

# **The Contemporary Posthuman**

By

**Leonardo Caffo**

Translated by:

**Steven Umbrello**

**The Contemporary Posthuman**

**By Leonardo Caffo**

**Translated by Steven Umbrello**

**This book first published 2022**

**Ethics International Press Ltd, UK**

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

**A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library**

**Copyright © 2022 by Leonardo Caffo**

**All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.**

**Print Book ISBN: 978-1-80441-010-3**

**eBook ISBN: 978-1-80441-011-0**





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Translator's Foreword .....	i
Introduction.....	iii

## Part One: Transformation

<b>Chapter 1. The ethical axis: the first transformation .....</b>	<b>3</b>
SHORT NOTE: What is speciesism? .....	3
What kind of humanity follows from speciesism? .....	6
SHORT NOTE: What is antispeciesism? .....	11
Which kind of humanity follows from antispeciesism? .....	12
The first transformation .....	16
<b>Chapter 2. The metaphysical axis: the second transformation...</b>	<b>19</b>
SHORT NOTE: What is the Ptolemaic system? .....	19
What image of humanity follows the Ptolemaic system? .....	20
SHORT NOTE: What is the Copernican system? .....	22
What image of humanity follows the Copernican system? ....	23
The second transformation .....	27
<b>Chapter 3. The scientific axis: the third transformation .....</b>	<b>30</b>
SHORT NOTE: What is creationism? .....	30
What image of humanity follow creationism? .....	32
SHORT NOTE: What is Darwinism? .....	35
What image of humanity follows Darwinism? .....	36
The third transformation.....	38

## **Part Two: Speciation**

<b>Chapter 4. Definitive speciation: the contemporary posthuman ...</b>	<b>43</b>
What is the posthuman? .....	43
Stage one: defining the contemporary posthuman .....	44
Stage two: a new ethics.....	49
Stage three: a new art of interpretation.....	54
Stage four: a theory of anticipation with art and architecture ..	57
Stage five: the ethological crisis.....	61
Stage six: Cartesian geographies .....	66
Stage seven: hybridization .....	69
A map and a unitary route.....	72
<b>Chapter 5. Managing speciation: design and philosophy.....</b>	<b>76</b>
Designing oneself .....	76
The preparation phase.....	77
The construction or realization phase .....	82
The production phase .....	85

## TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

The number of publications as well as general interest in what can be considered 'posthumanism' has surged over the past few years. There is no surprise as to why, given the urgency and immanence of what is undoubtedly the sixth mass extinction event and the catastrophic consequences of global warming. These processes, all of which fundamentally rest on the foundations of human practices and abuses, are forcing us to rethink our place in existence. We must step off the privileged pedestal that we have created for ourselves. The foundations of this now-shaken pedestal have a long history, all of which is firmly rooted in the daily practices and beliefs of Western cultures. Caffo fearlessly confronts these assumptions of truth head-on. He begins by leading the reader through a history of human ecological and social abuses. From Ptolemaic astronomy to Darwinism, Caffo rebuilds the ontology of the Western world by deconstructing the pillars of its current one – flattening it without oppressing it. But here, you find more than the theoretical musing of high philosophy. Caffo follows his conceptual journey with practical steps for putting his philosophy into practice by joining forces with both art and architecture.

As a philosopher of technology, focused especially on design and engineering ethics, Caffo presents an interesting approach to ameliorating a damaged planet. This approach espouses salient ways of envisioning design and technological developments, framing how to be responsible for the responsibility of others. It was a pleasure to take on this translation project. In tangling with his words, I learned more about them than I did when I read this text simply for pleasure. It is my hope that this translation rings true to the original Italian. But however close it may be to the original prose,

close is far from being the original. I have taken care to construct the following sentences in such a way that it reads with the ease and poetic beauty of Caffo's style. Whether this happens to actually be the case is left up to the discerning reader to decide. Regardless, this is no substitution for the original text. One should refer to the original as the authoritative version, if possible, and perhaps alongside this one.

