'Uncertainty, Threat, and the Role of Media in Promoting the Dehumanization of Immigrants and Refugees,' *Journal of Social Issues* 69 (2013): 518-536, and Hartley and Fleay.

dehumanising,[7] but also policies that seek to facilitate the provision of aid to asylum seekers, including the use of wristbands to signal their right to food and the distribution of pre-paid grocery cards.[8]

This imprecise and indiscriminate use of the term, I argue, follows from a failure to clearly distinguish this practice from related ones, such as humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment. Without such distinctions, dehumanisation is likely to be used as an umbrella term to reject a wide variety of practices that undermine the social, legal, or moral standing of people. The risk involved in using dehumanisation in this broad way is that we lose sight of what dehumanisation entails and why it is morally wrong. When people fail to distinguish dehumanisation from related practices, this obscures the unique character of dehumanisation as a failure to recognise people as human beings in a moral sense. Only dehumanisation takes away the possibility for victims to effectively appeal against the treatment that they are given and allows for them to be treated in ways that otherwise would not be deemed acceptable forms of conduct towards fellow human beings.[9] People who are humiliated, marginalised, stigmatised, or subjected to inhumane treatment, but not dehumanised, continue to be recognised as normatively human, which constitutes an important form of moral inclusion that sets limits to the ways in which perpetrators are to treat them. It is therefore crucial to distinguish dehumanisation from such related practices.

Rich material for this comparative conceptual analysis can be found in the stories that refugees and asylum seekers themselves recount about their experiences with these various practices. It will therefore be an important task of this chapter to analyse these accounts in order to clarify what humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment entail and how dehumanisation differs from these related forms of exclusion and disrespect.

The sense of a loss of value

Before turning to the question of what distinguishes humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, inhumane treatment, and dehumanisation, let us consider first what it is that these various practices have in common. The personal stories of asylum seekers and refugees emphasise that these practices tend to produce a sense of a loss of value. This sentiment is expressed in a particularly striking way by Hassan, who is one of the more than one and a half million Syrians living in

[7] See: Barry Malone, 'Why Al Jazeera Will Not Say Mediterranean "Migrants",' *Al Jazeera English*, 20 August 2015, available at: http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/editors-blog/2015/08/al-jazeera-mediterranean-migrants-150820082226309.html [last accessed: 15 November 2016], Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson, Ljiljana Mihic, and Esses, Medianu, and Lawson.
[8] See: *BBC*, 'Food Wristbands Scrapped for Cardiff Asylum Seekers,' 25 January 2016, available at: http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-35397109 [last accessed: 26 November 2016], *Scottish Refugee Policy Forum*, 'A Fairer Scotland for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Times of Austerity?' February 2012, p. 6.
[9] The normative implications of this form of moral exclusion will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Lebanon.[10] Reflecting on his life after he fled from Syria, Hassan states that he feels like he is valueless: 'There are so many problems, so many humiliations. You have no value.'

Referring to a local Arabic saying, he asserts that his life as a Syrian in Lebanon amounts to 'a narrow grave', which means that it is not enough to die; one's grave also needs to be small and cramped. Hassan explains that it is not easy to live in a country as a refugee, but the situation he is in has become untenable. He has to provide for his large family but he is not allowed to work. The decision to clandestinely sell fruit from the back of his cart in an attempt to maintain his wife and children has led to several fines. Even if Hassan and his family would try to leave Lebanon, they would be confronted with fees for forfeiting the payment for a residence permit, which have accumulated to more than two thousand dollars per person. Everyday life is full of problems and humiliations.[11]

Other refugees and asylum seekers tell similar stories about feeling valueless. While most focus in their stories on experiences of humiliation and disrespectful treatment, some express the idea that being a refugee is shameful in itself. Suha, a Syrian woman who fled with her husband and children from Homs and now lives in Germany, explains, for example, that being a refugee 'is a burden. It is difficult to accept. It feels shameful. We are capable people. We are open. We can work. Historically, it was the word for weak people.'

The assertion that 'refugee' is a word for 'weak people' resonates with an argument developed by the Jewish political theorist Hannah Arendt about the way in which the meaning of this term changed during the interbellum. In 'We Refugees', Arendt explains that the predominant basis for a claim for asylum shifted from individuals' political acts and opinions to their identity as members of a prosecuted ethnic or religious minority:

> A refugee used to be a person driven to seek refuge because of some act committed or some political opinion held. Well, it is true we have had to seek refuge; but we committed no acts and most us never dreamt of having any

[10] According to the UNHCR, over a million Syrian refugees were registered in Lebanon in 2016, which corresponds to almost 25 per cent of the Lebanese population of 4.4 million. Since the Lebanese government has prohibited the registration of Syrian refugees after 6 May 2015, the actual number of Syrians living in Lebanon is estimated to be higher and to exceed, at least, 1.5 million. Obtaining exact information about the number of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon is further complicated by the fact that the Lebanese authorities consider the Syrians 'displaced persons' rather than 'refugees', which reflects the government's stance that the presence of Syrians in Lebanon should be considered of a temporary nature. See: Maja Janmyr, 'Precarity in Exile: The legal status of Syrian refugees in Lebanon,' *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 35 (2016), 58-78 and 'Syria Regional Refugee Response,' *UNHCR*, 30 June 2017, available at: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122, [last accessed: 14 December 2017].

[11] A report by the Norwegian Refugee Council on the living conditions of Syrians in Lebanon presents similar stories about precariousness resulting from obstacles to obtaining and renewing legal papers. See: Racha El Daoi, 'Syrian Refugees Deprived of Basic Human Rights,' *Norwegian Refugee Council*, 10 December 2017, available at: https://www.nrc.no/syrian-refugees-deprived-of-basic-human-rights [last accessed: 13 September 2018].

> radical opinion. With us the meaning of the term 'refugee' has changed. Now 'refugees' are those of us who have been so unfortunate as to arrive in a new country without means and have to be helped by Refugee Committees.[12]

Arendt points out that historically refugees were the victims of political persecution, who arrived in small numbers in countries where they applied for asylum. After the First World War, however, nationalist politics began to produce large numbers of people who were denaturalised and expelled based on their ethnic or religious identity. The profile of stateless people and refugees thereby changed – from members of the political and cultural elite to mass movements that included people from all layers of society. With this change in profile came about a change in the way refugees were generally perceived. Given that these 'new' refugees were in need of support to reconstruct their lives in the countries that granted them asylum, they oftentimes came to be viewed as a burden. This unfavourable perception helps explain in part why the transition from a citizen to a refugee is often difficult.

In a fairly similar way, Hanan, a young Syrian woman who fled from Aleppo to Europe, links the refugee experience to a sense of humiliation when she claims that 'to be a refugee means to be humble'. She explains that when she looks for housing or applies for jobs, people sometimes treat her as a homeless person. She also recounts stories that speak to stigmatisation, as she notes that some people seem to think that she came to Germany only for money.

Amira, whose family left Damascus after the army took possession of their house, experienced the same kind of prejudices but points out that some of the Syrian refugees living in Germany actually were richer in their homeland. She also notices that certain people seem to view refugees as tainted by the chaos and violence from which they fled and fear that they will not be careful and 'break things' in the countries that receive them.

These stories by refugees and asylum seekers about the various forms of social and moral exclusion that they have experienced highlight salient points about what it means to be humiliated, marginalised, stigmatised, or subjected to inhumane treatment or dehumanisation. The next parts of this chapter will engage with these testimonies to characterise these practices. More specifically, each section will examine one of these exclusionary practices and explain how it differs from dehumanisation. To do so, I will analyse the manner in which humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, inhumane treatment, and dehumanisation bring about a distinct sense of a loss of value.

[12] Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees,' in Marc Robinson (ed.), *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on exile* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), p. 110.

Dimensions of humiliation

When asked about the most difficult aspect of being a refugee, many of the people whose stories feature in this thesis speak about experiences of humiliation. Let us consider what characterises the sense of a loss of value that humiliation tends to produce. According to dictionary definition, to humiliate means 'to reduce (someone) to a lower position in one's eyes or others' eyes: to make (someone) ashamed or embarrassed'.[13] In the case of some refugees, as discussed above, the label 'refugee' is itself considered humiliating, although Amira contends that it is not shameful to be a refugee. In most cases, humiliation follows from the way refugees and asylum seekers are treated. In particular, people tend to feel humiliated when they are insulted or exploited.

As mentioned above, Abdul notes that certain people insult and humiliate him because he is a refugee. Laila, Nour, and Maryam, three young Syrian women who work in a factory that produces sweets in Beirut, confirm this idea, claiming that the word '"Syrian" is used as an insult. Wherever you go, they call you "Syrian!" It is an insult.' Reflecting on the aspect of exploitation, their colleague Qasim adds that 'it is humiliating when they extort you, when they don't pay you or much too late.'

Such stories about insults and exploitation seem to be familiar to many Syrians living in Lebanon, given the difficult situation in which they oftentimes find themselves. If Syrians apply for refugee status, they are dependent on the financial support they are to receive from the UNHCR, which at times falls through or proves insufficient to cover the costs for living in Beirut.[14] If they decide to enter Lebanon as workers instead, Syrians are obliged to find a Lebanese sponsor who takes legal responsibility for them. In case the sponsor decides to end this relation, or if Syrians are unable to pay the fees required to renew legal papers, they risk arrest and detention.[15] This system has led to large-scale economic and social exploitation, with Lebanese sponsors asking steep prices for their assistance and Syrian workers being dependent on the goodwill of their patrons.[16] KAFA, a Lebanese women rights organisation, has furthermore raised the alarm about refugee and migrant women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation because of the dependency relations created by the sponsorship programme.[17]

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[13] 'Humiliate,' *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/humiliate [last accessed: 16 November 2017].

[14] Khaled, a father of four, came to Lebanon three years ago from Syria and registered with the UN Refugee Agency at the time, but he claims that his family did not receive support for food for the last one and a half year and has not received vouchers to pay for the rent over the last year. Fatima, who lives in Beirut with her husband, children, and parents, tells a similar story. She stood in line for twelve hours to get food vouchers on the day we meet only to find out that their cards have been cancelled without having been provided with any justification for the cancellation.

[15] Janmyr and El Daoi.

[16] Mohammed, who works as a guardian at a parking lot in Beirut, explains, for example, that 'it is very difficult to enter Lebanon. You need a sponsor. It is human trafficking. You need to pay at least a thousand dollars.'

[17] See: KAFA, 'Anti-trafficking and exploitation unit,' *Annual Report*, 2015, available at: http://www.kafa.org.lb/StudiesPublicationPDF/PRpdf-92-635930575034471502.pdf [last accessed: 24 November 2017], pp. 14-19 and Kareem Shaheen, 'Dozens of Syrians Forced Into Sexual Slavery in Derelict Lebanese House,' *The Guardian*, 30

The stories that refugees and asylum seekers recount about their experiences with humiliation highlight several points. First, humiliation contains an internal and an external dimension. The internal dimension reflects the fact that people who feel humiliated experience a subjective sense of shame or embarrassment, or would have a sound reason to feel this way. The external dimension speaks to the fact that this sense of shame or embarrassment is produced through factors that lie (at least partially) outside the person. Abdul and Qasim note, for example, that they feel humiliated because people insult and exploit them. There is thus an external cause for their sense of shame. Without this external dimension, people would simply feel shame or embarrassment while this sensation would not be caused by anything outside their own mind. Without the internal dimension, people's position would be lowered without them feeling bad about it. For humiliation to occur, it is therefore necessary that the internal and external dimensions are both present.

Second, these accounts indicate that humiliation results from the actions of people, although the sense of shame and embarrassment that the humiliated experience can also be produced more indirectly through institutions or man-made circumstances.[18] For instance, the way in which Hassan describes his sense of a loss of value reflects this aspect. After all, he does not speak about particular people who made him feel embarrassed but about how he feels diminished because of his insecure existence in Lebanon, which stands in sharp contrast to the life he led in Syria before the war. Hassan feels humiliated, then, because he feels forced into a precarious condition by the restrictive rules and regulations established by the Lebanese authorities.

Third, the testimonies suggest that humiliation sometimes draws on discrimination. This is reflected, for example, in the account of Laila, Nour, and Maryam, who note that the insults they are subjected to target them as Syrians. Discrimination entails the prejudicial treatment of people who belong to a particular group. The idea that underpins negative discrimination is that certain people are inferior because of a particular aspect of their identity, such as, for example, their race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or political orientation. Humiliation, then, sometimes reduces people to a lower position as members of a particular group, which constitutes a form of discrimination.

Drawing on this discussion of the concept of humiliation, the relation between humiliation and dehumanisation is not difficult to unravel. Dehumanisation is humiliating because the failure to acknowledge that certain people are human reduces their standing in a way that provides people with a sound reason to feel a sense of embarrassment.[19] The failure to recognise people as

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April 2016, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/30/syrians-forced-sexual-slavery-lebanon [last accessed: 24 November 2017].

[18] Margalit notes on this issue that '[c]onditions of life also are capable of providing sound reasons for feeling humiliated. Conditions are humiliating, however, only if they are the result of actions or omissions by human beings' (p. 9).

[19] This is the case, at least, for instances of dehumanisation through which people are seen as subhuman, rather than supra-human.

interlocutors who can make moral claims lowers their moral position since they are no longer regarded as claim-makers who take part in a moral community of communication. At the same time, however, the stories of refugees' experiences with humiliation, recounted in this chapter, suggest that many instances of humiliation fall short of dehumanisation. After all, insulting or extorting people does not necessarily entail that people fail to be perceived as human beings in a normative sense – that is to say, as interlocutors who can make moral claims. Dehumanisation is therefore humiliating, but humiliation is not always dehumanising.

Whether a particular form of humiliation constitutes dehumanisation depends on whether the lowering of a person's position in their own or others' eyes affects their human status. This would be the case, for example, if Qasim's employer saw him as nothing more than a donkey that could be put to work, but could not make any claims. This would not be the case, however, if Qasim's employer perceived of him as a 'Syrian', who could only make weak moral claims since his illegal status makes it difficult for him to back up his claims by legal means.

To conclude, the most characteristic aspect of the sense of a loss of value in cases of humiliation is that it is produced by a lowering of a person's status, which provides a sound reason to feel a sense of shame or embarrassment. This sense of shame is important for defining humiliation because not all treatments that place people in a lower position can be considered humiliating, given that many mechanisms in society function on the basis of differences in position. This is not only the case, for example, of pupils in relation to their teachers, but also of employees in relation to their employers. The point is, then, that people are humiliated when they are made to occupy lesser – more humble – positions in situations where people believe they should not hold this lower position. A sense of shame or embarrassment thus derives from this feeling of being diminished in an unfair way. Dehumanisation is therefore humiliating, but humiliation is not always dehumanising, given that humiliation does not necessarily fail to recognise the moral status that people hold as fellow human beings.

Marginalisation and moral exclusion

Marginalisation is another practice that is described in the stories of refugees and asylum seekers. To marginalise means 'to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group'.[20] Marginalisation thus lowers the position that persons hold in relation to others and relegates them to the outer circles of a society, moral community, or social group, banned to a sphere where their interests, considerations, and opinions matter significantly less than those of others. Certain testimonies by refugees and asylum seekers speak about experiences of marginalisation.

[20] 'Marginalize,' *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marginalize [last accessed: 24 November 2017].

For example, before coming to Germany, Suha spent a year in Lebanon where she felt like 'a tenth grade of society. You are dismissed, not wanted.' She explains that the situation in Lebanon became unbearable for her when her son came home from school one day and said that his friends told him that they no longer wanted to play with him because he is Syrian. Suha and her husband decided to leave Beirut as they felt that they could not raise their children in an environment characterised by such blatant discrimination.

At times, marginalisation plays a role in people's decision to leave their country as well. Ammar, a young Syrian teacher, explains, for example, how he had to flee from Aleppo to evade military service. He recounts how his problems started after his father died. Without his protection, Ammar found that no member of the family or his circle of acquaintances was willing to use their influence to get him an exemption from joining the army. He recalls how 'the circle around me was getting smaller. Place to move became smaller. There are checkpoints in Syria. Going to the university became difficult.' Ammar realised that living in hiding was becoming too dangerous when two of his cousins died after having been taken into custody. He therefore decided to go to Turkey and make his way to Europe, where he filed for asylum in Germany.

Marginalisation sometimes goes hand in hand with segregation as well. The act of keeping people at arms-length conveys a message of inferiority and may lower people's standing in society. Michael, a Nigerian asylum-seeker in Italy, recalls, for example, how people in the streets in Libya would distance themselves from him because of his skin colour: 'They see you are black, they create a gap, for you not to go near them.'

These testimonies indicate that marginalisation is similar to dehumanisation in the respect that these practices negatively affect the moral standing of persons. Still, these concepts are distinct in an important sense as well because marginalisation does not lead to the complete exclusion of a person from a moral or social community but only diminishes a person's status within that community. This conclusion follows from the fact that the margins are still included in the category they encircle. Therefore, marginalisation should be seen as a concept that shows a stronger resemblance to infra-humanisation than to dehumanisation.

Marginalisation is akin to infra-humanisation because it lowers the standing that people hold within a community, but does not reject them fully from this community. After all, to be forced to the margins of a community still presumes one's inclusion. Therefore, in cases where persons are marginalised - instead of excluded - they are not treated as if they are of no importance at all, but as if they are of only little importance compared to people who are more securely included in the community. Marginalisation is a broader concept than infra-humanisation, however, because it comprises not only practices and attitudes that relate to people as lesser human beings, but also to

practices and attitudes that diminish the status that people hold within other moral communities, such as (national) societies, religious groups, or families.

What characterises the sense of a loss of value in marginalisation is, then, that the marginalised are made to feel unimportant or powerless within a group. Persons who are marginalised feel that their interests, concerns, and ideas matter less than those of others. This is distinct from dehumanisation because marginalised people still are part of a moral community, although in a limited sense, whereby their claims can easily be discarded and dismissed.

The case of stigmatisation

The testimonies of refugees and asylum seekers that feature in this thesis also point to stigmatisation as a practice that produces a sense of a loss of value. Stigmatisation entails marking people as bad or tainted by a characteristic of which to be ashamed. The sociologist Erving Goffman thus describes stigma as 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting' through which people are set apart from a majority that is considered 'normal'.[21] An example of the stigmatisation of refugees and asylum seekers can be found in the aforementioned observation of Amira that people sometimes seem to view refugees as tainted by the chaos and violence from which they have fled and fear that they also create havoc in the countries that host them. Refugees are thus at times perceived to carry with them the stigma of violence and destruction that forced them to leave their country.

Salim, who left Mosul shortly before the take-over by Islamic State and who now lives in Italy, argues in a similar way that some people respond in negative ways to refugees because of the war or more general discriminatory beliefs, claiming that 'they think you are bad because you come from Iraq. You have war. You have black hair.' Salim also believes that some Europeans fear the coming of refugees because they identify them with Muslim militants and terrorists, although many of the asylum seekers and refugees who have come from Iraq are actually among the principal victims of Islamic State.

Stigmatisation and dehumanisation are similar in the sense that both practices mark people as deviant; failing to live up to the standards that proscribe what human beings ought to be like.[22] In most cases, however, stigmatisation differs from dehumanisation because stigmas generally do not exclude people completely from the moral community we share as human beings. This is so because stigmatisation either does not completely *exclude* people from the human category, but (like marginalisation and infra-humanisation) only makes their participation in this community less secure,

[21] Erving Goffman, Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 13.

[22] Goffman (p. 15) points to the similarities between these concepts in claiming that '[b]y definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human.' Although I believe this statement to be correct, I contend that we should view stigmatisation, in most of its forms, as a type of infra-humanisation, rather than dehumanisation, as indicated by the qualification 'not *quite* human'.

or because it excludes them, not from the *human* category, but from another moral community, such as, for instance, a religious community or a particular social group.

In this first sense, stigmatisation is in many cases akin to marginalisation because the attribution of stigma often marginalises persons within a particular community by lowering their moral status, but does not lead to their exclusion. Contrary to marginalisation, however, particular forms of stigmatisation may be considered dehumanising when the stigma attributed to people excludes them from the moral community we share as human beings. This is the case, for example, when people are stigmatised as monsters, devils, or beasts who fall outside the moral circle that orders human relations.[23]

A certain overlap therefore exists between practices that can be considered stigmatising and those that should be viewed as dehumanising. Still, the reason as to why a particular act constitutes an instance of stigmatisation or dehumanisation differs. These concepts remain distinct because dehumanisation consists in the exclusion from the moral order we share as people, which may be brought about through stigmatisation as the process of negatively marking a person through the attribution of embarrassing traits.

The most typical aspect of the sense of a loss of value that characterises stigmatisation is, then, that people feel that they are perceived to be abnormal and deviant. Persons who are stigmatised feel that they are marked as 'bad'. The main difference with dehumanisation thus lies in the fact that victims of stigmatisation are usually perceived to be deviant human beings, which entails that they remain included in the human category.

The characteristics of inhumane treatment

Inhumane treatment is another practice that may lead to a sense of a loss of value. 'Inhumane' is the opposite of 'humane', which means 'marked by compassion, sympathy, or consideration for humans or animals'.[24] Inhumane treatment thus refers to the inconsiderate treatment of humans or animals. It may be helpful to have a closer look at the terms 'compassion', 'sympathy' and 'consideration' to understand better what constitutes inhumane treatment. Compassion is defined as 'sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it'.[25] Sympathy refers to 'the act

[23] The psychologists Milica Vasiljevic and Tendayi Viki argue that this form of dehumanising stigmatisation at times is directed against criminals. See: Milica Vasiljevic and Tendayi Viki, 'Dehumanization, Moral Disengagement, and Public Attitudes to Crimes and Punishment,' in Paul Bain, Jeroen Vaes, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens (eds.), *Humanness and Dehumanization* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 129-147.

[24] 'Humane,' *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/humane [last accessed: 21 November 2017].

[25] 'Compassion,' *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion [last accessed: 10 December 2018].

or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings or interests of another'.[26] Consideration can mean 'taking into account' or a 'thoughtful and sympathetic regard'.[27] What these different terms have in common is a focus on the feelings of others and a willingness to let those feelings weigh in on one's actions. Inhumane treatment then refers to treatments that fail to take into consideration the feelings of others. Synonyms of the term 'inhumane', such as 'affectless', 'cold-blooded', 'heartless', 'merciless', and 'unfeeling', similarly highlight a sense of inability or unwillingness to let oneself be moved by the feelings of others. The testimonies of refugees and asylum seekers depict inhumane treatment in a similar way as a form of treatment that lacks consideration for the feeling of others.

Hanan explains, for example, that inhumane treatment consists in a failure to empathise with and help others, which may be produced by a discriminatory attitude:

> As a human you help one another. When someone does not know me and he helps me, he empathises with me and helps me. That is for me humanity. People do not worry about this other opinion. When someone needs my help, then I need to help him. When someone says "I do not help you because you wear a headscarf", then this person does not have humanity.

Musa, who left Gambia to work in Libya and fled to Europe when civil war broke out, similarly emphasises the salience of empathy: 'Humanity means to be someone good. A human being should be a special kind of being with empathy and feeling.' Arguing against a destructive and aggressive view of humanity, Musa contemplates how 'humanity is about helping each other, not leaving one another. Not making each other suffer. Not seeing that I have more power and I use it against you.'

The idea that inhumane treatment relates to an unwillingness to help others is also reflected in the testimony of Tariq. He argues that people are treated inhumanely when they 'have a problem and you are on purpose not helping them. You can, but you won't. That is inhumanity.' This account is very close to that of Joseph, who fled from Senegal to Europe out of fear for persecution on religious grounds. For Joseph, people treat others inhumanely, 'when you do not help your neighbour. When he has a problem, you should help him. You don't help him.'

These testimonies highlight the idea that inhumane treatment is marked by an absence of compassion, sympathy, and consideration for others. Inhumane treatment is therefore similar to most forms of dehumanising treatment in that they are devoid of kindness, concern, and care. However, an important difference lies in the fact that inhumane treatment can be directed towards animals as well as human beings. Since the label 'inhumane treatment' is based on a value

[26] 'Sympathy,' *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sympathy [last accessed: 10 December 2018].
[27] 'Consideration,' *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consideration [last accessed: 10 December 2018].

judgement about the conduct of the perpetrator, the precise nature of who or what is at the receiving end of inhumane treatment is of less importance. While only human beings can be dehumanised, both human beings and animals can be subjected to inhumane treatment.

Dehumanisation may then perhaps be characterised as the inhumane treatment of people. Yet, this does not seem to be correct either. First of all, as I explained in the first chapter, dehumanisation can manifest itself as a treatment, perception, or representation. Therefore, dehumanisation encompasses more that only forms of treatment. The question is then whether dehumanising treatment could be considered as the inhumane treatment of people. When we take a closer look at the testimonies of refugees and asylum seekers discussed above, it seems that, if we define dehumanising treatment as the inhumane treatment of people, cases would fall under the category of dehumanisation that fail to exclude people from the moral community of communication we share as human beings. Consider, for example, the above-mentioned argument by Hanan. Indeed, it would be inhumane of me to refuse to help a woman in need because she wears a headscarf. Yet, it would not be necessarily dehumanising. After all, this discriminatory stance does not automatically imply that I would view her as less than human. Rather, I might see her as a lesser human being. In this way, I would not maintain that she could not make any moral appeal on me, but I might be convinced that her claims are less important than those of others because I perceive her to be inferior. This would entail that I marginalise her in the moral community of communication we share, but do not fully exclude her.

These considerations suggest that dehumanisation cannot simply be described as the inhumane treatment of people. Not all ways in which people fail to behave humanely towards other persons necessarily amount to dehumanisation, I argue, because not all failures to show compassion, sympathy, and consideration imply a failure to recognise the other as an interlocutor who can make moral claims. After all, a lack of compassion, sympathy, and consideration may also derive from forms of (moral) rejection that fall short of dehumanisation, such as discrimination, marginalisation, stigmatisation, or infra-humanisation.

This points to a more fundamental distinction between these two concepts, which can be explained at the hand of the Husserlian distinction between the community of compassion and the community of communication, which was discussed in the previous chapter. While inhumane treatment entails a failure to properly treat people (or animals) as members of a community of compassion, dehumanisation involves a failure to properly recognise, represent, or treat people as members of a community of communication. To fail to properly treat people (or animals) as members of a community of compassion entails that perpetrators of inhumane treatment fail to resonate with the feelings of others and take these feelings into account in determining their actions. Perpetrators of inhumane treatment can therefore be described as ‘affectless’, ‘cold-blooded’,

'heartless', 'merciless', or 'unfeeling'. This failure to show compassion may result from various forms of affective disengagement, which do not necessarily entail a failure to recognise people as moral interlocutors. Rather, a treatment that lacks compassion, sympathy, and consideration may also be inspired by infra-humanisation, racism, sexism, or other forms of discrimination, as seems to be the case in the example of Hanan.

