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Dogs and Monsters: Moral Status Claims in the Fiction of Dean Koontz

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Abstract

This article explores conceptions of moral status in the work of American thriller author Dean Koontz, beginning with general theories used by philosophers to determine whether particular entities have moral status. This includes both uni-criterial theories and multi-criterial theories of moral status. After this examination, the article argues for exploring bioethics conceptions in popular fiction, a rich source for analysis because it provides not only a good approximation of the beliefs of ordinary members of the moral community but also explores important issues in a context where ordinary individuals are likely to encounter them. Following from this, the article explores theories of moral status in the context of Koontz's novels, in particular, *Watchers* and Koontz's *Frankenstein* series. Through these works, Koontz indicates that entities have moral status for a variety of reasons and thus presumably, he is a proponent of multi-criterial theories of moral status. The article concludes with an examination of what this might mean for our understanding of moral status claims generally.

Keywords

Moral status, moral worth, multi-criterial theories, bioethics, literature, Dean Koontz

Introduction

Theories of moral status

One of the first tasks for making moral decisions is to determine not only what moral rights others are entitled to but what 'others' are entitled to those rights. In other words, we need to determine who matters morally in addition to determining what acting morally means. The mechanism used to determine who matters morally is a theory of moral status. Theories of moral status take a variety of forms. Some theories argue that only human beings have moral status. These theories suggest that we only need concern ourselves with the results of our actions if those affected are also human. If they are not, then any action we do cannot be considered immoral. Other theories do not depend upon species classifications but are instead dependent upon characteristics of the entity in question.[1] If the entity has particular, usually cognitive, characteristics, then it is entitled to a particular moral status (Warren 1997). If it is not, then it is not entitled to any moral status at all. The most common characteristics used in moral status claims are life (those entities which are alive are entitled to moral status) (Warren 1997), sentience (those entities which can feel pain are entitled to moral status) (Singer 1993) and personhood (those entities with the capacity for rational thought [and related mental characteristics] are entitled to moral status) (Glover 1977; Harris 1985; Kuhse and Singer 1985; Tooley 1983).[2] Other theories might rely on social connections in order to create moral status (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1978). In these theories, those with moral status are those entities which have particular social connections to us such as family or society or create particular feelings of empathy in us.

All of these theories, however, have problems. Those based upon species membership need to account for arguments against speciesism - the concern that species membership is not a morally relevant category and thus cannot ground a morally relevant distinction like moral

status (Harris and Holm 2003; Singer 1993). Since, the argument posits, species membership is based upon biological factors over which the entity has no control, it does not provide a sufficient basis to determine the limits to our moral actions (Harris and Holm 2003). Instead, only morally relevant criteria should provide a basis for moral status claims. Those based upon characteristics of the entity in question, however, also have significant problems. First, these characteristic-based methods tend to be considered either over or under-inclusive. They either include entities we think should not be included (microbes, insects, rats, etc.), or they do not include entities (usually human newborns or humans with severe mental disabilities) who we think ought to be included. Second, it is important to determine what is meant by 'having' a particular characteristic in these types of theories. Does it mean the actual exercise of these capabilities (must individuals actually act rationally?), or the capacity to exercise these capabilities or something different? Even if we successfully overcome this hurdle, we have additional evidentiary problems which might exist such as the sufficiency of evidence to determine rationality (Smith 2012). Does the use of tools suffice (in which case any number of non-human animals count)? Is it the use of language? Is it evidence of self-awareness? What if any relevant tests conflict? What if, for example, a particular entity appears to be able to use language but is not self-aware? Moreover, on whom does the burden of proof lie and what is the applicable standard of proof? Characteristic-based theories, then, have at least as many problems as those based upon species membership. Ones based upon social connections, though, appear to be no different as one may wonder to what extent these theories trade on the 'yuk' or 'cute' factors of entities which have little to no moral importance (Warren 1997).

This has led some to posit that no single theory of moral status adequately presents our views on the subject (Warren 1997; Beauchamp and Childress 2009; Smith 2012), nor could one

single theory of moral status ever accurately reflect what are a series of complex views about how and why entities matter in our moral decision making. Instead of proposing different uni-criterial theories of moral status then, some have argued that the way forward is through multi-criterial theories which allow a myriad of ways that entities could claim moral status subject (Warren 1997; Beauchamp and Childress 2009; Smith 2012). It is claimed that these provide a more solid basis for our moral actions as well as more closely aligning with general intuitions about moral status. Even these, however, may not be completely free from doubt. Multi-criterial theories of moral status, by their very nature, are more complex than their uni-criterial counterparts. They may involve different levels of moral status further complicating our decision making process.[3] Furthermore, multi-criterial theories of moral status have the likely impact of increasing the number of entities with moral status, meaning we need to consider more of them in our decision-making process.

Consequently, it is worth exploring theories of moral status in considerable detail, including the benefits of multi-criterial theories. In particular, we ought to be able to test the extent to which multi-criterial theories correspond to our general intuitions about moral status. One method for doing so would be the use of detailed surveys which explored the ways in which members of our moral community engaged in moral reasoning and assigned moral status to various entities. Such information, while useful, will not satisfy all of the potential questions we might have about moral status. Surveys may be badly designed, those participating might not be representative, participants might answer in different ways, intentionally or otherwise, from how they act in real world situations. Survey data, even if it existed, then, would only be one possible method to explore the benefits of these theories.

Popular literature and Dean Koontz

It is also worthwhile to explore how individuals act in situations in the real world. One method for which we might do this is through the use of literature. While not an exact parallel, what we choose to read provides evidence about our views and what we consider important. This is true not only of the literature we read for specific knowledge-based reasons (for example, academic journal articles) but also for what we read for entertainment. What we find entertaining tells us at least something about ourselves – about how we think, about our likes and dislikes, and about what we think important. This article, then, will explore concepts of moral status through the use of characters in popular fiction, particularly that of Dean Koontz.[4] Two questions which might arise at the start are (1) why use characters in popular fiction at all (as opposed to other types of fiction), and (2) why use Dean Koontz? As a preliminary matter, these two questions are worthy of response. We can begin with the first question.

