

What Is Speciesism?

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ABSTRACT: In spite of the considerable literature nowadays existing on the issue of the moral exclusion of nonhuman animals, there is still work to be done concerning the characterization of the conceptual framework with which this question can be appraised. This paper intends to tackle this task. It starts by defining speciesism as the unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species. It then clarifies some common misunderstandings concerning what this means. Next, it rejects the idea that there are different kinds of speciesism. Such an idea may result from confusion because there are (1) different ways in which speciesism can be defended; and (2) different speciesist positions, that is, different positions that assume speciesism among their premises. Depending on whether or not these views assume other criteria for moral consideration apart from speciesism, they can be combined or simple speciesist positions. But speciesism remains in all cases the same idea. Finally, the paper examines the concept of anthropocentrism, the disadvantageous treatment or consideration of those who are not members of the human species. This notion must be conceptually distinguished from speciesism and from misotherapy (aversion to nonhuman animals). Anthropocentrism is shown to be refuted because it either commits a *petitio principia* fallacy or it falls prey to two arguments: the argument from species overlap (widely but misleadingly known as “argument from marginal cases”) and the argument from relevance. This rebuttal identifies anthropocentrism as a speciesist view.

KEYWORDS: Anthropocentrism • Argument from Relevance • Argument from Species Overlap • Discrimination • Misotherapy • Speciesism

INTRODUCTION

For approximately the last three decades, the attention paid to the issue of the moral consideration of nonhuman animals has grown spectacularly. Moreover, this has been one field in which academic philosophers have been particularly influential. Philosophers’ contributions have played an important role in the increase of social awareness of the issue (which, in turn, has also fuelled the academic debate on it).

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In spite of this, this subject needs further theoretical development. Among other things, there is much work to do concerning the clarification of the conceptual framework that would be necessary to examine properly the questions involved.

This paper tries to tackle this task by providing concepts that should play a most significant role into such framework. It is divided in three parts. The first one aims to characterize speciesism. It starts by proposing a definition of speciesism, which is assessed comparatively against alternative ways of understanding this concept. Doing this will imply presenting an account of what discrimination is, and what equal consideration of interests implies. It will also be necessary to distinguish the consideration of species from the consideration of the individuals who belong to them.

The second part will present the different stances that can be adopted as part of a speciesist position. It will first present the different ways in which speciesism is defended. It will then point out the differences between speciesism and combined speciesist positions.

The third part will give an account of anthropocentrism. In it, I will first define this concept, and distinguish it from speciesism. Then I will draw another distinction between anthropocentrism and positions based on anthropocentrist assumptions, and will introduce the concept of extended anthropocentrism. Next, I will distinguish it from misotherapy. Finally, I will briefly present reasons for asserting that anthropocentrism is an unjustified position.

SPECIESISM

DEFINING SPECIESISM

Speciesism can be defined as follows:

(S₁) Speciesism₁ is the unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who are not classified¹ as belonging to one or more particular species.²

¹ The idea that species exist as given kinds is questionable—see on this Dupré (2002); also, a well-known book that contains several essays on the issue is Cavalieri and Singer (1993), see in particular the chapters by Dawkins; Dunbar; or Clark—. At any rate, in order to avoid unnecessary controversy I will not tackle this problem.

² Discriminating against those who do not belong to any of several species can be seen as discrimination against those who do not belong to a certain species *s* plus discrimination against

However, some of the theorists who have dealt with this issue have not been satisfied with this definition. For instance, Richard Ryder, the author who actually coined the term, writes:

Two slightly different, but not often clearly distinguished usages of “speciesism” should be noted... But more strictly, it is when the discrimination or exploitation [is defended by means of an appeal to] species that it is speciesist. This... usage should perhaps be called *strict speciesism* (Ryder 1998, p. 320).

If this claim is right, (S_1) should be rejected as a sound definition of speciesism. Those who agree with Ryder should have to adopt a different one, such as (S_2):

(S_2) Speciesism₂ is the unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to one or more particular species for reasons that do not have to do with the individual capacities they have.

This second definition assumes that a position is speciesist if it defends an unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of certain individuals because they are not members of a given species, unless if it is due to the fact that they lack certain abilities that are considered morally relevant. As we have seen, proponents of this characterization of speciesism, such as Ryder, would maintain that it is more technical and accurate than (S_1). They claim that treating someone worse because she does not have certain individual capacities is something different from doing it because she belongs to a certain species. Such treatment will certainly be disadvantageous, and it may be unjustified,³ but it will not be an instance of speciesism.

those who do not belong to another species s' , and so on. This is controversial, but if it were right, the wording in the definition I have presented would not be wrong, but redundant. I could just have written that speciesism affects those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species. Speciesist discrimination against those who do not belong to several species would just be an aggregation of several speciesist discriminations.

³ Evelyn Pluhar—the theorist who has examined the question of the different defenses of anthropocentric speciesism in more detail so far—has used the term “full-personhood view” to name the idea that only those who have certain individual capacities possess what she calls maximum moral significance (Pluhar 1995, p. 61). She has rejected this view, but has not described it as speciesist.

There is an objection that this argumentation must face. Individual capacities or species membership are not the only criteria on which an unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species can be based. They are also defended by means of an appeal to other reasons, such as, for instance, the existence of certain special relations between moral agents and those who may be subject to moral consideration (I will come back to this later). Given this, the very argument that might have led some to reject (S₂) in favor of (S₂) would drive them to abandon (S₂) and adopt (S₃):

(S₃) Speciesism₃ is the unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those that are not classified as belonging to one or more particular species on the basis of species membership alone.

Those who accept this definition believe that a position is speciesist if it defends such consideration or treatment of certain beings merely because they are not members of a given species. If all those who do not belong to a certain species are treated or considered in this way, but they are so for some other reason, then that must not be called speciesism, but something else.⁴

The argument for (S₃) is sound. However, there are pragmatic reasons in favor of (S₁) that outweigh it.