Steven Umbrello  
Delft University of Technology



## INTRODUCTION

*The correct and interesting thing to say is not: this has arisen from that,  
but: it could have arisen this way.*

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Before I theorize anything, absolutely anything, there is first the anecdote: the lived experience. I began writing this book in the great hall in the department of Anatomy, full of skeletons and human bones, at one of the universities where I worked. Philosophers didn't have access to the facilities, so I had to make friendships with some of the faculty's researchers and file some formal requests saying that I was in need of their research space and materials for my own. They believed that a book on humanity might require anatomical research. This was the conceptual human envelope that I found myself in, surrounded by hanging skeletons on the floor that houses the Cesare Lombroso museum (a person to whom I, paradoxically and along with thousands of others, owe much of this research to).

From the very beginning, we are aware that we come after many other things. But still, we consciously remove this belief. Is there anybody that can truly think beyond the human? Can anyone think beyond the limits of this skeleton or this model of life? Before we appeared in the sphere of appearing and being? I can certainly try to think about what it means to think beyond the human. But although we try, our mind is entirely ill equipped for the enterprise. Everything is relational to us. This is why correlationist philosophers (who 'correlate' the existence of the external world with the human mind) have always played an easy game, creating traditions and

follows of every type but always within this common limit. Does anyone really know what the universe is? The universe beyond us who inhabit it, I mean. But it is not the universe itself that we speak of. Instead, we will look at how we think the universe is regardless of the fact that we cannot know. This is the “regardless” in which the book is situated. Nobody negates dignity for the world without us. More specifically, the infinite nature of the often-indistinct entities populating the world will continue their existence regardless of whether me and you conceptualize either those entities or the world itself. In the following pages, I argue that anthropocentrism – this magical word – is not simply an attitude of prevarication or pure metaphysics. Anthropocentrism is our cognitive atmosphere. Yet at the same time, the purpose of the book is to think beyond anthropocentrism and determine how to get out of this atmosphere<sup>1</sup>.

In effect, anthropocentrism is a creature that resembles the visual field described by Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Tractatus*. That is, we are unable to see its limits. It goes without saying that we feel these limits. We know they are there, but where? Whenever we meet the gaze of a creature different from us, or stop to admire the immensity of a tree or the light of a star, we are on the right path. The problem, so to speak, is the filter through which we observe reality. It is as if we wear glasses making the space around us appear concave when in reality, it is convex. A good metaphor for this is from Edwin Abbott’s *Flatland*, where each dimension seems independent and autonomous. In reality, they are dependent and equivalent to the others but they ignore each other’s existence – at least until a square

---

<sup>1</sup> The first results of this research in Caffo, L., *The two dogmas of anthropocentrism*, in “Sciences and Research”, 2017, n. 46, pp. 25-31

meets a sphere. Metaphor aside, it is an almost geometric discourse that we are indeed about to face.

Our journey inside the cognitive atmosphere will be articulated through the exploration of three axes that form the architectural basis for anthropocentrism. These axes represent three corresponding revolutions: a revolution in ethics (how we behave); a revolution in metaphysics (how we conceive the universe and ourselves in it); and a revolution in science (how we discover and how we consider ourselves discoverable). Since this journey of ours cannot be described exclusively by that tripartite formula, these axes must be seen in their dual function. We can now say, without hesitation, what Jacques Derrida conceived of in his deconstruction: we are stripping a problem without worrying about its new clothing. Every time we encounter an issue, I take care to present a solution. Even if singularly irrelevant, the solution can be conceived together with all three strategies. This will guarantee a one-way ticket beyond the cognitive atmosphere of anthropocentrism. “Man has made a certain evolution, in previous times, from *Preominidae* to *Homo sapiens*”, writes Del Boca, “but it is still at the beginning of its evolution”<sup>2</sup>. What follows, if anything, from this beginning?

Diverging from the main theories on the isolated posthuman so far, I argue in favor of a different thesis. What I call the contemporary Posthuman<sup>3</sup> is the result of a speciation (a biological concept that we will analyze). Speciation makes the posthuman completely different from members of the *Homo sapiens* species. Acting simultaneously on the three axes of anthropocentrism traced here in the first three chapters of the text, speciation leads to an overall mutation. The

---

<sup>2</sup> B. del Boca, *La dimensione umana*, Brescia, Torino 1971, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> From now on I will use ‘contemporary Posthuman’ in uppercase when I refer to the species I describe, in lowercase when I describe the theory.

mutation is no longer ascribable within the principles and parameters of the human being as we know it. Its behaviors, relationship with the environment, and observation of things are just some of the elements that characterize the existence of another species of human. Yet still no one – and we will see why – has deemed it necessary to describe this species. The journey will be short but detailed. Before departing, then, I leave the reader with the motivation underlying this book. The rest will be theory.