Philosophers often use hypothetical examples to explain complex ideas and to help clarify matters in the mind of the reader. Due to normal space requirements, these hypothetical examples are usually short and, consequently, not very detailed. They usually consist of simplified versions of humans (or others) to emphasize a particular distinction between them. While these hypothetical examples have their place, there is also scope to consider broader and more complex examples when we explore ethical decision-making. Simple examples can often hide nuances and intricacies which are revealed when we examine more detailed cases. Of course, one way we explore these difficulties is through the use of cases studies, which are often more complex. However, even these do not always provide a sufficient basis for all of our ethical discussions. Case studies may add factors which detract from the central issues being explored. There may also be important information which is not disclosed because of a

lack of information (we may, for example, know little of a patient's wishes or mental state.) Moreover, case studies might not be appropriate – either because of concerns over the disclosure of information or because we are examining possible future cases as opposed to current real ones. It is particularly in these sorts of cases where fiction might be especially useful. Fictional characters can inhabit worlds or scenarios which do not currently exist (and even may be unlikely to exist in the near future). They can thus provide us with possible worlds to ground our philosophical discussions and provide a rich, complex storyline which can better allow us to explore complex issues than that available through the use of hypothetical examples.

That, of course, only provides something of a justification for the use of fiction. Popular fiction, though, might seem less useful although there are certain benefits to the use of popular fiction to explore these sorts of questions. First, unlike (perhaps) most philosophical literature, the primary purpose of popular fiction is to engage with the public. If the author of popular fiction has done his job, readers are expected to relate to characters and to do so in particular ways. Popular fiction is supposed to encourage readers to empathize with specific characters and not to empathize with others. We are supposed to understand their motivations (whether or not we are expected to agree with them) and to have specific reactions to their thoughts, words and actions. Secondly, popular fiction might also provide a reasonable analogue for the thoughts of ordinary members of the moral community (those without specific training in ethics, philosophy, theology or law). Best-selling authors presumably sell the number of books that they do because their words resonate with the community. They attempt to cause particular reactions and feelings in their readers which are replicated across a community in meaningful ways. They create a connection in ways that other literature or other writing (academic writing, for instance) do not. Third, popular fiction not only provides

an analogue for what people might think but we can also reasonably assume that what we read often has an important normative role in our thinking. What we read often provides influences which cause us to think in particular ways. It convinces us what to think in addition to providing a mirror which reflects our own views. Finally, popular fiction is useful for no other reason than that people do actually read it. If we wish to explain the reasoning of ordinary people, then it is crucial to consider the sorts of literature with which they will come into contact. Analysis should therefore include the literature ordinary people often read and the ways in which even popular literature can explore important moral and philosophical questions.

Even if those arguments are persuasive as to why there might be reasons to examine popular literature for use in bioethics, they probably do not necessarily provide reasons to examine the works of Dean Koontz in particular. There are reasons, however, as to why he might be a particularly useful author to examine, especially in relation to moral status claims and bioethics generally. First, he clearly fits within the category of popular fiction authors. His books have sold over 450 million copies worldwide and have been published in over thirty-eight languages.[5] Fourteen of his books have reached number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list (hardback), and sixteen have reached number one on the paperback list.[6] Under whatever definition of 'popular' fiction we wish to construct, Koontz qualifies. There are, however, two additional elements which make him especially useful for the purposes of exploring conceptions of moral status. First, many of the characters which populate Koontz's fiction are borderline. They often straddle boundaries between human and not-human, are altered versions of existing creatures (for example, he favors intelligent animal characters, especially dogs), and monstrous entities created out of whole cloth. This, then, makes him different from other best-selling authors such as James Patterson and John Grisham, who tend

to focus only on human beings. However, unlike some of his contemporaries in horror fiction such as Stephen King,[7] Koontz focuses primarily on scientifically-based monstrous characters instead of supernatural ones. His 'monsters', then, are more likely to be genetically engineered, cloned or otherwise created by humans as opposed to arising from supernatural origins (such as demons, ghosts, vampires or other staple 'monsters' within the horror genre). This, of course, also separates him from those working within the fantasy field such as George RR Martin or JK Rowling. We thus have a rich range of characters to examine, and it is even possible to explore characters across books as the method of 'creation' is often similar. We, consequently, not only have a number of characters from which to choose but also a range within character types which will aid analysis. Additionally, Koontz has himself entered the debate on moral status with his novel, *One Door Away from Heaven* (2001, hereafter *One Door*). We therefore have a relatively clear statement of his position. Obviously, the fact that he has outlined a position in a novel does not necessarily mean that he actually abides by the position he has espoused, but it provides us with a benchmark to examine when conducting an analysis of his views. Moreover, even if it is not the focus of the book as it is with *One Door*, Koontz often uses the moral status of various borderline entities as a major theme in his work. He highlights in his work questions as to whether various borderline entities matter in a way which is unique among those in the genres in which he works. [8]

Koontz, then, provides us with a compelling author to examine for our purposes. He is consistently listed as a well-known, best-selling author. He has a considerable number of borderline characters who provide a rich source of material to explore conceptions of moral status. Moreover, since these tend to be more scientifically-based borderline characters, they can perhaps provide some insight into potential entities which might one day exist. We might,

consequently, be less susceptible to complaints that we are focusing on entities which not only do not matter at the moment, but could never conceivably matter. In other words, we might, sometime in the future, live in a world where we can genetically modify dogs so they can communicate with us; we can never live in a world where vampires and werewolves exist. We also have the benefit that questions of moral status are ones that Koontz engages with in his work either as an explicit purpose, as it is in *One Door*, or as a general theme with which he works. This separates him from other writers of popular fiction, most of whom do not deal with these concerns on a regular basis. We are therefore required to do less extrapolation of his views on moral status then we might be required to do for other popular authors (many of whom do not address moral status claims at all).

Presuming, then, that a reasonable argument has been made about the use of popular fiction in general and Koontz's work in particular, this article will focus on his view on moral status. We will examine Koontz's novels to get a better understanding of what appears to be how he determines which entities matter and which ones do not.

Koontz's works

In order to do this, we will need to explore specific works within his overall oeuvre. Two are of specific interest to us: *Watchers* (Koontz 1988), one of his most celebrated novels, and Koontz's *Frankenstein* saga (Koontz 2009a; Koontz 2009b; Koontz 2009c; Koontz 2010; Koontz 2011).[9] The general plots and important characters of these works are summarized below.