Consider the way in which disadvantageous treatment or consideration is usually regarded and named when it takes place between humans. Take discrimination against those who are not men and those who are not of European descent. Some defenses of such forms of discrimination are based on the mere fact that those individuals do not belong to a certain group (either men or caucasians). But others have resorted to arguments of a different sort, such as the claim that women or those of non-European descent lack certain intellectual, moral or cultural abilities. Such positions would not be instances of sexism or racism if we defined these concepts in the way in which (S₃) characterizes speciesism. According to this, if a member of the Ku Klux Klan discriminates against a number of humans simply because they are not of European descent he will be a racist. But what if he

⁴ In some way, this seems to be the view expressed in the “Declaration against Speciesism” proclaimed at Cambridge in 1977, which reads: “We do not accept that a difference in species alone (any more than a difference in race) can justify wanton exploitation or oppression”. See Paterson and Ryder (1979).

did so due to other sort of reasons? Let us suppose, for instance, that he considers that he should not treat non-caucasians equally because they do not fall within the scope of his sympathy, come second in the divine conception of the world, have a less developed culture or lack white skin. If we accept the definition of racism in line with (S₃) he will not be a racist. Neither will it be sexist to discriminate against women not merely because of their sex but on the idea that they were not chosen by god to serve males or that they are in a socially inferior rank.

This clashes with the view that is generally held nowadays. Positions like the one I have just presented are usually seen as racist and sexist. The word ‘racism’ is normally used to mean all kinds of unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who do not have certain physical traits (such as some skin color, facial features and so on). Likewise, ‘sexism’ is used to mean all kind of unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment against women. There is no reason to conceptualize speciesism in a different way.⁵ Hence, if we accepted (S₃) we would have to change the actual meaning these terms have today.⁶

Thus, there are reasons not to try to restrict the meaning of ‘speciesism’, ‘racism’ or ‘sexism’ to denote only those discriminations based on species, ethnic, or sex group belonging alone, without any other further reason being considered. The possible light that would be shed on the issue would be negated by the confusion that would be also generated. Moreover, it would probably lead to a practical distinction between the way in which the term ‘speciesism’ is understood and the way in which other terms such as ‘racism’ or ‘sexism’ are. This differentiation (which would undermine the case against speciesism) would be unwarranted.

We must conclude that (S₁) is correct: speciesism₁ is speciesism. That is: *speciesism is the unjustified disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to one or more particular species.*

A final note is needed here as regards this definition. I have claimed that our consideration of whether a particular way of treating or considering someone is speciesist will depend on whether there is a justification for it. By this I do not mean merely an argument for it, but an argument that offers a sound justification of it. This implies that

⁵ This idea is also defended by Dunayer (2004, pp. 2-3).

⁶ In fact, speciesism is a less recognized kind of discrimination, and this is why it can be more difficult to tell what those who use that term today exactly mean when they employ it.

speciesism is, by definition, a morally unjustified position (contra Cohen, in Cohen and Regan 2001, who uses the term to name disadvantageous consideration, whether justified or unjustified, of those who do not belong to a certain species). According to the definition I have defended, a justified prescription according to which only the members of some species could enjoy certain goods or benefits would not be speciesist (just as it is not sexist to defend that only women, and not men, may receive gynecological attention). For instance, as we will see later, the idea that humans' interests count for more than the interests of other beings is usually considered to be a justified position. If this is actually so, then we will have to conclude that this is not a speciesist view. Otherwise, we will have to say it is. Discrepancy concerning this point need not entail a disagreement as regards whether the definition of speciesism presented above is correct. Also, note that this definition does not imply accepting a normative conception of justification in particular. It is compatible with different moral theories and views of what is justified.

DISCRIMINATION

One reason why the definition presented above may not be attractive at first sight is that the expression 'unjustified disadvantageous treatment and consideration' is long and perhaps a bit clumsy. This, of course, is far from important: we should be primarily concerned with having a good, sound definition, rather than one that sounds good. However, we may wonder if there is a better way to express this idea. And I think there is. We have a word that may be used: 'discrimination'. Consider the following definition:

x discriminated against = df x is treated or considered in a way that is unjustifiably disadvantageous with respect to some y.

If this description of discrimination is correct, then we could reach the next definition of speciesism, which is simpler than the one we have been dealing with thus far:

(S') Speciesism is discrimination against those who are not classified as belonging to one or more particular species.⁷

⁷ Apart from this, there is another way in which this definition can be expressed. We can say that being treated disadvantageously with respect to others means being deprived of certain benefits (either intrinsic or extrinsic—such as the alleviation of a certain harm) that others do receive.

However, this may be a controversial step. The term ‘discrimination’ has been understood in many different ways by those who have used it, and it has been often employed in a much more restrictive way than the one I have presented above. Iris Marion Young, for instance, described discrimination as “the explicit exclusion or preference of some people in the distribution of benefits, the treatment, they receive, or the positions they occupy, on account of their social group membership” (Young 1990, p. 196). In accordance with this definition, she rejected the use of this term to name phenomena such as racism or sexism. She preferred to identify them by means of other concepts, such as oppression or domination (which would roughly mean, respectively, the deprivation of the means needed to develop oneself and the deprivation of the power to determine oneself).

Now, Young’s set of concepts seem certainly useful in the sphere of social and political philosophy. The problem with it, however, is that it deprives us of a notion that would be extremely useful in the moral arena. In a number of cases in which the satisfaction of the interests of different individuals is at stake we need to assess whether equal consideration takes place or not, and, if it does not, whether this is justified or not.⁸ For this reason, it would be very helpful to have a notion to denote unjustified unequal consideration. And ‘discrimination’ seems an adequate term to name it. Hence, in what follows I will use this word as a substitute for ‘disadvantageous consideration or treatment’⁹ (although I will still use the latter in some cases in which it can be particularly descriptive). However, it is important to bear in mind that I will use the term ‘discrimination’ with the meaning I have explained above—not in the restrictive way in which Young and others have used it, nor in any other way. “Disadvantageous for someone” should be understood here in a very broad sense, as “unequal in a way that is (or is intended to be) less favorable or worse for the one who suffers the disadvantage”. It is important to note that, according to this, this expression could account not only for those cases of discrimination in which the discriminatee is actually harmed, but also for those in

Hence, the speech of “moral exclusion” can also be used to name discrimination. Therefore, speciesism can be characterized as the moral exclusion of those (and only of those) who are not classified as belonging to a certain species.

⁸ In fact, it seems that this is what makes the difference according to which it is interesting for us to appraise a situation in which oppression or domination may be occurring.

⁹ Boxill (1991) has proposed a similar account. According to him, discrimination is the negation of equal consideration of interests. Another account of discrimination in terms of disadvantageous treatment (although different from this one) has been defended by Lippert-Rasmussen (2006; 2007).

which, even if she is better off for having been treated in a certain way, she is still unjustifiably worse than others. In fact, it may even account for possible instances of discrimination in which the discriminatee is not affected in any way (as in the case of epistemic discrimination, i.e., if we disregard someone's opinions just for being hers, even if this has no effect on the discriminatee).