To fail to properly recognise, represent, or treat people as members of a community of communication, on the other hand, entails that perpetrators of dehumanisation fail to acknowledge the moral status of people as interlocutors who could make moral claims on them. The loss of value that victims experience when they are subjected to inhumane treatment or dehumanisation thus differs.[28] In the case of inhumane treatment, the value that fails to be respected is the value people (or animals) hold as beings with feelings and emotions, which can be affected by the actions of others and which deserve to be taken into account. In the case of dehumanisation, the loss of value that people experience is directed against their status as moral interlocutors who do not merely undergo the actions of others but can hold other people to account by addressing them through moral claims.

The particularity of dehumanisation

Dehumanisation, as I argued in the previous chapter, should be seen as a particular form of moral exclusion that consists in the failure to recognise people as moral interlocutors. What distinguishes dehumanisation from inhumane treatment is therefore, in the first place, the fact that inhumane treatment entails a failure to properly treat people (and animals) as members of a moral community of compassion, whereas dehumanisation involves the failure to properly recognise, represent, or treat people as members of a moral community of communication. The loss of value that is characteristic of dehumanisation is therefore the loss of a person's normative status as an interlocutor who can make moral claims.

A telling example of what it means not to be properly recognised as a moral interlocutor was recounted to me by Amira, who recalled an event that happened in Turkey while her family was waiting with other people for a boat to take them to Greece. The police came and stopped them. Given that there were around three hundred people, they were too many to be taken to the police station. The police therefore decided to bring them to a courtyard, where they had to stay for 19 hours. It was August and they were under the sun. They were not given anything to eat or drink.

[28] It is important to note, however, that it is possible for a treatment to be both inhumane and dehumanising. This is the case when a treatment fails to properly treat people as members of a community of compassion and as members of a community of communication.

Amira's mother, who was pregnant at the time, asked for water but the police officer pointed at the toilet and said: 'You drink from there.'

This story provides an illustration of dehumanisation as a failure to recognise people as moral interlocutors since it alludes to the type of respect that is missing when people are not properly treated as members of a community of communication. This treatment constitutes dehumanisation, so I argue, because the police officer failed to treat Amira's mother as a moral interlocutor. After all, we can see that the reason why the police officer wronged Amira's mother when he told her to drink from the toilet is not simply that this reply lacked compassion, sympathy, and consideration. Rather, the answer of the police officer expressed disrespect for her mother as it communicated a refusal to recognise her as a person whose claim draws on an expectation of understanding that can only exist between counterparts in a shared moral community of communication. We can recognise that the answer of the police officer was inhumane because urging someone to drink from a toilet that is used by three hundred people entails a lack of consideration. Consider, for example, that letting a dog drink from the same toilet should be considered inhumane as well, given that the dog would likely become ill. Furthermore, the mother of Amira was entitled to greater care and concern than an average person because she was pregnant and the dirty water could not only harm her but also her unborn child.

Yet, the wrongfulness of the reply does not end there. Telling Amira's mother to drink from the toilet intended to humiliate her by communicating to her that a toilet would be an appropriate place for her to drink from. Animals would not consider it shameful to drink from a toilet because they lack the symbolic and cultural sensitivities that make the same conduct denigrating to people. The moral standing of Amira's mother was thus put on a par with that of an animal by failing to acknowledge her claim as a *moral* appeal that required a response that takes into consideration the normative dimensions involved in the question. This failure of recognition reduced her status from that of a person who can make moral claims to that of an animal who can merely indicate the sensory experience of thirst. She was thus not excluded from communication – after all, the police officer answered her request – but she was excluded from a *moral* community of communication, as the police officer refused to acknowledge her claim as a moral claim and thereby denied her status as a moral interlocutor.

One could object that in a certain way the police officer did recognise Amira's mother as an interlocutor who was making a moral claim. After all, if he intended to humiliate her, this would only be possible by first recognising that her appeal drew on certain symbolic and cultural sensitivities that could be hurt through a response that denied her the opportunity to behave in a way that cohered with her principles and values. Yet, this treatment is dehumanising precisely because it

revolves around denying her status as a moral interlocutor by refusing to acknowledge her claim as a moral claim.[29]

This case thus illustrates the paradox of dehumanisation, as identified by Margalit and discussed in the first chapter, which revolves around the idea that to bring about a sense of humiliation in the victims of dehumanisation through the denial of their humanity, dehumanisers first need to presume this humanity in a certain way. As a minimum, it is necessary to assume that victims share particular human sensibilities without which they could not be humiliated. Dehumanising treatment therefore does not presuppose a view of the victim as lacking human traits and qualities, although it does require a perception of the victim as less than human in a normative sense.

An alternative way of making sense of this tension is to reflect on the different meanings of the term 'to recognise'. To recognise can mean 'to acknowledge formally', 'to acknowledge or take notice in some definite way', or 'to perceive to be something or someone previously known'.[30] These different meanings suggest that recognition contains a cognitive and a behavioural dimension. While the police officer recognised Amira's mother as a moral claim-maker in a cognitive sense, he failed to recognise her as such in a behavioural sense. By treating her as he did, he excluded her from a shared moral community of communication and thus dehumanised her by treating her in a way that suggested that her normative standing was that of an animal, rather that of a fellow human being.

Debunking the umbrella term

After having specified the meanings of humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, inhumane treatment, and dehumanisation, it is time to challenge the overly broad use of dehumanisation in scholarly and journalistic writings on the position of asylum seekers and refugees. Let us consider the academic literature first and then turn to popular commentaries on the refugee crisis.

In an influential article from 2013, the social psychologists Victoria Esses, Stelian Medianu, and Andrea Lawson analyse how media promote the dehumanisation of migrants and refugees.[31] In this study, the authors focus on representations of immigrants that link them to the spread of (contagious) diseases, portray them as queue-jumpers, or represent them as potential terrorists. The classification of these different representations as dehumanising, I argue, depends on a failure to distinguish dehumanisation clearly from marginalisation, stigmatisation, and infra-humanisation.

Consider, first, the portrayal of migrants as spreading (contagious) diseases. Traditionally there has been a strong link between diseases and dehumanisation. For example, Nazi propaganda often

[29] This relates to what Rosen describes when he speaks about perpetrators 'expressively deny[ing] the humanity of their victims' (p. 158).

[30] 'Recognize,' *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recognize [last accessed: 16 November 2017].

[31] Esses, Medianu, and Lawson.

represented Jewish people as a cancer. Here we may recall the statement, mentioned in the first chapter, of the camp doctor from Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, Fritz Klein, who used the dehumanising image of Jews as an infectious disease to reconsider his medical responsibilities: 'My Hippocratic oath tells me to cut a gangrenous appendix out of the human body. The Jews are the gangrenous appendix of mankind. That's why I cut them out.'[32]

It is important to note, however, that likening people to a disease and portraying them as carriers of an illness is not the same thing. Although representing people as a disease – as in the case of Klein - is clearly dehumanising, the same is not necessarily true for portraying them as carriers of a disease. This representation aims to marginalise people by conveying the idea that contact with asylum seekers and migrants would threaten the health of the local population. It can also invoke disgust, which makes dehumanisation more likely.[33] However, to be the carrier of a disease does not automatically jeopardise people's normative status as fellow human beings since we generally do not fail to regard the sick in our midst as our moral counterparts.

Esses, Medianu, and Lawson also argue that portraying immigrants and refugees as queue-jumpers or potential terrorists is dehumanising. A problem with this argument is that it fails to distinguish between dehumanisation and infra-humanisation. When refugees and migrants are represented as people who 'cheat' to get ahead or as potential terrorists, they are portrayed as inferior human beings but not necessarily as less than human. After all, queue jumping and terrorism are uniquely human activities. Although 'queue-jumpers' and potential terrorists may be dehumanised, these labels themselves are best described as stigmatising, rather than dehumanising, since they mark asylum seekers and refugees as tainted by a negative quality, but do not in themselves exclude them from the human category.

The perception of asylum seekers as cheats becomes a source of dehumanisation only when the idea that people are 'illegal immigrants' leads to severe forms of moral disengagement through which their lot need not concern us, thus rendering meaningless any moral appeals they might make on us through which such claims would no longer be recognised as moral claims. Yet, even in cases where such extreme forms of moral exclusion occur, the portrayal of asylum seekers as frauds and cheats is not dehumanising in itself – as their depiction as a disease, plague, or pestilence, for example, would be.

The act of representing migrants and refugees as potential terrorists fails to be dehumanising for the same reason. First, it is important to distinguish between portraying people as terrorists and representing them as *potential* terrorists. Even if the first would be dehumanising, this does not entail that the second would be as well. Second, it is not evident that representing people as

[32] As cited in: Lifton, p. 232.
[33] Bloom, *Just Babies*, p. 133.

terrorists would be humanising either. Here, we should note that even if terrorists were dehumanised, this does not entail that portraying people as terrorists would be dehumanising as well. In my view, it is reasonable to claim that terrorists and terrorist suspects are sometimes dehumanised. For example, the portrayal of terrorists as 'unlawful combatants', which was used after 9/11 as a strategy to justify the exclusion of detainees in Guantanamo Bay from the protection of human rights and international law, can be viewed as a form of dehumanisation. [34] By being labelled as 'unlawful combatants', terrorists (and terrorist suspects) have been denied the status of moral interlocutors who can make moral claims. Although terrorists and terrorist suspects thus indeed face a risk of dehumanisation, which is sometimes realised in practice, this does not entail that the portrayal of people as (potential) terrorists is dehumanising as well. Depicting people as (potential) terrorists does not constitute a form of dehumanisation, in my view, because this depiction does not automatically deny their status as moral interlocutors and thereby exclude them from a moral community of communication. If this would be the case, there would be no calls to negotiate with (potential) terrorists.[35]

An article on the visual dehumanisation of refugees in Australian media by the political scientists Roland Bleiker, David Campbell, Emma Hutchison, and Xzarina Nicholson provides another example of an overly inclusive view of dehumanisation.[36] This article contends that the lack of images depicting individual asylum seekers leads to their dehumanisation. The authors claim that Australian media coverage demonstrates dehumanising visual patterns that 'have framed the refugee "problem" such that it is seen not as a humanitarian disaster that requires a compassionate public response, but rather as a potential threat that sets in place mechanisms of security and border control'.[37]

This article importantly identifies the way in which media reports on asylum seekers and migrants influence how the broader audience morally and emotionally engages with their plight, but it fails to distinguish between dehumanisation with de-individuation. Although it is true that individualising images and narratives may lead to the humanisation of refugees, in the sense that the latter become more easily recognisable as persons whose claims deserve consideration, the reverse, that is to say, a failure to depict people as individuals, is not necessarily dehumanising.

In some cases, for example, journalists may opt not to individualise the stories they cover in order to protect people's interests. As Bleiker et al. also observe, the UNHCR urges caution 'when

[34] This status allegedly allowed for the violent mistreatment, abuse, and torture of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. See: Erin Chlopak, 'Dealing with the Detainees at Guantanamo Bay: Humanitarian and Human Rights Obligations under the Geneva Conventions,' *Human Rights Brief* 9 (2002): 6-9, 13.

[35] Such calls are presented, for example, by the journalist Scott Atran in *Talking to the Enemy: Violent extremism, sacred values, and what it means to be human* (London: Penguin, 2011).

[36] Bleiker et al.

[37] Idem: 399.

publishing images that may identify individuals,' given the risk of retaliation against asylum seekers or their family members who still remain in their country of origin.[38] Consideration for people's individuality may therefore sometimes be overturned by matters that are more important, such as concerns for people's safety and well-being, which sometime are better served by confidentiality. De-individuation, in the sense of not depicting people as individuals, can therefore not be simply equated with dehumanisation.

Furthermore, it is important to note that not all forms of moral disengagement necessarily amount to dehumanisation. Bleiker et al. do not indicate what makes the visual patterns used in Australian media reports on refugees specifically dehumanising. Given that the examples the authors provide only fail to individualise refugees, and do not, for instance, depict them as diseases or parasites, it seems that the images used indeed create emotional distance, as the authors observe, but do not affect the moral status that refugees hold as human beings.[39] Although these reports do not engage with the pleas of individual asylum seekers, they do not necessarily exclude them from a shared moral community either. A failure to present people's viewpoints is not the same as failing to recognise their moral status as human beings who hold such viewpoints and whose appeals ought to be taken into consideration.

Regarding this point, it will be helpful to consider the influential work of the anthropologist Liisa Malkki on typical representations of refugees.[40] Drawing from the famous account of the philosopher Giorgio Agamben on 'bare life', Malkki points out that visual portrayals of mass displacement often take the shape of 'a spectacle of '"raw", "bare" humanity,' which 'in no way helps one to realize that each of the persons in the photograph has a name, opinions, relatives, and histories, or that each has reasons for being where he is now'.[41] At the same time, however, Malkki points to the complexity of

[38] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Reporting on Refugees: Guidance by & for journalists*, 2012, available at: http://www.unhcr.ie/images/uploads/pictures/pdf/reportingonrefugees.pdf [last accessed: 2 November 2016], p. 7.

[39] Bleiker et al.: 399.

[40] Liisa Malkki, 'Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization,' *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1996): 377-404.

[41] Idem: 388.

The concept of 'bare life' is introduced by Agamben to describe a state in which people are excluded from consideration as subjects under law, politics, and religion (see: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign power and bare life* (translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)). The idea behind this concept is that human life can be rendered 'bare' by the reduction of an ordinary human life with political, social, and religious meaning (*bios*) to a (virtually) naked biological existence (*zoë*), which is excluded from any socio-political and legal order. This notion is frequently used in the field of migration studies to theorise the loss of humanity that can be caused by restrictive asylum regimes and the securitisation of immigration (see, e.g. Roxanne Doty, 'Bare Life: Border-crossing deaths and spaces of moral alibi,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and space* 29 (2011): 599-612, Nick Dines, Nicola Montagna, and Vincenzo Ruggiero, 'Thinking Lampedusa: Border construction, the spectacle of bare life and the productivity of migrants,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38 (2015): 430-445, and Willem Schinkel, '"Illegal Aliens" and the State: or: Bare Bodies vs. the Zombie,' *International Sociology* 24 (2009): 779-806. For a critical account, see: Patricia Owens, 'Reclaiming "Bare Life"? Against Agamben on refugees,' *International Relations* 23 (2009): 567-582). While the notion of bare life is in my view problematic when understood as a description of the actual condition of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants in the refugee crisis, it is conducive in denoting particular ways in which refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants may be represented. As a way of

deciding whether such framing should be considered dehumanising in her reflections on the different ways in which the notion of humanity features in this practice:

> The visual conventions for representing refugees and the language of raw human needs both have the effect of constructing refugees as a bare humanity – even as a merely biological or demographic presence. This mode of humanitarianism acts to trivialize and silence history and politics – a silencing that can legitimately be described as dehumanizing in most contexts. And yet the mechanisms involved here are more complex than that. For one might argue that what these representational practices do is not strictly to dehumanize, but to humanize in a particular mode. A mere, bare, naked, or minimal humanity is set up. This is a vision of humanity that repels elements that fail to fit into the logic of its framework.[42]

If refugees are humanised in a mode that allows them only to be seen through the lens of 'a mere, bare, naked, or minimal humanity', it seems unlikely that they can simultaneously be recognised as interlocutors who are able to make moral claims. This limited form of recognition is insufficient to acknowledge people's status as interlocutors who can make moral claims. Such representations fail to portray people as moral interlocutors, and I therefore agree with Malkki that this form of silencing typically should be regarded as dehumanising. The idea that people can still be recognised in a distinct, limited way – namely as bare life - does not entail that they are not dehumanised, according to the moral interlocutor view. After all, I established in the first chapter that dehumanisation consists in a denial of moral human status, which does not require for the biological status of people to be denied as well.

Nonetheless, de-individuation is not a sufficient condition to turn pictures of refugees into depictions of 'bare' humanity. Consider, for example, that media reporting on music festivals or, for example, after terrorist attacks, such as those in Paris or Cannes, at times publish similar looking images of masses of people. People do not object to such images on the ground that they dehumanise the people portrayed or represent them as 'bare life'. The failure to portray refugees in individualising ways may therefore reinforce already existing perceptions of refugees as belonging to a category of 'bare life', especially if such portrayals focus on the aspects of human beings that we share with animals, but the aspect of de-individuation itself does not lie at the core of this reduced view of people's humanity.

Other illustrations of overly broad uses of the term 'dehumanisation' can be found in the fields of human rights advocacy and journalism. Bill Frelick, the director of the Refugee Program of *Human*

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representation, the concept of bare life stands for, what Nicholas De Genova calls, 'a political fiction', which is summoned by political authorities to communicate the ultimate, but never fully realised, consequence of a complete exclusion from consideration as a judicial-political subject (see: Nicholas De Genova, 'Bare Life, Labor-Power, Mobility, and Global Space: Toward a Marxian anthropology?' *The New Centennial Review* 12 (2012): 133).

[42] Malkki: 390.

Rights Watch, has claimed, for instance, that the practice of labelling migrants as 'illegal' is dehumanising.[43] He argues that calling people 'illegal immigrants' presupposes that 'a particular event in someone's life, such as irregularly crossing an international border or overstaying a visa, irrevocably taints that person's character as illegitimate or criminal.'[44]

Although Frelick does not specify what he takes dehumanisation to mean, he seems to draw on an understanding of dehumanisation as a violation of human dignity, according to which the depiction of a human being as illegal should be understood as an affront to the moral status that migrants hold as people. Yet, one can object that this affront does not directly affect a person's *human* status, but only the standing that people hold within a particular legal framework. Although it can be rightly questioned whether this label should be applied to human beings at all (especially in light of the fact that better alternatives are available, such as 'undocumented'), I contend that this term does not deny people's humanity in any meaningful sense. While it places undocumented migrants and asylum seekers in a low position in a hierarchy of human subjects, which may make them more vulnerable to dehumanisation, labelling someone as 'illegal' does not in itself entail treating, viewing, or representing them as *less than* human, in the sense, that their status as moral interlocutors is denied. My claim is therefore that the practice of characterising people as 'illegal' migrants should be understood as stigmatising and criminalising, but not dehumanising.

Barry Malone, editor of *Al Jazeera English*, has taken Frelick's argument one step further to contend that even the term 'migrant' is dehumanising. Malone argues that 'migrant' has become an umbrella term that can be used as 'reductive terminology' that renders the lives of refugees valueless:

> The umbrella term migrant is no longer fit for purpose when it comes to describing the horror unfolding in the Mediterranean. It has evolved from its dictionary definitions into a tool that dehumanises and distances, a blunt pejorative. It is not hundreds of people who drown when a boat goes down in the Mediterranean, nor even hundreds of refugees. It is hundreds of migrants. It is not a person – like you, filled with thoughts and history and hopes – who is on the tracks delaying a train. It is a migrant. A nuisance. It already feels like we are putting a value on the word. Migrant deaths are not worth as much to the media as the deaths of others - which means that their lives are not. Drowning disasters drop further and further down news bulletins. We rarely talk about the dead as individuals anymore. They are numbers.[45]

Malone importantly reflects on the way in which the meaning of terms can change, allowing for a notion that is not intrinsically dehumanising to become so over time. However, he overstates his case, given that migrants are not necessarily excluded from a shared moral compact of human

[43] Frelick.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Malone.

beings. People who are migrants may indeed be dehumanised when their lives are not considered valuable and when they are seen as numbers, but in that case they would be dehumanised, not because they are viewed as migrants, but because their claims are no longer viewed as moral claims. Furthermore, it is important to note that not all migrants are necessarily seen in this way and that it therefore cannot be claimed that the term 'migrant' itself is dehumanising.

This brief overview of some academic studies, human rights commentary, and journalistic opinion pieces that have recently been published on the dehumanisation of refugees and migrants shows that dehumanisation is often conflated with related processes. De-individuation, stigmatisation, marginalisation, and infra-humanisation unsettle the social and moral position that refugees hold. Still, these practices only turn into dehumanisation when morally degrading portrayals fundamentally deny the moral status that victims hold as human beings. This is the case when people are excluded from the moral order that we share as human beings as they are no longer considered as interlocutors who can express moral claims.

In my view, it is crucial to maintain clear distinctions between dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices for two reasons. First, these distinctions mark important conceptual and normative differences. People who are subjected to humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, inhumane treatment, or infra-humanisation, but not to dehumanisation, are still recognised as human, which constitutes an important form of moral inclusion that sets limits to the ways in which they may be treated. It is therefore crucial to distinguish dehumanisation from such related practices because the harms that may follow differ significantly. Second, the way to respond to these various forms of exclusion and disrespect should be different as well. Policies that seek to undo the detrimental effects of marginalisation through fuller integration in society, initiatives that fight stigmatisation through the normalisation of difference, or campaigns that highlight the harm of inhumane treatment by emphasising shared vulnerability to suffering do not address the particularity of dehumanisation. To counter dehumanisation, it is crucial to guarantee both minimal acknowledgement of people's status as claim-makers and a basic affective engagement with the moral character of people's claims through affirmation of shared vulnerability to suffering.

My argument for maintaining clear conceptual distinctions between dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices has two important implications. First, drawing on a more narrow understanding of dehumanisation entails that far fewer practices can be described as dehumanising than is commonly assumed. When people are humiliated, marginalised, stigmatised, or treated inhumanely, this generally does not amount to dehumanisation. Second, those cases that do amount to dehumanisation require our urgent attention because people are not simply attributed a lower position within a given social or moral community, as is the case for related exclusionary practices, but fail to be regarded as moral counterparts in any significant sense. This form of moral exclusion

allows for harms to be done to people that are considered inadmissible as forms of treatment for fellow human beings, given that victims of dehumanisation are excluded from the discursive moral interactions that form the basis for human morality.[46]

Disrespect and rights

Based on first-hand accounts of refugees and asylum seekers, this chapter drew conceptual distinctions between humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, inhumane treatment, and dehumanisation and challenged the indiscriminate use of dehumanisation as an umbrella term in reporting on the refugee crisis. The main argument of this chapter was that the degradation of moral standing that is central to dehumanisation consists in the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

Dehumanisation is distinct from humiliation, I argued, because the position of persons can be reduced and people can have a sound reason to feel ashamed or embarrassed without excluding them from the moral order we share as human beings, that is to say, fail to recognise them as interlocutors who can make moral claims. Dehumanisation is also different from marginalisation, given that marginalisation does not lead to the complete exclusion of a person from a moral or social community but only diminishes a person's standing within that community. Stigmatisation and dehumanisation are distinct concepts as well because dehumanisation consists in the failure to recognise a person as an interlocutor who can make moral claims, whereas stigmatisation entails the process of negatively marking a person through the attribution of embarrassing traits. Lastly, inhumane treatment can be differentiated from dehumanisation because inhumane treatment entails a treatment that is devoid of compassion, sympathy, or consideration, whereas dehumanisation consists in a failure to recognise people as moral interlocutors. Inhumane treatment is therefore distinct from dehumanisation because not all failures to show compassion, sympathy, or consideration towards people imply a failure to recognise the other as an interlocutor who can make moral claims and not all forms of dehumanisation take the form of a treatment that is devoid of compassion, sympathy, or consideration.

The chapter drew on this conceptual comparative analysis to explain why dehumanisation should not be used as an umbrella term to denounce a wide range of exclusionary practices. Many of these practices can better be characterised as marginalisation, stigmatisation, inhumane treatment, or infra-humanisation. The next chapter will focus on the relation between dehumanisation and fundamental rights violations. Here, I will argue that it is important to distinguish between these

[46] A detailed account of the normative implications of dehumanisation will be set out in Chapter 6.

notions given that some forms of dehumanisation do not take the form of a violation of (legal) rights and not all fundamental rights violations entail a failure to regard the victim as an interlocutor who can make moral claims.

4. The violation of fundamental rights

'The way I was treated in Libya, I never believed people could be treated like that, like animal. Like animal, they were loaded. They kept asking people to pay. From poor people!'

Musa, Gambian asylum seeker living in Italy

The infringement of fundamental rights

Violations of fundamental rights play a central role in the stories that refugees and asylum seekers recount about their experiences with practices of exclusion and disrespect. This may be seen in the testimony of Musa, a Gambian electrician who came to Libya to work and who fled after civil war broke out there in 2014. Reflecting on the difficult times he encountered during his travel, he reports how he had to wait for three weeks in the port town of Sabratha before he could embark on a boat to Europe. The smugglers held him and the other passengers in overcrowded warehouses, beat them, and gave them food only once a day. Musa recalls how the smugglers 'treated you like how they feel like'. In addition, the warehouses were raided sometimes by Libyan gangs, who threatened the passengers with violence and tried to rob them. Musa remembers a time when one of his companions jumped out of the window to escape the violence and broke his leg. Their ordeal did not end there, however. While on the boat, Musa and his fellow travellers were held at gunpoint by a band that tried to steal their belongings. Recalling the distressing situation, he observes that 'it was very crazy. All the way to reach here it was. There was a group firing at us while there was a group trying to help us off the boat. They don't care about you. They try to get things from you. If they can't get anything, they just leave you.'

The testimony of Musa reflects a situation in which he and the other passengers endured severe rights violations. Although the situation that Musa depicts is particularly extreme, many refugees and asylum seekers speak about a similar sense of vulnerability, which arises from a lack of safeguards of their fundamental rights. Khaled, a Syrian refugee who lives in Beirut, recounts, for example, how he feels that he has no choice but to risk the dangerous crossing from Libya to Italy. He has lost faith that his family can build a future in Lebanon. Khaled's daughters have never been to school, even though they are more than nine years old, because they have not been admitted to any school since they arrived to Beirut. The family is supposed to receive financial assistance from the UN Refugee Agency to pay for their groceries and rent, but payments have fallen through over the last year. Khaled says that he is considering taking his family to Europe, exclaiming that 'probably my children will drown in front of my eyes, but I have to do this because my rights are not respected. I would not

do this if I would have the same rights here as in Europe. I pay three hundred fifty dollars for a room. The UN should pay for it, but doesn't. They do not leave us any choice but to go back to Syria or swim to Europe.'

These stories illustrate that under particular circumstances refugees and asylum seekers are vulnerable to fundamental rights violations. This chapter will draw on testimonies by refugees and asylum seekers to clarify the relation between such violations and dehumanisation. The main argument of the chapter is that fundamental rights violations should not be conflated with dehumanisation, for two main reasons. Firstly, particular forms of dehumanisation exist that do not take the form of a violation of legal rights. Secondly, not all fundamental rights violations entail a failure to regard the victim as an interlocutor who can make moral claims. Distinguishing between dehumanisation and fundamental rights violations is important because this distinction signals that taking legal actions against acts that violate people's fundamental rights is not sufficient to protect them from dehumanisation.