Watchers (1998)

The plot of *Watchers* can be explained fairly simply. The two main characters are Travis Cornell and Nora Devon. At the beginning of the novel, Travis meets a golden retriever who appears to be attempting to protect him. Travis takes the dog in and notices that the retriever seems to have a number of unusual abilities such as understanding human speech (as opposed to merely non-verbal cues), turning the handle on an outside water spigot, getting Travis a beer from the refrigerator without being asked and, most astonishingly to Travis, creating a "crude but recognizable" **(**page 62**)** question mark on the floor out of dog biscuits in an apparent attempt to ask Travis a question. Travis names the dog Einstein.

Later, Einstein comes to Nora's aid and subsequently protects her from a potential assault. Travis and Nora become romantically involved as a result of Einstein's intervention, and Nora likewise learns of Einstein's abilities. The two then teach Einstein to communicate first through the use of pictures and simple 'yes' and 'no' answers. Einstein is later taught to read, and he learns to spell out more complex ideas through the use of Scrabble tiles. Through this method, Einstein explains that he is the result of a research experiment whose purpose was to modify a dog's DNA to increase its cognitive abilities such that it is able to think and communicate. Einstein further explains that the government will be looking for him but so will something else referred to as the Outsider. The Outsider is a wholly created creature – there is no existing animal which it resembles, but it is made of the genetic code of a number of different ones. It is also intelligent, is largely genetically designed to be a killing machine and hates both human beings and (especially) Einstein. While the government agents chasing Einstein wish to return him to the lab, the Outsider instead wants to kill him. The final character of importance to our discussion is Vince Nasco, a freelance contract killer who is also seeking Einstein. There is the inevitable showdown between Travis, Nora and Einstein

against first, Vince Nasco, and then the Outsider. Travis kills both, but Einstein is severely injured. Einstein, however, recovers and he, Travis and Nora ended up living happily ever after.

Frankenstein (2009, 2010, 2011)

Koontz's *Frankenstein* saga is not, strictly speaking, a retelling of the Frankenstein myth. Instead, the books presume that the story in the original book by Mary Shelley (1818) was not fiction. In other words, there was a real Victor Frankenstein who created a 'monster' from bodies he unearthed from criminals and brought to life.[10] That monster killed a number of people and then fled to the Artic with Victor chasing him. However, in the Koontz retelling, neither dies as they do in Shelley's version. Both, instead, survive to the present day. In the intervening two hundred years, Victor Frankenstein's hubris has turned to megalomania, and he seeks to eliminate the human race (minus himself) and replace them with cloned human beings he refers to as the 'New Race'. At the start of the series, Victor has changed his name to Victor Helios[11] and lives in New Orleans where he begins to populate the city with his 'New Race' clones. The most important clone (for our purposes at least) is Erika. There have been five Erikas, all of whom have been Victor's wife.[12] She is unique among his creations because she alone is programmed with shame and humility. All of the clones, while purportedly humans, have had genetic enhancements. They are unnaturally strong and resistant to death either by violence, injury or illness. A number of them also have additional enhancements deemed useful or necessary for their positions.

The monster, however, has spent the past two hundred years on the fringes of society and now calls itself Deucalion.[13] It learns of Victor's plans and teams up with two New Orleans police detectives, Carson O'Connor and Michael Maddison, who are investigating a series of

murders perpetrated by a serial killer known as the Surgeon who turns out to be, in part, one of the New Race. The three pursue the killer and learn about Helios' plans for the New Race. The New Race Surgeon dies but, in doing so, gives 'birth' to a small being which is compared to a troll. At roughly the same time, Erika IV discovers a creature called Karloff – a monstrous entity which consists only of a head and an unconnected hand. At Karloff's request, Erika IV disconnects Karloff killing him and is herself killed by Victor Helios as a result. The second and third books chronicle the chaotic devolution of the New Race. Many of Helios' creations begin to exhibit what he terms an "interruption of function" (Koontz 2009b, page 133) but which Deucalion, O'Connor and Maddison see as the clones spiraling out of control. The three attempt to prevent the potential crisis by stopping Helios' plan. While this is happening, Erika V meets and befriends the troll (now named Jocko). A final confrontation ensues in a farm outside of New Orleans owned by Victor Helios. Helios is killed and, as a result all of his creations excluding Erika V, Jocko and Deucalion cease to exist.[14]

The fourth and fifth books take place two years after the events of the original trilogy and move the location to Rainbow Falls, Montana. A cloned Victor, Victor Immaculate, has moved to a secret location outside Rainbow Falls. While Victor Helios sought to create a 'perfect' society, Victor Immaculate's ultimate plans are the destruction of every thinking creature on Earth. To facilitate that plan, he has also created clones although they are different to Helios' clones. Unbeknownst to Victor Immaculate, Erika V and Jocko (now essentially a mother and her adopted son) have also moved to Rainbow Falls. Upon learning of Victor Immaculate's existence, she contacts Detectives O'Connor and Maddison. Deucalion, sensing that Victor is still alive, also contacts them. Deucalion, O'Connor and Maddison travel to Rainbow Falls to deal with the threat presented by the new Victor. Aided

by Erica V, Jocko and some of the residents of Rainbow Falls, the three attempt to prevent a new disaster. Working together, they manage to stop the threat to Rainbow Falls and Deucalion kills Victor Immaculate. Once again, the death of Victor means the death of his created beings ending the threat. Those that survive then live out reasonably standard versions of a happy ending.

With these summaries in mind, we can turn to the relevant features for the analysis of moral status in Koontz's work.

Multi-criterial theories of moral status

We can begin any exploration of moral status in the work of Dean Koontz with his own views, stated most explicitly in the novel *One Door* (2001). In this novel, the antagonist is Preston Maddoc, a utilitarian bioethicist,[15] who has killed a number of people including his disabled stepson. One of the protagonists is his disabled stepdaughter and one of the overt themes of the novel is the wrongness of utilitarian bioethics, particularly as it relates to the moral status of disabled persons. Koontz's theme, then, is that all humans have moral status, regardless of disabilities.[16] Indeed, Koontz has frequently used disabled characters in his novels, including the *Frankenstein* saga, *Midnight, The Bad Place, Forever Odd, Hideaway, Dragon Tears, By the Light of the Moon,* and *Dark Rivers of the Heart*. Disabled characters are thus relatively frequent in his writings and are usually either 'good' characters or associated with them. It is therefore unsurprising that Koontz appears to take the view that all human beings have moral status irrespective of disability. Looking more closely, though, a majority of the disabilities are physical rather than mental ones including the disabled characters in *Midnight, Forever Odd, Hideaway, Dragon Tears*, and *Dark Rivers of the Heart*. The stepdaughter in *One Door* also suffers only from a physical disability rather than a

cognitive or developmental one. Indeed, by her own admission, she is "precocious." There is, while a minor character with cognitive disabilities in *One Door*, as a rule, though, characters with cognitive developments are fairly rare in Koontz's literature as they only feature in *The Bad Place, By the Light of the Moon* and *Frankenstein*. Moreover, the characters who do have cognitive disabilities appear to be reasonably high-functioning ones. The institutionalized Down syndrome characters in *The Bad Place* and *One Door* appear to be relatively high-functioning.[17] The characters with cognitive disabilities in *Frankenstein* and *By the Light of the Moon* do not need institutionalization at all. All of them are, thus, likely to satisfy either the test for capacity for rational thought or, at the very least, radical capacity for rational thought.