In any case, a discussion of discrimination is not the subject of this paper. Those who reject the definition of discrimination I have given above can simply assume that speciesism is well defined by (S₁).

EQUAL CONSIDERATION OF INTERESTS DOES NOT ENTAIL IDENTICAL INTERESTS

Different treatment and disadvantageous treatment are not the same thing. Being equally considered does not entail being treated in the same way. It implies being treated in a way that is not disadvantageous for anyone involved. Hence, if different individuals have different interests, considering them equal will mean treating each one of them in accordance to the interests they have. Given this, we can understand why speciesism should not be confused with the (obvious) consideration that members of different species have different needs. This can seem a rather simplistic observation—which was famously pointed out by Singer (2002)—, but the fact is that such confusion is not unusual, as Mary Midgley's argumentation shows. In an attempt to justify speciesism, Midgley tries to distinguish it from other unjustified discriminations or oppressions (like racism or sexism) as follows:

Race in humans is not a significant grouping at all, but species in animals certainly is. It is never true that, in order to know how to treat a human being, you must find out what race he belongs to... But with an animal, to know the species is absolutely essential. Even members of quite similar and closely related species can have entirely different needs about temperature and water-supply, bedding, exercise-space, solitude, company and many other things. Their vision and experience of the world must therefore be profoundly different (1983, p. 98-99).

It could be pointed out that Midgley's claims here are not completely accurate. Some people with white skin can get skin cancer more easily than those with darker skins. Certain communities have better immunological defenses against certain diseases. In such cases there are differences that can be relevant when it comes to know what each of them need,

even if they are less significant, or even much less significant, than those one can find between the needs of individuals grouped in different species.¹⁰

However, this secondary consideration should not divert us from the very reason why Midgley misses the point here. Midgley considers speciesism quite differently from racism by claiming that nonhuman animals' interests are different from humans'. But the fact is that a difference between the content of two interests needs not imply a difference between their significance. Two interests do not need to be equal as regards their content in order to have an equal weight. Indeed, considering interests equally actually entails paying attention to the differences between them; otherwise their weight cannot be appraised, nor can they be actually attended. Consider the case of two individuals who are seriously ill (one of them suffers from a liver disease, while the other has been diagnosed with some kind of coronary malady). Suppose they suffer from equally severe conditions, and their health—or even their life—is equally threatened in both cases. Taking their interests equally into account entails that, other things being equal, we will not give some proper treatment to one of the patients and not to the other one. But this of course does not mean that the treatment they should receive has to be the same in both cases, as the patients' requirements will be different. In order to avoid some disadvantageous treatment it is necessary, then, to know what kind of ailment each one of them is suffering (as in Midgley's case for the proper treatment of the member of each species). If 'equal treatment' means "being treated according to what an equal consideration of interests implies", then it cannot always mean "being treated in the same way".

SPECIESISM IS THE DISADVANTAGEOUS CONSIDERATION OR TREATMENT OF INDIVIDUALS, NOT SPECIES

Speciesism is not suffered by species as such, but by their individual members. There is a common confusion regarding this point. In most cases, this is probably due only to linguistic expression. But sometimes it may also be due to the fact that nonhuman animals are usually considered not as individuals but as mere live exemplifications of a species (because of widespread speciesist attitudes). Hence individuals are frequently identified with the species they belong to. But just as the group of all triangles does not have the

¹⁰ I have not used here the speech of "races", which is very questionable. But it is important to bear in mind that, I as said, also the concept of "species" is. None of them can be clearly defined.

properties that triangles themselves have, the interests of an individual cannot be said to be the interests of his or her species. Actually, the very idea of “the interests of a species” is highly confusing. As long as a species is not itself a being with the ability to experience suffering or wellbeing, or to have any kind of preference, it is difficult to see the way in which we could affirm that there is such thing as an interest of a species. We could speak metaphorically, and use the term ‘interest’ to name something rather different from that which we mean when we talk about the interests of sentient beings. For instance, we could mean by ‘the interests of a species’ something like its continued existence, its number of individuals or the degree of distinctiveness that its members have. But it is unlikely that we could relate such “interests” with the rather different interests of the members of that species even if we were to accept the use of such a term as pertinent. We could argue that species conservation is a direct consequence of our concern for valuing the lives and well-being of animals. But even this is, to say the least, doubtful, both at a theoretical and a practical level.

At a theoretical level, the interest for species conservation can be rooted in different sorts of anthropocentric or maybe metaphysical reasons, but does not arise as such from the consideration for the individuals who are members of these species.¹¹ In fact, it can be actually against it. Consider our own species. Very few humans would support an extensive neglect of the interests of human individuals for the alleged sake of the human species itself (for example, the killing of those individuals with any health problem in order to have a “stronger species” in a Third Reich-styled fashion). It is commonly accepted that we as individuals should not be treated in such a way, even if the human species as a separate entity were better off in the mentioned respect as a result of it. Moreover, the very idea that our species can be improved as such, as something different from its members, seems puzzling. Despite this, positions of this kind are often held when it comes to nonhuman animals. This happens when those nonhuman animals that do not fit certain standards are culled to keep species “purity”—as in the case of ruddy ducks, whose killing has been

¹¹ Of course, there might be the case that members of a certain species of social animals would be benefited if more members of their species existed, if they were in need of other animals of their same species to socialize. But in cases such as these the relevant point would not be the conservation of the species: from the point of view of the individuals we would not have less reason to provide company to lonely individuals of a very populated species than to those who belonged to one with less members.

defended in order to prevent them from mating with “endangered” white-headed ducks. In cases like these there seems to be a concern for the species (or, rather, for some idea of what should the history of the species be like). But that such concern means very little or nothing when it comes to respecting its members. This differential treatment appears as a clear instance of speciesism.

Hence, we have to conclude that if we are just concerned about individuals, there is no reason to value the existence of a lynx more than that of a common cat, or a blue whale’s life more than a grey whale’s one. If anyone wants to introduce further arguments in favor of drawing such a difference, they must be of different sort.

SPECIESIST POSITIONS

DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH SPECIESISM CAN BE DEFENDED

The idea that those beings that do not belong to a certain species must not be taken into account assumes two premises:

1. Those who do not satisfy a certain criterion C must not be considered or treated as those who do satisfy it.
2. Only the members of some species S satisfy C .

Their conclusion is thus:

3. Those who are not members of some species S must not be considered or treated as those who are members of it (or them).

