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**Respect for Nature and the Presumptive Case Against Geoengineering**

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In his 2011 paper “*Rethinking the Unthinkable”*, Christopher Preston argues that a presumptive case against geoengineering can be found within the environmental ethics literature. This is evidenced in the main part by his reading of Paul Taylor’s highly influential 1986 work “Respect for Nature”. In this work, Taylor develops a paradigmatic environmental ethics, which seeks to ground inherent moral worth in all living beings and explain humanity’s obligations towards them. In particular, Taylor advocates for a *duty of non-intervention* as one of the categorical imperatives of this ethics*.* This rule obligates persons, in most circumstances, to maintain a “hands off” attitude towards the natural world and its inhabitants, in order to maintain a wild nature separate from domination by humans. Such a prohibition on human interference in nature seems to be clearly in opposition to the commonly given definition of geoengineering as *“The large scale and intentional manipulation of Earth’s climate”.*

I argue, however, that Preston’s argument is based on an inadequate reading of Taylor’s work, and that *Respect for Nature* does not providean absolute case for the prohibition of geoengineering. This is firstly because Taylor’s rule of non-intervention produces counter-intuitive and problematic conclusions when put to the test. Additionally, Taylor allows the duty of Non-Intervention to be over-ruled in cases of restitutive justice and ecological repair. In these circumstances, humans may intervene in natural processes in ways that are consistent with an attitude of Respect for Nature. Increasingly, framings of Carbon Capture and Removal geo-engineering are positioning themselves closer to waste management, and are extolling the benefits of these technologies for protecting threatened ecosystems from the harmful effects of climate change. When framed in this way, it becomes less certain that a *presumptive case* against geoengineering can be found in Taylor’s work, despite the importance he places on the preservation of wilderness and nature free from human interference.

If my argument seems like a *bad faith* reading of Taylor’s work, then this paper should serve to illustrate how proponents of geoengineering will be able to use such intricacies of early environmental ethics to defend actions that their creators would have found abhorrent. Preston argues that “*the presumptive argument must be accorded the weight that forty years of environmental ethics has provided it”.* I instead hope to show how philosophies created with the environmental problems of forty years ago in mind, struggle to deal with today’s issues of climate change and geoengineering.