Indeed, there have only been a couple of characters who have been so severely damaged as to (most likely) not satisfy the test for rationality. Those two individuals are the wife of one of the main protagonists in *Strangers* and the sister of one of the protagonists in *One Door*. It is again not necessarily clear from either book the extent of the damage, but there is information provided about their conditions. In both cases, the damage is a result of trauma. Both women were 'normal' women at one point but as a result of violence, both have lost capacity. While the wife in *Strangers* is in a coma-like state, the sister from *One Door* is harder to characterize. She is described as suffering from "serious brain damage that allows little self-awareness and no hope of a normal life" (2001, page 144). However, she is apparently able to dress and feed herself although "she appeared…as if not entirely sure what she was doing or why she was doing it" (2001, page 145). She also apparently is capable of speech but rarely does so. It is thus not entirely clear what condition the sister has although it is clear that it is the result of brain trauma that she has limited self-awareness, extremely limited sociability and limited capability to provide for her own needs. However, despite the existence of these

two characters, there are no real ethical decisions made in relation to either. In the case of the wife from *Strangers*, her husband pays to keep her in a private care facility where she dies of natural causes. In the case of the sister in *One Door*, her brother also pays to keep her in a private care facility. He, however, makes few further medical decisions in relation to her care. She is murdered by a supposed utilitarian, but it is again not clear that the person in question really subscribes to utilitarian views.[18] There is, then, no exploration of real hard cases in the treatment of either the wife in *Strangers* or the sister in *One Door*. Neither potential surrogate decision maker is asked or required to make a decision related to their medical care nor do they appear to give much, if any, thought to what the patient might want under the circumstances.

We thus have an apparent preference for the view that all humans matter but without any difficult cases to truly test that hypothesis. There is, however, one way we might question Koontz's apparent view that all humans have moral status. It is unclear to what extent he believes that those characters which are designated as 'evil' are entitled to moral status (or at least the moral status he believes the rest of us are due).[19] The deaths of evil characters in his novels are not subject to any moral qualms or questioning by the protagonists. Moreover, it is clear that he does not expect us to feel anything negative about these deaths. We are not supposed to feel bad for them, as a general rule. The death of Prestor Maddoc, Vince Nasco or either Victor is seen as a good and righteous action on the part of those acting. We might attribute this to Koontz's writing except for the fact that he clearly wants us to feel bad about other deaths. We should feel bad, for example, about the sister's murder in *One Door* as well as the death of Maddoc's stepson. Indeed, the most striking example of this happens in *Watchers* (1988). As noted above, there are two characters who die in the novel. The first is Vince Nasco. The second is the Outsider. Nasco's death is short. Indeed, the entire gunfight

between Nasco and Travis, Nora and Einstein consists of two short scenes which cover four pages in the book. The actual death takes place in the context of a one-line response to Nasco from Travis and the only description is that Travis "opened fire" (page 462). After Nasco's death, Travis, Nora and Einstein are more concerned with the gunfight ruining their plans to catch the Outsider than they are with anything related to Nasco himself. They refer to him only as a "wild card" and then discuss plans on how to dispose of the body while causing the least amount of disruption (page 462-463). In other words, the characters in question – the 'good' protagonists in the novel – show no emotional response to the death of Vince Nasco or their actions which caused it. Vince Nasco is treated much more like a thing than he is a person. This can be contrasted with the views taken about the Outsider, who is, after all, supposed to be the main antagonist in the book. The Outsider is not human nor is he anything other than a genetically designed killer. By the end of the book, the Outsider has killed at least five people, and a number of animals in horribly brutal ways and attacked a thirteen-year-old girl. Despite this, at least two of the characters, Travis Cornell and Lemuel Johnson, feel sympathy for it. Lemuel Johnson, the NSA agent searching for Einstein and the Outsider, explores a cave used by the Outsider. Due to a number of factors, Johnson makes the following pledge in his mind: "When I find you, I won't consider trying to take you alive; no net or tranquilizer guns, as the scientists and military types would prefer; instead, I'll shoot you quick and clean, take you down fast" (page 267-268). This pledge is referred to as not only being the "safest plan" but would also "be an act of compassion and mercy" (page 268). Travis, likewise, seems sympathetic to the Outsider at the end. After the Outsider attacks and severely injures Einstein, Travis tracks it to a barn. At this point, Travis believes that Einstein is dead. When he encounters the Outsider in the barn, it has a Mickey Mouse video in its hands.[20] Unlike Vince Nasco's death, the Outsider's is longer and more complex. It is worth citing the passage in full:

"*Mickey*," The Outsider said, and as wretched and strange and barely intelligible as its voice was, it somehow conveyed a sense of terrible loss and loneliness. "*Mickey*."

Then it dropped the cassette and clutched itself and rocked back and forth in agony.

Travis took another step forward.

The Outsider's hideous face was so repulsive that there was almost something exquisite about it. In its unique ugliness, it was darkly, strangely seductive.

This time, when the thunder crashed, the barn lights flickered and nearly went out.

Raising its head again, speaking in that same scratchy voice but with cold, insane glee, it said, "*Kill dog, kill dog, kill dog*," and it made a sound which might have been laughter.

He almost shot it to pieces. But before he could pull the trigger, the Outsider's laughter gave way to what seemed to be sobbing. Travis watched, mesmerized.

Fixing Travis with its lantern eyes, it said again, "*Kill dog, kill dog, kill dog*," but this time it seemed racked with grief, as if it grasped the magnitude of the crime it had been genetically compelled to commit.

It looked at the cartoon of Mickey Mouse on the cassette holder.

Finally, pleadingly, it said, "*Kill me*."