Some of those who defend this conclusion claim that C must stand simply for membership to a certain species (or at least that this is one of the values that C must have). This is the view that has been defended, for instance, by Diamond (1991; 1995) and other neowitzgensteinian anti-theorists (Gaita 2003). Now, these authors would surely oppose a way of presenting the issue such as the one I have developed here, since they reject that we respond morally to others because we consider the relevant criteria involved. Despite this, their view does fit perfectly the scheme I have proposed. They claim that some beings are important in a special way and some others are not, that humans are the important ones (even if by this they mean “important to us”) and that we actually distinguish, according to this, between humans and other beings.

However, other authors, as we have already seen, assert that *C* must have different values, such as having certain capacities or being engaged in certain relations. LaFollete and Shanks (1996, pp. 42–43) have said concerning this:

Speciesism... comes in either of two forms. The *bare* speciesist claims that the *bare* difference in species is morally relevant. The *indirect* speciesist claims that although bare species differences are not morally relevant, there are morally relevant differences typically associated with differences in species. We can illuminate that distinction by analogy: a *bare* sexist might claim that we should give men certain jobs *because they are men*, while indirect sexists might contend men should be given certain jobs *because they have certain traits* which distinguish them from women.

In a similar vein, Rachels distinguished “*unqualified*” and “*qualified speciesism*”. He has described the former as “the view that mere species alone is morally important” (1990, p. 182), but he has also pointed out (1990, p. 184) that

there is a more sophisticated view of the relation between morality and species, and it is this view that defenders of traditional morality have most often adopted. On this view, species alone is not regarded as morally significant. However, species-membership is correlated with *other* differences that *are* significant.

Note that here neither LaFollete and Shanks nor Rachels are rejecting (S_2) as a definition of speciesism. They are only claiming that there are two different versions of speciesism. This, in principle, does not contradict (S_1). Nevertheless, there are several reasons to reject the classification they are making here.

1. Terms such as ‘qualified’ or ‘indirect’ seem to imply that the views they denote try to prove the case for speciesism by means of an elaborate argument, in opposition to the simplicity and effortlessness that would be distinctive of “bare” or “unqualified” defenses of speciesism. This seems to imply that the most refined defenses of speciesism have been those that have alluded to individual properties, or, at least, that these have been more qualified than the others. In addition, expressions like ‘qualified’ can carry some sort of positive connotations, as if speciesism were more justifiable in this way. This may also be so in the case of the opposition between ‘indirect’ and ‘bare’: the latter seems to denote a poor defense of speciesism. But in fact there have been several defenses of speciesism that have avoided any reference to individual capacities. And some of the arguments that have

been used in an attempt to justify speciesist positions without any reference to individual features are complex and elaborate.

2. I have claimed above that speciesism is a disadvantageous consideration or treatment. But what we are dealing with here are not different kinds of considerations or treatments, but rather different *reasons to defend* some kind of consideration or treatment. They are not different *kinds* of speciesism (actually, they imply the same in practical terms); rather, they are different *kinds of defenses* of speciesism. Let me put an example of this. Consider some prescription, such as “Do not get off the path”. There are several reasons why we may defend this norm (to avoid disturbing some animals living in the area, to let the grass grow, to avoid getting lost, etc.) But the prescription remains always the same. The same happens in the case of speciesism. From a normative point of view, speciesism is a prescription that determines how to consider different individuals. The arguments we may use to defend this prescription are different from what the prescription requires us to do. There would be different prescriptions only if the content of such requirements varied (I will come back to this later).

In light of this, we could perhaps reformulate our terminology and claim that there are bare and unqualified, or indirect and qualified, defenses of speciesism. However, even this would be a bit simplistic. As a matter of fact the landscape appears to be far more complex. There are several different ways in which discrimination against those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species can be defended. They could be classified as follows:

(1) *Definitional* defenses of speciesism, i.e. those approaches that do not use any further argumentation in order to defend species-related disadvantageous consideration or treatment. (Those who nowadays explicitly assume this view usually maintain it from an agent-related viewpoint, although it may also be defended from a neutral viewpoint).¹²

(2) *Argued* defenses of speciesism. The next ones can be defended among them:

(2.1) Defenses of speciesism that are based on criteria whose satisfaction can be confirmed. These can be of two different kinds:

¹² See Diamond (1991; 1995); Posner (2004). In fact, many other theorists defend a view of this sort without giving any argument for it. However, inasmuch as they do not necessarily exclude the need for their claims to be argued for, their views cannot be seen as definitional.

(2.1.1) Defenses of speciesism that appeal to individual traits whose possession can be confirmed (such as intellectual, linguistic, or moral agency-related abilities).¹³

(2.1.2) Defenses of speciesism that appeal to the relations whose existence can be confirmed (such as emotional bonds, power relationships, or feelings of solidarity).¹⁴

(2.2) Defenses of speciesism that are based on criteria whose satisfaction cannot be confirmed. Again, these can be of two different kinds:

(2.2.1) Defenses of speciesism that appeal to individual traits whose possession cannot be confirmed (such as a certain “ontological status”).¹⁵

(2.2.2) Defenses of speciesism that appeal to relations whose existence cannot be confirmed (such as being members of “the chosen species”).¹⁶

This is an exhaustive account. The different ways in which discrimination against those who belong to a certain species can be defended fall in some of the five categories listed above.¹⁷ There can be, though, defenses of speciesism which combine some of these criteria. For instance, it has been defended by some authors that in order to be morally considerable one must either possess certain capacities or belong to the human species (Scanlon 1998). That would be a “horizontal” combination of criteria in defense of anthropocentrism. Others have claimed that we must be partial towards those who have certain relationships with those who possess certain capacities (Cohen, in Cohen and Regan

¹³ As defended for instance by Descartes (1930); Frey (1980); Leahy (1991); Ferry (1992); Carruthers (1992); and Scruton (1996).

¹⁴ Defenders of these arguments include Narveson (1987); Midgley (1983); Wenz (1998); Mosterín (1998); Scanlon (1998); and Petrinovich (1999).

¹⁵ Examples of religious and not religious metaphysical defenses of anthropocentrism can be found respectively in the writings of Harrison (1989); Reichmann (2000); and in Aristotle’s *Politics* (1998, book I, in particular 1256b 20-22).

¹⁶ The argument that humans are special because they were created on “God’s image” is an instance of this position.

¹⁷ According to this, we can see that (S₂) would entail that only (1) would be a speciesist position sensu strictu—or perhaps that both (1) and (2.1.2) would—. (S₂) would imply that (1), (2.1.2) and (2.2) would be speciesist. According to (S₃)—or, for short, (S)—any of them may be so.