The first part of the chapter will discuss and criticise three common ways of conceiving of the relation between fundamental rights violations and dehumanisation. First, asylum seekers and refugees sometimes tie the infringement of fundamental rights to dehumanisation through the idea that they are treated like animals. Here, I will argue that it is problematic to view the violation of fundamental rights as a form of dehumanisation through which people are treated like animals, if we acknowledge that certain animals may also have a right not to be subjected to gratuitous suffering.

Second, dehumanisation is sometimes associated with the violation of human rights, given that human rights specifically seek to protect the interests and needs of human beings. Yet, we can conclude that not all violations of human rights necessarily entail the dehumanisation of the victim when we consider the catalogue of human rights established by international law, which includes, for example, the right to own property, to social security, and to rest and leisure. Furthermore, forms of dehumanisation exist that do not take the form of a violation of a legal right.

Third, fundamental rights violations are sometimes regarded as symptoms of dehumanisation that signal the loss of a 'right to have rights'. This idea is central to Hannah Arendt's account of the condition of stateless people. Following Arendt, people are dehumanised when they are no longer regarded as members of a polity that can uphold their rights and that enables them to participate in collective action. Although her account rightly identifies the risks involved in failing to be recognised as a person in a political and legal sense, it prioritises political exclusion over moral exclusion. Based on the idea that political exclusion does not necessarily entail moral exclusion, I will argue that rightlessness, as the loss of one's protected status as a member of a political community, constitutes a factor that can render people vulnerable to dehumanisation but need not be dehumanising in itself.

The second part of the chapter will consider the relation between fundamental rights violations and dehumanisation from the point of view of the moral interlocutor account. Drawing on the distinction between inhumane treatment and dehumanisation made in the previous chapter, the second part of the chapter will argue that intentional violations of fundamental rights are inhumane because they constitute a form of mistreatment, which is marked by a lack of compassion, sympathy, and consideration. However, such fundamental rights violations do not necessarily entail dehumanisation, given that not all such violations imply a failure to recognise the victim as an interlocutor who can make moral claims. When fundamental rights are intentionally violated, people may still be perceived as counterparts in a moral community of communication, although in a limited sense, whereby their appeals can easily be discarded or dismissed.

The rights of humans and animals

Scholars, commentators, and journalists have often described the violation of the fundamental rights of refugees and asylum seekers as a form of dehumanisation.[1] Most of these works focus on conditions of detention,[2] while some also consider the failure to regard refugees and asylum seekers as the bearers of rights, and therefore as normatively human.[3] In an article on the detention of irregular migrants in Malta, the international migration scholar Daniela DeBono argues, for example, that irregular migrants are treated as 'less than human' by the Maltese system of detention, which violates people's human rights through its arbitrariness and unacceptable conditions.[4] She notes how 'the lack of freedom and "appalling" conditions reported by human rights organisations have made possible the creation of a space where dehumanising practices are commonplace and immigrants are reduced to mere existence, "less than human".'[5] Based on the idea that immigrants are reduced to something 'less than human', DeBono argues that detention does not simply create the conditions for dehumanisation to occur, but produces it.[6]

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[1] See, e.g.: Hugh Muir, 'Indefinite Detention is Dehumanizing for Refugees: This practice must end,' *Guardian*, 19 July 2017, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/19/indefinite-detention-refugees-journeys-refugee-tales [last accessed: 9 February 2018], Daniela DeBono, '"Less Than Human": The detention of irregular migrants in Malta,' *Race & Class* 55 (2013): 60-81, and Hartley and Fleay.

[2] See: Muir and DeBono.

[3] Regarding this point, DeBono cites a NGO worker who observes about immigrants on Malta that 'somehow, they are perceived as less than human […] If I believe that he's as human as me, with as much rights as me, why would I lock him up and in those conditions?' (62). Hartley and Fleay also note that asylum seekers employ the language of human rights to 'position themselves as human, deserving of such rights' (59).

[4] DeBono.

[5] Idem: 76.

[6] Similarly, Pro Asyl condemns the conditions of detention in the Evros region in Greece in its statement that 'the detention in Evros is synonymous with brutality, despair, and dehumanization.' See: Pro Asyl, *Walls of Shame: Accounts from the inside: The detention centers of Evros*, April 2012, available at: https://www.proasyl.de/en/material/walls-of-shame-accounts-from-the-inside-the-detention-centres-of-evros/ [last accessed: 27 August 2018], p. 3.

Scholars have warned not only of the risks of dehumanisation involved in detention, but also of dehumanising side effects of processes of integrating in society. In an article on asylum seeker policies in Australia, the human rights scholars Lisa Hartley and Caroline Fleay note, for instance, that asylum seekers who live in the community on a restrictive visa at times experience the denial of their right to work as dehumanising.[7]

These articles call attention to the commonly held belief that the infringement of fundamental rights constitutes a form of dehumanisation. The testimonies of asylum seekers and refugees also echo this idea. This may be seen, for example, in the way these testimonies frequently associate the experience of being subjected to fundamental rights violations with being treated like animals. For example, the description by Musa, cited above, of how the smugglers in Libya loaded him and the other passengers like animals reflects this tendency. This conceptual link is also present in the testimony of Tariq, who recalls mistreatments that occurred on the border between Turkey and Bulgaria. Tariq observes how 'in Bulgaria, there are volunteer refugee hunters who literally shoot people who come from Turkey. You shoot animals, don't you?'[8] The idea that people are treated like animals when their rights are abused can be recognised in the words of Ammar as well, who notes that 'the system in Syria, the police, they don't let me live my life like a person. The system is there to destroy the people.' When asked what he means by this, he explains that the system tries to control people. Although both sides in the war commit crimes, Ammar claims that the regime 'kills people like animals'.

How are we to understand these frequent references to a sense of being treated like an animal in the descriptions of mistreatments by refugees and asylum seekers? A first possibility is that the claim that people are treated like animals serves to highlight the inhumane treatment that the victims are subjected to. The testimonies cited above suggest that people are treated inhumanely when their rights are violated in callous or systematic ways. Indeed, it makes sense to claim that such violations of fundamental rights are inhumane because they constitute a form of mistreatment, which is marked by a lack of compassion, sympathy, and consideration. However, as noted in the previous chapter, inhumane treatment can be inflicted on both humans and animals. Under the circumstances described, we could therefore just as well describe killing animals or loading them into cramped spaces as inhumane, since this treatment lacks compassion, sympathy, and consideration for animals.[9] The charge that these forms of mistreatment are inhumane therefore does not help explain

[7] Hartley and Fleay: 55-56.

[8] For an analysis of violent border patrol practices, see: Ruben Andersson, 'Hunter and Prey: Patrolling clandestine migration in the Euro-African Borderlands,' *Anthropological Quarterly* 87 (2014): 119-149.

[9] It is important to note that this evidently does mean that no moral differences exist between treating animals or people in this way. Treating people in this way should be considered worse because it inflicts not only physical pain and immediate fear, but also humiliation through symbolic means.

why refugees and asylum seekers describe the wrongness of these acts through the notion that people are treated like animals. Rather than inhumane, these practices could then perhaps better be characterised as dehumanising, given that callous or widespread fundamental rights violations seem to draw on a denial of the human status of people as the bearers of rights under the law.

A first way in which the link between the violation of fundamental rights and dehumanisation may be understood thus draws on the idea that human beings are considered persons before the law, whereas animals are generally regarded as property and can therefore be treated in ways the owner thinks appropriate, provided that no gratuitous suffering is inflicted on them.[10] Rights are thus only supposed to limit the ways in which human beings are treated. Following this logic, it would make sense to claim that people are treated like animals when their fundamental rights are violated and that severe rights violations therefore involve dehumanisation.

This argument draws on a classical understanding of which beings have a right not to be physically harmed, which has been challenged in recent years by human rights activists. This classical view assumes that since animals lack the necessary qualities to uphold duties, they cannot have rights either.[11] Although the gratuitous violent treatment of animals has commonly been considered to be morally wrong, historical justifications for this principle usually did not draw on a notion of rights. Instead, the wrongfulness of the mistreatment of animals was explained through the belief that it would lead to the mistreatment of humans or the conviction that such mistreatment arises from cruelty.[12] Therefore, the wrong involved in the mistreatment of animals was not primarily determined by the pain and distress inflicted on the animal but by the potential harm done to human beings as a consequence of habituation to signs of suffering or by the intentions and sensations of the human being tormenting the animal.

In recent decades, this neglect of the experience of the animal has been criticised by advocates of animal rights. In an early and influential defence of animal rights, the political and legal philosopher Joel Feinberg argued that it is possible to think of animals as the holders of rights when we recognise that animals are wronged, and not merely harmed, when gratuitous suffering is inflicted on them. Feinberg explains that we ascribe rights to animals 'if we hold not only that we ought to treat animals humanely but also that we should do so for the animals' own sake, that such treatment is something we owe animals as their due, something that can be claimed for them, something the withholding of which would be an injustice and a wrong, and not merely a harm'.[13]

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[10] Gary Francione, *Animals, Property, and the Law* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

[11] This argument is criticized in Joel Feinberg, 'The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations,' *Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty: Essays in social philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 162.

[12] See: Tom Regan, 'Animal Rights, Human Wrongs,' in *All That Dwell Therein: Essays on animal rights and environmental ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 82.

[13] Feinberg, 'The Rights of Animals,' p. 166.

It is not my intention here to enter into a discussion of the controversial question of animal rights. It suffices to note that if it seems conceivable that animals are wronged when gratuitous suffering is inflicted on them and that certain animals may therefore have a right to protection from physical harm, it becomes problematic to identify dehumanisation with the violation of fundamental rights, given that rights violations may not only affect human beings but also animals. Considering this possibility, it may be better to conceptualise the link between dehumanisation and the violation of fundamental rights through a focus on the infringement of *human* rights, given that this category of rights specifically seeks to protect the needs and interests of human beings.

Dehumanisation and human rights violations

In academic literature on mass atrocities and genocide, the notion of dehumanisation is often associated with the violation of fundamental human rights. This literature generally conceives of dehumanisation as a precursor to, rather than a consequence of, the violation of fundamental rights. This link is present, for example, in the work of former diplomat and genocide scholar Gregory Stanton, who identifies dehumanisation as one of the stages along a continuum through which the perpetration of genocide develops.[14] Likewise, Kelman explains the occurrence of state sanctioned massacres through processes of authorisation, routinisation, and dehumanisation.[15] In a similar way, the social psychologist Philip Zimbardo has focused on the role dehumanisation played in the systematic abuse and torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib.[16] In these accounts, dehumanisation is conceptualised as a step on a pathway that leads to severe human rights violations.[17]

In other works, the violation of fundamental human rights is more directly linked to dehumanisation through the idea that such violations entail a failure to recognise the victim as a bearer of inalienable and inviolable human rights and therefore as 'normatively human'. This idea is central to the argument that Judith Butler develops in *Frames of War*. Here, she affirms that the most fundamental issue concerning human rights does not concern their content or justification, but

[14] Stanton.

[15] Kelman, 'Violence Without Moral Restraint'.

[16] Zimbardo.

[17] The link between dehumanisation and the perpetration of mass atrocity crimes has also been observed by other scholars, including: Susan Benesch, 'Words as Weapons,' *World Policy Journal* 29 (2012): 11, Ervin Staub, *Overcoming Evil: Genocide, violent conflict, and terrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 177, Adam Jones, *Genocide: A comprehensive introduction* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 393 and p. 437, Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining ethnic cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 74-75, p. 172, and p. 322, Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The political uses of massacre and genocide* (London: Hurst & Company, 2005), pp. 38-39, Neil Kressel, *Mass Hate: The global rise of genocide and terror* (Cambridge MA: Westview, 2002), p. 96, p. 172, and p. 216, Helen Fein, 'Genocide: A sociological perspective', in Alexander Hinton (ed.), *Genocide: An anthropological reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p. 84, and Kuper, p. 43, pp. 85-92, and p. 104. For a discussion of the role of dehumanising ideology as a facilitating factor in such crimes, see: Jonathan Leader Maynard, 'Combating Atrocity-justifying Ideologies,' in Serena Sharma and Jennifer Welsh (eds.), *The Responsibility to Prevent: Overcoming the challenges to atrocity prevention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 189-225, in particular pp. 195-199.

the question of to whom they apply. Butler argues that the question of who is entitled to human rights is answered by norms that establish who can be recognised as human.[18] When the human rights of a particular group of persons are violated in a systematic way these abuses thus signal the dehumanisation of the victims as they are not recognised as the bearers of fundamental rights that human beings are supposed to possess.

The link between dehumanisation and human rights violations is also often drawn in reports by international and humanitarian organisations. In response to the systemic human rights violations committed against the Rohingya in Myanmar in 2017, Amnesty International declared, for example, that the discrimination, repression, and continuous rights abuses of this minority amount to a 'dehumanizing system of apartheid'.[19] The close association between dehumanisation and human rights violations is also reflected in the title of a report that the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published in December 2016 on human rights violations committed in Libya against refugees and immigrants, entitled *Detained and Dehumanised: Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya*.[20]

In the accounts of refugees and asylum seekers, violations of fundamental human rights play an important role as well, although references to human rights violations are usually not explicit. For example, human rights violations often play an important role in people's decisions to flee their country. Ammar recounts, for instance, how he felt he had to leave Syria when his cousins did not return home after unknown men took them. Fathi, a Syrian teacher who filed for asylum in Germany, travelled to the Turkish border, afraid of being put on a 'black list' of persons who were to be arrested, after having stood up against a security officer for one of his female students.

African asylum seekers and refugees who travelled from Libya to Italy also convey stories of violence and abuse.[21] For example, Musa speaks of a time when he was walking home from work and was attacked by a Libyan gang: 'I have a scar in the neck. I was walking home. They asked us for money. They strip you down, like when you were born. They take your clothes.' Amadou also notes how the situation of refugees who take the Libyan route to Europe involves continuous threats to their life and well-being: 'From the beginning until the end, safety is not provided. It is complete unsafety on the road.'

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[18] Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 75.

[19] Amnesty International, 'Myanmar: Rohingya trapped in dehumanizing Apartheid regime,' 20 November 2017, available at: https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/myanmar-rohingya-trapped-in-dehumanizing-apartheid-regime/ [last accessed: 14 December 2017].

[20] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Detained and Dehumanised: Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya*, 13 December 2016, available at: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/DetainedAndDehumanised_en.pdf [last accessed: 14 December 2017].

[21] For a report on the systematic abuse of fundamental human rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants taking place in Libya, see: Amnesty International, *Scapegoats of Fear: Rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants abused in Libya*, 20 June 2013, available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde19/007/2013/en/ [last accessed: 27 August 2018].

Fundamental human rights violations are particularly prominent in the testimony of Amadou, who speaks of the abuse and torture he endured in prison camps in Sabha and Tripoli, in Libya, where human traffickers sought to extort money from prisoners and their relatives. He recalls how people who were unable to raise the requested amount were killed or left to die: 'They asked us money. There are many who die. There are many prisons. They are all the same thing: they mistreat people for money.'

This form of mistreatment seems inconceivable without the prior dehumanisation of the victim. This is the case because it only appears possible to torture a person to death in an attempt to extort money, if that person is no longer perceived a fellow human being in a normative sense. However, this treatment can also be seen as dehumanising in itself because it entails the exclusion of the victim from a shared moral community of communication. After all, the act of torturing to extort money requires a refusal to acknowledge the moral claims of the victim, given that such extortion can only be successful if the perpetrator acts in ways go against the appeals of the victim.[22]

Nonetheless, in spite of the commonly assumed connection between dehumanisation and severe human rights violations, the relation between these two concepts is complex. This is so for two reasons: first, certain infringements of human rights are not dehumanising, and second, particular forms of dehumanisation cannot easily be captured in the framework of human rights. For the first idea, consider the catalogue of human rights in international law. This catalogue comprises not only the rights to life, liberty, and security of person, not to be held in slavery or servitude, and not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment, but also the rights to own property, to social security, and to rest and leisure. Someone whose right to own property is violated has suffered an injustice, but not necessarily one that should be considered dehumanising.

This critique could be overcome by considering only those fundamental human rights where consensus exists about their necessity to secure all human beings a minimally decent life. The philosopher John Rawls provides an example of this kind of restricted account of human rights in *The Laws of People*, where he describes the basic human rights that an international society of liberal and decent societies should uphold. These basic rights form 'a special class of urgent rights, such as freedom from slavery and serfdom, liberty (but not equal liberty) of conscience, and security of ethnic groups from mass murder and genocide.'[23] It seems, however, that this account of basic human rights is too limited, given that it excludes, for example, the rights to freedom from torture or the right to life, liberty, and security of person. The mistreatment that Amadou experienced in Libya thus would not be prohibited by this class of urgent rights.

[22] This point will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

[23] John Rawls, *The Laws of Peoples. With 'The Idea of Public Reason Revisited'* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 79.

To establish which rights should be considered fundamental forms is thus a controversial enterprise in itself. Furthermore, even if it would be possible to establish a catalogue of fundamental, or urgent, human rights, it does not follow that violations of these rights automatically should be deemed dehumanising. Consider, for example, the right to life. A person who is killed may not always be the victim of dehumanisation because killing may take place without failing to consider the other as an interlocutor who can make moral claims. An example would be the case of euthanasia, where a doctor assists a patient in dying precisely because the latter is considered a person with perceptions of what is right and wrong who can decide on the way to live (and end) his or her life. One may object here that euthanasia should not be considered an act of killing but ought rather to be seen as assisting people to die, which should not be viewed as an infraction of the right to life. Still, it is not evident that murder always entails dehumanisation either, particularly if we think of people who kill out of (perceived) self-defence. In this case, people kill a person not because they do not consider him or her a fellow human being who can make moral claims, but because they perceive the other as an existential threat. Through this perception of the other as an existential threat, one's own moral appeal to live offsets the moral appeal of the other to live, which allows for the coincidence of recognition of the other as a fellow human being with the act of terminating his or her life.[24]

These reflections lead to the conclusion that not all violations of human rights should be considered dehumanising. It is important to note as well that there may also be ways in which people can be dehumanised that do not violate their human rights. When persons are considered to have a moral status equal to that of a rat or a cockroach, for example, this evidently dehumanises them, but this form of dehumanisation does not entail a violation of their fundamental rights, at least, if we consider rights as legal, and not (merely) moral, entitlements. Such legal rights can only offer individuals a claim not to be treated in certain ways. Since legal rights focus on treatment, rather than on the thoughts and beliefs that people have, particular forms of dehumanisation escape the legal human rights framework.

The philosopher Anna Galeotti offers an insightful discussion of the distinction between respect and rights, which is relevant to the point I wish to make here. Galeotti notes that while 'being a subject of rights is a necessary condition for being respected,' it 'is not a sufficient condition'.[25] This is the case because a claim to respect transcends claims for a particular form of treatment, which could be expressed in the terms of specific rights. Galeotti thus notes that 'what is claimed is not a precise

[24] In a certain way, all forms of dying entail an exclusion from the moral community of communication. In order to identify when dehumanisation occurs in situations regarding death, it will therefore be helpful to ask the question as to whether people were recognised as interlocutors who could make moral claims in the moment before their death. This would be the case, for example, for a person who passes away through euthanasia. This would not be the case, however, for detainees who died in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps.

[25] Anna Galeotti, 'Respect as Recognition: Some political implications,' in Michel Seymour (ed.), *The Plural States of Recognition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 79.

thing, but an attitude, an acknowledging attitude which escapes definition and precise behaviour.'[26] The issue is, then, that people can be dehumanised not only when they are treated in particular ways, but also by being denied a particular form of respect through the attitude that people take towards them, which is respect for their status as interlocutors who can make moral claims. Dehumanisation can, therefore, not be treated as synonymous with the violation of fundamental (legal) human rights.

The '**right to have rights**'

If dehumanisation cannot be identified directly with the violation of fundamental human rights, it might be possible to conceive of an indirect link between these two concepts. Fundamental human rights violations may be seen as a symptom of dehumanisation, for instance, if these infringements follow from a failure to recognise people as persons who possess rights.[27] This idea is central to the notion of the loss of a 'right to have rights', which Arendt develops in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Arendt introduces this concept as an element of a perspective on dehumanisation that focuses on the loss of a political community that can guarantee people's fundamental rights. Concentrating on the plight of stateless people, she analyses the failure by liberal western states to safeguard the life and well-being of individuals who fell outside the bonds of state protection in the period after the First World War. According to Arendt, people were excluded from humanity, as they were no longer regarded as members of a national community that could uphold their rights and through which they could participate in collective action.

Although Arendt focuses on the notion of rights, her perspective is distinct from a classic human rights view since she locates the moment of dehumanisation in the loss of a community that guarantees one's rights and place in the world as a person among persons, rather than in the violation of these rights themselves. She thus claims that the failure to belong to a political community excludes people from humanity:

> Not the loss of specific rights, then, but the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever has been the calamity which has befallen ever-increasing numbers of people. Man, it turns out, can lose all so-called

[26] Galeotti, p. 85.

[27] An account that follows this logic has been developed by the feminist philosopher Linda LeMoncheck, who argues that dehumanisation consists in a degradation of human status 'to the sort of thing which is considered unequal to other persons with respect to their human rights to freedom and well-being' (p. 31). LeMoncheck's account highlights the importance of showing minimal respect to people in refraining from acts that cause them physical injury or suffering, exploit them, violate their privacy or self-respect, or fail to view them as individuals who are entitled to civil treatment and self-determination. However, it seems difficult to justify the idea that we need to show equal respect to people, who do not actually possess these capacities, or only to a limited extent, or to persons who use these abilities to a negative effect.

> Rights of Man without losing his essential quality as man, his human dignity. Only the loss of a polity itself expels him from humanity.[28]

For Arendt, the loss of one's place in a political community that guarantees one's rights thus entails the risk of exclusion from humanity. This connects to Arendt's idea that people need to be members of a community and the bearers of rights to live a fully human life. Without this 'right to have rights', as Arendt calls it, people are stripped of the means to make their lives meaningful to themselves and others, given that people need a position in the world to enable them to voice their opinions and take action.[29] A consequence of this loss of the right to have rights is that the 'rightless' risk no longer being recognisable as genuinely human. Arendt maintains that people who are excluded from community in this way remain tied to humanity in a biological sense only:

> The great danger arising from the existence of people forced to live outside the common world is that they are thrown back, in the midst of civilization, on their natural givenness, on their mere differentiation. They lack that tremendous equalizing of differences, which comes from being citizens of some commonwealth and yet, since they are no longer allowed to partake in the human artifice, they begin to belong to the human race in much the same way as animals belong to a specific animal species.[30]

Without their participation in collective action, it becomes difficult to view others as human beings since their similarity loses its political character. People bereft of a community, which can confer them with an identity that ties them to others in bonds of resemblance, thus become characterised by a form of humanity that cannot express itself in any morally meaningful way.[31] Arendt therefore argues that we need more than mere recognition of human rights and an abstract sense of human dignity to be considered human. It is fundamental that we are also included in a political sphere where we can disclose ourselves to our fellow human beings through our actions and the expression of our ideas.

The importance of this form of inclusion is illustrated in a study by the social practitioner and human rights scholar Lucy Fiske, which focuses on forms of protest enacted by refugees and migrants in immigration detention centres on Nauru, off the coast from Australia.[32] Based on Arendt's theory, Fiske argues that detainees are dehumanised when they are deprived of the recognition that they

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[28] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest, 1973), p. 297.
[29] Arendt maintains that the humanity of our existence derives from our acting with and among others. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt thus contends that '[a] life without speech and without action […] is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men' (p. 176).
[30] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 302.
[31] Arendt thus notes that '[i]t seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man' (idem, p. 300).
[32] Fiske.

are persons who can engage in speech and act on a basis of equality with other people. She points out that this neglect of people's expressions entails a failure to recognise their individuality, as the identity of detained individuals is reduced to their membership of a social category, namely that of being an 'illegal migrant'.[33] However, detainees retain a sense of agency - and therefore humanity - through the staging of protests that focus on the management of their bodies, which is the last object under their control, for example, through hunger strikes or the sewing of their lips.

Although Fiske's article draws on Arendt's ideas, it is also in tension with them in important ways. After all, if the recognition of the status of people as persons who can express their identity through the participation in collective action depends on the protection of their fundamental rights by a political authority that is bound to a national community, the acts of resistance staged by the detainees of immigration detention centres cannot be understood as practices through which people may regain their human status since the particular mistreatment they protest arises from the very fact that their fundamental rights are not guaranteed by any national authority. The argument presented by Fiske thus calls into question the centrality of the political community as tied to the nation-state found in Arendt, placing in its stead a social, ideological, or moral understanding of community through which immigrant-detainees may appeal to the solidarity of international human rights advocates or humanitarian sympathisers.

The conclusion I draw from this discussion is that the loss of a 'right to have rights' is a factor that can contribute to the dehumanisation of refugees and asylum seekers, but need not be dehumanising in itself. Arendt's account provides a valuable contribution to our understanding of dehumanisation through the idea that human rights violations are not dehumanising in and of themselves, but may signal the exclusion of the victim from a shared human realm. Furthermore, the evocative notion that people can be made to be 'superfluous' by depriving them of the means to make their lives meaningful for themselves and others through their expulsion from a polity helps elucidate the radically exclusionary politics of the Holocaust.[34] Arendt's account thus offers a powerful conceptualisation of a particular form that dehumanisation can take, which is reflective of many of the atrocities that occurred in the twentieth century. However, in contrast to Arendt, I argue that our understanding of dehumanisation should focus on the idea of exclusion from a moral, rather than a political, community. If fundamental human rights violations indeed signal dehumanisation, this is so not for the reason that such abuses signal that victims lack a political authority to present themselves through their ideas and actions, which makes them the bearers of rights, but rather

[33] Fiske: 21.

[34] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 457.

because these victims are not regarded as fellow human beings in a normative sense.[35] The point is then to explain how dehumanisation involves an exclusion from a distinct human form of *moral* community. The moral interlocutor account provides such an explanation by tying moral human status to a distinctive human aspect of life, namely taking part in a moral community of communication.

The moral interlocutor account and fundamental rights violations

So far, this chapter has discussed and criticised the popular ideas that fundamental rights violations are dehumanising because they imply that people are treated like animals, violate human rights that seek to protect the interests and needs of human beings, or signal the loss of a 'right to have rights', which excludes people from action and speech. The critique of these three common ways of perceiving of the relation between dehumanisation and fundamental rights violations raises the question of how we should make sense of the relation between these two concepts.

Under the moral interlocutor account, violations of fundamental rights can be dehumanising on three grounds. The first is when a fundamental rights violation, as a form of treatment, in and of itself fails to recognise the status of the victim as a moral claim-maker.[36] The second is when the perpetrators of a fundamental rights violation fail to regard the victims as interlocutors who can make moral claims. The third is when the treatment represents the victims in a way that fails to acknowledge their status as moral claim-makers.