> Travis did not know if he was acting more out of rage or out of pity when he squeezed the trigger and emptied the Uzi's magazine into the Outsider. (page 472)

Like Lemuel Johnson, Travis' response to killing the Outsider is mixed whereas his reaction to killing Vince Nasco is not. He is transfixed by the Outsider and, even in his own mind, is unsure whether the act to kill the Outsider is one of pity or anger. This death is emotionally complex for Travis in a way that Nasco's is not. He somehow cares more about whether what he did was right in this context. This is a somewhat shocking development if all humans actually have moral status. Vince Nasco's death, whether as a result of self-defense or not (and the killing of the Outsider is also at least partially one resulting from self-defense), is not treated as being morally complex or, indeed, as anything other than a minor inconvenience. It is therefore not entirely clear how much Koontz actually holds to the view that *all* humans have the same moral status.[21]

Let us presume, however, that the view is the one Koontz appears to express in *One Door*: that all humans necessarily have moral status and a moral status equal to each other. Even if one accepts this as true, it does not mean that Koontz is really in the camp of those who argue that moral status is only species-related. As the many non-human or not-entirely human characters in his works show, he actually holds a more complex view. We can see this, at least in part, from *One Door*. Two characters important to the story are Curtis and Old Yeller who are an alien of some sort and a dog respectively. Curtis is a Messiah-type figure who both protects and is protected by the other characters in the book. He is clearly a character to whom we should ascribe moral status; likewise with Old Yeller, despite the fact that she is merely a dog (and not even a genius dog like Einstein). Curtis cares about and protects Old

Yeller referring to her as his "sister-becoming" (2001, page 172). Moreover, according to the novel, dogs appear to have at least part of the key to happiness and are worthy of protection as a result. So, even in the supposedly strident view taken in the novel, there is ambiguity as to whether only humans have moral status.

More clear and complete information on his views come from *Watchers* (1988). As noted, Einstein is a particular dog, capable of communication, self-awareness, rational thought, and the ability to form preferences and plan accordingly. More importantly, other characters treat him as if he is different to other animals. For example, Einstein, because he is a lab animal, has been tagged. The method used for this is a tattoo. Einstein objects to this on the basis that, as he indicates, "Do not want to be branded. Am not a cow" (page 434). Nora's reaction to this point is to realize that the tattoo "marked him as mere property, a condition which was an affront to his dignity and a violation of his rights as an intelligent creature" (page 434). She responds to Einstein "I do understand. You are a…person, and a person with… a soul" (page 434). She further realizes that any God would approve of Einstein "not least of all because [of] Einstein's ability to differentiate right from wrong, his ability to love, his courage and his selflessness" (page 434). As she indicates, "you [Einstein] were born with free will and the right to self-determination" (page 434). Nora, then, clearly sees Einstein as possessing moral status and, importantly, moral status on the same level as human beings. Travis makes similar statements claiming, "No one can be his master, but anyone should be damned proud to be his friend" (page 424). Other characters, including Lemuel Johnson, Nora's family lawyer and a veterinarian who treats Einstein also make similar statements about his personhood, ability to care, and the fact that he ought not to be treated as property. This is despite the views they express about other animals including other dogs. The veterinarian, for example, originally believes Einstein to be a lab dog who was being used for cancer experiments. He

argues that animal experimentation can lead to important benefits and ought not to be stopped merely for the protection of one dog. It is only because he is shown Einstein's abilities that he changes his mind. What we can take from these discussions amongst the characters is that Koontz believes (and wants us to believe) that Einstein matters deeply. He ought to matter to us as much as the other human characters in the novel like Travis or Nora. He is, as Nora indicates, a 'person', a statement which we are to believe is accurate whether Nora means the philosophical definition of person or not.

But Einstein is not the only one who matters. We can return to the decisions made in relation to the Outsider by both Lemuel Johnson and Travis Cornell. In deciding that the Outsider ought to be treated with compassion and pity, both are indicating that they feel it ought to be treated with some level of respect and worth. Indeed, one can see Travis' decision to shoot and kill the Outsider as a fulfillment of its wishes as it asks to be killed. Moreover, the Outsider is presented as an entity which recognizes beauty, is self-aware,[22] and tries to communicate with other beings.[23] The Outsider might be owed different treatment to Einstein, but none of the characters appear to think he does not matter at all.

This same theme is also present in the *Frankenstein* saga. Again, all of the clones are not really human, even to the extent of their DNA. They look like humans and have significant amounts of human DNA but are not human as such. This includes not only physiological differences between them and other humans but often the presence of non-human DNA. Moreover, we can consider a scale of different human-like cloned entities to see what extent the presence or absence of human-like attributes matters to Koontz's beliefs about who is morally relevant in the story. At one end of the spectrum are (probably) Deucalion and Erika. Deucalion is the only of Victor's creations to be at least mostly human. He is created from the

bodies of human beings and therefore contains only human DNA. He is given no specific designed enhancements by his creation (in the way that the members of the New Race are).[24] His appearance is monstrous, but he ends up being closer to human than many of the New Race. Furthermore, Deucalion has intelligence, compassion, the ability to create and develop plans and the other attributes of personhood. Indeed, his moral status is never questioned by anyone other than Victor Helios.[25] Considering he views all humans (except himself) to be of no real moral status anyway, it does not appear to be a convincing statement of Koontz's views. Victor's views are ones which we ought to refute, meaning Koontz wants us to see Deucalion as a morally relevant creature.

Erika is probably the most human of the New Race clones. While her physiology is different to human beings, she is the one most like human beings. She is also given a wider range of human emotions, including the capacity for shame, guilt, compassion and other 'positive' emotions instead of the purely negative ones which are all that the other members of the New Race can feel. She is self-aware, capable of stating preferences and creating plans to satisfy those preferences, has empathy (particularly for Jocko) and other attributes of personhood. Her moral status, like Deucalion's is not really questioned by anyone other than Victor Helios. Neither Deucalion nor Erika, though, are likely to cause much problems for our general conceptions of moral status. Both are likely human enough for even those who base moral judgments on species classification to consider them morally relevant.

Other characters are less easy to accept, however, at least on those terms. The first is Jocko who by his own admission, began life as a tumor. He is described as being physically monstrous. He is described as being "a funny-looking dwarfish guy with a knobby chin, a lipless slit for a mouth, warty skin and huge, expressive, beautiful – and eerie – eyes."