There is a sad image, one that is now widely known, of a dead child lying face down in the sand on the coast of Turkey. This coast is the same one that birthed Western philosophy. The child died trying to save himself from war, and his story is the latest of the terrible implications of the most radical and ruthless forms of anthropocentrism – *a type of man at the center of the world*. The most intransigent anthropocentrism is built on the presumed superiority of the human over other forms of life (strong anthropocentrism), as well as on the superiority of certain types of humans over others (weak anthropocentrism).

But what happens when the “featherless biped” discovers that it is made of the same substance that all beings on this planet are made of? The properties we think make us special, such as our mental life or the ability to suffer, also manifest themselves in what we naively call “non-human”. Humanity is a closed system of classical humanism that dissolves within what has been defined as the “crisis of the subject”. There have been proposals for solutions to this problem, ranging from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Übermensch* to Peter Singer's contemporary antispeciesism. But taken individually, each of these theories is not enough; they may even be dangerous. What is really wrong with the image of that child who died on the beach? Is it because if we reject the image, we necessarily put into crisis a

wider system of the representation of humanity as a privileged entity (rather than only the direct and apparent cause)?

The posthuman investigated in this book contrasts with the first homonymous but unsuccessful attempts of the last decade of the last millennium. These attempts tried to reposition what follows the human (the post-human) within an integrated scheme in Nature. In overcoming anthropocentrism, we can move towards a new narrative construction for our future. The posthuman is an open project – a new Copernican revolution that has already begun. “The world is trembling on the edge of an abyss. It’s time to try everything”<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> A. Artaud, *I Cenci* (1935), Einaudi, Torino 1972, p. 40.

Each means of defense invented by man has always been matched by a parallel means of offense, even today this precarious balance exists, with the difference that the means of offense have the possibility of completely destroying all life on earth. For this reason, it is necessary more than ever to direct all the possibilities we have towards an ideal alien to the normal impulses and distractions of man. The fact of having children (other things are born because other things are born) is a way of reaching eternity, with the difference that it is reached by the human species and not by man, the awareness that we are already children should make us understand that we could, ourselves, use the experiences we have, that we, ourselves, could use them in the future.

Guido de Dominicis

# **The Contemporary Posthuman**

## **Part One: Transformation**



# CHAPTER 1

## THE ETHICAL AXIS: THE FIRST TRANSFORMATION

*It is so difficult to find the beginning.  
Or, better: it is difficult to being at the beginning.  
And not to try to go further back  
Ludwig Wittgenstein*

### **SHORT NOTE: What is speciesism?**

Speciesism, or discrimination by *Homo sapiens* against other animal species, is the first axis (perhaps the most resistant and dangerous) of this powerful and complex set of phenomena that we call “anthropocentrism”. Our whole society is built on the institutionalized exploitation of non-human animals. Animals are killed for food, clothing, entertainment of various kinds, and scientific research. Non-humans are basically in the world to guarantee the total wellbeing of the *Homo sapiens* species. Speciesism, a neologism first used by psychologist Richard D. Ryder, is the idea that all of this is justifiable through a series of arguments that are easily falsifiable. Even in the case of speciesism, the question of whether the chicken or egg came first is clear: as argued in the 1975 book *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer, speciesism is a prejudice. Or perhaps it is a justificationist ideology for a historical phenomenon? This distinction matters little; speciesism is a phenomenon that becomes possible, at least conceptually, because a series of general claims (often considered ‘common sense’)

regarding its necessity for the existence of our society. These claims are possible but unfounded, as I will try to show. When seeking philosophical justifications for speciesism, it is a mistake to not refer to Descartes (who claimed that the animal is an automaton without language) or to Martin Heidegger (who even claimed that the animal is a poor subject of *being-in-the-world* and lacks in the capacity to die). I will try to not make the same mistakes. I prefer to focus on precisely what speciesism is and why, for millennia, it has been regulating the lives of those who have never heard of Descartes or Heidegger. Even without knowledge of these justifications, people exist in a mutually violent relationship with animals.