2001; Scruton 1996), or towards those who have the capacity to have certain relationships (Goldman 2001). These may be considered “vertical” combinations of criteria in defense of anthropocentrism. Whether these views can be justified will depend on whether the criteria which they combine are morally justified themselves.

A further division amongst defenses of speciesism that is interesting to note is the one that has been drawn by Bernstein (2004, p. 380) and Jamieson (2008, p. 109). They have distinguished what they call “absolute speciesism” and “indexical speciesism”. An absolute speciesist view would claim that everyone should treat disadvantageously those who do not belong to a certain species. An indexical speciesist view would maintain that only those who belong to that species should do it. All those defenses of speciesism that appeal to capacities would be absolute speciesist ones. Among those that refer to relations, some of them would. It could be claimed that the way in which the members of a certain species are related to other beings is a reason for everyone to give them some special consideration. What is clear, of course, is that all indexical speciesist views are based on relations.

The next figure presents the different ways in which speciesism can be defended:

<i>Defenses of speciesism</i>								
Definitional		Argued						
		Appealing to criteria whose fulfillment can be confirmed				Appealing to criteria whose fulfillment cannot be confirmed		
Indexical	Absolute	Appealing to relations		Appelaing to individual traits	Appealing to relations		Appelaing to individual traits	
		Indexical	Absolute		Indexical	Absolute		

SIMPLE AND COMBINED SPECIESIST POSITIONS

There is another respect in which different forms of speciesism have been claimed to exist: concerning the extent to which the interests of those who are in a disadvantageous position because of it are dismissed. Donald VanDe Veer has distinguished what he calls “Radical Speciesism”, “Extreme” and “Interest Sensitive Speciesism”. In his view, ‘Radical Speciesism’ would mean total disregard for those who are morally excluded¹⁸ by it. ‘Extreme Speciesism’ would mean rating some peripheral interest of a member of some

¹⁸ I will use the concept of “morally exclusion” profusely throughout this paper, with the meaning of “deprivation of moral consideration”. This need not imply total desconsideration, it can also mean some partial desconsideration, that is, a disadvantageous treatment.

species over a vital interest of a member of other species (1979, p. 61). Finally, he refers to “Interest Sensitive Speciesism” as occurring when interests of a somewhat similar importance are at stake (1979, p. 62). A similar distinction was made by Rachels (1990, p. 182), who distinguished two different kinds of speciesism, “mild” and “radical speciesism”, depending on whether the interests at stake when speciesist discrimination takes place are somehow comparable ones or vital against trivial ones.

There are reasons to reject the idea that, depending on the weight of the interests involved, there are different forms of speciesism. If they are sound, we will have to reject the classifications offered by VanDe Veer and Rachels. I will now present three minor objections and a major one to such classifications, and then offer what I consider a better way to account for what VanDe Veer and Rachels wanted to explain by introducing the aforementioned taxonomy of speciesism.

1. The first problem for VanDe Veer’s and Rachels’s account arises from the vagueness of a distinction drawn in terms of the weight of the interests involved. How can we discern which interests are trivial and which are not? As VanDe Veer himself (1979, p. 74) says:

The principle is vague. There is no precise way of determining which interests are basic, which serious, and which are more peripheral or how to rank interests precisely.

This means, then, that we lack a clear standard with which to carry out the measurement prescribed by accounts of this kind.

2. VanDe Veer and Rachels’s distinctions are only concerned with the visible manifestations or consequences of different speciesist positions. However, it seems that it is more informative to distinguish these positions according to the way they are structured, which is what brings about their visible manifestations or noticeable consequences.

3. Finally, the nomenclature used by these authors can be confusing (as with the case of the different defenses of speciesism). The use of terms like “radical” or “extreme speciesism” can lead some to consider other speciesist positions as acceptable, especially when we call them “mild” or “interest sensitive” (even if, of course, there is nothing which entails this).

All these problems have their root in a deeper one. The main problem with this taxonomy rests on its assumption of the idea that in each case we are facing a different form of speciesism. I believe this view must be rejected. The positions that VanDe Veer and Rachels classified as different *forms of speciesism* are not so. Rather they are different *speciesist positions*. Let me elaborate on this. “Speciesist position” is not a synonym of “speciesism”. We can define a speciesist position as follows:

A position p is speciesist = df p includes speciesism among its premises.

This distinction is central for the ontology of discrimination I am proposing. I have defined speciesism as a particular prescription. But we can combine it with other prescriptions. Hence the need of a distinction between the prescription and the different positions that may assume it. Suppose we held a position according to that the only criterion for moral consideration were a speciesist one. If this were so, such a viewpoint would be one which we could consider speciesist in a somehow simple, monistic way. But there can be many other positions that assume a speciesist criterion in combination with other criteria. For instance, we may believe that in order to be morally considerable there are two criteria to be taken into account: being a member of the species *Homo sapiens* and being sentient. Hence, the latter criterion would grant consideration to those that are morally excluded by speciesism. If this is the case, the resultant position will provide some consideration to them. But it will not be full consideration, since they would still be deprived of some consideration for not being human. The consideration they will receive will be the result of the combination of the two criteria taken into account.

Given this, it seems that the claim that there are different kinds of speciesism (a radical or extreme one and some more moderate ones) is not correct. Rather, there are different positions that assume speciesism as one of their premises. These positions, all of which are speciesist, can be simple or combined with other criteria (which, depending on the case, may provide consideration to those that are morally excluded by speciesism).

Now, for a moral exclusion to be fully justified, all the premises prescribing moral exclusions in which it is based must be justified themselves, with no exception. Hence, every speciesist position is unjustified (since so it is at least one of the prescriptions it consists of), even if those who are discriminated against by it are not completely deprived of consideration as a result. Speciesism does not become justifiable by being combined with other criteria that are.

Hence, we must abandon the idea that there are different versions of speciesism, some of which are stronger or more radical and some of which are more moderate. Rather, we find different perspectives depending on whether they combine speciesism with other criteria. For some of them, in order to know whether someone is morally considerable we just need to know if that individual belongs to a certain species: if the individual in question is a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, then she will be morally considerable; otherwise she will not. According to other views, there are several criteria that need to be considered. Belonging to the human species is just one of them. Other criteria, such as being sentient, may be relevant too. Of course, we may hold a view such as this without noting that we are actually assuming a different normative premise. Or we may assume a single moral criterion that may lead us to set several distinctions as regards how should different beings be morally considered. But I am not examining here our psychology, or the criteria for moral consideration we hold, but the actual distinctions as regards moral consideration that our view implies. It is for these reasons that I claim that we must not distinguish between different kinds of speciesism, but, rather, between simple and combined speciesist positions:

Simple Speciesist Positions

It is sometimes claimed that those individuals who are not members of a certain species lack any kind of moral considerability. According to this view, there is no recognition of any criterion beyond species membership that could establish moral duties toward them. This means that only the interests of the members of that chosen species will be taken into account. There are different ways in which this position can be defended:

First, there are some who believe that those who are not members of a certain species cannot be benefited or harmed. This is the view that theorists such as Descartes (1930) and Peter Harrison (1989; 1991) have maintained. Their claim has been that those beings who do not belong to a certain species (*Homo sapiens*) lack the capacity to have any experience at all. Hence, there is no reason to take them into account.