(2009c, page 71)[26] Another character notes that, if Jocko is a boy (as he is described by Erika V), then "[his] dictionaries were so out of date that he might as well burn them" (2011, page 267). Nor is Jocko's physiology similar to ours even in general ways. He eats soap because he thinks it tastes good. He is further described as squirting a "strange but fortunately odorless green fluid" from his right ear and talking in unknown languages for an hour after being given the Heimlich maneuver (2010, page 126). When a cinnamon roll gets stuck in his throat, he uses two plastic corks in his ears and a can of compressed air normally used to clean computer keyboards to get it out. Koontz, then, is keen to highlight the ways in which Jocko is distinctly not human. Despite this, in the latter two novels at least, Jocko is given heroic status. He finds out crucial information regarding Victor Immaculate's plot to destroy humanity and has a key role in occupying the children in Rainbow Falls. Moreover, other characters, once they get over his unusual physical features, treat him with dignity and respect. As noted above, this, in particular, is the case with Erika V who considers Jocko to be her adopted son. Others such as Deucalion, however, also treat him with respect, the children enjoy his company, and he becomes a television star at the end of the book. The role of the children in the story might be an especially important point considering the source material. In the original Mary Shelly novel, the monster kills Victor Frankenstein's younger brother, William, because even that young child cannot overcome his feelings for the monster's hideous features (Shelley 1991). Children, in particular, despite the more extreme ugliness of Jocko, consider him to be enjoyable company. Jocko also clearly matters and while his frequent mishaps are meant to add a comic element to the story, we are also supposed to care what happens to him and to want to see him succeed.

Karloff is another character which stretches the boundaries of human-ness. An experiment of Victor Helios' who appears in the first novel, Karloff is, if anything, more an extreme

physically abnormal specimen than even Jocko. Karloff does not possess a body but merely a head and a disconnected hand. The head itself has only "half formed" features, and his face is considered a "travesty" (2009a, page 347). Indeed, so strange and disturbing is the creation Karloff that Erika IV, herself a New Race clone, considers him an object of pity. Koontz himself refers to Karloff's "life" in quotation marks indicating that whatever 'having a life' means, Karloff does not possess it (2009a, page 358). Again, though, despite the extreme nature of his existence, Erika IV is shown to have pity for it. She communicates with it, listens to its plea for death and helps Karloff to die. Erika IV's decision is one we are supposed to empathize with not just because Koontz wants us to feel compassion towards her struggle to be more than Victor Helios made her but also because of Karloff's pain and suffering. Killing him, then, is the compassionate choice but having compassion for him requires that he have some moral status in the first place.

Thus, even if we accept Koontz's apparent general view that all human beings matter, he does not hold the view that *only* human beings matter. Entities who are rational, show preferences, and are capable of valuing their own existence (even if they do not under the circumstances) also are morally relevant under his view. More interestingly, there is evidence that dogs, at least, are morally relevant even if they are not philosophical persons. That dogs might be morally relevant irrespective of cognitive abilities is perhaps not surprising from a writer who has written at least three books ascribed, at least partially, to his dog.[27] We might wonder, however, on what basis Koontz ascribes them moral status. This leads us to consider two additional elements which appear to be part of Koontz's theory on moral status. The first is the value of community or social factors. While it does not appear to be the deciding factor in whether something is morally relevant or not under Koontz's view, it does play an important modifying effect. Those entities which at least strive to be part of a community are

considered to be more morally relevant than those that are not. We can see this both with *Watchers* as well as *Frankenstein*. In *Watchers,* Einstein is considered to be morally relevant long before the Outsider, at least on the views of Lemuel Johnson and Travis Cornell. This is despite the fact that on the two criteria previously determined to be relevant to Koontz, Einstein and the Outsider are equal. Neither is human, and both are philosophical persons. We therefore cannot distinguish between the two on those grounds. The best explanation then may be to look at *when* people begin to consider the Outsider to be morally relevant instead of merely as a monster that needs to be killed. In the case of Lemuel Johnson, the Outsider becomes morally relevant after Johnson views the cave where the Outsider lived. It was viewing the Outsider's attempts to bridge a gap between itself and other creatures that Johnson views it as something other than just a creature. Travis Cornell has a similar experience. It is the attempt to communicate, both through words and the possession of the Mickey Mouse tape, which creates the feelings of pity and compassion in Travis for the Outsider. Both, then, are struck by the attempts by the Outsider to be part of a community. While that attempt is necessarily futile, the striving for community is what is relevant.[28]

The same is true for characters in *Frankenstein*. What separates Erika from the other New Race clones is not her physiology. While there are some differences, none of them is substantial enough to ground differential treatment between our views of her and the other clones. Instead, the focus is on her developing relationships with others – Karloff in the case of Erika IV and Jocko in the case of Erika V. This can be contrasted with the rest of the New Race who do not have communities or engage in social relationships. Their very genetic coding prevents socialization either in couples, family groups, or wider communities. Indeed, the paucity of relationships appears to be one of the factors which leads to the chaos and destruction of the New Race in *City of Night* and *Dead and Alive*. This emphasis on

community and relationships appears to be the foundational concept for which Koontz includes dogs in his list of those with moral status. Dogs in his literature form an important part of our social communities and are often companion figures for major characters (e.g., Einstein in *Watchers* or Old Yeller in *One Door*). They are thus important because of their role within our mixed social communities.[29]

The final aspect worthy of consideration is Koontz's views on genetic hardwiring, a frequent issue in his novels. Many characters, and especially his monstrous ones, often have genetic limitations on either what they can do or what they can avoid doing. The Outsider, for example, seemed genetically unable to stop killing. Even were the Outsider to wish to avoid killing other things, he could not do so. The same is true of the New Race who have, by and large, a genetically hardwired hatred of the Old Race. They kill ordinary humans not only because they enjoy it but also because their genes make it impossible for them to do otherwise. While this raises interesting questions about moral responsibility, it also provides a way of distinguishing between those things with moral status and those without. For Koontz, it is the striving against our genetic makeup which plays at least some role in our moral status.[30] For characters like Erika, it is not that they are genetically hardwired which comes into play but that she is able to overcome this obstacle because of her inherent sociability and sense of community. Indeed, another New Race clone, like Erika, develops a maternal streak. In Erika, that maternal streak provides a basis for her growth and eventual joining of a larger community. In the case of the clone, there is no larger societal engagement. She takes offense to her partner arguing that wanting a baby makes her soft insisting that she still likes killing people as much as anyone. The clone then, despite her wish to be a mother, never exceeds her genetic programming. Instead, Koontz uses this particular wish of the clone as further evidence of the breakdown of the New Race programming. Erika, however, uses her feelings

of compassion and empathy for Jocko to become something different (and in Koontz's eyes better) than Victor Helios wanted her to be. Even for a character such as the Outsider, for whom the possibility of exceeding his genetic programming is ultimately futile, that struggle provides a way to personalize it in a way that members of the New Race never are. How we struggle and strive against our limitations (and our genetic limitations are only the most stringent of those) allows us to grow. And - Koontz appears to believe - that growth may make entities which were not as morally relevant become more morally relevant as a result of that striving.