These grounds do not always apply when fundamental rights are violated, however. It is important to note that some fundamental rights violations do not necessarily in and of themselves entail a failure to recognise the status of the victims as moral interlocutors. Furthermore, perpetrators may still perceive of the victims as counterparts in a moral community of communication, although in a limited sense, whereby their appeals can easily be discarded or dismissed. Many fundamental rights violations also lack a representative element and therefore do not portray the victims in a way that fails to acknowledge their status as moral claim-makers.

To bring this idea in clearer focus, let us return to some of the testimonies that were discussed earlier this chapter. An illustration of a fundamental rights violation that should not be considered

[35] In this respect, the account of dehumanisation that I develop and defend in this thesis is closer to Butler's, who claims that dehumanisation revolves around the failure to consider others human in a normative sense. Yet, the downside of Butler's view, as argued in Chapter 2, is that it is not tailored specifically to the human condition. The argument that being seen as 'normatively human' entails that one's death would be considered 'grievable' does not clarify what makes the loss of a *person*, rather than of any sentient being, particularly deserving of grief. The challenge is, therefore, to present an account of exclusion from a distinctively human moral community.

[36] An example of a treatment that fails to recognise the status of the victim as a moral claim-making was given in the previous chapter with the policeman who answered the request of Amira's mother for water with the statement that she could drink from the toilet. This treatment should be considered dehumanising because it fails to recognise her request as a demand expressed by a moral interlocutor.

dehumanising on my view can be found in the story of Khaled, who recounted that his family is entitled to financial assistance from the UN Refugee Agency to pay for their groceries and rent, but payments have fallen through over the last year. Given that refugees are dependent on these vouchers for their subsistence, the failure to deliver this form of assistance can be considered a fundamental rights violation. However, this violation does not seem to involve dehumanisation. The failure to provide assistance does not in and of itself fail to recognise the status of Khaled as a moral interlocutor. After all, this failure of provision does not necessarily require a failure to recognise Khaled as a moral interlocutor. Furthermore, the failure of provision does not appear to have a representative quality, in the sense that it does not seek to portray Khaled in a way that refutes his status as a moral claim-maker.[37] The only ground on the basis of which this treatment could be considered dehumanising is, then, that those responsible for the human rights violation fail to regard Khaled as an interlocutor who can make moral claims. Although it is unknown to Khaled why the UN Refugee Agency has stopped to provide his family with financial aid, it seems unlikely that the UN suddenly failed to recognise him as an interlocutor who can make moral claims, given that they have paid for the expenses of his family over the previous years. It therefore seems more plausible that the department of the UN Refugee Agency in Lebanon has become incapable of satisfying the demands of all the refugees living in the region. This appears likely, especially when we consider that the UN was compelled to cut its food subsidies for refugees in the Middle East because of a shortage of funding of 40 per cent in 2014, forcing the institution to make difficult decisions about budget allocations over the past few years.[38]

In many, but not all, cases where fundamental rights are violated, the answer to the question whether such rights violations involve dehumanisation depends on the attitudes, perceptions, and viewpoints of the people who are responsible for the violations.[39] Think, for example, about the situation on the boat that Musa described, where a band of armed robbers tried to steal the belongings of the passengers. The question of the perceptions that the robbers held is central to determining whether this case amounts to dehumanisation, I argue, because this treatment cannot be considered a form of dehumanisation in and of itself, nor does this treatment contain a clear representational element. That is to say, it did not seek to portray the victims in a way that refutes their status as moral interlocutors. In my view, the treatment in and of itself did not necessarily fail to recognise the status of the passengers as moral interlocutors either. Although being robbed and shot

[37] A more detailed discussion of this representational aspect of dehumanising treatment will be provided in Chapter 5.
[38] Kingsley, *The New Odyssey*, p. 188.
[39] It is important to note that not all scholars on dehumanisation would agree with this claim. For example, an alternative approach, which has been proposed by Mari Mikkola, focuses on whether acts present an indefensible and morally injurious setback to human interests. This approach will be discussed in Chapter 5. The question about the consequences of mistreatment on people's self-perception will also be addressed in the next chapter.

at signals a blatant disregard for the concerns and interests of the passengers, it does not necessarily communicate a failure to recognise their moral standing as interlocutors who can make moral claims. After all, there are many cases in which people rob and shoot others while still recognising their status as moral interlocutors. This is suggested, for example, by cases in which robbers decide not to take particular precious belongings after pleas of the owners or in the case discussed earlier in this chapter of a person who kills another out of perceived self-defence.

The central question is thus whether the robbers failed to recognise the passengers as moral interlocutors. While it is evidently possible that the band failed to recognise the people on the boat as fellow human beings – that is, as interlocutors who can make moral claims - given that the robbers shot at them and allegedly would just leave them behind, if nothing more could be taken from them, this is not a certainty. Clearly, this form of mistreatment amounts to inhumane treatment given that it is characterised by a lack of compassion, sympathy, and consideration. However, it is less certain that the robbers necessarily failed to recognise the humanity of the passengers, in the sense that they did not consider them interlocutors who could make moral appeals. After all, it is also possible that the robbers viewed them as people whose claims could easily be discarded or dismissed, for example, on the basis of the conviction that the hopeless political situation in Libya left little room for people to act in considerate and compassionate ways towards strangers. Given that it is at least conceivable that forms of racism and discrimination, falling short of dehumanisation, inspired the hostile attitude towards the passengers on the boat and served to justify their inhumane treatment, this case provides further support for the idea that not all violations of fundamental rights necessarily require the dehumanisation of the victim(s).

The foregoing discussion raises the question as to whether the dehumanising character of fundamental rights violations generally depends on the attitudes and viewpoints of the perpetrators, or whether some fundamental rights violations may be considered dehumanising *ipso facto*. If there exist any forms of mistreatment that should be considered dehumanising in and of themselves, dehumanisation needs to arise from the fact that particular fundamental rights violations exclude the possibility for the victim to be recognised as an interlocutor who can make moral claims.

I argue that an illustration of this form of mistreatment can be found in the testimony of Amadou about the prison camps in Libya. Based on his experiences with imprisonment in Sebha and Tripoli, Amadou reports that people in the camps were frequently subjected to torture in order to pressure them or their family members to pay ransom. People who would be unable to produce the required sum would be killed or left to die. Amadou notes how the same logic characterises the different prisons: 'They mistreat people for money.'

The form of mistreatment that Amadou describes should be considered dehumanising, I maintain, because it excludes the possibility for the victim to be recognised as an interlocutor who can make

moral claims. To see why this is the case, it is important to examine under which conditions practices exclude the possibility for the victim to be recognised as a moral interlocutor.

The cases of slavery and torture

At least two practices seem to be by definition dehumanising in this way: slavery and torture. Slavery and torture are *ipso facto* dehumanising because both require a refusal to acknowledge respectively the slave and the tortured person as an interlocutor who can make moral appeals. Let us consider slavery first. Slavery excludes the possibility for the slave to be considered a moral interlocutor because the central claim of the slave – the appeal for freedom – cannot be acknowledged without cancelling his or her state of bondage.

The definition of slavery that I draw on here is the one proposed by the philosopher Joshua Cohen, who argues that history displays a tension between the way slaves were commonly portrayed in legal, moral, and religious sources and the roles they actually performed in society. Cohen thus argues that '[o]ne of the great challenges in understanding slavery and its evolution is to appreciate the ways in which slaves exercised their will and contributed as agents to their own history under highly constrained circumstances, where one of the many constraints upon them was precisely the denial in the public culture of their capacity for deliberate action.'[40]

Cohen notes that some people who were legally classified as slaves should not be considered de facto slaves because of their ability to pursue their own will. Following the same logic, persons who would not legally classify as slaves should be considered de facto slaves because of their inability to follow their own will – an idea that is particularly relevant in the current world order where slavery is officially prohibited, yet continues to exist in practice. Cohen thus proposes to characterise slaves as follows:

> A slave is, in the first instance, someone largely lacking the power to dispose of his or her physical and mental powers, including the capacity to produce and control the body more generally (extending to sexuality and reproduction); the power to dispose of the means of production; the power to select a place of residence; the power to associate with others and establish stable bonds; the power to decide on the manner in which one's children will be raised; and the (political) power to fix the rules governing the affairs of the state in which one resides.[41]

The powers Cohen lists can be seen to derive from the position one holds as a person who can make claims. Consider, for example, the argument by the philosopher Linda LeMoncheck that 'without the

[40] Joshua Cohen, 'The Arc of the Moral Universe', in *The Arc of the Moral Universe and Other Essays* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 24.
[41] Cohen, p. 25.

ability to make such claims, one would be subject to any treatment from others that they wished, without being able to demand or expect otherwise.'[42] Indeed, slaves, in the true sense of the word, are in this position of suffering treatment from others – as well as having to perform any act that they are ordered to - without having the power to make an appeal. This sense of powerlessness is communicated, for example, in the testimony of a Yazidi girl who was held by militants of Islamic State: 'To them we are "kuffar" [infidels] and they can do whatever they want. It was so humiliating. We were imprisoned; they wouldn't feed us; they would beat us [all] even the small children; they would buy and sell us and do whatever they want to us... It is like we are not human to them.'[43]

The position of the slave is per definition dehumanising, I argue, because a slave cannot be recognised as a moral interlocutor, given that the claim for freedom – which is the fundamental moral appeal in the case of the slave - cannot be acknowledged without the slave losing his or her status as a slave. Torture displays important similarities with slavery understood in this way. Most importantly, torture requires a radical asymmetry of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Based on this idea, the moral philosopher Henry Shue has argued that situations of torture are characterised by the almost complete control that the torturer holds over the body of the tortured person.[44]

In the case of the abuse reported by Amadou, the human traffickers could not acknowledge the appeals of the victims because the act of torturing to extort money requires a refusal to recognise the moral claims of the victims, given that such extortion can only be successful when the perpetrators act in contradiction to the appeals made by the victims. Imagine, for example, that a victim of torture would ask the torturer to inflict more pain on him or her out of sadomasochistic desire. The act of inflicting physical pain would cease to be torture because the request of the victim would fundamentally change the dynamics of the situation.

The point here is not simply about failing to comply with the pleas made by the victim. Indeed, if that would be the case, dehumanisation would be all too common. After all, it happens regularly that people are unable or unwilling to satisfy moral appeals made on them. The central point is that torture, like slavery, rules out the possibility for the claim of the victim even to be taken into consideration. The logic of torture dictates that whatever the victim wishes for cannot be granted.

The situation that Amadou describes combines elements of slavery and torture. The mistreatment he reports is therefore dehumanising because the act of depriving people of their freedom in order to inflict severe physical and mental suffering on them in an attempt to exact money requires a

[42] LeMoncheck, p. 19.

[43] Amnesty International, *Iraq: Yazidi survivors of horrific abuse in IS captivity neglected by international community*, 10 October 2016, available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/10/iraq-yezidi-survivors-of-horrific-abuse-in-is-captivity-neglected-by-international-community/ [last accessed: 23 May 2017].

[44] Henry Shue, 'Torture,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 7 (1978): 124-143.

refusal to acknowledge the victims as interlocutors who can make moral claims. Firstly, the torture inflicted on the prisoners to force them to pay the human traffickers is dehumanising because this form of mistreatment cannot coincide with recognition of the victims as moral interlocutors. For the extortion to succeed, the torturer needs to act in contradiction to the pleas made by the victim.

Secondly, the deprivation of freedom as a means of extortion is dehumanising to those people who are unable to pay because they are forced in a position of slavery. Consider, for example, an alternative scenario where no torture would be inflicted on the people who are kept in the Libyan prison camps. People would not be beaten. Women would not be raped. Yet, they would not be allowed to leave unless they have paid a large sum of money. If nothing more could be taken from them, people would be killed or left to die. This situation would be dehumanising because the people who are held in this way and who are unable to buy their way out are forced in a position of utter powerlessness that characterises slavery. This treatment would be dehumanising because the victims could not be viewed as moral interlocutors, given that their appeal for freedom could not be recognised without cancelling out the characteristics that define the situation.

It is possible that other fundamental rights violations should be considered dehumanising as well because they rule out the possibility for the victim to be recognised as a moral interlocutor.[45] However, the example of the UN's failure to pay for the expenses of Khaled's family illustrates that not all fundamental rights' violations can be considered dehumanising in this way. In most cases, the answer to the question whether such violations involve dehumanisation depends on the attitudes, perceptions, and viewpoints of the people responsible for the violations. Although this makes it more difficult to determine when dehumanisation takes place, it reflects the reality that dehumanisation not only concerns the way in which people are treated or portrayed, but also how they are perceived.

Rights and needs

The main argument of this chapter was that fundamental rights violations should not be considered identical to dehumanisation for two reasons. First, forms of dehumanisation exist that do not take the form of a violation of legal rights. Second, not all fundamental rights violations entail a failure to regard the victim as an interlocutor who can make moral claims.

[45] In particular, genocide seems a plausible candidate here. However, genocide is more complex than slavery and torture because of its nature as a collective crime. Although genocide, as a collective crime, entails dehumanisation, participation in genocide, as an individual act, does not necessarily exclude recognition of the victim as a moral interlocutor in the same way as torture and slavery do. After all, from the perspective of the individual, there may not exist a difference between killing in war and genocidal killing. That is to say, an individual who kills as part of a genocide may not be aware of participating in a genocide. Therefore, he or she may balance the moral appeal of the other to live against his or her own moral appeal to live, even though the collective crime of genocide, as characterised by the intent to eliminate a particular group, excludes the possibility of recognising the members of this group as interlocutors who can express moral claims.

An important implication of this analysis for the refugee crisis is that refugees are not automatically dehumanised when their fundamental rights are violated. An exception to this rule is when asylum seekers and refugees are enslaved or tortured. In cases where people suffer other fundamental rights violations, it depends on the attitudes, perceptions, and viewpoints of the persons who are responsible for these violations and the consequences that this treatment has for the way in which the victims are perceived by others and perceive of themselves whether such violations involve dehumanisation. A second implication of this discussion is that refugees and asylum seekers may be dehumanised, even if their fundamental rights are not violated. Given that dehumanisation can take the form of a perception, representation, or treatment, not all forms of dehumanisation manifest themselves as violations of (legal) rights. Distinguishing between dehumanisation and fundamental rights violations is thus important because this distinction signals that taking legal actions against acts that violate people's fundamental rights does not suffice to protect them from dehumanisation.

The next chapter will analyse the relation between dehumanisation and the deprivation of basic needs. Here, I will argue that dehumanisation always entails a certain type of deprivation of basic needs because being recognised as a moral interlocutor is a basic human need. However, deprivation of basic (material) needs does not necessarily amount to dehumanisation, given that such deprivation does not require that people fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

5. The deprivation of basic needs

> 'People who have fled war are now enduring dehumanizing living conditions and dying of entirely treatable diseases. They escaped bombs to die of infections, diarrhoea or pneumonia.'
>
> Salil Shetty, Secretary General Amnesty International

Lives of destitution

In the refugee crisis, dehumanisation is commonly conceived through the lens of a deprivation of basic needs. While the focus on fundamental rights violations zooms in on mistreatment, as discussed in the previous chapter, the notion of deprivation of basic needs looks at the conditions under which people live. There are, at least, two distinct ways in which such conditions can be considered to be dehumanising, namely in failing to reach an objective standard of conditions that are befitting for human beings or in making people feel alienated from their own sense of humanity.

This first consideration is central to the statement by Salil Shetty above that the failure by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016 to agree on a fairer system for the resettlement of refugees has as one of its consequences that many refugees are now living under dehumanising conditions.[1] Similar references to dehumanising living conditions have been made by scholars. In a special issue on the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey, the political scientists Mine Eder and Derya Özkul note, for instance, how the failure of the international community to adequately respond to the crisis has led to 'an intensification of uncertainty, precarity, and economic vulnerability for the migrants, concepts that are most frequently used in this volume to depict their dehumanizing conditions.'[2]

Refugees and asylum seekers themselves also frequently describe their experiences in terms that relate to the notion of deprivation of basic needs. The testimony of an Iranian refugee who has passed more than three years in migrant detention centres on Nauru reflects this logic:

> After being brought to Nauru we spent almost 24 months in detention, before we were finally found to be genuine refugees. Since then I have not slept even one night without having recurring nightmares of those endless months

[1] Salil Shetty, 'Tackling the Global Refugee Crisis: Sharing, not shirking responsibility,' *Amnesty International*, 4 October 2016, available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/10/tackling-the-global-refugee-crisis-sharing-responsibility/ [last accessed: 9 February 2018].

[2] Mine Eder and Derya Özkul, 'Editors' Introduction: Precarious lives and Syrian refugees in Turkey,' *New Perspectives on Turkey* 54 (2016): 3.

> living in a hot, mouldy tent. We became so alienated from our humanity, we were thoroughly transformed into a bunch of animals after years of living in the most appalling conditions possible.[3]

This chapter will analyse these two ways in which deprivation of basic human needs may involve dehumanisation. It will do so by considering the relation between dehumanisation and two types of basic needs of which people may be deprived. First, it will reflect on what happens to people when they are forced to live under conditions of severe material destitution. Second, the chapter will look at the deprivation of non-material needs that have to be fulfilled for people to experience their lives as *human* lives.

The main argument of the chapter is that dehumanisation always entails a certain deprivation of basic needs because recognition as a moral interlocutor is a fundamental human need. However, this is a very particular reading of what basic needs entail, which does not correspond to conventional understandings of this notion. When commentators report on deprivation of basic needs in the context of the refugee crisis, they usually refer to a lack of nutrition, inadequate sanitary conditions, and impediments to accessing health care in the camps. This type of deprivation of basic (material) needs, I contend does not necessarily amount to dehumanisation because it may result from a lack of resources, emergency situations, bad planning, or even a lack of concern for the well-being of the people concerned, due to forms of moral exclusion that fall short of dehumanisation, such as discrimination, marginalisation, or stigmatisation. It does not require, however, that people fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims. After all, their claims can be considered, though not met, through inability, inefficiency, or even, up to a certain point, indifference.

Living in destitute conditions does not necessarily entail that people come to fail to recognise themselves as moral interlocutors either. Regarding this point, I will argue that while people frequently report feeling alienated from their own sense of humanity under such circumstances, these claims retain an ambivalent character. After all, in denouncing the conditions in which they are placed, refugees and asylum seekers who report feeling alienated from their own sense of humanity, simultaneously affirm their human status in this appeal that these conditions are inappropriate for human beings. This observation does not entail that deprivation of basic needs cannot alienate people from their sense of humanity, but highlights that such deprivation does not necessarily involve dehumanisation. Dehumanisation occurs if and only if this deprivation involves treating people in ways that fail to acknowledge their status as moral interlocutors or impedes them from recognising themselves or being recognised by others as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

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[3] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Think Australia's Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers is OK? Read this. An open letter from a refugee on Nauru to the leaders of the UN's Summit for Refugees and Migrants,' 19 September 2016, available at: http://www.smh.com.au/comment/think-australias-treatment-of-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-is-ok-read-this-20160919-grjjz2.html [last accessed: 20 February 2018].

Two types of basic needs

To understand better what it means to deprive people of their basic needs, it is important to define first what basic needs are. Needs are requirements, which can be contingent or non-contingent in nature.[4] As the philosophers Soran Reader and Gillian Brock explain, needs are non-contingent when the being in need cannot do without them because they are necessary for it to exist (as it is), while they are contingent if the being in need does not depend on them. My need for oxygen is thus a non-contingent need, whereas my need for chocolate is a contingent one.

Basic human needs can then be described as general, shared requirements of human beings. Unsurprisingly, disagreement exists about what the basic needs of human beings are and about how inclusive this category should be. While is it evident that all human beings have particular physiological needs, without the fulfilment of which they would die, it is more difficult to pinpoint whether there might also be other requirements without the fulfilment of which people may be able to live, but not as *human* beings. Reader and Brock observe that 'basic needs are requirements for physical survival as a biological human being, like water, food, shelter and safety.'[5] Yet, they also add that the 'concept of a basic human need is now generally extended to include requirements for a decent human life which go beyond physical survival, such as education, privacy, freedom.'[6]

An important distinction here concerns needs that spell out the requirements for minimal well-being and those that aim for a higher standard of human flourishing. Both of these types of needs are included in the influential human needs theory developed by the psychologist Abraham Maslow, who conceives of needs as constituting a hierarchical pyramid where people move up from lower to higher levels once their more urgent needs are satisfied.[7] According to Maslow, people thus focus first on their physiological needs and safety, then search to fulfil needs for social belonging, and, finally, aim for the highest levels of esteem and self-actualisation.[8]

Although such more inclusive accounts of human needs shed an interesting light on the diversity of needs that people seek to fulfil in their lives, it seems to me that they offer an overly broad perspective to guide our analysis as to whether the deprivation of basic needs can be considered dehumanising. In arguing for a particular restrictive set of basic human needs, I set up a more difficult challenge to demonstrate that even in cases where people are deprived of truly basic needs this deprivation does not necessarily amount to dehumanisation. For the purposes of this thesis, basic human needs are therefore considered general, shared requirements people cannot do without to exist as human beings.

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[4] Soran Reader and Gillian Brock, 'Needs, Moral Demands and Moral Theory,' *Utilitas* 16 (2004): 252.
[5] Idem: 255.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Abraham Maslow, 'A Theory of Human Motivation,' *Psychological Review* (50): 370-396.
[8] Ibid.

These basic human needs, I propose, fall into two categories. Basic needs can be 'material' or 'non-material'. Material needs of human beings include nutrition, clothing, sleep, medical care, and other means that are required to maintain physical and mental health. If material needs are not satisfied over a long period of time, people will die. Non-material needs refer to what is required for people to experience their life as a *human* life. Education, privacy, and freedom, as mentioned by Reader and Brock, belong to this category, as does Maslow's 'social belonging'. Calling this category 'non-material' does not entail that no material conditions need to be met for these needs to be satisfied. It means that depriving people of material needs leads human beings to perish through physical disintegration, whereas depriving people of non-material needs can lead to their dissolution as *human* beings without harming their bodies. In what is to follow, these two forms of depriving people of basic needs will be analysed.

Deprivation of material needs in the refugee crisis

There are different contexts in which deprivation of material needs in the refugee crisis can be studied. Reports by NGOs and testimonies by refugees and asylum seekers suggest that one context where such deprivation occurs is in immigration detention centres.[9] Although it is important to note that conditions in detention centres vary and that there exist centres where the incarcerated are treated relatively well, frequent stories to the contrary indicate that the basic needs of people are not universally met in centres where refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants are detained.[10]

This conclusion can be drawn, for example, based on the discussion of Nick Vaughan-Williams of witness accounts of the way in which people have been treated in immigration detention centres in the Evros region in Greece. Vaughan-Williams notes, for instance, that 'what comes through most strikingly from the testimonies of "irregular" migrants detained in the Evros region are protests about the everyday material aspects of their incarceration. In particular, it is the systematic denial of access to basic forms of critical infrastructure networks – water, food, medicine, sanitation, electricity, communications, and so on – that many detainees frequently emphasize in their accounts

[9] For reports by NGOs on material deprivation in immigration detention see, e.g.: Human Rights Watch, *'As Though We Are Not Human Beings: Policy brutality against migrants and asylum seekers in Macedonia*, 21 September 2015, available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/21/though-we-are-not-human-beings/police-brutality-against-migrants-and-asylum [last accessed: 13 September 2018], Australia Human Rights Commission, *Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Human Rights: Snapshot report (2nd edition)*, 2017, available at: https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/AHRC_Snapshot%20report_2nd%20edition_2017_WEB.pdf [last accessed: 13 September 2018], Human Rights Watch, *Code Red: The fatal consequences of dangerously substandard medical care in immigration detention*, 20 June 2018, available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/06/20/code-red/fatal-consequences-dangerously-substandard-medical-care-immigration [last accessed: 13 September 2018], and Pro Asyl, *Humiliated, Ill-Treated and Without Protection: Refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria*, December 2015, available at: https://www.proasyl.de/en/material/humiliated-ill-treated-and-without-protection-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-bulgaria-2/ [last accessed: 13 September 2018].

[10] For an overview of detention conditions around the world, see: *Global Detention Project*. For an overview of detention conditions in Europe, see: *Asylum in Europe*.

of detention'.[11] Some commentators consider these conditions of deprivation dehumanising, as is illustrated by the statement of Shetty above and the claim by Pro Asyl that 'the detention in Evros is synonymous with brutality, despair, and dehumanization'.[12]

Some of the stories of the refugees and asylum seekers that were interviewed for this thesis report deprivation of material needs as well. Mahmoud, a Syrian engineer who works at a construction site in Beirut, notes, for example, regarding the conditions of refugees who live outside the camps in Lebanon that 'everything is a challenge for refugees. They cannot satisfy their basic needs. They are being humiliated. They pay 27 dollars a month. It is a joke! How can they pay the rent? How can they survive?' Deprivation of material needs therefore characterises not only the conditions of refugees and asylum seekers in certain detention centres, but also the situation of some of the asylum seekers and refugees living in urban centres in neighbouring countries.

The situation of Omar confirms the bleak image that Mahmoud paints. Omar is an elderly Syrian refugee who fled because of the war and who tries to earn a living by selling tissues on the streets of Beirut. He lives with his wife in a room of six square meters without furniture or a door. A curtain separates their room from a little courtyard. The bathroom and one gas pit are shared with four other families. Still, they have to pay 250 dollars per month for the rent. Other refugees in Beirut report similar experiences.

Let us consider whether (and if so, why) this type of destitution should be considered dehumanising. The conditions under which Omar lives could potentially be called dehumanising for different reasons, which relate to the way these conditions influence how he is treated, portrayed, or perceived. Before we analyse these various options, a few points should be noted. First, it is important to observe that the term 'deprivation' can refer to 'an act or instance of withholding or taking something away from someone or something' or 'the state of being kept from possessing, enjoying, or using something'.[13] The fact that deprivation can refer to a state as well as an act entails that it is not always easy to identify a particular person or institution responsible for deprivation. Deprivation may also arise through structural constraints.

Second, in terms of representation, we should consider that deprivation differs from typical forms of dehumanising portrayals, as may be found, for example, in propaganda, in that it does not involve a figurative portrayal of people in a subhuman way. Still, depriving people of particular basic needs can alter their appearance, making it possible to speak of these acts as a more literal manifestation of the act of portraying them in ways that deny their status as moral interlocutors.

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[11] Vaughan-Williams, p. 80.

[12] Pro Asyl, *Walls of Shame*, p. 3.

[13] 'Deprivation,' *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deprivation [last accessed: 10 March 2018].