Other theorists accept that nonhuman animals can suffer harms, yet reject that we must regard them as morally considerable. An example of this position is the “indirect duties view” that Kant, among others, defended (Kant 1996a, 5:76; pp. 201–202; 1996b, 6:443, pp. 563–564; 1997, 27:459–460, pp. 212–213).

Finally, there are some theorists who combine both positions. One representative of this stance is Carruthers (1992). He devotes most of its argumentation to show why we should not care about nonhuman animals even if they had interests. But he adds to his case another line of reasoning aimed to show why nonhumans cannot have interests—although if this were the case, his other arguments would be rendered redundant.

Combined Speciesist Positions

Other positions are discriminatory against those that are not classified as belonging to a certain species, yet regard them as morally considerable (to some respect). That is, they take their interests into account, but only to a certain extent.

These positions adopt a pluralistic approach. They accept two or more principles as morally relevant, species membership being one of them. This criterion is thus combined with others (hence the name of such positions). As a result, we can (as in the example presented above) regard sentience as a relevant criterion, but give preference to the satisfaction of human interests simply because they are human.

This being so, it is clear that within this second class we will find a considerable number of different positions, in which the kind of consideration given to those individuals who are not members of the privileged species will depend on two factors: (1) the number of principles accepted in addition to species membership; and (2) the preeminence or subordination of the latter with respect to the other criteria. Several authors have adopted a view of this sort. We will examine their view later.

ANTHROPOCENTRISM

SPECIESISM AND ANTHROPOCENTRISM

The term “speciesism” is commonly defined as the moral exclusion of those who do not belong to the human species. As Waldau (2001, p. 38) claims:

Speciesism is the inclusion of all human animals within, and the exclusion of all other animals from, the moral circle.

There is no reason, however, to restrict the meaning of ‘speciesism’ in this way. In line with what I have pointed out above regarding discrimination and oppression, it is possible to discriminate against those who do not belong to species other than the human one.

Certainly, in the world in which we are living most instances of speciesism are ones that favor humans over nonhumans. But other discriminations are possible that may favor the members of other species—or both the members of human species and of other species as well (Dunayer 2004, pp. 2-4). (Indeed, there is no logically possible world in which speciesism could be a class whose only member were discrimination or oppression against nonhumans. If the human species were the only existing one, there would be no members of other species to be discriminated against or oppressed. And if only two species existed—the human one and another one—there could actually be two types of speciesist discrimination or oppression: the one that would favor humans and the one that would favor the members of the other species).

The term ‘anthropocentrism’ should be clearly distinguishable from ‘speciesism’. These two words are not synonyms. ‘Anthropocentrism’ denotes, in general, the view that considers humans as central. Given this, it can be used in the moral arena¹⁹ to indicate the view that considers the satisfaction of human interests as central. But this is a vague description. There is another, clearer way in which we can define this term, in terms similar to those we have been considering so far to characterize speciesism:

- (A) Anthropocentrism is the disadvantageous treatment or consideration of those who are not members (or who are not considered members) of the human species.

Note that I have not included the word ‘unjustified’ in this definition. This only entails that if the disadvantageous treatment of nonhumans were justified, that is, if it were not discriminatory, it could still be called anthropocentrism. This does not mean I think that anthropocentrism is justified. In fact, it implies that it makes sense to ask whether anthropocentrism is justified. Which, in other words, implies asking whether it is a form of speciesism. I will come back to this matter in the last section of this paper.

I must also say now something more as regards the concept of speciesism. I have claimed before that the fact that there are different possible defenses of speciesism and

¹⁹ “Moral anthropocentrism” thus defined must not be confused with three different ideas which have been also named with this term by some theorists working in the field of environmental ethics. As they use it, ‘anthropocentrism’ would mean: (a) the view that only humans, or human interests, are valuable; (b) the idea that if nonhuman entities have value it is because humans assign it to them; or (c) the idea that if those entities have value this can be recognized only by humans.

different speciesist positions does not imply that there are different kinds of speciesism. However, as this section has shown, there is a sense in which we can say that there *are* different kinds of speciesism: depending on what are the species to which someone must belong in order to be favored or discriminated against for speciesist reasons. The reason why this happens here and not elsewhere is that in this case this distinction does alter what speciesism prescribes.

ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND POSITIONS BASED ON ANTHROPOCENTRIST PREMISES

A moral exclusion that unjustifiably favored, say, cephalopods would not be anthropocentric, but would be speciesist.²⁰ And so would another one that unjustifiably favored the members of certain species closer to the human one (such as apes or mammals). But in the case of the latter a question arises: Should an instance of speciesism of this sort be also considered, in one way or another, a form of anthropocentrism? In order to solve this question it is necessary to introduce a conceptual distinction.

The term ‘anthropocentric’ names, in a loose manner, what is “relative to anthropocentrism”. A similar but different term, ‘anthropocentrist’, can be used to denote something diverse: “favorable to anthropocentrism”. (Note that there is no parallel linguistic dualism in the case of the word “speciesist”, which denotes both “relative to speciesism” and “proponent of speciesism”). Hence, we may say that an anthropocentric premise is one that necessarily entails a position that favors humans over nonhumans, whereas an anthropocentrist premise would be one that has been accepted (at some point) with the intention of defending such a position. Suppose we defend as morally relevant a criterion that we believe draws a difference between human and nonhuman animals. However, our suppositions happen to be wrong: regardless of whether such a criterion is morally relevant or not, the truth is that it is satisfied by some nonhumans or/and it is not satisfied by some humans. If that is the case, the premise that we would have defended would not be really anthropocentric. But its use with the intention of drawing a moral difference between humans and nonhumans would be anthropocentrist. In line with this, it also makes sense to use the term ‘anthropocentrist prejudice’ to name the bias toward the

²⁰ Confusions regarding this point are far from uncommon. Edwin Hettinger (1983, p. 125) writes: “Since anti-speciesism allows for discriminating between animals, critics can consistently object to the raising, slaughtering, and consumption of veal valves while not objecting to commercial shrimp farming and shrimp consumption”.