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on his books, Dean Koontz appears to be using a multi-criterial method for determining which entities matter. It is a mixture of purely species-based criteria (all humans matter), characteristics of the entity in question (all rational persons matter), and social and cultural factors (those entities in a community or that strive against their limitations are more morally relevant than they otherwise might be). The first two categories appear to be categorical ones, by and large, while the social and cultural factors he relies up appear to modify those categories in cases where they lead to unwelcome outcomes. Of course, this is probably not a complete theory of moral status. Koontz avoids some difficult questions about particular entities (those in PVS, for example), and there are certain areas (for example, whether the environment has any moral status as an entity) in which he appears not to have expressed any interest whatsoever. Even the relatively basic view expressed in the books, though, must be a multi-criterial one. More importantly, the view expressed by Koontz is not incoherent. Despite the fact that there are three or four principles in play, it is not difficult to determine who matters under the Koontzian view and why they matter.

Indeed, we can test this hypothesis by exploring one of the possibilities Koontz leaves open. For example, we can come to a reasonable conclusion on how the sister in *One Door* ought to be treated. As a reminder, the sister in *One Door* is cognitively disabled as a result of trauma. While it is unclear what her exact diagnosis is, she has limited self-awareness and social interaction. She is capable of performing certain basic tasks and is conscious but her prospects for recovery are slight. For our example, let us presume that she does not get murdered but instead lapses into a comatose state. She still has minimal consciousness – she isn't brain dead – but she has been placed on a ventilator to regulate her breathing and is receiving artificial nutrition and hydration (ANH). After a period of time, the doctors come to the conclusion that her chances of recovery are very slim and ask her brother about removing the ventilator and ANH. How would we expect someone taking a Koontzian view to react to such a request? Based on what we know, Koontz would presumably determine that the sister does have at least some degree of moral status, even in her comatose state. She is human even if she does not satisfy the mental characteristics necessary for personhood. We might further add that she is considered part of a social community at least by her brother and possibly by other individuals within her care home. Thus, we would expect someone to treat the sister as if she matters. That means, in determining whether to remove the ventilator and ANH, we must consider what is best for her, not what is best under an abstract value such as 'overall happiness'. She cannot simply be treated as a means to an end. That does not mean, though, that ANH and the ventilator cannot be withdrawn from her. If we determine that withdrawing ANH and the ventilator is best for the sister even though it leads to her death, there is nothing within the Koontzian stated position on moral status which means we could not do that. For example, if we determine the sister's situation to be similar to the one Karloff suffered in the *Frankenstein* saga, then removing her life-sustaining measures might be appropriate. If we do not consider the sister's life to be as bad, we may be less inclined to believe we can remove

the ventilator or ANH. It is not surprising, though, that knowing the position on moral status gets us only part of the picture because moral status claims are only ever part of the equation. There are often a number of other principles in play during a scenario such as the removal of ANH and artificial ventilation. Since Koontz provides us with very little to go on in relation to those other principles, we are limited in the number of direct answers we can get. What is important, however, is that, knowing Koontz' position means we can figure out what the relevant questions are that need to be answered and what is necessary for those answers to be given.

What we can learn from this is illustrative of the uses of popular culture in bioethics generally. Ordinary people do have views on moral status, and those views are often more complex than uni-criterial theories tend to be. They involve a number of different ways in which entities might come to possess moral status and principles may interact and perform different functions. Using characters from popular culture allows us to explore the complexities of these viewpoints and to explore a range of scenarios in which these views provide incomplete or difficult answers. They help us to provide substance to these debates for those who do not normally engage in them as well as highlight why these sorts of questions are important. Moreover, through understanding how popular culture explains moral status claims to ordinary members of the community provides a window into how (at least some) people view these kinds of moral claims. Koontz' view, despite its numerous principles, appears to be one people understand. It is one that can be explained and used by others and, presumably, makes sense to those who read his novels – something shown by his success as an author. It thus not only provides further support for the position that at least some portion of the community uses a multi-critieral view which is at least similar to the one

Kootz uses but also that these theories are a plausible approach to exploring the moral status of entities in general.

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Endnotes

[1] Entity is an admittedly thin, context-dependent word. However, theories of moral status need to consider a broad range of possible beings affected by the decision in question. This can include human beings, non-human animals, plants, microbes, and even the environment. In order to encompass all of these possibilities, the term entity will be employed to stand in for all of these possibilities.

[2] There are also other moral status systems which are similar, but use different terminology. For example, Deryck Beyleveld and Roger Brownsword have presented a view of moral status based upon moral agency (2002).

[3] So far, there are very few multi-criterial theories of moral status. All, however, have posited different levels of moral status ranging from having no moral status to full moral status with at least one intermediate level.

[4] Dean Koontz (1945 – present) is an American author of popular fiction. His books tend to be considered horror novels although he appears to prefer to refer to them as cross-genre including aspects of horror, suspense, action, romance, science fiction and other genres. He has written (as of 2012) at least 103 books (including graphic novels and ebooks) and in 2012 was considered the 10th best-paid author in the world according to Forbes magazine (Bercovici 2012).

[5] http://www.deankoontz.com/about-dean/ (accessed December 6, 2012).

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Koontz has argued that his fiction isn't really 'horror' fiction at all. He contends it is cross-genre fiction and includes a number of elements (Gorman 1994). That particular classification concern is not an especially relevant issue for our purposes and will, henceforth, be ignored.

[8] The exception to this might be JK Rowling, at least within her *Harry Potter* series. The political and moral rights of non-human characters was a frequent theme in that series.

[9] The *Frankenstein* saga consists of the following five individual books: *Prodigal Son*, *City of Night*, *Dead and Alive*, *Lost Souls* and *The Dead Town*. The first two books were originally published with co-authors but both have been dropped from subsequent versions.