Third, with respect to perception, it is important to point out that deprivation of basic needs can relate to dehumanisation in two ways. Not only can a dehumanising perception on the side of the perpetrators motivate deprivation of the basic needs of the victims, but this deprivation can also produce a sense of alienation in the victims, which makes it difficult for them to affirm their own humanity, as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

In the case of Omar, it seems complex to identify a particular agent responsible for the state of deprivation he lives in and the question whether this deprivation follows from a dehumanising perception on the side of the perpetrator therefore would be difficult to answer. It is possible, however, that this deprivation leads Omar to feel alienated from his own sense of humanity. This does not seem to be the case either, given that Omar does not communicate any such sentiment.[14] Furthermore, the destitute conditions under which Omar lives may portray him as marginalised, but it does not seem right to claim that these conditions make him appear as less than human. The only way in which these conditions could be considered dehumanising, then, is if they would entail an objective form of dehumanisation, inherent in mistreatment, as in the case of torture or slavery.

This logic seems to underpin statements like those made by Shetty, cited above, which suggest that conditions are dehumanising when they fail to reach some objective standard of conditions that are befitting for human beings. This discussion raises the question as to whether such an objective standard exists, and if so, what the minimal conditions are that need to be guaranteed for people to be able to live a human life. An influential theory of human development that could be helpful in answering this question is the 'basic capabilities approach', which has been proposed by the economist Amartya Sen and the philosopher Martha Nussbaum.[15]

With the basic capabilities approach, Sen and Nussbaum seek to identify what authorities need to provide people with to guarantee them at least a minimal level of well-being. The originality of their answer lies in arguing that societies should not simply offer people material resources but rather support them in ways that open up opportunities that individuals can pursue in their lives. Human development, according to Nussbaum and Sen, should thus focus on guaranteeing people the freedoms needed to engage in particular acts through the development of their capabilities.

In elaborating on this account in more detail, Nussbaum gives a (potential) list of the basic capabilities that need to be secured for people to enjoy a life that is line with their human dignity.[16]

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[14] The case of some of the people who were held in immigration detention centres may differ on this point. The Iranian who describes the suffering that he has been subjected to on Nauru evidently speaks to a sense of alienation from his humanity. This issue will be discussed later in the chapter.

[15] See: Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The human development approach* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

[16] Nussbaum, p. 29.

These central capabilities, according to Nussbaum, relate to 'life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's environment'.[17]

The basic capabilities approach could be used, then, to characterise the conditions in the camps, described by Shetty, as dehumanising because these conditions do not allow people at least a threshold level of these basic capabilities, given that their health is jeopardised through the unhygienic environment in which they are forced to live. Moreover, Shetty further condemns the conditions in the camps by observing that 'children are not attending school, with devastating consequences for the rest of their lives.'[18] This speaks to what Nussbaum describes as conditions that thwart the development of human capabilities, which may lead to lives that are lacking from a human perspective.[19]

It is important to note, however, that the aim of Nussbaum and Sen is not to set out when people are treated as less than human, but to construe a theory of human development. Their account therefore leaves open the question whether the thwarted development of human capabilities can – and should - be described in terms of dehumanisation, or perhaps, rather, as infra-humanisation.[20] In my view, the basic capabilities approach is helpful in considering what goods and services people should be guaranteed to safeguard their minimal well-being. Nonetheless, without a determined account of where the threshold level of these basic capabilities lies, it is unclear whether the failure to provide people with basic capabilities entails the loss of their capacity to effectively make moral claims on others. The fact that people who are incarcerated in immigration detention centres often protest against the conditions under which they are held and that these claims are at times considered suggests that this capacity is not undermined in all cases where basic human needs fail to be satisfied in detention.

The philosopher Mari Mikkola has proposed an alternative account that does specifically seek to relate dehumanisation to the deprivation of human needs. This account may therefore be helpful in considering whether there may exist some objective standard that determines which conditions are befitting for human beings and which could help determine whether the deprivation of material needs of refugees and asylum seekers in immigration detention centres and in the situation of Omar should be considered dehumanising,

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[17] Nussbaum, pp. 33-34.

[18] Shetty.

[19] To make this point, Nussbaum approvingly cites Adam Smith, who states that 'deprivation of education made people "mutilated and deformed in a[n] […] essential part of the character of human nature"' (p. 23).

[20] In my view, as set out in Chapter 2, the thwarted development of human capabilities can be described as dehumanising only in so far as it impedes people's development towards becoming moral interlocutors.

Mikkola's account defines dehumanisation as a morally injurious and indefensible setback to legitimate human interests. These legitimate human interests are characterised as interests that are basic to the well-being of human beings and include, among others, interests in being healthy and alive, being able to engage in 'meaningful social intercourses', at least minimal 'means of subsistence', and 'a certain amount of freedom from interference and coercion'.[21] To avoid an overly inclusive account of dehumanisation, Mikkola argues that setbacks to such legitimate human interests only count as dehumanising when they are indefensible and morally injurious. Setbacks are indefensible when they are inexcusable or unjustifiable and they are morally injurious if they fail to recognise people's value, which is the case, for example, when they are based on sexist attitudes.[22] As examples of acts and practices that are dehumanising, she mentions rape, denying education to women, and failing to consider a person for a job on discriminatory grounds.

According to Mikkola's account, the systematic deprivation of basic (material) needs, including water, food, sanitation, and medical care, would entail dehumanisation given that this deprivation entails a setback to people's legitimate human interests in an indefensible and morally injurious way. According to her account, Omar is also subjected to dehumanisation given that he is treated in a way that sets back his legitimate human interests in an indefensible and morally injurious way. The high rent affects his legitimate human interests in having at least minimal means of subsistence. Moreover, the request for a high rent can be considered indefensible, as long as the rate is not determined on justifiable grounds, such as, for example, a general rise in rent prices due to an increase in demand. The excessive rate in relation to the housing conditions seems to imply that the setback to Omar's interests in having a roof over his head and being able to provide for himself and his wife is indeed indefensible. Furthermore, this rent rate is morally injurious, if it is based on exploiting his precarious status as a Syrian in Lebanon. Even if this may not be the direct intention of his landlord, structural conditions can contribute to the morally injurious character of acts and practices that set back legitimate human interests.

The concern I have about defining dehumanisation in this way is that not all morally injurious and indefensible setbacks to human interests necessarily entail that people are perceived, treated, or portrayed as (being) less than human, even though the morally injurious character of these setbacks does require that they are at least seen as inferior. To begin, people may be extorted, exploited, and insulted because they are marginalised, stigmatised, or otherwise considered inferior. Acts that set back legitimate human interests in an indefensible and morally injurious way therefore do not require dehumanising perceptions on the side of the perpetrator(s).

[21] Mikkola, p. 168.
[22] Idem, p. 165 and p. 170.

The notion of dehumanisation that Mikkola develops can also be understood to draw on a different logic, namely that dehumanisation consists in acts that harm basic requisites for our well-being as human beings. In this way, dehumanisation is conceived of as a form of mistreating people. Yet, without a sense of the consequences of the harm done, setbacks with only little impact on people's life should be counted as dehumanising as well. Consider, for instance, the example that Mikkola gives of a person who is dehumanised when he or she is not considered for a job on discriminatory grounds. This refusal to consider a person as a candidate entails an indefensible and morally injurious setback to the person's legitimate human interest in at least minimal means of subsistence and therefore amounts to dehumanisation, according to Mikkola's view. However, if the same person lands another job the next day, this would mean that the refusal of the previous day is unlikely to have a serious impact on that person's interests, let alone harm basic prerequisites for his or her well-being as a human being.

Another reading of Mikkola's account is possible, however, which concentrates on the idea that dehumanisation does not revolve primarily around harm done to basic requisites for our well-being as human beings, but around the failure to recognise people's value, which is the aspect that renders setbacks to legitimate human interests morally injurious. This interpretation of Mikkola's account focuses again on dehumanisation as a form of perception, rather than treatment. This seems more promising, yet Mikkola does not set out in detail what it means to recognise people's value. The examples she gives focus on discrimination, suggesting that what she has in mind is not people's minimal value as counterparts in a human moral community but their equal value in a more demanding sense. As argued previously, discrimination, marginalisation, and stigmatisation are not identical to dehumanisation because these acts generally involve perceiving, portraying, and treating people as inferior human beings rather than as less than human. The account that Mikkola develops therefore seems more suitable as a perspective of infra-humanisation, rather than of dehumanisation.

Regarding the case of Omar, I conclude that although there are good reasons to promote humane policies towards refugees, which would preclude this kind of destitute living conditions, such policies should focus on preventing *inhumane* situations. In this case, 'inhumane' has a double meaning. On the one hand, it refers to situations that are unsuitable for human beings, for example, from a sanitary perspective. Situations that are inhumane in this sense include the living conditions in refugee camps, described by Shetty, where people die of treatable diseases.[23] On the other hand, situations can be described as inhumane when they are marked by a failure to demonstrate compassion, sympathy, or consideration for people. This description applies to the case of Omar,

[23] Shetty.

who is forced to pay a high rent in spite of the fact that he is a refugee with few resources who fled from war.

Regarding the case of lack of nutrition, inadequate sanitary conditions, and impediments to accessing health care in the camps, this type of deprivation of basic (material) needs amounts to inhumane conditions as well. Dehumanisation is not the right term to use here, unless these conditions of deprivation affect the capacity of people as moral claim-makers, as I will explain shortly. This conclusion does not entail that the conditions under which people live can never be dehumanising. In fact, they can when material deprivation entails treating people as less than human or renders them unrecognisable as human beings to themselves or others, as I will set out in the following section.

Alienation from humanity

Some refugees and asylum seekers report feeling alienated from their own sense of humanity. In an article on the detention of irregular migrants in Malta, discussed in the previous chapter, DeBono reports, for example, how an immigrant from Congo felt diminished after having passed more than eighteen months in detention in Malta: 'Detention dehumanizes the human being. The detainee is reduced to the state of an animal. One wakes up, eats, sleeps, wakes up'.[24]

This testimony corresponds to an argument presented by Vaughan-Williams that conditions of detention that are marked by the deprivation of basic needs are part of a process of production of animalised subjectivities.[25] This means that people come to see themselves as less human, and more animal-like, through the denial of access to the necessary infrastructure to satisfy their basic needs. Vaughan-Williams thus notes that 'given the systematic denial of access to critical infrastructure networks necessary to be "human", the narrated experience of many detainees is that they gradually acquire a status that becomes more akin to an "animalized" figure.' [26]

The detrimental effects of prolonged detention may stay with people for a long time. The Iranian refugee who testifies of the detrimental conditions in the immigration detention centres on Nauru and who claimed that the inhabitants of these centres were transformed into 'a bunch of animals' confirms this idea when he states that 'to this day we are still walking ghosts, utterly broken and hopeless. We are hollowed out and devoid of enthusiasm for life, and we are stuck in an animalistic state of existence because that is what we have become.'[27]

[24] DeBono: 71.
[25] Vaughan-Williams, p. 83.
[26] Ibid.
[27] *Sydney Morning Herald*.

These testimonies provide powerful allegations against the conditions under which refugees and migrants are at times detained. Based on their personal experiences with living under these conditions, asylum seekers and refugees strive to raise awareness of the detrimental consequences that security regimes have on the individuals under its subjection. Yet, the frequently reported claim that people are alienated from their own sense of humanity retains an ambivalent character. After all, in denouncing these conditions, refugees and asylum seekers who report feeling alienated from their own sense of humanity, simultaneously affirm their human status in their appeals that these conditions are inappropriate for human beings.

To clarify this argument, it may be conducive to contrast the situation of refugees and migrants in detention centres with that of the inmates who allegedly gave up their sense of humanity in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. In the camps, inhumane living conditions were imposed on the prisoners in an attempt to undermine their humanity. It becomes possible to speak of dehumanisation here, but only in certain exceptional cases, as I will argue, when such living conditions come to fundamentally affect people's sense of humanity. Levi describes the conditions that may lead to this form of dehumanisation in a passage where he reflects on the psychological burden of remembering the camps:

> Coming out of the darkness, one suffered because of the reacquired consciousness of having been diminished. Not by our will, cowardice, or fault, yet nevertheless we had lived for months and years at an animal level: our days had been encumbered from dawn to dusk by hunger, fatigue, cold, and fear, and any space for reflection, reasoning, experiencing, emotions was wiped out. We endured filth, promiscuity, and destitution, suffering much less than we would have suffered from such things in normal life, because our moral yardstick had changed. […] We had not only forgotten our country and our culture, but also our family, our past, the future we had imagined for ourselves, because, like animals, we were confined to the present moment.[28]

In this passage, Levi recounts how the inmates of the camps were forced to live on an animal level, which made it virtually impossible for them to engage in reasoning, feel deeper emotions, or hold on to moral principles. This is the point where inhumane conditions are often said to become dehumanising as people come to feel alienated from their own humanity. However, in my view, 'dehumanisation' is generally not the right term to describe this process of alienation because, as in the case of refugees and asylum seekers who denounce the inhumane living conditions in certain immigration detention centres, people do not necessarily lose their sense of humanity in this situation.

It is important to emphasise here that the treatment imposed on the inmates of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps was undoubtedly dehumanising because this treatment

[28] Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, pp. 56-57.

failed to acknowledge them as interlocutors who could make moral claims. A second question is, however, if the treatment that the inmates were subjected to was also dehumanising in a secondary sense, namely in impeding the prisoners from recognising themselves as interlocutors who can make moral claims. This only seems to have been the case for those people who were unable to withstand the Nazi attempts to break their will. Levi reflects upon the fate of these people, speaking about 'an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead in them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand.'[29]

The difference between the inmates who resisted and those who gave up has also been a point of reflection for the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, who was detained as a political prisoner in Dachau and Buchenwald. Bettelheim notes that the latter stopped 'responding to [the environment] at all, and [became] objects'.[30] He claims that the prisoners would get to this point, 'when emotion could no longer be evoked in them.'[31]

The testimonies by Levi and Bettelheim suggest that the deprivation of basic material needs can indeed impede people from recognising their own humanity and being recognisable to others as fellow human beings. Through starvation and the infliction of continuous inhumane treatment, people can be cut off from fundamental human activities, such as reasoning, engaging in social contact, and upholding moral principles. If such destitution persists, people may eventually give up responding to the outside world, as they no longer can be moved by anything. However, as Levi has insightfully pointed out, the perspective of those who were driven to this point is beyond our epistemological reach.[32] It may therefore be better to focus instead on what survivors say about their own experiences in the camps rather than on how they describe what happened to others.

The accounts of survivors who left testimonies of their experiences communicate ambivalence towards their own human status. While many report a sense of being reduced to an animal level,

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[29] Levi, p. 90.

[30] Bettelheim, as cited in Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The witness and the archive* (translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen) (New York: Zone Books, 2000), p. 57.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Levi emphasises this point in *The Drowned and the Saved* where he notes how 'we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses. This is an uncomfortable notion, of which I have become conscious little by little, reading the memoirs of others and reading mine at a distance of years. We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute' (p. 64). Levi further stresses this point in explaining that survivors of the camps 'tried, with more or less wisdom, to recount not only our fate, but also that of the others, the submerged; but this was a discourse on "behalf of third parties", the story of things seen from close by, not experienced personally. When the destruction was terminated, the work accomplished was not told by anyone, just as no one ever returned to recount his own death. Even if they had paper and pen, the submerged would not have testified because their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before being snuffed out, they had already lost the ability to observe, to remember, to compare and express themselves. We speak in their stead, by proxy' (p. 64).

people also often speak about moments of reflection that contradict this reduction. Immediately following the passage regarding the difficulty involved in remembering life in the camps, cited above, Levi notes, for example, how the inmates became aware of their humbled condition at certain occasions. He observes how '[o]nly at rare intervals did we come out of this condition of levelling, during the very few Sundays of rest, the fleeting minutes before falling asleep, or the fury of the air raids, but these were painful moments precisely because they gave us the opportunity to measure our diminishment from the outside.'[33]

More explicitly, Bettelheim comments on the possibility of retaining a sense of humanity in the camps through the reflective practice of staying aware of one's moral point of view:

> To survive as a man not as a walking corpse, as a debased and degraded but still human being, one had first and foremost to remain informed and aware of what made up one's personal point of no return, the point beyond which one would never, under any circumstances, give in to the oppressor, even if it meant risking and losing one's life. It meant being aware that if one survived at the price of overreaching this point one would be holding on to a life that had lost all its meaning.[34]

The claim by Bettelheim that people lose their humanity when they give in to the oppressor can be understood as a moralistic account of what it means to be human. Regarding this point, I agree that it would indeed be problematic to maintain that people who transgress their own moral boundaries in this way would thereby cease to be human. However, Bettelheim's account can alternatively be read as a personal perspective on the fear that people have of losing their (sense of) humanity. In this way, the claim that people fail to recognise their own humanity when they become insensitive to moral considerations which they always held to be fundamental can be understood as a particular view on the point where a denial of basic needs may be seen to induce dehumanisation.

It is interesting to note here that Levi recounts a fairly similar story in *If This is a Man* when he speaks about the philosophy of one of his fellow inmates in Auschwitz, ex-sergeant Steinlauf of the Austro-Hungarian army. Steinlauf, in the words of Levi, maintained:

> that precisely because the Lager was a great machine to reduce us to beasts, we must not become beasts; that even in this place one can survive, and therefore one must want to survive, to tell the story, to bear witness; and that to survive we must force ourselves to save at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the form of civilization. We are slaves, deprived of every right, exposed to every insult, condemned to certain death, but we still possess one power, and we must defend it with all our strength for it is the last – the power to refuse our consent.[35]

[33] Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, pp. 56-57.
[34] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a mass age* (New York: Free Press, 1960), p. 158.
[35] Levi, *If This is a Man*, p. 47.

The image that comes forward from these testimonies is that people may demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of the deprivation of their basic needs. Although extreme forms of forced destitution can make people feel less human, it is not necessarily the case that people truly become alienated from their humanity, that is to say, come to fail to recognise their status as interlocutors who can make moral claims. In this respect, the claims that people make as interlocutors should not only be understood as those they make on others, but also as those they make on themselves. Seen in this light, the 'point of no return' described by Bettelheim implies that people can make moral claims on themselves not to engage in particular forms of conduct, even if this may cost them their life.

To conclude, the discussion of the case of Omar and the testimonies by Levi and Bettelheim yields the insight that material deprivation can be dehumanising, but need not always be so. Material deprivation is dehumanising when it involves treating people in ways that fail to recognise them as moral interlocutors, follows from a dehumanising perception on the side of the perpetrator(s), and/or renders the victims unrecognisable to themselves or others as moral interlocutors. In the case of the destitute living conditions of Omar, none of these criteria seems to have been satisfied and these conditions can therefore not be considered dehumanising. In the case of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps, dehumanisation was involved because the treatment inflicted on the inmates failed to recognise them as moral interlocutors and the deprivation of their basic needs generally, if not always, followed from a dehumanising perception on the side of the perpetrators. The deprivation of basic needs did not necessarily lead people to stop considering themselves as moral claim-makers, however, and therefore did not always entail that victims came to fail to recognise their own normative human status.

Deprivation of non-material needs in the refugee crisis

The stories that refugees and asylum seekers recount about their experiences in the refugee crisis speak not only of material destitution, but also of deprivation of non-material needs. Particularly salient among these is the need for social belonging. This may not be considered surprising if we consider that asylum seekers and refugees have fled from their country of origin and that the loss of a home entails being cut off from many, if not most, of one's social relations.

Reflecting on what it means to have lost his home, Ahmed, a young Syrian who works in a cafeteria in Beirut, states, for example, that he feels alone in Lebanon: 'I am a stranger here. I have no family members. I have nothing to do, except for work.' His colleague Abdul confirms this image, contrasting his current situation with his former life in Syria: 'In my village, we felt one. Here everybody is alone. We are not friends. No one cares about another.'

This lack of a place to belong, which refugees frequently report, is the focal point of an influential study by the cultural anthropologist Michel Agier. In *On the Margins of the World*, Agier contends that the existence of refugees in the contemporary world is characterised by their loss of a place in the world. The situation of refugees is based on 'the loss of a geographical place, to which were attached attributes of identity, relationship and memory, and likewise on the absence of any new social place.'[36] Refugees lose their connection to the place that constituted their home. According to Agier, a denial of human identity is thus brought about as refugees are forced to leave behind the community they belonged to and continues for as long as they have not yet found 'a new social place, a humanity, in collective action, the only condition by which they can shed their identity as victims'.[37]

Arendt offers similar reflections in 'On Refugees', where she argues that 'man is a social animal and life is not easy for him when social ties are cut off.'[38] She elaborates on this point by explicating how social embeddedness provides people with guidelines for behaviour and a sense of identity: 'Moral standards are much easier kept in the texture of a society. Very few individuals have the strength to conserve their own integrity if their social, political and legal status is completely confused.'[39]

The loss of a home is a recurrent theme in the testimonies by refugees and asylum seekers. When asked about the biggest difference between her life in Syria and that in Germany, Amira emphatically states, for example: 'I have lost my homeland. I am without a home. I am homeless.' Suha also contemplates the bitterness of losing her home through war: 'It is hard when your home, memories, possessions are vanished. It is difficult to accept.'

The challenge here lies not only in dealing with the loss of a spatial connection with one's past, but also in the fact that this loss is unsettling in the present. Fathi reports this sensation. Responding to the difficulties he experiences in adapting to his new social environment, he communicates a sense of disorientation: 'I have lost my life. I am nothing. I was an academic. I was a teacher. I need to decide what my future will be.'

Although it is evident that the need to belong plays an important role in the stories of refugees and asylum seekers about the problems they encounter while settling in new communities, it is less clear how the deprivation of this social need is connected to dehumanisation. A first way in which this relation may be conceived draws on the idea that extreme forms of social exclusion amount to

[36] Agier, *On the Margins*, p. 29.
[37] Idem, p. 6.
[38] Arendt, 'On Refugees,' p. 116.
[39] Ibid.

dehumanisation because excluding people socially entails treating them as less than human. In this way, dehumanisation is often translated into terms that emphasise social exclusion. Roula, a Syrian refugee who lives in a reception centre on Lesvos, notes, for example, that 'it's worse than jail. We are not treated as belonging to society, as human beings.'[40]

Roula highlights the reality of social exclusion in claiming that the refugees and migrants living in the camp do not seem to belong to society. She puts this treatment on a par with dehumanisation as she contends that the people living in the camp are not treated as human beings. While social exclusion and dehumanisation can, and indeed often do, coincide, I argue that it is problematic to conflate these two practices. Dehumanisation, I contend, revolves around an exclusion from a moral, rather than a social, community. This difference draws on the fact that since societies are bounded, they cannot include all human beings. Being treated as not belonging to a particular society therefore does not necessarily entail that someone is not recognised as a fellow human being. After all, if social communities would extend to include all human beings, refugees would not face the problem of a loss of a social place in the world to begin with.

The story of Salim suggests a different way in which social exclusion and dehumanisation may be connected. Salim explains that he encounters difficulties in making contact with people in Italy because they keep their distance from him. He states that '[i]f I want to contact with people, they act the same like with zombie. They don't treat me like a human being.'

Salim recounts that he feels that people often seem to fear him because he comes from Iraq and people associate Iraqis with militants and terrorists. Because he does not speak Italian well, he cannot convey the message that there is no need to be afraid of him. Like a zombie, he is unable to engage with people, given that their fear and his own problems in communicating rule out the possibility of contact.

In the story of Salim, aspects of perception, representation, and treatment coincide. Although Salim does not say as much, his words imply that people keep their distance from him because they perceive of him as somehow dangerous, possibly encouraged by vilifying media reports on migrants and asylum seekers. The most interesting aspect of his story is, however, the fact that Salim chooses the figure of the zombie to describe himself. This choice may tell us something about what it means for Salim to be (considered) human.

Zombies can function as a mirror image for human beings for different reasons. One is that they do not have a brain and therefore contrast the more reasonable nature of people. However, this does not help explain the frightening aspect of zombies. This aspect lies in the fact that zombies used to be people, and therefore resemble them in many ways, yet act in amoral ways. Zombies are

[40] As cited in Ćerimović.

terrifying because they come to kill us and turn us all into vile creatures without any moral constraint. Yet, although Salim does consider this frightful aspect of zombies, his main motivation for choosing this metaphor seems to be that it conveys his inability to interact and engage with people in a meaningful way. He thus links feeling like a zombie to his weak linguistic abilities: 'I don't speak the language well. […] I see every door closing. This means like I'm zombie.'

What characterises zombies is, then, that, on the one hand, they are eerily recognisable as human figures, while, on the other hand, they are dangerous creatures whose threat cannot be mitigated through communication. People do not try to reason with zombies; they flee. This dimension seems to be most central to Salim's choice for the figure of the zombie to describe himself.

The question this analysis raises is whether the deprivation of social needs that Salim comments on can indeed be considered dehumanising. Does his self-description as a zombie indicate that he is treated, portrayed, or viewed as less than human in a moral sense, that is to say, that his status as a moral interlocutor is not acknowledged? I believe that there are reasons to be sceptical about this conclusion. When Salim reports that he 'feels like a zombie', it seems to me that he wants to communicate a sense of loneliness and isolation, not that he is somehow less than human. The fact that he reiterates that he does not speak the language well enough supports this reading, as it emphasises a feeling of isolation rather than a denial of humanity.

This conclusion does not entail that deprivation of social needs cannot amount to dehumanisation under other circumstances. This is indeed possible under extreme conditions, like those of prolonged isolation or torture, which severely affect people's need for (positive) social contact. In such cases, people are dehumanised when they come to disregard themselves as interlocutors who can make moral claims, as I explained previously.

Dehumanisation as a deprivation of a basic moral need

So far, the chapter has argued that the deprivation of basic material and non-material needs does not necessarily amount to dehumanisation. Conditions that allegedly fail to reach an objective standard of conditions that are befitting for human beings are better called 'inhumane', rather than 'dehumanising', given that such conditions do not rule out the possibility for the victim to be recognised as a moral interlocutor, as slavery or genocide do. The fact that people are sometimes placed under such conditions does not necessarily entail that they are viewed as less than human either. The deprivation of basic material needs may result, for example, from a lack of resources, emergency situations, bad planning, or even a lack of concern for the well-being of the people concerned, due to forms of moral exclusion that fall short of dehumanisation, such as discrimination, marginalisation, or stigmatisation. It does not require, however, that people fail to be recognised as

interlocutors who can make moral claims. After all, their claims can be considered, but not met, through inability, inefficiency, or even, up to a certain point, indifference.

Nor does living under destitute conditions necessarily entail that people come to fail to recognise themselves as moral interlocutors. While people frequently report a sense of alienation from their own humanity under such circumstances, these claims retain an ambivalent character. I argued that refugees and asylum seekers, who report feeling alienated from their own sense of humanity in denouncing these conditions, simultaneously affirm their human status in their appeal that these conditions are inappropriate for human beings. This observation does not entail that deprivation of basic needs cannot alienate people from their sense of humanity, but highlights that such deprivation does not necessarily involve dehumanisation and that it only seems to do so under exceptional circumstances.