members of the human species. In fact, it could be the case that someone supported some discrimination or oppression due to his—not deliberate—assumption of an anthropocentrist prejudice (this case would be similar to that of someone who did not intentionally want to support the discrimination or oppression of women, but who, due to his unreflected assumption of a sexist prejudice, did so). Hence, anthropocentrist premises may occur which end up supporting a position that does not match anthropocentrism (due to mistakes of appreciation made by their proponents).²¹

We can similarly characterize those positions that unjustifiably favor both humans and the members of other species *if* this is done on the basis of criteria that are commonly understood as anthropocentric ones. They may be described as positions that are based on *extended anthropocentrist* premises.²² Such stances are not unusual. For example, we could assert that all great apes deserve significant respect, but deny such consideration to other sentient beings. And we could defend this by means of the arguments that are typically used in order to defend anthropocentrism (for instance, by claiming that only great apes have certain capacities).²³ Also, we could favor “higher” mammals over other animals for similar reasons.²⁴ Alternatively, some have defended that so-called “companion animals” be given some preferential treatment (Burgess-Jackson 1998). In fact, it can be claimed that what we find in practice when we analyze different speciesist discriminations is that most of the

²¹ Hence, whereas the fact of a certain premise being anthropocentric is something independent of the attitude of the one who may accept it, it is precisely intention and prejudice which count in order to claim that the assumption of a certain premise is anthropocentrist.

²² Michael Lockwood (1979, p. 169) exemplifies this when he writes: “If we are concerned about puppies, but indifferent to the fate of, say, veal calves, this may well be because we, understandably but irrationally, accord the latter, but not the former, some sort of ‘associate membership in the family of men’ ”.

²³ Marc Bekoff (1998, p. 269) has denounced the view he has called “primatocentrism” as parallel to anthropocentrism. This point is also pointed out by Sapontzis (1993).

²⁴ David Morton has drawn attention to another interesting instance of this kind of moral distinction. He has written (1998, p. 318): “Sizeism, a form of speciesism, specifically relates to the failure to empathize with... or give small animals the same consideration that would be given to larger animals”. Morton has also pointed out that “scientific procedures are carried out on them that would not be carried out on larger animals without an anaesthetic, for example, amputation of digits, docking of tails, castration, cardiac puncture, and intracerebral injections”.

ones that are drawn between nonhuman beings will have their root in an anthropocentric bias.

ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND MISOTHERY

Speciesism does not imply loathing of those animals that are not members of the species we have chosen as particularly significant. Nor does anthropocentrism entail such an attitude toward nonhuman animals. There is another term we may use to name this. Jim Mason (1998a, p. 163) writes:

I have coined the word misotherapy... It comes from two Greek words, one meaning “hatred” or “contempt”, the other meaning “animal”. Literally, then, misotherapy is hatred and contempt for animals.²⁵

The idea of misotherapy would reflect a clearly hostile attitude toward nonhuman animals, or at least towards some of them (those who are assumed to display the features that are taken to be characteristically “animal”—i.e. distinctive of nonhuman animals). And it would also be used to disqualify some features or behaviors that are usually considered negative as representative of an alleged “animal-side” humans have (aggressiveness and sexual arousal are very likely candidates).²⁶ So misotherapy would be useful not only to undervalue nonhuman animals but also to create a bipolar evaluative criterion to value humans by virtue of which positive features are typically human and negative ones, typically “animal”.

It should not be difficult to see that anthropocentrism need not imply misotherapy. The interests that a nonhuman individual has can be neglected just because they are not considered to be worth enough to be taken into account: a hostile attitude is not really needed for this to occur. In fact, we can even feel some sympathy toward someone we oppress or discriminate against (some owners of human slaves have been said to behave kindly to those who they were nevertheless exploiting as their property, and many men can feel sympathy for the women they discriminate against). Nonhuman animals are routinely harmed by humans not because those who pay for it want to inflict some harm on them, but because the production of a number of goods or services that many humans want to enjoy

²⁵ A shorter definition can be found in Mason (1998b, p. 245).

²⁶ Mason writes “We describe horrible human beings as ‘animals,’ ‘beasts’ or ‘brutes’ (an old word for ‘animal’) when we want to describe their egoism, insatiable greed, insatiable sexuality, cruelty, senseless slaughter of nonhuman beings, and the mass slaughter of human beings” (1998b, p.163).

entails so. The death, deprivation of freedom and suffering of the animals who suffer due to this could be defined, in most of the cases, as a kind of by-product of this process. Consumers enjoy eating or wearing animal products. With some exceptions, they do not enjoy harming animals as such. They simply do not value properly the interests that nonhuman animals have in not being harmed. Thus we can say that misotherapy is not the cause of the plight of nonhuman animals—anthropocentrism is. Of course there can be exceptions, but they do not seem at all to be the general rule. Some people are misotherous. But most humans are anthropocentrist and not necessarily misotherous. Mason introduces the hypothesis that misotherapy would constitute a mechanism to ease the feeling of guilt we have as a consequence of harming nonhuman animals. In this manner, we would adopt misotherous attitudes as a tool in trying to justify our anthropocentrist bias. Whether this theory is right is not clear. Perhaps it is. In any case, what we can affirm is that misotherapy and anthropocentrism are two different positions, even if it is true that, as Mason tries to show, the former can be linked to the latter.

Inversely, it is clear that opposing anthropocentrism needs not imply zoophilia, that is, an attitude of fondness or attachment to animals (although, of course, it does not preclude such a disposition and can be actually be informed by it). To reject anthropocentrism, one simply would oppose the idea that it is justified to give nonhumans a disadvantageous treatment, which does not imply that one who rejects anthropocentrism loves them. Of course, something similar applies in the same way in the intrahuman realm. Being fond of humans with a certain color of skin is not a requirement in order to oppose their discrimination.

ANTHROPOCENTRISM IS ANTHROPOCENTRIC SPECIESISM

When I defined anthropocentrism above I assumed that it need not be an unjustified position, unlike what happens in the case of speciesism. As I said then, this only means that we could use the term anthropocentrism to name the disadvantageous treatment of nonhumans even if such treatment were justified. But the question arises as to whether this is actually so or not. In other words, whether anthropocentrism is an instance of speciesism or not.

I do not have the space that would be necessary to deal adequately with this question here. My intention in this paper has not been to tackle this point. Rather, I have only intended to present a conceptual scheme for understanding and assessing the problem. In

any case, let me sketch very briefly the reasons why I believe anthropocentrism cannot be justified and therefore is indeed an instance of speciesism.