[10] The original Shelley story merely lists 'unhallowed graves' (Shelley 1991) which includes criminals but could also include other people – suicides, for example. While those who committed suicide were criminals in Shelley's time, they are not necessarily the violent criminals (murderers, rapists, arsonists, etc.) commonly associated with the Frankenstein myth. Koontz follows the standard trope, however, and indicates that the human parts which make up the monster are from criminals, particularly violent ones.

[11] Over the course of the series, there are two different Victor Frankensteins. The first is the one from Shelley's novel brought forward to modern times. The second is a clone. For ease of identification, the first will be referred to as Victor Helios and the second as Victor Immaculate, the name he gives himself. Victor Helios is the main antagonist in the first three books. Victor Immaculate is the antagonist in the final two.

[12] Only the last two, designated Erika IV and Erika V, appear in the novels.

[13] This is a nod to the original story by Mary Shelley. The subtitle of the original book is *The Modern Prometheus*. Deucalion, in Greek mythology, was the son of Prometheus.

[14] All of Victor Helios' creations are implanted with a device which kills them if Victor dies. Deucalion, however, never received the device and Erika V and Jocko are protected by a bolt of lightning.

[15] More correctly, Preston Maddoc is what Koontz seems to believe a utilitarian bioethicist is. Maddoc makes a number of claims, not least the central ones in relation to the individuals with disabilities, which is at odds with any number of versions of utilitarian ethics, including the ones presented by Peter Singer and John Harris.

[16] While Koontz does not perhaps explicitly state the view that all humans have moral status, it seems a reasonable assumption to make based upon the novel. Not only is the protection of disabled persons an important aspect, one of the main protagonists expresses both the view that all human beings are worthy of respect as well as the belief that utilitarianism is not only terrifying but completely wrong. These views on utilitarian bioethics are repeated in the Author's note at the end of the novel which provides at least some indication that the views expressed by the character are Koontz's own views.

[17] The character in *One Door Away from Heaven* with Down syndrome is described as being "severe" and he is not a major enough character to be able to truly grasp the limits of his disability (Koontz 2001). However, it is clear that the character can have preferences, is able to value his own existence, and is able to empathize with others.

[18] As with Prestor Maddoc, the utilitarian position taken by the individual in question is a caricature of a real utilitarian position. The sister is apparently killed because it "will bring more happiness" into the world. At the very least, the utilitarian calculation used to reach that decision fails to account for her brother or anyone else who might be positively affected by the sister's continued existence. For example, the nursing home where she resides loses financially due to her death, the court system needs to go through the expense and complication of a needless murder trial, etc. Not killing the sister is, in fact, probably the better decision for a utilitarian.

[19] A particularly stark example of this might be Deucalion's views about Victor Helios in the *Frankenstein* saga. When talking about him, Deucalion indicates the following : "Victor is no god… He is not even as little as a false god, nor half as much as a man. With his perverse science and his reckless will, he has made of himself less than he was born, has diminished himself as not even the lowliest beast in nature could abase and degrade himself." (Koontz 2009b, page 255).

[20] Mickey Mouse videos are an important humanizing element for the Outsider. In the cave, Lemuel Johnson finds a Mickey Mouse bank and that is part of what causes his views on how to deal with the Outsider. According to the story, both Einstein and the Outsider used to watch Mickey Mouse videos in the lab, a pastime both enjoyed.

[21] It may be the case, of course, that Koontz's argument would not be that Vince Nasco has lost all moral status as a result of his psychopathy. Instead, it might be argued that Koontz's point is that the moral action required of Travis at that point was to kill him in self-defense. He is, after all, protecting himself, his wife Nora, Einstein (who is less of a pet and more a friend), and his and Nora's unborn child. Even so, it is striking the differences between the ways the deaths of the two killers are portrayed.

[22] In particular, the Outsider seems to recognize its status outside of creation and seems painfully aware that it is different from other things, that it should not exist and that its creation was a mistake (Koontz 1988). It would not be a misunderstanding to compare the way the Outsider views its existence to the way the 'monster' views its existence in the original Frankenstein novel by Mary Shelley (1991).

[23] The Outsider was not designed to be capable of speech. However, as the passage quoted above indicates, it teaches itself to talk. Again, this is not very different from Frankenstein's monster in the original story.

[24] There are a number of differences between Deucalion and normal human beings. However, all of the "enhancements' are supposedly the result of the lightning which animated him instead of Victor Frankenstein's deliberate plan. Deucalion gives the lightning religious significance.

[25] While his moral status is not, Carson O'Connor at least questions whether he is human. She indicates the following: "As for being human, there was the fright figure in Allwine's apartment [Deucalion], who claimed not to be human, unless he believed that being cobbled together from pieces of criminals and being brought to life by lightning was not a sufficient deviation from the usual dad-makes-mom-pregnant routine to deny him human status" (Koontz 2009a, page 234).

[26] Erika V's description of Jocko is not necessarily echoed by everyone. When Carson, Michael and Deucalion meet Jocko, he is described as "a trollish thing in children's clothes, Rumpelstiltskin cubed, a cacodemon, a hobgoblin, a *thing* for which no word existed, a thing wearing a floppy hat decorated with tiny bells. Its eerie yellow eyes were bright with some terrible hunger, and its hideous face twisted into a mask of hatred so raw that Carson and Michael – and even Deucalion – skidded their chairs back from the table and shot to their feet in alarm" (Koontz 2010, page 217). It is, however, clear from the passage that Jocko is actually smiling.

[27] The three books in which his dog Trixie was named as at least a co-author are: *Bliss to You: Trixie's Guide to a Happy Life*; *Life is Good!: Lessons in Joyful Living* and *Christmas is Good! Trixie Treats and Holiday Wisdom*.

[28] Indeed, Koontz considers this one of the primary themes in *Watchers*. Creating families and a sense of community is particularly important for Koontz and is highlighted in the novel.

[29] It might also explain, at least in part, Koontz's views about his evil characters. Vince Nasco lives outside of society and abhors human conduct, Victor Helios considers himself above other human beings and Prestor Maddoc removes himself from society.

[30] Koontz makes the following comparison between The Outsider and Vince Nasco: "The Outsider at least longs to be like the dog, Einstein, though his engineered genetic nature makes it impossible for him to change: Vince Nasco, born of man and woman, is as savage as The Outsider but doesn't want to change and is, therefore, the more despicable of the two – and in some ways the more frightening." (Gorman 1994).

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