There is, however, a particular way in which dehumanisation, in my view, does involve depriving people of a basic non-material need. Dehumanisation amounts to a particular type of deprivation of a basic moral need, I argue, because being recognised as a moral interlocutor is in itself a basic human need. This recognition constitutes a basic human need because people need to be recognised as moral interlocutors to be able to guide the ways in which others treat us. Without this ability to make effective moral claims on others, people would be unable to stand up for themselves, to protest against mistreatment, or to call wrongdoers to account.[41]

Furthermore, this basic human need encompasses not only the need to be recognised by others as moral interlocutors, but also the need to regard oneself as a person who can make moral claims. This idea corresponds to the testimony by Mouhamad, a Syrian refugee in Greece, who states in an interview with the United Nations that '[m]y fear, is to wake up one day transformed – as in Kafka's book – into a huge insect, willing to accept anything to survive.'[42]

Mouhamad uses the literary metaphor of changing into 'a huge insect' to express his anxiety about losing his humanity, reflected in the concern that he would be 'willing to do anything to survive'. This statement resonates with Bettelheim's claim that to remain human, people have to remain aware of their 'personal point of no return', that is to say, what they are unwilling to do even if it would cost them their life.

From the moral interlocutor view, the fear of losing one's normative human status by overstepping moral boundaries that one holds to be fundamental can be understood if we translate it into a concern for becoming blind or insensitive to one's own moral claims. In this way, I argued

[41] A more elaborate account of why people need to be recognised as moral interlocutors will be developed in Chapter 6.
[42] UNHCR, 'Mouhamad's Journey, Greece,' *Refugee Stories*, 2014, available at: http://stories.unhcr.org/mouhamads-story-greece-p60137.html [last accessed: 23 January 2017].

earlier in this chapter that Bettelheim's 'point of no return' implies that people make moral claims on themselves not to engage in particular forms of conduct, even if this could have fatal consequences.

When people become willing to do anything to survive, it means that they become blind or insensitive to normative considerations that tell them not to act in ways that they consider unacceptable. This blindness or insensitivity to moral red lines undermines their ability to participate in moral claim-making because awareness of and concern about one's moral standpoints are needed to be able to formulate moral claims. After all, I established that moral claims need to be grounded in a basic understanding of what is good and bad, and right and wrong, as well as a sense of concern for the (potential) suffering and well-being involved. If people lose touch with such considerations, this impedes them from regarding and presenting themselves as moral claim-makers. To recognise oneself as a moral interlocutor and to be recognised as such by others therefore constitute basic human needs.

To conclude, dehumanisation entails the deprivation of a basic moral need. This is the case because people have a basic need to be recognised as moral interlocutors, both by others and themselves. This does not mean, however, that dehumanisation can be considered identical to the practice of depriving people of their basic needs. This conclusion does not follow because people have various basic needs, including material ones, the deprivation of which is not necessarily dehumanising.

The need for recognition as a moral interlocutor

This chapter analysed the relation between dehumanisation and the deprivation of basic human needs. The main argument of the chapter was that dehumanisation always entails the deprivation of a basic need because being recognised as a moral interlocutor is a fundamental human need. Yet, this is a very particular reading of what basic needs entail, which does not correspond to conventional understandings of this notion. When commentators report on deprivation of basic needs in the context of the refugee crisis they usually refer to lack of nutrition, inadequate sanitary conditions, and impediments to accessing health care in the camps. This type of deprivation of basic needs, I argued does not necessarily amount to dehumanisation because it may result from a lack of resources, emergency situations, bad planning, or even a lack of concern for the well-being of the people concerned, due to forms of moral exclusion that fall short of dehumanisation, such as discrimination, marginalisation, stigmatisation, or infra-humanisation. It does not require, however, that people fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims. After all, their claims can be considered, though not met, through inability, inefficiency, or even, up to a certain point, indifference.

Living under destitute conditions does not necessarily entail that people come to fail to recognise themselves as moral interlocutors either. While people frequently report feeling alienated from their own sense of humanity under such circumstances, these claims retain an ambivalent character. In denouncing inhumane conditions, refugees and asylum seekers who report feeling alienated from their own sense of humanity, simultaneously affirm this sense in their appeal that these conditions are unsuitable for human beings. This observation does not entail that deprivation of basic needs cannot alienate people from their sense of humanity, but highlights that such deprivation does not necessarily involve dehumanisation. Dehumanisation occurs if and only if this deprivation involves treating people in ways that fail to acknowledge their status as moral interlocutors or impedes them from recognising themselves or being recognised by others as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

The next, and last, chapter will present the final part of the thesis, which summarises my account of the unique moral wrongness of dehumanisation. The main argument that the chapter presents is that the principle moral wrong of dehumanisation lies in 'moral silencing', which entails that people lose their voice as moral interlocutors within their interaction(s) with the perpetrator(s) of dehumanisation. Moral silencing constitutes an exceptional moral wrong because it undermines the very foundations of human morality, which is fundamentally enabled and shaped by the possibility for people to make moral claims on one another.

Part III

6. The moral wrongness of dehumanisation

> 'We are segregated and separated from the world and the fullness thereof, driven out of the society of the human race.'
>
> Chaim Kaplan, *Scrolls of Agony*

The distinct wrong of dehumanisation

The previous chapters have demonstrated that exclusionary practices can take different forms: people can be discriminated, marginalised, or stigmatised, to name only few examples. In the spectrum of exclusion, dehumanisation takes a distinct place. When people are dehumanised, this does not simply undermine their position in a particular social or moral order, but entails that they are no longer recognised as moral counterparts in any significant sense. Following this line of reasoning, it is possible to interpret the observation of Chaim Kaplan, cited above. Kaplan was a Jewish teacher who held a diary on life in the Warsaw ghetto until August 1942, shortly before he and his wife were deported to Treblinka where they died. He notes that the Jewish people were 'separated from the world and the fullness thereof' as they were 'driven out of the society of the human race'.[1]

To be dehumanised means to be banned from the world, not in its concrete, physical sense but in its social, constructed sense, that is, the world we share as human beings.[2] People who are dehumanised are no longer seen to partake in distinctively human moral interactions by those who dehumanise them.[3] It is not merely that they are relegated to the confines of a community or that their social or moral position is weakened; people who are dehumanised are no longer recognised as fellow human beings in a normative sense by those who dehumanise them because in the eyes of the perpetrator(s) they have been pushed out of the moral community we share as people.

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[1] Chaim Kaplan, *Scrolls of Agony: The Warsaw diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 225.

[2] The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas speaks in a similar way of his experiences with dehumanisation. In his recollections of the time that he spent incarcerated in a camp for Jewish prisoners of war in Nazi Germany, Levinas notes how the people outside the camp with whom he and his fellow detainees had infrequent encounters stripped them 'of our human skin. We were subhuman, a gang of apes. A small inner murmur, the strength and wretchedness of persecuted people, reminded us of our essence as thinking creatures, but we were no longer part of the world'. See: Emmanuel Levinas, 'The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights,' in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 152-153.

[3] In the case of the life in the ghetto that Kaplan describes and the experiences in the camp recounted by Levinas, the dehumanised were also in a more literal sense warded off from interactions with other people through exclusionary policies of segregation and encampment.

This chapter will consider what renders this form of moral exclusion uniquely morally problematic. The main argument of this chapter is that the principal moral wrong of dehumanisation consists in 'moral silencing', which entails that people lose their voice as moral interlocutors within their interaction(s) with the perpetrator(s) of dehumanisation. Moral silencing constitutes an exceptional moral wrong because it undermines the very foundations of human morality, which is fundamentally enabled and shaped by the possibility for people to make moral claims on one another. It is thus wrong to view, portray, or treat people in ways that fail to acknowledge their human status in a moral sense, that is to say, that do not recognise them as interlocutors who can make moral claims, because this denial takes away the authority of victims to voice normative appeals. When persons are no longer seen as counterparts in a moral community of communication, their moral voice is silenced and they are no longer able to effectively object to the treatment they are given.

This argument will be developed in three steps. First, I will set out why people ought to be granted a special moral authority in making demands on the way in which they are to be treated. To do so, I will start with a defence of value pluralism and argue that value pluralism sets the background conditions that render acts of claim-making relevant for moral interactions. In the absence of a master value that can order normative interactions, it is important that people have a say in how they are treated. This is the case, firstly, because the person who is subjected to a particular treatment has a distinct interest in it because he or she directly experiences it. Those who undergo a treatment ought to have a special say in what happens to them because of the fact that they are subjected to it. Secondly, people deserve a distinct authority in guiding the way in which others treat them because the possibility to make moral claims on others is indispensable to people for shaping their lives and sense of identity. The precondition for granting people this moral authority in making claims on others regarding the way in which they are to be treated is that they possess the basic capacities to form moral viewpoints and express these to others.

Second, and as a preliminary step to the argument that it is wrong to exclude people from acts of moral claim-making, I will discuss the commonly held belief, which I sustain, that it is morally wrong to deny people what they have a right to claim. Although people disagree on what should be considered rightful claims, few persons would maintain that there is nothing that people can rightfully claim. Particularly when it comes to the infliction of gratuitous suffering, it seems reasonable to assume that most people would agree that victims have a right to demand its cessation. I will argue that there are two grounds why denying people what they have a right to claim can be considered wrong. The first emphasises that people are withheld what they are due

when they are denied what they have a right to demand. The second highlights the disrespect shown to the claimant's moral authority when he or she is not granted what he or she may rightfully demand. When people are denied what they may rightfully claim, in the absence of extenuating circumstances, they are therefore subjected to a dual wrong: not only are they withheld what is their due, their distinct moral status as persons to whom something is owed and who have the authority to demand what they are entitled to is not properly respected either.

Based on these insights, the final step in the argument zooms in on why it is morally wrong to exclude people from acts of moral claim-making. When people fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims this denies their authority to make normative demands. If it is indeed wrong to deny people what they have a right to claim, as I maintain, it is also wrong to take away the possibility for people to demand what they may have a right to claim. The wrongness of denying people what they have a right to claim, as I argued, lies not only in withholding from people what they are entitled to, but also in the failure to show proper respect for the claimant as a person who can demand what is his or her due. The failure to recognise people as moral claim-makers goes even further than this, given that it does not involve an attitude of slight, contempt, or disrespect towards the status that people hold as moral interlocutors, but the failure to acknowledge this status in the first place, which constitutes a unique form of moral exclusion.

The last part of the chapter will set out the implications of this normative account of dehumanisation for the moral obligations of bystanders to prevent, counter, and punish dehumanisation. Given that people usually are brought to dehumanise others through the manipulation of their perceptions through propaganda and ideology, I argue that efforts to counteract dehumanisation should focus foremost on the collective, rather than the individual, level. Finally, I will identify three focal points for efforts to prevent and mitigate dehumanisation. While I claim that the precise form that such efforts should take is context-dependent, I propose, as a general guideline, that such efforts should aim at blaming and shaming governments that employ dehumanisation or allow for it to be used by other actors in society, countering the dissemination of dehumanising images and representations in propaganda and ideology, and prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes in which dehumanisation plays a central role, such as slavery, torture, and genocide.

Moral claims and value pluralism

The second chapter defined dehumanisation as a particular act of exclusion that consists in the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims. To specify what the moral

wrongness of dehumanisation consists in, this chapter will analyse what renders this form of exclusion morally wrong. To do so, it will be helpful to consider first why claim-making is important to morality.

Acts of claim-making are fundamental to interpersonal moral interactions, I argue, because of value pluralism. Value pluralism means that there exist different values that are irreducible to one another. If we would ask different people what the most important value in their life is, it is likely that we would receive a variety of answers. While some people might say 'happiness', others would perhaps reply 'freedom' or 'kindness'. The most famous proponent of value pluralism is the philosopher Isaiah Berlin who defended this doctrine against both value monism and relativism. According to Berlin, 'there is a plurality of ideals, as there is a plurality of cultures and of temperaments.'[4] This argument does not entail relativism, however, as Berlin contrasts values and preferences: 'I do not say "I like my coffee with milk and you like it without; I am in favour of kindness and you prefer concentration camps" – each of us with his own values, which cannot be overcome or integrated. […] But I do believe that there is a plurality of values which men can and do seek, and that these values differ.'[5]

To argue for the doctrine of value pluralism, rather than merely posit it as an intuitively appealing idea, it is important to defend it against competing views. The most plausible alternative to value pluralism, in my opinion, would be presented by a monist account that identifies 'well-being' as the master value to which all other values can be reduced.[6] Although well-being strikes me as the strongest potential candidate for a value that could encompass all other human values, history has provided us with a myriad of examples where people made decisions to the detriment of their personal well-being to uphold other values, such as loyalty or solidarity. For example, people who gave up their lives in order to better the lives of others do not seem to cohere to this model, which claims that all other values in live are reducible to people's well-being.

These examples furthermore suggest that value pluralism exists not only between people, but can also occur within them. For people who sacrifice their well-being out of loyalty or solidarity, this deed follows after an internal struggle, given that it is not easy for people to give up their well-being to help others, precisely because kindness, solidarity, or loyalty are not reducible to well-being and vice versa. Such cases involve tragic choices, where no alternative can be found that can reconcile

[4] Isaiah Berlin, 'My Intellectual Path,' *New York Review of Books* 45 (1998): 11.

[5] Ibid.

[6] This argument is similar to the one presented by utilitarianism, although Jeremy Bentham, the founding father of this doctrine, used the term 'utility' rather than 'well-being'. For an interesting contemporary defence of utilitarianism, see: Greene. Greene suggests that we should think of the notion of utility as referring to 'the quality of someone's *experience*' (p. 160). Another important difference with utilitarianism is that I understand 'well-being' for the purposes of this argument as personal well-being. While utilitarianism considers the utility of all affected, a monist account of value loses its intuitive appeal, in my view, if well-being is taken to mean something more encompassing than personal well-being.

conflicting values. Berlin remarks about such situations that 'the need to choose, to sacrifice some ultimate values to others, turns out to be a permanent characteristic of the human predicament.'[7]

The existence of value pluralism renders acts of claim-making relevant because in the absence of a master value that can govern moral interactions, it is important that people can guide the way in which they are treated and communicate to others what they hold to be important in their lives. Even if value pluralism would be less stark than I set it out to be, claim-making would remain relevant, given that even in the case where we could agree on a central value in our lives, the meaning of values is contested.

Take the example of justice. In 'Two Pictures of Justice', the philosopher Rainer Forst discusses the ancient principle 'To each (or from each) his own'.[8] Forst notes that this principle in itself already gives rise to various interpretations of what it means for something to be just, as it can be understood to call for a comparison between the goods that people possess or for the granting of a minimal level of essential goods to each.[9] Furthermore, this principle fails to take into account two further concerns that nowadays are regarded as important for justice as well, namely, where the goods come from and under what conditions they were produced.[10]

In *The Idea of Justice*, Amartya Sen points in a similar way to the various meanings that justice can have in his reflections on a situation where three children want to have the same flute.[11] The first child makes the case that she is the only one who knows how to play it, the second points out that he owns no other toys and that the flute would give him something to play with, and the last explains that she has made the flute.[12] The answer to the question what would be right thing to do in this situation depends on the view of justice one holds.

Given the different perspectives that people have of which values are central to their lives and what these values entail, it is important that people can make moral claims on others to guide the way in which they are treated. After all, the person who is (to be) subjected to a particular treatment is in the most suitable position to know whether this treatment coheres with his or her values. Value pluralism thus provides a background condition that helps account for the relevance of acts of moral claim-making. Nonetheless, value pluralism in itself does not provide a specific reason as to why we should ascribe to people a special authority in making claims about the way in which they are to be treated. This reason, I argue, derives from two further normative grounds, which depend on a basic precondition.

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[7] Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 43.

[8] Rainer Forst, 'Two Pictures of Justice,' *Justice, Democracy, and the Right to Justification: Rainer Forst in dialogue* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 4.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press, 2009), p. 13.

[12] Ibid.

The first of these normative grounds is based on the acknowledgement that the person who is subjected to a particular treatment has a distinct interest in it because he or she directly experiences it. In being the person who undergoes the treatment, this person has a special interest in guiding the way in which he or she is treated. In the case where someone is mistreated this special interest is captured by the idea that the person is wronged by the action. The fact that the person is wronged by an action implies that he or she has a particular moral authority to hold the wrongdoer to account, as can be seen, for example, in the fact that only the wronged can forgive the wrongdoer for what he or she has done.[13] The philosopher David Owens underlines this point when he notes that 'the wronged have a special standing to rebuke the violators of their rights.'[14]

A convincing defence of the idea that the wronged hold a special moral authority in making demands about the way in which they are treated has been presented by the philosopher R. Jay Wallace. He points to the distinct moral authority of the wronged in his reflections on the way in which his rejection of the mistreatment of political opponents by the former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe differs from the claims that these political opponents themselves could make:

> When I become indignant about Mugabe's treatment of Zimbabwean dissidents, I assume that he had good reason to comply with the demand that I hold him to for humane treatment of political opponents. But this reason does not derive from my "authority" to hold him to the demand. If anyone's authority is at issue here, it is surely the authority of Mugabe's political opponents, who are in a privileged position to complain when he arranges them to be beaten and intimidated. His opponents have a claim against him not to be treated in these ways, one that is prior to and independent of any sentiments I might be subject to as I read about events in Zimbabwe from the comfort of my kitchen in Berkeley.[15]

The argument by Wallace lends support to the idea that people who are subjected to a particular treatment hold a distinct moral authority to make claims on the people who subject them to this treatment. The fact that the person who is subjected to the treatment directly experiences the treatment, I argue, thus constitutes an important normative ground for granting him or her a distinct moral authority in making claims about the way in which he or she is to be treated.

A second normative ground for attributing a special moral authority to people in making claims about the way in which they are to be treated concerns the central role that moral claims play for people in shaping their lives and sense of identity. Liberal political theorists and philosophers,

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[13] This point is highlighted in the analysis of wronging by the philosopher David Owens. See: David Owens, *Shaping the Normative Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 44-67.

[14] Idem, p. 50.

[15] R. Jay Wallace, 'Reasons, Relations, and Commands: Reflections on Darwall,' *Ethics* 118 (2007): 31.

such as John Stuart Mill, Isaiah Berlin, and Joel Feinberg, have emphasised the importance of safeguards against interferences by others for people to live their lives and pursue their ends in accordance with the values that matter to them. Such claims safeguard what people value and care about and enable them to stand up for themselves.[16] In line with this tradition, as I noted in the discussion on slavery in the fourth chapter, the philosopher Linda LeMoncheck points out that 'without the ability to make such claims, one would be subject to any treatment from others that they wished, without being able to demand or expect otherwise.'[17]

The concern here involves not only the issue that without the capacity for claim-making people would be unable to make moral demands about the way in which they ought to be treated, but also that this would impede them from upholding the values they deem to be important in the face of challenges by others. The loss of this capacity to make moral demands on others may adversely affect people's sense of identity.

The argument that moral values are central to our sense of identity has been developed by the philosopher Charles Taylor, who claims that people develop their sense of self within a particular 'ethical space'.[18] Taylor argues that to have an identity is to know '"where you are coming from" when it comes to questions of value or issues of importance. Your identity defines the background against which you know where you stand on such matters. To have that called into question, or to fall into uncertainty, is not to know how to react, and this is to cease to know who you are in this ultimately relevant sense.'[19]

Following Taylor, our moral viewpoints and values should thus be considered important because they are the articulations of the positions we take in an ethical space, which are constitutive of our identity.[20] As such, our moral viewpoints may be seen as a kind of anchor that provide stability to our sense of self. Taylor observes that people cannot abandon this need to take on particular moral viewpoints without losing their orientation in life: 'A human being exists inescapably in a space of ethical questions; she cannot avoid assessing herself in relation to some standards. To escape all

[16] In 'The Nature and Value of Rights', Joel Feinberg comments on the importance of standing up for oneself through the making of claims in observing that the possibility to claim one's rights 'enables us to "stand up like men," to look others in the eye, and to feel in some fundamental way the equal of anyone.' See: Joel Feinberg, 'The Nature and Value of Rights,' in *Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty: Essays in social philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 151.
[17] LeMoncheck, p. 19.
[18] Charles Taylor, 'The dialogical self,' in David Hiley, James Bohman, and Richard Shusterman (eds.),*The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, science, culture* (New York: Cornell University, 1991), pp. 304-313.
[19] Idem, p. 306.
[20] The centrality of morality for our sense of self is also emphasised in the field of psychology, in particular in the work on identity by the psychologist Nina Strohminger. See: Nina Strohminger, Joshua Knobe, and George Newman, 'The True Self: A psychological concept distinct from the self,' *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12 (2017): 551-560 and Nina Strohminger and Shaun Nichols, 'The Essential Moral Self,' *Cognition* 131 (2014): 159-171.

standards would not be a liberation but a terrifying lapse into total disorientation. It would be to suffer the ultimate crisis of identity.'[21]

Taylor thus contends that it is impossible for people to reflect on their own existence without relating to particular issues, standards, goods, and demands that describe what is truly important in life.[22] These issues, standards, goods, and demands, as well as the sense of self that derives from the position one takes regarding these questions, are not simply given, however, but are constituted in dialogical relationships that people maintain with others.[23] According to Taylor, people's identities are thus always mediated by the influence of interpersonal relations and the need to situate oneself in a field of ethical positions.

This positioning in an ethical field can be jeopardised, however, when the capacity of people to make claims on others on the basis of their moral values is denied. If people are impeded from making demands on others, this reduces taking a value stance to a personal affair and undercuts the dialogical relations that Taylor holds to be fundamental for the development of a sense of self. Furthermore, this denial of the capacity to make claims on others would severely limit the means available to people for defending their values against incursions by others. The philosopher Christopher Franklin notes that 'among the norms that govern how to properly care about morality is the requirement we defend and protect moral values: we must stand up for and safeguard moral values against those who flout them.'[24] The possibilities for standing up for the moral values that matter to us are critically diminished, however, if we are unable to make demands, claims, and appeals on others.

Based on the foregoing analysis, I conclude that the possibility to make moral claims on others is important to people for shaping their lives and sense of identity. This is a second normative ground for the argument that people ought to have a distinct moral authority in making normative demands that seek to guide the way in which they are treated.

The precondition for granting people this moral authority in making claims on others regarding the way in which they are to be treated is that they have the basic capacities to form moral viewpoints and to express these views to others. This precondition relates to the distinction made by Husserl, discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, between a moral community of communication and a community of compassion.[25] Particular moral and communicative qualities are required to participate in a moral community of communication and to grant people a minimal level

[21] Taylor, p. 305.
[22] Idem, p. 306.
[23] Idem, p. 307.
[24] Christopher Franklin, 'Valuing Blame,' in Justin Coates and Neal Tognazzini (eds.), *Blame: Its nature and norms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 215-216.
[25] Husserl.

of moral authority in making claims on others regarding the way in which they are to be treated: namely, the capacity to develop moral views and to communicate these to others. Human beings generally satisfy both of these conditions.[26]

Denying people what they have a right to demand

The argument so far has justified the idea that people should be attributed a particular moral authority in making claims about the way in which they are to be treated. This is a first preliminary step that is needed to explain why dehumanisation, as the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make moral claims, is morally wrong. As a second preliminary step in developing my account of why it is wrong to exclude people from acts of moral claim-making, it will be useful to consider the related question of why it is morally wrong to deny people what they have a right to demand. This commonly-held belief is expressed in the declaration by the sixteenth century legal scholar Samuel von Pufendorf that wrong is done to people 'if that be deny'd to another which in his own right he might demand'.[27]

This statement may not be particularly striking as a description of what it means to do wrong. It is insightful, however, in indicating two distinct sources for the wrongness of denying people what they have a right to claim. The first point is one of fairness and desert, and concerns the idea that people are withheld what they are due when they are denied what they have a right to demand. This idea focuses on the content of the claim and considers the denial wrongful because the person does not receive what he or she can rightfully demand. The second point is one of recognition and highlights the disrespect shown to the claimant's moral authority when he or she is not granted what he or she may rightfully demand. If, in the absence of extenuating circumstances (such as practical constraints that render the fulfilment of the demand impossible), a person is denied what is his or her right to claim, this denial entails disrespect for the moral status of the claimant as a person who holds the authority to make rightful claims. After all, in cases where such practical constraints are absent and the moral authority of the claimant is given due respect, people would not be denied what they may rightfully claim.

Evidently, disagreement may arise about what people have a right to demand. Such disagreements are all too common given the value pluralism and relative indeterminacy of the meaning of values that characterise morality. However, these disagreements centre on the question of what can be considered a rightful claim and not on whether any rightful claims can and do exist. It is important to note here that it is not necessary for the argument that I develop in this chapter to

[26] The case of people who fail to satisfy these conditions has been discussed in Chapter 2.

[27] Samuel Pufendorf, *The Whole Duty of Man According to the Law of Nature* [1673] (translated by Andrew Tooke [1691]) (edited by Ian Hunter and David Saunders) (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003): p. 51.

establish which claims are rightful claims. It suffices to provide a convincing argument that certain rightful claims exist and that the act of denying people what they can rightfully claim is morally wrong.

The idea that certain rightful claims exist seems indispensable for the workings of morality. If people would believe that there are no demands that they could rightfully make on others, morality would appear inconceivable, or conceivable only in a severely distorted form. Particularly when it comes to the infliction of gratuitous suffering, most people seem to agree that victims have a right to demand its cessation, although people may justify this belief on the basis of different normative grounds. I also hold that the demand to end the infliction of gratuitous suffering is a rightful moral claim that people can make because subjecting people to suffering without a reason that is acceptable to them is morally wrong.

To develop further the argument that the act of denying people what they can rightfully claim is wrong, it will be helpful to consider in more detail the two sources for the wrongness of the denial, introduced above. The first – which states that denying people what they have a right to demand is wrong because people are withheld what they are due – provides a general justification for considering this denial morally wrong. It would not make a difference if this claim would be made by the person who holds the rightful claim him- or herself or by any other member of the moral community. The second – which states that the denial is wrong because it shows disrespect to the claimant – is more directly related to the person who is wronged by the denial. The second point thus complements the first in highlighting that there is something special about the position of the person who is denied what he or she may rightfully demand, as I argued in the previous section.

If the consideration that people fail to receive what they are entitled to when their rightful claims are denied would be the only concern involved, any member of the moral community could equally demand for others what they are entitled to. Wallace has convincingly argued that something is missing from this account in his reflections on the claims of Zimbabwean political dissidents, discussed above. An account that focuses solely on the notion of fairness (that is, on what is due to people merely in terms of the content of their claim) therefore fails to appreciate the further wrong that is done to people whose moral status as persons with rightful claims is not accorded due respect. The philosopher Adam Kadlac highlights this point when he argues that people generally think 'it important for others to be attuned to us in various ways, and when they fail to be so attuned, they wrong us.'[28]

Denying people what they have a right to demand, in the absence of extenuating circumstances, is then wrong because this denial entails that the person who denies the rightful demand of the

[28] Adam Kadlac, 'Does It Matter Whether We Do Wrong?' *Philosophical Studies* 172 (2015): 2285.

claimant thereby fails to give the claimant what is owed to him or her, both in the sense of the content of the claim and with regard to the moral authority that the claimant holds to make such rightful demands.