In line with what was said above, there are five possible ways in which anthropocentrism can be defended:

- (1) Definitional ones.
- (2) By means of an appeal to individual traits whose possession can be verified.
- (3) By means of an appeal to certain relations in which humans are supposed to be engaged whose existence can be verified.
- (4) By means of an appeal to individual traits whose possession cannot be verified.
- (5) By means of an appeal to certain relations in which humans are supposed to be engaged whose existence cannot be verified.

How should we assess all these defenses of anthropocentrism? That would depend on the kind of criteria they appeal to. Consider, first, (1), (4), and (5). These defenses of anthropocentrism do not point at any verifiable criterion beyond species membership. For this reason, they can be described as question-begging. If this is right, we can assume that none of them can be successful. As for (2) and (3), in order to succeed they must appeal to criteria that must be (a) morally relevant; and (b) satisfied by all humans and only by them. However, there are two arguments that put into question whether these two conditions can be fulfilled:

1. The *argument from species overlap* points out that the criteria to which (2) and (3) appeal is not satisfied by all humans. Hume (1964, book 1, part 3, sec.16 [§177]) and Bentham (1996, p. 282n), and before them even Porphyry (2000, book 3, 15: 3–4) already noticed this. Consider individual abilities. There is none that all humans and no nonhuman have. Take intellectual capacities or language—which are among the features that defenders of anthropocentrism more often refer to. Many members of the human species do not have them (such as those who suffer from certain conditions, those who have suffered brain injuries, or babies). If the mentioned criteria do justify the treatment we now give to nonhumans, then it will be justified to treat these humans in the same way. In any case, the point is that such criteria do not draw a line between humans and nonhumans. And the same happens in the case of relations. Consider the claim that bonds of sympathy or solidarity justify partiality. If this is so, anthropocentrism cannot be justified, given that

many humans do not have such feelings for the rest of humanity, and that many humans actually have no one to care for them (in fact many humans have stronger relations of this sort with some nonhuman animals). This has been often ignored in the literature on the issue. In fact, it is usually believed that those defenses of anthropocentrism that appeal to capacities and those that refer to relations have to be examined differently. Mark Bernstein has assumed this, and has used the term ‘neo-speciesism’ when he speaks of those defenses of anthropocentrism based on relations (2004, in particular p. 381). Note, though, that there is no reason why those arguments that appeal to capacities should take precedence over those that appeal to relations.²⁷ And they can be assessed in a similar way, as we have just seen.

This argument against anthropocentrism has been sometimes referred to as ‘the argument from marginal cases’. This is unfortunate in my view. Regardless of whether this terminology may offend some, it could entail a serious confusion. What does marginal mean here? It may entail assuming that within humanity we can find some center and some margins, which are determined by the possession of certain capacities. However, what the argument actually shows is that this is not so: the argument points out that there are humans who do not have those capacities. But they are nevertheless as human as those who satisfy them are (otherwise, the argument would be pointless). Besides, as we have seen, the argument not only applies with respect to capacities, but also to relations. We can avoid this problem if we assume that ‘marginality’, as used here, refers to the satisfaction of the criteria in question. However, confusion is very possible here. For this reason, I have chosen to use a different term: *argument from species overlap*. This term was coined by Miller (2002), and has been also used by Jesse Ehernert (2002) and Wilson (2005).

2. There is another argument that can be used to defend that such criteria cannot be justified. We can call it the *argument from relevance*. By definition, in order to be benefited or harmed it is (ontically) irrelevant to have any trait that does not determine as such that we be benefited or harmed. Suppose we assume that what is *morally* relevant should be crucially connected with what is *ontically* relevant. If we accept this, then we will have to assume that only one criterion among all those to which (2) and (4) appeal can be

²⁷ The term “neo-speciesism” conveys the idea that these defenses of anthropocentrism have been presented later than those that appeal to individual capacities. Note, however, that already in the 17th, the 18th and the 19th centuries, theorists such as Spinoza (1989, 4/37e1[d]); Hume (1978, Sect. 3, part 1 [§152]); and Whewell (1852, pp. 223–25) defended this.

considered morally relevant:²⁸ the one that refers to the capacity to be benefited or harmed. Given this, if we accept that this capacity is not possessed by humans alone but also by other animals,²⁹ we will have to reject anthropocentrism.

If this line of reasoning is successful, then it will suffice to reject (2) and (4). But note that even if it failed, the previous argument would, at any rate, be enough to reject (2) and (4) as well.

Given this, we must conclude that no defense of anthropocentrism is justified. Hence, anthropocentrism must be considered an instance of speciesism. To put it another way: anthropocentrism is a synonym of anthropocentric speciesism.

Finally, we must note that this shows that all anthropocentric positions will be unjustified—recall what we have seen regarding the difference between simple and combined speciesist positions. In line with this, an anthropocentric position can be defined as follows:

A position p is anthropocentric = df p includes the acceptance of anthropocentrism (i.e., the disadvantageous treatment or consideration of those who are not members of the human species) among its premises.

An anthropocentric position, then, will be one that assumes that belonging to the human species is a criterion (though not necessarily *the only* one) applied in order to favor someone. In line with what I said above, we can say that there are simple and combined anthropocentric positions. In fact, most people seem to hold a combined anthropocentric view nowadays. Theorists as different as Van De Veer (1979); Midgley (1983); Næss (1989, p. 171); Callicott (1989); Warren (2000); or Dolan (1999), among many others, have shown their concern for nonhuman animals interests, yet have also defended the preeminence of human interests in cases of conflict even when the interests of nonhuman animals are more significant. Hence, they have mostly agreed with an “animal welfare”

²⁸ As the ‘*if*’ in the argument clearly shows, the strength of this argument rests on a hypothesis. We will have to accept its conclusion if we assume a certain premise (that there should be a parallelism between moral and ontical relevance). But it seems that this is a premise which at least many of us would be compelled to accept.

²⁹ Of course it could be possible to defend a conception of the good according to which suffering and pain would not be relevant, which may then imply that nonhuman animals would not be able to be benefited or harmed. Nonetheless, such a view seems hardly acceptable. (Just as the claim that nonhuman animals cannot feel suffering and pleasure is implausible).

approach, according to which nonhuman animals can be granted some consideration but only insofar as their use as resources is not questioned. But they have rejected a view that could take into account more seriously nonhuman animals interests—which would entail rejecting their current use as resources (Francione 1996). In light of the arguments presented above, their views are unjustified.

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