Exclusion from moral claim-making

If it is indeed wrong to *deny* people what they have a right to claim, as I argued, it will also be wrong to *fail to recognise* people as interlocutors who can demand what they may have a right to claim. There are two reasons for this. First, if people fail to be recognised as moral interlocutors this impedes them from demanding what they may have a right to claim, which makes it more likely that they are not given what is their due. This wrong differs from the wrong that characterises a situation where people are denied what they have a right to demand because there is no denial of the rightful claim. It does not come to such a denial because the rightful demand cannot be expressed in the first place.

It should be noted, furthermore, that it is not necessarily the case that people are not given what they are due in cases where they are impeded from demanding what they have a right to claim through the failure to be recognised as interlocutors who can express moral demands. After all, people might be given what they are due, even if they cannot demand it.[29] However, in cases where people are (at risk of) not receiving what they are owed, they will not be able to claim what they have a right to demand. In this way, the failure to be recognised as an interlocutor who can make rightful demands increases the likelihood of not receiving what is due.

The second reason why it is wrong to fail to recognise people as interlocutors who can demand what they have a right to claim is more fundamental. This reason corresponds to the argument, made in previous section, that denying people what they have a right to demand is wrong because it entails a failure to show proper respect for the claimant as a person who can demand what is his or her due. The failure to recognise people as moral claim-makers goes even further than this, given that it does not involve an attitude of slight, contempt, or disrespect towards the status that people hold as moral interlocutors, but a prior failure to recognise this status, which constitutes a unique moral wrong.

The unique nature of dehumanisation can be better understood when we contrast the failure to recognise people as moral claim-makers with the disrespect that is shown to people when they are denied what they may rightfully claim. It is important to note here that in some cases misrecognition and disrespect overlap. After all, when people are denied what they may rightfully claim because they fail to be recognised as moral claim-makers this can be viewed as a case of both misrecognition

[29] For example, people might rescue someone in need out of compassion, without recognising that this person could have made a rightful moral demand to be helped, in a way similar to how people sometimes aid animals.

and disrespect. The more interesting question is, however, how misrecognition and disrespect may differ. Disrespect can take various forms and occur in varying degrees of severity. Disrespect towards the moral authority of people who make demands can therefore also occur when their moral status as claim-makers is nonetheless acknowledged. This is the case when this status is recognised, but not attributed sufficient weight, as happens when this status is held in contempt.

An example of this can be found in a situation where people make a rightful claim for equal treatment but this demand is denied because of a discriminatory attitude on the part of the person(s) to whom the claim is made. This attitude may fall short of denying the moral authority of the claimants to make demands. For instance, it could entail a perception of the claimants as taking an inferior position in the moral community that people share as moral interlocutors, which, consequently, produces the belief that their demands are worthy of only minimal consideration and can therefore be easily denied. In this case, the status of people as moral claim-makers is recognised, but not accorded due respect.

By contrast, when people fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims the possibility of attributing even such limited consideration to their demands is ruled out. Failing to be recognised as a moral interlocutor therefore constitutes an altogether different moral wrong in that it entails the exclusion from discursive moral interactions, given that any demand that a person thus excluded could make would be without moral force.

This exclusion entails that people are bereft of the capacity to stand up for themselves – at least within their interactions with the person(s) who dehumanise(s) them - as their moral authority to make demands on others is denied. People who are shown disrespect in being denied their rightful claims, but who are nonetheless recognised as moral interlocutors, still can object to the treatment they are given. They maintain the moral power to express demands and to cast blame and, therefore, to stand up for the values that matter to them, in contrast to people who fail to be recognised as moral claim-makers.

Dehumanisation, I argue, therefore involves a unique type of 'status wrong',[30] which is distinct from the wrongs that characterise related practices that undermine the standing that people hold as moral interlocutors, such as discrimination, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and infra-humanisation. The status wrong in dehumanisation is distinct because it does not lower the moral

[30] The term 'status wrong' is introduced by Larry May in *Genocide: A normative account* as part of his argument that genocide should not be seen as a crime against groups but against individuals, who suffer from the loss of belonging to a group that grants people a particular moral status. The notion of a 'status wrong' captures the idea that certain acts are wrong in the first place because they affect a person's moral status, which, in my view, applies also to dehumanisation. See: Larry May, *Genocide: A normative account* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

authority that people hold in expressing normative claims, but effectively denies the moral standing of the dehumanised as moral interlocutors.[31]

Moral silencing

The status wrong that characterises dehumanisation is *sui generis* because it consists in moral silencing. 'Moral silencing' entails that the voice that people express as moral interlocutors becomes inaudible, at least for the persons who dehumanise them, as dehumanisers fail to recognise the dehumanised as interlocutors who can make moral claims. The moral voice of people is thus silenced when they fail to be recognised as moral interlocutors. In Husserlian terms, people are thereby excluded from a moral 'community of communication'.[32] Following the Aristotelian view, people's capacity for 'speech' is reduced to a mere 'voice'.[33]

Moral silencing is unique in that it undermines the very foundations of human morality, which is fundamentally enabled and shaped by the possibility of people to make normative claims on one another. The argument that moral silencing undermines the foundation of human morality does not entail that dehumanisation undermines morality as a general human practice, but more narrowly that it deprives victims of the basic prerequisite for partaking in distinctively human forms of moral interaction. This means that moral silencing undermines the foundations of human morality as a concrete practice within the particular context of the interpersonal relation between the dehumaniser and the dehumanised. This is the case because moral silencing rules out even minimal recognition of the victim's status as a moral interlocutor, which is a necessary condition for partaking in distinctively human moral interactions. Since moral silencing excludes people from discursive moral interactions and discursive moral interactions are what distinguishes human moral interrelations, moral silencing entails an exceptional form of moral exclusion as it excludes people from the moral community of communication that only human beings share.

People can be subjected to moral silencing by being silenced in general or through the failure to recognise that the demands that they express are moral demands, as I explained in the third chapter. This entails that people who are dehumanised need not necessarily be excluded from communication more generally. For example, the guards of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps communicated with the detainees on a daily basis. Yet, these discursive interactions, which mostly centred on the giving and receiving of orders, could not be conceived of

[31] The fact that the status wrong in dehumanisation effectively denies the moral standing of the dehumanised as moral interlocutors does not entail that this wrong is necessarily committed intentionally. An unintentional failure to recognise people as moral interlocutors produces a similar denial of moral standing.

[32] Husserl.

[33] Aristotle, *Politics* I, 1253a, 9-17.

as discursive moral interactions because the moral authority of the voice of the detainees was denied.[34]

While the moral wrongness of dehumanisation thus should be conceived in the first place as a status wrong, which consists in the silencing of the moral voice of people, the exclusion from discursive moral interactions that dehumanisation entails also renders victims vulnerable to consequent mistreatment. Moral silencing, I argue, plays a central role in the process through which dehumanisation facilitates the perpetration of acts that otherwise would not be deemed acceptable forms of conduct towards fellow human beings in two ways.

First, moral silencing takes away the possibility for people to produce moral strain in the persons who mistreat them through the voicing of moral appeals. If acts of moral claim-making are indeed as central to human normative interactions as I have argued throughout this thesis, it follows that subjecting people to forms of mistreatment that are considered inacceptable, such as torture, would cause serious moral strain on the perpetrator, particularly, if the victims would continue to object against the treatment they are given and the appeals of the victims would continue to be regarded as moral claims.

Moral strain is produced by such appeals because people remind each other of their similarity through discursive acts of claim-making. When an individual makes a moral appeal on another, this act establishes the person as the other's equal in a basic, yet important, sense, namely as an interlocutor who holds the moral authority to make demands about how he or she is to be treated. When such appeals are considered, instead, as nothing more than noise or as claims that lack any normative force, this takes away from victims the authority to assert themselves as moral counterparts who are not to be mistreated in callous ways. Moral silencing can thus facilitate the perpetration of acts that otherwise would not be deemed acceptable forms of conduct towards fellow human beings in impeding victims from producing moral strain on the perpetrator(s) through the voicing of moral appeals.

Second, moral silencing can facilitate the perpetration of such acts by excluding people from discursive interactions through which the norms that set limits to the treatment of fellow human beings are set, negotiated, and defended. As I argued in the second chapter, people construe a moral order through the making of normative appeals, which can be described in Husserlian terms as a 'community of communication'.[35] Taking part in acts of moral claim-making thus means being included in a moral order that sets limits to the way in which people are to be treated. When people

[34] Illustrations of these dynamics can be found in witness accounts of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. In *If This is a Man,* Levi describes, for example, how an SS man gave instructions on what the inmates had to do, but when the prisoners asked him questions through an interpreter, 'the German smoke[d] and look[ed] him through and through as if he were transparent, as if no one had spoken' (p. 29).

[35] Husserl.

fail to be recognised as moral interlocutors through moral silencing, they therefore lose not only the opportunity to object to the way in which they are treated, but also the inclusion in this moral order, based on discursive moral interactions, which generates norms that govern interpersonal relations.

Moral silencing, I contend, thus plays a dual role in facilitating the perpetration of acts that otherwise would not be deemed admissible, namely in taking away the possibility for victims to put moral strain on the perpetrator(s) through the voicing of moral appeals and in excluding victims from a moral 'community of communication', through which norms are produced that govern the way in which people are to be treated.

Dehumanisation as a form of 'social violence'

The foregoing discussion emphasised that dehumanisation contains a distinct moral wrong. Moral silencing is unique in that it excludes people from discursive moral interactions. Since discursive moral interactions are central to morality, understood from a second-personal view, moral silencing entails an exceptional form of moral exclusion. Given the serious nature of the wrong involved in dehumanisation, it is important to devote the last part of this chapter to a discussion of how dehumanisation can be prevented and countered.

In the academic literature on dehumanisation, the most important contribution on the question of what should be done against dehumanisation has been offered by Richard Rorty, who argues that the tendency to dehumanise is best downplayed by a sentimental education that nurtures people's sympathy for others by extending the boundaries of the community of persons that are seen as 'people like us', as I discussed in the first chapter. Based on a Humean view of morality, Rorty claims that people are more likely to come to recognise others as fellow human beings through the telling of 'sad and sentimental stories' than through rationalist teachings that uphold the fundamental equality of human beings as moral agents.[36]

On the one hand, I am sympathetic to Rorty's proposition that a Humean 'sentimental education' can be helpful in countering dehumanisation. This proposal corresponds to the findings of studies in psychology, which suggest that affective engagement is necessary for the claims of people to be perceived as moral claims.[37] Without this type of engagement, people may treat others in ways similar to psychopaths, that is, without concern for their vulnerability to

[36] Rorty, p. 172.

[37] See: Elisa Aaltola, 'Affective Empathy as Core Moral Agency: Psychopathy, autism and reason revisited,' *Philosophical Explorations* 17 (2004): 81.

suffering.[38] Engaging with people in affective ways thus seems indispensable to recognising them as moral interlocutors.[39]

On the other hand, I am concerned that endeavours to encourage affective engagement with people may be insufficient to counter dehumanisation because these efforts can lead to recognition of similarity in too minimal a sense.[40] Besides affective engagement, I maintain that it is crucial that people are recognised as claim-makers as well in order to safeguard their participation in uniquely human forms of normative interactions. As I argued earlier in this chapter, people should be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims since they ought to be granted the moral authority to make demands about the way in which they are to be treated.

A further limit to Rorty's account, in my view, is that the strategy of countering dehumanisation through the recounting of sentimental stories ignores the larger societal, institutional, and political influences that encourage people to hold dehumanising perceptions in the first place. This sentimental education targets the symptoms of dehumanisation, but not its root causes. To get to these root causes, I argue, it is important to appreciate the way in which dehumanisation constitutes a form of 'social violence'.

The idea that dehumanisation entails a form of social violence is presented by the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. According to Levinas, dehumanisation contains a form of violence through which harm is done, not to our bodies but to our social position. Levinas introduces this notion through the story of Bobby, a dog who lived near the camp for Jewish prisoners of war in Nazi Germany where the philosopher was incarcerated. Levinas recounts how Bobby would greet him and his fellow inmates when they would return from their day of forced labour: 'He would appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt that we were men.'[41]

The response of Bobby stood in stark contrast to that of the people the prisoners encountered. The men, women, and children who had dealings with the inmates in the camp refused to recognise their humanity, demonstrating how people, unlike animals, are able to consider humans not human. Human beings are thus capable of 'social aggression,'[42] that is to say, a form of aggression that does violence to people's social position, as the former fail to recognise the latter as fellow human beings.

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[38] Aaltola: 81.

[39] This conclusion also relates to the discussion of Honneth's study of dehumanisation as a form of reification in Chapter 2.

[40] A similar concern is expressed by Lynn Festa, who notes that the focus on pity that characterises sentimentalism produces a definition of humanity tied to suffering. See: Lynn Festa, 'Humanity without Feathers,' *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 1 (2010): 13.

[41] Levinas, p. 41.

[42] Ibid.

While it will be clear at this point in the thesis that I would prefer the term 'moral violence' to refer to this type of aggression,[43] it is important to note that there is another way in which dehumanisation can be understood to constitute a form of 'social violence'. Dehumanisation may be conceived as a form of 'social violence' because people usually do not spontaneously engage in dehumanisation, but are brought to dehumanise others through the manipulation of their perceptions through propaganda and ideology. In this sense, dehumanisation constitutes a form of 'social violence' in that dehumanisation is induced by social factors. I draw this conclusion from the fact that people generally develop dehumanising perceptions at particular times in history and in particular societies, namely, when and where societies are characterised by the dissemination of dehumanising images and representations, such as, for instance, frequently occurs in times of war. If dehumanisation would be a spontaneous individualistic process, this pattern begs explanation. After all, if dehumanisation depends on individuals, rather than on social processes, we would expect to find equal levels of dehumanisation over time and in different societies. The conclusion that dehumanisation should be seen as a 'social' phenomenon is also supported by the observation that dehumanisation generally involves the opposition between an 'us' versus a 'them' rather than an 'I' versus a 'you'.

If dehumanisation is indeed best seen as a collective phenomenon, it follows that the primary focus in countering dehumanisation should also be on the collective, rather than the individual, level. While it may be helpful in certain cases to recount people sentimental stories in an attempt to convince them that others are fellow human beings, I propose, as a general guideline, that efforts to prevent and mitigate dehumanisation should aim foremost at blaming and shaming governments that employ, allow, condone, or permit dehumanisation, countering the dissemination of dehumanising images and representations in propaganda and hate speech, and prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes in which dehumanisation plays a key role, such as slavery, torture, and genocide.

The collective obligation to prevent and counter dehumanisation

Having established the serious harm involved in dehumanisation, the remaining task of this chapter is to consider the obligations that third parties have to prevent and counter it. A particular collective moral obligation to counter dehumanisation is produced, I argue, by the fact

[43] What Levinas describes as 'social violence', in my view, could be described as 'moral violence'. Levinas notes, for example, that social aggression 'shuts people away in a class, deprives them of expression and condemns them to being "signifiers without a signified" and from there to violence and fighting' (p. 153). It is this form of aggression that takes away the moral voice of the victim, as Levinas also suggests in posing the rhetorical question of how the victims of this violence can 'deliver a message about our humanity which, from behind the bars of quotation marks, will come across as anything other than monkey talk?' (p. 153).

that dehumanisation takes away the possibility for people to protest against the treatment that they are given. This lack of means to make a moral appeal, brought about by moral silencing, in my view, produces a collective moral obligation on the side of bystanders to stand up for the moral status of victims as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

This moral obligation to counter dehumanisation derives from the needs and value of the victim(s), rather than from liability on the side of bystanders for the wrong done to the victim(s). The argument here is similar to the one that suggests that people who see someone drowning have an obligation to rescue him or her, irrespective of whether they had any role in how the person ended up in the water. Although a person who pushed someone in the water would be under a greater duty to rescue him or her, because of his or her causal responsibility, this fact does not discharge bystanders from their collective obligation to prevent the person from drowning, if capable of doing so.[44]

In a similar way, the obligation to prevent and counter dehumanisation should be seen as a collective moral obligation because it derives from the need(s) and value of the victim(s), rather than from causal responsibility on the side of identifiable persons (other than the perpetrators) for the wrong done to the victim(s). This moral obligation is shared by all those who witness dehumanisation and have adequate capacities to respond to it. These two criteria are crucial because people cannot be held responsible for what they are not aware of or what they are unable to do something about.[45]

The point of capacity is particularly important because it suggests that states as well as certain national and international institutions and organisations have a greater responsibility in preventing, countering, and punishing dehumanisation than do individuals, given that states, institutions, and organisations generally have a greater capacity to act and intervene than individuals do. This is especially the case when we recall that dehumanisation should be seen as a collective phenomenon, which is often induced by social and political factors. Who is most likely and suitable to act on this obligation depends on the particulars of any specific situation of dehumanisation and its context.[46]

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[44] An important difference between these cases lies in the fact that a person who is left to drown will die, whereas a person who is dehumanised often may not. The harms that are involved in these situations are thus not the same and the obligations on the side of third parties to intervene are therefore not the same either. While acknowledging this point, I claim that cases of dehumanisation do produce an obligation to stand up for the moral status of the victims because serious harm is done to people who are excluded from discursive moral interactions, as I set out previously in this chapter.

[45] Regarding the second point, the philosopher Onora O'Neill notes that 'both institutions and individuals can have obligations *if, but only if*, they have adequate capabilities to fulfil or discharge those obligations.' See: Onora O'Neill, *Justice Across Boundaries: Whose obligations?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 169.

[46] This argument corresponds to the one made by James Pattison for effectiveness as one of the main criteria for determining the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. See: James Pattison, 'Effectiveness and the Moderate Instrumentalist Approach,' in *Humanitarian Intervention & The Responsibility to Protect: Who should intervene?* (Oxford:

While the precise form that actions and interventions should take depends on the actual situation, it is possible to identify, in more general terms, three important focal points for such interventions. First, efforts to prevent and mitigate dehumanisation can be directed at blaming and shaming governments that employ, allow, permit or condone dehumanisation.[47] Blaming and shaming are important forms of action because they respond to the experience of the victims who are unable to effectively call their wrongdoers to account. Given this incapacity to stand up for themselves, it is fundamental that others stand up for the victims of dehumanisation. This can have important effects, especially, if powerful actors, institutions, or organisations engage in these practices, by pressuring governments to prevent and act against dehumanisation occurring within their borders. Furthermore, blaming and shaming by outside parties can have an important psychological effect on the victims in demonstrating that their normatively human status is acknowledged by others. In this way, blaming can be understood as form of protest against the way in which people are treated.[48] Lastly, acts of blaming and shaming signal normative expectations and can contribute to the creation of a normative environment that is less permissive of dehumanisation.[49]

Second, efforts to counter dehumanisation can be directed at countering the dissemination of dehumanising images and representations in propaganda and hate speech. Such efforts often have a double aim, namely to halt the spread of dehumanising perceptions and to counter and prevent incitement to mass atrocity crimes.[50] As the ideology scholar Jonathan Leader Maynard

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Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 69-97. Another factor that can play a role in the attribution of collective responsibility is whether special ties exists between victims and bystanders, as is suggested by David Miller. See: David Miller, 'Distributing Responsibilities,' *Journal of Political Philosophy* 9 (2001): 453-471.

[47] An exception should be made for governments that are unable, rather than unwilling, to act against dehumanisation employed by other actors in society. In this case, a more appropriate response would be to provide assistance to help strengthen the government's capacities for governance.

[48] The philosopher Angela Smith notes, for example, that blaming has two functions: 'first, to *register* the fact that the person wronged did not deserve such treatment by *challenging* the moral claim implicit in the wrongdoer's action; second, to prompt moral recognition and acknowledgment of this fact on the part of the wrongdoer and/or others in the moral community' (p. 43). See: Angela Smith, 'Moral Blame and Moral Protest,' in Justin Coates and Neal Tognazzini (eds.), *Blame: Its nature and norms* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 27-48. Similar accounts of the function of blaming are provided by Pamela Hieronymi in 'Articulating An Uncompromising Forgiveness,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62 (2001): 529-555, and Franklin.

[49] The notion of a normative environment of permissiveness is presented by Jennifer Welsh and Serena Sharma in 'Operationalizing the Responsibility to Prevent' (Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law, and Armed Conflict), April 2012, available at: http://www.elac.ox.ac.uk/downloads/elac%20operationalising%20the%20responsibility%20to%20prevent.pdf [last accessed: 14 September 2018], p. 7.

[50] The idea that countering dehumanising propaganda and hate speech can aid the prevention and mitigation of mass atrocity crimes is presented, for example, in Jamie Metzl, 'Information Intervention: When switching channels isn't enough,' *Foreign Affairs* 76 (1997): 15-20, Alexander Dale, 'Countering Hate Messages that Lead to Violence: The United Nations' Chapter VII authority to use radio jamming to halt incendiary broadcasts,' *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law* 11 (2001): 109-132, Monroe Price and Mark Thomson (eds.), *Forging Peace: Intervention, Human Rights and the Management of Media Space* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), and Susan Benesch, 'Words as Weapons,' *World Policy Journal* 29 (2012). See also Scott Straus, 'What is the Relationship between Hate Radio and

insightfully points out, efforts to counter 'atrocity-justifying ideologies' can take 'coercive' or 'persuasive' forms.[51] Coercive forms seek to block the transmission of dehumanising propaganda and hate speech, whereas persuasive forms aim at contesting the content of incendiary messages.[52]

Which of these two strategies is the most appropriate is context-dependent. If dehumanising propaganda and hate speech are produced by a single source, it may be possible to block their transmission. This can take the form of 'jamming' hate radio and television broadcasts, seizing broadcasting transmitters, or destroying radio and television stations.[53] While coercive means of countering dehumanising ideology and hate speech may be appropriate when there is a need to rapidly interfere with broadcasts, for example, in a context of increasing antagonism turning violent, such interventions are often risky and costly. For instance, the possibility of coercive intervention was considered in the case of the radio channel *Radio-Télévision Libre* des *Milles Collines* in Rwanda, but this idea was rejected because of the high costs involved.[54] Nowadays, with information spreading over the internet, it seems even less feasible to counter dehumanising propaganda and hate speech through a blockade of the sources of dehumanising contents.[55] Furthermore, interfering with broadcasts does not engage with the content of the messages and can therefore not contribute to changing the viewpoints of people.

A more promising way of countering dehumanising ideology and hate speech therefore seems to lie in challenging its content through persuasive means, such as the dissemination of counter-messages or the diversification of the audience of broadcasts. Susan Benesch notes, for example, that the KTN television network in Kenya changed its policies after the widespread political violence of 2007-2008 to broadcast clips of Kenyan politicians with subtitles in Swahili or English in order to discourage the use of inflammatory speech in vernacular languages.[56] A broader campaign was set up in Kenya to prevent new violent outbreaks and to mitigate social

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Violence? Rethinking Rwanda's "Radio Machete",' *Politics & Society* 35 (2007): 609-637 for a critical analysis of the impact of propaganda broadcasts during the Rwandan genocide.

[51] Jonathan Leader Maynard, 'Combating Atrocity-justifying Ideologies,' in Serena Sharma and Jennifer Welsh (eds.), *The Responsibility to Prevent: Overcoming the challenges to atrocity prevention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 219.

[52] Maynard, p. 219.

[53] See: Metzl: 18, Dale, Monroe Price, 'Information Intervention: Bosnia, the Dayton Accords, and the Seizure of Broadcasting Transmitters,' *Cornell International Law Journal* 33 (2000): 67-112, Leader Maynard, p. 219, and May, p. 232.

[54] May notes regarding the case of the RTML that '[t]he radio station's tower could have been destroyed, the broadcasts could have been jammed, or there could have been "counter-broadcasts" transmitted through the auspices of foreign States. Here, according to Samantha Power, the United States was best placed to act. A Pentagon analysis concluded that the jamming would be too difficult and costly' (p. 232).

[55] For a discussion of the legal aspects involved, see: Janice Yu, 'Regulation of Social Media Platforms to Curb ISIS Incitement and Recruitment: The need for an international framework and its free speech implications,' *Journal of Global Justice and Public Policy* 4 (2018): 1-29. See also: Monroe Price, 'Orbiting Hate? Satellite transponders and free expression,' in Michael Herz (ed.), *The Content and Context of Hate Speech: Rethinking regulation and responses* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 514-538.

[56] Benesch: 10.

polarisation before the 2013 elections. This campaign included initiatives by civil society groups to monitor media, the raising of awareness among journalists of their responsibility in informing the public about politics, and the distribution of messages of peace and union in radio and television broadcasts.[57] The case of Kenya suggests that efforts to counter propaganda and hate speech through counter-messages can contribute to dissuading people from engaging in violent acts and promoting more positive views of other groups in society.[58]

Third, beyond countering dehumanising messages and the blaming and shaming of governments that employ, enable, condone, or permit dehumanisation, the prosecution of perpetrators of crimes in which dehumanisation plays a key role, such as torture, slavery, and genocide, is crucial. Putting wrongdoers on trial is important for several reasons. The prosecution of slavery and torture (as well as other crimes in which dehumanisation often plays a significant role, such as genocide and war crimes) is imperative in the first place because these acts constitute egregious violations of non-derogable human rights. It is important to note, however, that these legal actions also communicate a powerful message that contradicts the central belief in dehumanisation that victims are excluded from a moral community that sets limits to the ways in which people are to be treated. The fact that victims of these crimes are protected by law, as illustrated by the fact that the violation of their rights results in legal prosecution, demonstrates the inclusion of the victims in the moral category of humanity and thereby reaffirms their status as moral interlocutors whose claims merit consideration.

Why dehumanisation is morally wrong

This chapter has argued that the principal moral wrong of dehumanisation consists in 'moral silencing', which entails that people lose their voice as moral interlocutors within their interaction(s) with the perpetrator(s) of dehumanisation. Moral silencing constitutes an exceptional moral wrong because it undermines the very foundations of human morality, which is fundamentally enabled and shaped by the possibility for people to make moral claims on one another. It is thus wrong to view, portray, or treat people in ways that fail to acknowledge their human status in a moral sense, that is to say, that do not recognise them as interlocutors who can make moral claims, because this denial takes away the authority of victims to voice normative appeals. When persons are no longer seen as counterparts in a moral community of

[57] See: Serena Sharma, 'The 2007-8 Post-election Crisis in Kenya,' in Serena Sharma and Jennifer Welsh (eds.), *The Responsibility to Prevent: Overcoming the challenges to atrocity prevention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 300 and Jessica Gustafsson, 'Media and the 2013 Kenyan Election: From hate speech to peace preaching,' *Conflict & Communication* 15 (2016): 1-13.

[58] It is important to note, however, that initiatives to counter impunity accompanied these communication campaigns. The obtained results may therefore not be attributed solely to the effects of the media reforms. See: Sharma.

communication, their moral voice is silenced and they are no longer able to effectively object to the treatment they are given.

In the final part of the chapter, I argued that there is a collective moral obligation to counter dehumanisation. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to set out in precise detail what this obligation requires of specific actors under particular circumstances, this chapter provided a general account of, and the grounds for, this moral obligation. I claimed that a collective moral obligation to counter dehumanisation is produced by the fact that dehumanisation takes away the possibility for people to protest against the treatment that they are given. This obligation is a collective obligation because it derives from the need(s) of the victim(s), rather than from causal responsibility on the side of third parties for the wrong done to the victim(s). This moral obligation is shared by all those who witness dehumanisation and have adequate capacities to respond to it. While the specific form that actions and interventions to discharge this moral obligation should take is context-dependent, I identified three main focal points for efforts to prevent and mitigate dehumanisation. As a general guideline, I proposed that such efforts should aim at blaming and shaming governments that employ dehumanisation or allow for it to be used by other actors in society, countering the dissemination of dehumanising images and representations in propaganda and ideology, and prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes in which dehumanisation plays a central role, such as slavery, torture, and genocide.

Conclusion

i.

The main aim of this thesis has been to develop and defend a normative account of dehumanisation illustrated by stories from the refugee crisis. This account was elaborated in three parts. The first part of the thesis engaged in a philosophical analysis of what constitutes dehumanisation. The second part deepened and illustrated this account with personal stories of refugees and asylum seekers about their experiences with dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, such as humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment. In the final part, I spelled out why and how dehumanisation contains a unique moral wrong and thus gives rise to responsibilities of prevention and response.

The thesis took a semantic analysis as its starting point, which yielded the insight that dehumanisation consists in a process or practice that negatively affects humanity. The first chapter then questioned accounts of dehumanisation based on biological and attributional conceptions of humanity. Drawing on a normative conception of humanity, I went on to argue that dehumanisation comprises acts that fail to recognise the *moral* status that people hold as human beings through discursive, cognitive, or physical means. The second chapter analysed this notion of a failure to recognise the moral standing of human beings through the theoretical lens of an exclusion from acts of moral claim-making. This approach led to the conclusion that dehumanisation entails a particular form of moral exclusion that consists in the failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make normative claims.

Based on major works in philosophy, biology, and moral psychology, I maintained that an important distinction exists between the relations and interactions among human beings, and those that are conceivable between people and animals. This distinction rests on the fact that human beings can make discursive moral claims on one another. These reflections suggest that people relate to others as animals, rather than as fellow human beings, when they fail to acknowledge the special moral status that people hold as interlocutors who can make normative demands. By implication, I argued that dehumanisation can be conceived as a failure to recognise people as interlocutors who can make such claims.

The second chapter also considered whether this view of dehumanisation as an exclusion from acts of moral claim making can account for the difference between regarding people as human beings and relating to them as objects. Here, I argued that while certain objects – such as robots or computers – are able to make claims, these claims are not moral claims. For a claim to be moral, it

needs to be grounded in a basic understanding of what is good and bad, and right and wrong, as well as a concern for the (potential) suffering and well-being involved. These judgements are based on evaluations of fragility, scarcity, and weakness. It is thus the bodily vulnerability people share with animals - or the way in which we can be similarly exposed to pain and suffering as a consequence of our sentient and embodied existence - which opens up the possibility for developing a moral consciousness, which does not seem to be similarly attainable for objects. What can be learned from this analysis is that, apart from failing to view people as interlocutors, dehumanisation can also take the form of failing to consider people's claims as *moral* claims.

The second part of the thesis illustrated and brought greater detail to my philosophical account with examples drawn from the personal stories of refugees and asylum seekers about dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, such as humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment. On the basis of this analysis, I determined that dehumanisation should not be conflated with fundamental rights violations or the deprivation of basic needs. Here, I argued that failing to distinguish clearly between dehumanisation and fundamental rights violations is problematic because dehumanisation does not necessarily take the form of a violation or infringement of a (legal) right. In addition, not all fundamental rights violations entail a failure to regard or treat the victim as an interlocutor who can make moral claims. The implication of this conclusion for the refugee crisis is that taking legal actions against fundamental rights violations does not suffice to protect people from dehumanisation.

Similarly, I scrutinised the relationship between dehumanisation and the deprivation of basic needs. Dehumanisation, I argued, always entails a certain type of deprivation of basic needs because being recognised as a moral interlocutor is a basic human need. However, this is a very particular reading of what basic needs entail, which does not correspond to conventional understandings of this notion. When commentators report on deprivation of basic needs in the context of the refugee crisis, they usually refer to a lack of nutrition, inadequate sanitary conditions, and impediments to accessing health care in the camps. This form of deprivation of basic (material) needs does not necessarily amount to dehumanisation because it may result from a lack of resources, emergencies, bad planning, or even a lack of concern for the well-being of the people concerned, due to forms of moral exclusion that fall short of dehumanisation, such as discrimination, marginalisation, or stigmatisation. In short, it is not necessarily the case that refugees fail to be recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims. The implication of this argument is that providing asylum seekers and refugees with the means to satisfy their basic (material) needs does not guarantee them protection from dehumanisation.

The last part of the thesis focused on determining why dehumanisation contains a unique moral wrong. Here, the main argument was that the principal moral wrong of dehumanisation consists in 'moral silencing', which entails that people lose their voice as moral interlocutors within their interaction(s) with the perpetrator(s) of dehumanisation. Moral silencing constitutes an exceptional moral wrong because it undermines the foundations of human morality, which is fundamentally enabled and shaped by the possibility for people to make moral claims on one another.

The final chapter also argued that the fact that dehumanisation takes away the possibility for people to protest against the treatment that they are given produces a collective moral obligation on the side of third parties to counter dehumanisation. This moral obligation is collective because it derives from the need(s) of the victim(s), rather than from a particular liability on the side of third parties for the wrong done to the victim(s). All those who witness dehumanisation and have adequate capacities to respond to it share this obligation. While the precise form that actions and interventions to discharge this obligation should take is context-dependent, I identified three focal points for such interventions. As a general guideline, I proposed that efforts to counter dehumanisation should be directed at blaming and shaming governments that employ, allow, condone or permit dehumanisation, countering the dissemination of dehumanising images and representations in propaganda and hate speech, and prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes in which dehumanisation plays a central role, such as slavery, torture, and genocide.

ii.

The normative argument presented in this thesis enhances our understanding of dehumanisation in several ways. Not only did the dissertation offer the very first analysis of dehumanisation as an exclusion from discursive normative interactions, it also established why dehumanisation is unique along a spectrum of exclusionary practices. Dehumanisation differs from related practices that undermine the standing that people hold as moral interlocutors, such as discrimination, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and infra-humanisation, because it does not simply lower the moral authority that people hold in expressing normative claims, but effectively denies the moral standing of the dehumanised as moral interlocutors. Dehumanisation thereby excludes victims from discursive normative interactions, which form the basis for human morality.

This account of the unique character of dehumanisation helps explain why the moral interlocutor view offers a promising alternative to the human dignity perspective. My view is preferable to the human dignity perspective, I argued, because the moral interlocutor view does not draw on contentious claims about what it means to be human and provides a clearer account of why dehumanisation entails a unique moral wrong. Furthermore, it specifies what distinguishes

dehumanisation from related exclusionary practices, such as marginalisation, stigmatisation, inhumane treatment, and infra-humanisation. While, following the human dignity perspective, all of these practices severely violate or undermine a person's human dignity, the moral interlocutor view contends that there is a crucial qualitative difference that distinguishes dehumanisation from such related practices, which is marked by the point where people are excluded from the moral order of human beings, as they are no longer recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims. The importance of this distinction lies in the fact that when people are excluded from the discursive moral community people share, they not only lose the possibility to effectively object against the treatment that they are given in their interactions with perpetrators of dehumanisation, but are also excluded in the eyes of the dehumanisers from the moral norms that set limits to the ways in which fellow human beings may be treated, as these norms are set, negotiated, and upheld through the discursive interactions from which the dehumanised are expelled.

With this argument, the moral interlocutor view also helps to account for the way in which dehumanisation facilitates the perpetration of forms of mistreatment that otherwise would not be deemed acceptable forms of conduct towards fellow human beings. Several scholars of dehumanisation have observed that exclusion from the moral order that people share as human beings can lead to severe forms of mistreatment.[1] However, this notion of moral exclusion has often been deemed to provide, on its own, a sufficient explanation for why mistreatment becomes conceivable in the eyes of the perpetrator(s), rather than as a first step in a larger argument, which further specifies the dynamics of this exclusionary process. By contrast, the moral interlocutor view explains how the perpetration of acts that otherwise would not be deemed acceptable forms of conduct towards fellow human beings is facilitated through moral silencing. Moral silencing, as the distinct moral wrong that characterises dehumanisation, allows for such mistreatment because it takes away the possibility for victims to put moral strain on the perpetrator(s) through the voicing of moral appeals and excludes victims from a moral 'community of communication', through which norms are produced that govern the way in which people are to be treated.

Lastly, through the engagement with stories from refugees and asylum seekers about their experiences with dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, such as humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment, this thesis contributed to clarifying how we should conceive of dehumanisation within the context of the contemporary refugee crisis. More specifically, I argued that dehumanisation does not occur when people are viewed, portrayed, or treated as lesser human beings, but only when they are viewed, portrayed, or treated as less than human in a moral sense. This normative human status is not acknowledged when people fail to be

[1] See, for example: Kelman, 'Violence Without Moral Restraint,' Opotow, and Zimbardo.

recognised as interlocutors who can make moral claims. People are thus portrayed in dehumanising ways when they are represented in ways that fail to acknowledge this moral status. This is the case, for example, when refugees or asylum seekers are portrayed as diseases, parasites, or helpless victims whose plight might invoke compassion, but who are unable to make moral demands. I argued that portrayals that depict refugees and asylum seekers as carriers of disease, (potential) terrorists, or illegal queue-jumpers are not dehumanising, however, because these representations do not deny the moral status of people as interlocutors who can make moral claims. While such portrayals may marginalise the moral voice of people, stigmatise them, and attribute them a lower position within the discursive moral community that people share, these depictions do not effectively silence the moral voice of people, as dehumanising portrayals do. With regard to treatment, I concluded that refugees and asylum seekers are not necessarily dehumanised when they are subjected to fundamental rights violations or deprived of basic (material) needs. While both of these practices are inhumane, they do not automatically involve dehumanisation – given that forms of moral exclusion and depreciation that fall short of dehumanisation can underpin such practices. Dehumanisation is always present, however, when people are subjected to torture or enslavement. This is the case because torture and slavery rule out the possibility for victims to be regarded as interlocutors who can make moral claims. To identify whether refugees and asylum seekers are subjected to dehumanisation, it is thus important to consider whether they are perceived, portrayed, or treated in ways that fail to recognise their moral status as interlocutors who can make moral claims.

In the second part of the thesis, I argued that this effort at clarifying what dehumanisation entails is important, not only because the distinct conceptual and normative nature of dehumanisation are obscured when an overly broad conception of dehumanisation is used, but also because this indiscriminate use and lack of conceptual clarity may lead to inadequate responses. Dehumanisation constitutes a distinct form of moral exclusion, which requires a distinct response. Since dehumanisation is characterised by the failure to recognise the moral status of people as moral claim-makers, it is crucial that efforts and initiatives that seek to prevent, counter, and punish dehumanisation focus on the affirmation of this status.

In particular, it is important to distinguish efforts to prevent, counter, and punish dehumanisation from efforts directed against related practices of exclusion and disrespect. For example, dehumanisation cannot be effectively countered by efforts that seek to mitigate the detrimental effects of marginalisation through fuller integration in society or that attempt to counteract stigmatisation through the normalisation of difference and diversity. These efforts require at least a minimal recognition of others as moral counterparts to succeed, which is absent in

the case of dehumanisation. Similarly, taking legal actions against fundamental rights violations does not suffice to protect people from dehumanisation. Although prosecution can play an important role in contradicting the central belief in dehumanisation that victims are excluded from a moral community that sets limits to the ways in which people are to be treated, legal proceedings in themselves may not change the hearts and minds of perpetrators of dehumanisation. Therefore, it is important to also counter dehumanising propaganda and ideology and to blame and shame governments that employ, allow, condone, or permit dehumanisation.

iii.

There are a number of avenues for future research that follow from this work. First, it is worth recalling that the aim of this thesis has been to develop and defend a normative account of dehumanisation with illustrations from the contemporary refugee crisis. I therefore did not seek to carry out a comprehensive empirical study of the different facets of the dehumanising treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. Important studies remain to be done in this field, in particular, with regard to the question of how to prevent and halt the dehumanisation of asylum seekers and refugees. The research conducted for this thesis established that people in the refugee crisis are indeed vulnerable to dehumanisation, although less so than is commonly assumed. Nonetheless, I maintained that countering dehumanisation is of great consequence because dehumanisation involves an exceptionally severe moral wrong, given that it denies people the moral authority to make claims about the way in which they are to be treated. A worthwhile research project could therefore focus on studying possible reforms of asylum policies and practices that could minimise the risk of dehumanisation.

The interviews I conducted with refugees and asylum seekers also suggest that further research could be pursued regarding their experiences with social rejection and exclusion. The focus of this thesis directed my attention to particularly extreme forms of disrespect, but the stories that were recounted to me give reason to believe that the social realities of the refugee crisis could also be studied through the narratives of refugees and asylum seekers on discrimination, marginalisation, and stigmatisation. This indicates that further research could examine the ways in which asylum seekers and refugees make sense of belonging and give meaning to the challenges they face in finding their ways in host societies.

Turning to the theoretical literature, additional research could be done on the moral interlocutor view. One direction for future inquiry concerns the relation between dehumanisation, humanity, and developments in artificial intelligence. While I touched on this issue at various points in the thesis, a more in-depth analysis of the challenges that technological advances in robotics and computer

sciences pose to our understanding of what it means to be human could further our understanding of the unique moral wrong at the heart of dehumanisation. In particular, the claim that objects are unable to make moral claims – given that such claims need to be grounded in a basic understanding of what is good and bad, and right and wrong, as well as a concern for the (potential) suffering and well-being involved - could form the starting point for research into the possibilities for technology to develop this type of understanding and concern.[2]

Finally, scholars could use the moral interlocutor view as a theoretical framework to study dehumanisation in different contexts, such as, for example, the perpetration of mass atrocity crimes. By setting out more clearly how dehumanisation allows for forms of treatment that otherwise would not be deemed admissible forms of conduct towards fellow human beings, the moral interlocutor view may be helpful in examining moral disengagement in the perpetration of mass atrocities. In particular, this perspective suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the way in which the claims of people are framed in the prelude to severe human rights violations and mass violence.

iv.

Let me conclude with a final reflection on dehumanisation as an exclusion from moral claim-making. Although I have argued that dehumanisation occurs less frequently than is commonly assumed, this does not entail that we should be less concerned about it. The reason for this is that dehumanisation is an unusual, but exceptionally severe, form of moral exclusion. While we should view dehumanisation as an 'extreme' phenomenon that does not occur frequently, it warrants serious attention because the wrong that is done to victims is of a particularly grave kind. Dehumanisation, I conclude, constitutes the most acute status wrong that can be inflicted on people because the failure to recognise people as moral interlocutors denies their normative human status.

[2] In a similar way, future research in biology could offer new insights in the relations and interactions between human beings and animals.

Appendix 1: Interview methodology

General overview

For this thesis, 30 refugees and asylum seekers were interviewed. The interviews took place in Frankfurt am Main from 12 until 20 June 2017, in Beirut from 12 until 28 July 2017, and in Milan on 26 and 27 September 2017. The participants came from Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, and Nigeria and included refugees and asylum seekers who were living in Lebanon at the time of the interview or reached Europe through the Balkan route or the Libyan route. Among the interviewees were 8 women and 22 men.

The participants in Germany and Milan were contacted through a university network and an accommodation facility, while the participants in Beirut were addressed on the street and asked to participate in an *ad-hoc* interview. Interviews took place in cafeterias, in an office, on a construction site, and in the street and took in between 30 to 90 minutes to complete. One of the interviews in Lebanon was finished prematurely because of pressures to end the interview by onlookers. The interviews in Germany and Italy were conducted in English, German, French, or Italian by the researcher. The interviews in Lebanon were conducted in Arabic with the help of a Syrian translator.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form that stated the purpose of the interview and the contact details of the researcher in the language in which the interview was conducted (Appendix 3). For safety reasons, participants in Lebanon were asked to sign the form with their initials only. The interviews were not recorded to safeguard the anonymity of the participants. Notes were taken that were transcribed shortly after the interview. The interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide with principal questions and follow-up questions. When deemed necessary, questions were omitted or the order of the questions was changed.

Interview aim and set-up

The aim of the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers with dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices. To this end, the participants were asked 13 questions about what it means to them to be a refugee, how their life has changed since they became a refugee, what challenges they have faced as a refugee, etc. (see Appendix 2). The questions were of a more general character at the start of the interview and turned more focused towards the end. The last questions zoomed in on what the notions of ‘humanity’ and ‘inhumanity’ meant to the interview participants and asked if they had any experience with being treated inhumanely.

Whenever possible, a friendly setting was created before the interview by offering participants something to drink, engaging in conversation before the interview began, and starting the interview with general questions where participants could recount why they fled and how they arrived to the place they live now. At the end of the interview, time was reserved to speak about other topics before leaving, in particular in cases were interviewees had recounted traumatic and distressing events. More specifically, methods of 'grounding' were used to help participants return to the current moment and emphasise that they were in a safe place now. The relevance of the participation in the interview was also highlighted by pointing out that the research may lead to a better understanding of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

Theoretical framework and methods

Since the purpose of the interviews was to acquire a better understanding of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers with dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, the most suitable approach to the interviews was deemed to be interpretative phenomenological analysis. This approach focuses on the way in which people make sense of important events in their lives.[1] Data collection techniques in interpretative phenomenological analysis strive to encourage participants to recount detailed stories about their experiences with the phenomenon under study. From interpretative phenomenological analysis this research took, first of all, the interview procedure of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Whenever possible, participants were interviewed on their own to allow them to tell their story and to facilitate the building of rapport with the researcher.[2]

Second, the interview guide was drawn up with the basic principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis in mind, which set out that questions should encourage participants to speak at length.[3] The interview guide therefore included predominantly open questions that allowed participants to answer as they saw fit and indicate which topics they felt comfortable speaking about. Follow-up questions were used to encourage participants to speak about issues that were particularly relevant for the research. After the first interviews, the interview guide was revised to correct the formulation of questions that caused confusion or unease during the interview. From

[1] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin.

[2] Idem, p. 57. Among the interviews were two group interviews that took place in Beirut: one with four colleagues from a sweet factory and one with a daughter and mother. Since the interviews in Beirut were mostly conducted on the street, bystanders often gathered to listen. The fact that these interviews generally produced less rich and detailed information about people's experiences indicates that the preference of interpretative phenomenological analysis for one-on-one interviews is supported by the research outcomes.

[3] Idem, p. 59.

interpretative phenomenological analysis, the researcher also took the lesson to be flexible and use the interview schedule as a guide rather than as a fixed model.[4]

While interpretative phenomenological analysis generally does not object to stating the precise phenomenon under study, it was decided that the term 'dehumanisation' would not be mentioned during the interview by the researcher to avoid upsetting, unsettling, or confusing the participants. Instead, the participants were asked at the end of the interview if they had experience with being treated 'inhumanely'. To avoid imposing a particular understanding of this term on the interviewees, they were first asked what they took 'humanity' and 'inhumanity' to mean. Some participants said they had no experience with inhumane treatment, while others recounted stories of the inhumane treatment of others. Several participants also said they had no idea of what 'humanity' or 'inhumanity' meant, but could give concrete examples of having been treated inhumanely.

The interview data was processed by transcribing the interview notes shortly after the interviews took place. In the notetaking during the interviews, particular attention was paid to write down important statements *ad verbum*. Citations found throughout the thesis correspond to what the participants said in the interviews (or to the translation given by the translator).[5] The remaining notes were worked out in detailed descriptions of the content of the interviews.

The analysis of the data took place in different stages. At the end of each interview period (in Germany, Lebanon, and Italy), the collected data was analysed to identify the most important themes in the material. This analysis consisted in a close reading of the collected material, determining the main thematic categories, and classifying interview data according to these categories. At the end of the data collection, all the material was grouped to determine the most salient themes in the overall material. The three main themes that emerged from this analysis were the loss of a sense of value, the violation of fundamental rights, and the deprivation of basic needs.

These three themes were given particular attention in the three chapters on dehumanisation in the refugee crisis. It is important to emphasise, however, that the interviews did not serve as the basis to develop an inductive account of dehumanisation in the refugee crisis but to illustrate the workings of the moral interlocutor view of dehumanisation in more detail. The material gathered during the interviews therefore was helpful in structuring the second part of the thesis by highlighting themes that asylum seekers and refugees hold to be central to their experiences with exclusionary practices. Yet, the main organising principle behind the chapters was not to describe dehumanisation at the hand of the stories of refugees and asylum seekers of their lived experience with this phenomenon (as in anthropology) or to build an account of dehumanisation on the basis of

[4] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, p. 64.

[5] In the case of interviews conducted in German, French, or Italian, the statements of the participants have been translated by the researcher.

these stories (as in inductive theorising), but to elaborate the moral interlocutor view by illustrating it with the accounts of people who have been subjected to dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices.

Practical and ethical constraints

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, flexibility was required in conducting the interviews to accommodate for certain practical and ethical constraints. These constraints were most stringent in the Lebanese setting where it was not possible, for example, to ask interviewees how they arrived to Beirut, given that the answers to this question might incriminate them. Questions of a political nature had to be omitted as well to avoid unease among participants and bystanders. Another important constraint in Lebanon involved the need for translation. While the aid of a Syrian translator was indispensable to convince people to participate in the interviews, the lack of direct communication rendered it more difficult to build a rapport with participants where they felt comfortable to share information about distressing and traumatic life events.

Regarding the interviews in Germany and Italy, communication issues at times arose due to the researcher and/or interviewee speaking a foreign language. In selecting the language for the interviews, priority was given to letting the participant speak in the language he or she felt more comfortable in. Through the repetition of questions and controls to check whether the researcher understood the participant correctly, these issues were minimised as much as possible.[6]

In terms of interpretation of the material, a difficulty arose from the decision to avoid using the term 'dehumanisation' in the interviews. This choice led to the collection of stories about a wide range of exclusionary practices, which the participant may or may not believe to amount to dehumanisation. By approaching the interviews as a source of illustrations of dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, rather than as descriptions of dehumanisation alone, this issue was mitigated.

As a last point, it should be noted that ethical constraints kept the researcher from pushing the participants on the stories they did or did not tell. When participants indicated that they were unwilling to speak about particular distressing experiences, the questions on this matter were dropped. When participants recounted stories that included controversial statements, the researcher did not interrogate them on this point in order to keep the conversation open. Since the thesis does not use the interview data to inductively construct an account of dehumanisation, but to illustrate a normative conceptualisation of dehumanisation, concerns about the truth-value and generalisability

[6] Language issues were more serious in three cases. The first concerned an interview where the participant had general difficulty in expressing ideas in German. The second and third concerned interviews where the researcher occasionally struggled to understand the participants' accent and expressions in French.

of the recounted stories are less pertinent. The stories recounted in the thesis should thus be seen as personal stories from which we may be able to learn something about what it means to experience dehumanisation and related exclusionary practices, such as humiliation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, and inhumane treatment, in the refugee crisis.

Appendix 2: Interview guide

1) Why did you leave your country?

When did you leave? What made you decide to leave? What happened in the days leading up to your decision? Was it difficult to leave?

2) How did you come here?

Through which countries did you travel? Did you stay in other countries before?
Did you need help from other people? Who helped you? What did they do for you?
Did you stay in a refugee camp at any point? For how long? Where?

3) How has your life changed since you have become a refugee?

What did a typical day in your life look like before? What does a typical day look like now?

4) What does it mean for you to be a refugee?

Do you identify as a refugee or not? How do you feel about being a refugee?
Is there something you find difficult about being a refugee? If so, would you be willing to tell me about that?
Are there things that surprised you about being a refugee, for example, how other people behave towards you?

5) Were you ever treated badly because you are a refugee?

If so, would you be okay with telling me about this experience? When and where did it occur? What happened?

6) Were you ever helped or treated with special generosity because you are a refugee?

Could you tell me about this experience? When and where did it occur? What happened?

7) What do you think is the biggest challenge that refugees face?

Is there a particular difficulty that refugees are confronted with or not? If so, what does it consist in? Did you personally experience this problem?

8) Is there something you would like people to know about refugees?

How do you think people perceive of refugees? Do you believe that there are prejudices against refugees? Is there something people do not understand about refugees?

9) If you could change something about the way refugees are portrayed in the media, what would it be?

Do you think popular media represent refugees correctly? If not, what do you think should change?

10) If you could change something about the way politics deals with refugees, what would it be?

Do you think current policies on refugees are working? What problems do you see? How do you think politics could respond better to the needs of refugees?

11) We are almost at the end of the interview. For the last couple of questions, I would like to tell you that my research focuses in particular on issues of humanity and solidarity and the way these are challenged in the refugee crisis. I therefore would like to ask you what 'humanity' and 'inhumanity' mean to you.

12) Have you ever been in a situation where you were treated inhumanely?

If so, can you tell me about your experience? When and where did it occur? What happened?

13) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences with being a refugee?

Appendix 3: Consent form

Adrienne.deRuiter@eui.eu
+31 6 138 831 65

Consent for participation in a research interview

I agree to participate in a research project on the impact that being a refugee has on people's lives and interpersonal relations by Adrienne de Ruiter, PhD candidate in Political Sciences at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, Italy. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.

1) I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.

2) Participation involves being interviewed by a researcher from the European University Institute. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. The interview will not be recorded.

3) I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.

4) I have been given the explicit guarantee that, if I wish to, the researcher will not identify me by name in any academic publication using information obtained from this interview, and that my anonymity as a participant in this study will remain secure. The information acquired during this interview will not be given to any authorities. It may be used solely for academic purposes (e.g. doctoral thesis, academic journal article). The data will be processed and stored according to the EUI Data Protection Policy.

5) I have read and understood the points and statement of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

6) I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.

_____

Participant's signature Date and place

_____

Researcher's signature Date and place

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