Being a speciesist means considering the life of one's own species as the only life that can be protected from a moral point of view. This is true even if there are different degrees of protection; we might think of how we treat a dog differently from a pig, for example. Understanding this fact is critical because otherwise, we will continue to think of speciesism as a Cartesian phenomenon: all animals have no world and are not subjects. On the contrary, conscious speciesists know very well that animals are "subjects of a life" (to use an expression by Tom Regan). Either way, adherents simply do not believe that this is a necessary and sufficient condition to radically change their lives. Here, I want to present an image of speciesism that is entirely conceptual<sup>1</sup>. This is because it is part of a tripartite set of concepts that comprise my idea of anthropocentrism, which is that animals simply do not "exist" in our daily lives. In the United States of America alone, fifty billion animals (large mammals) are killed each year for food. Let me repeat this: fifty billion! This immense slaughterhouse is well hidden and allows us

---

<sup>1</sup> Obviously, in the past, I thought it important to also give an ethical illustration: cf. L. Caffo, *The pig does not make the revolution. Manifesto for a weak antispeciesism*, Sonda, Casale Monferrato (al) 2013

to define all of this as simply part of “civil society” because animals are nothing but paradoxes. In other words, they are “non-existent entities”. We know that they exist. We know that they are beings with biological characteristics that are not secondary to ours. But we do not know that these same animals make up the objects of our daily wellbeing.

The novelty of the speciesism that I propose here is, above all, the understanding of it as forgetfulness: we have forgotten that we are not alone. Speciesism is the engine of the economy. With animals and what remains of their bodies, we literally produce everything from camera film to wallpaper, from glue to hold the seams of shoes together to dyes used in gummy candies that are so loved by children. Animals are literally everywhere. Ironically, we cannot see them because we have hidden them. So, speciesism is a sort of concealment as well. Of course, all of us can find opportunities to see. But the potential for sight surrenders, often too easily, to the characteristics of the economic system that we live in. The term speciesism is thus also a moral one. It is part of the encyclopedia of ethics, which shifts our attention from how we behave (descriptive ethics) to how we should behave (prescriptive ethics). Do we eat animals? We should stop. Why? Because there are no good arguments to continue to do so after realizing that it is unnecessary. We are not obliged carnivores such as felines and the animals we feed on have rights equal to ours, as eaters.

As I explain below, anti-speciesism is generally one of the most complex theories subject to scrutiny. But in the end, there are no good reasons for the daily massacre of millions of animals. At the very least, justification demands that animals no longer exist.

## What kind of humanity follows from speciesism?

Speciesism proposes an idea of a humanity that (more or less) traverses across the planisphere, epochs, and geopolitics. This is true even if such metaphysics are not always made explicit. It suggests that *Homo sapiens* may dispose of what is not inside the fence that defines it. But the fence of “our species” is an imaginary one or at least fleeting within its borders, as we know from Charles Darwin. Where there is a bipedal body, we see otherness. Otherwise, there is emptiness; the search for Emmanuel Lévinas’ face-to-face relation stops at the human body and the rest is outline. Yet “the body conceals”, writes Deleuze, and “contains a hidden language”<sup>2</sup>.

The notion of humanity that follows from speciesism is what I call “blind solitude”. In this notion, we kill one life form born to blossom together with others in order to sustain another life form that is deeply alone and unconsciously blind. Being a speciesist (a necessary characteristic of the strongly anthropocentric human) means believing that pain can only be found in those who behave as humans do. Thinking of oneself as the only species that suffers seems the only possible justification for the anomaly of a life of continuous pain. Here, the idea of the animal as an automaton was more or less born: we essentially feel envy for the animal and, hence, for those outside the enclosure. We think or sometimes we hope that the animal does not suffer, but we enact the senseless violence upon it. That is speciesism as a business. This notion of humanity, which emerges from the ethics of speciesism, feels special because it is one of suffering. The species that do not have the anguish of living on two legs must be punished. But everything, as it should be, is

---

<sup>2</sup> G. Deleuze, *Logic of sense* (1969), Feltrinelli, Milan 2005, p. 247.

complicated because “what the caterpillar calls the end of the world,” says Lao Tzu, “the rest of the world calls a butterfly.”

The logic of speciesism involves a fallacy that forces everyone to put their nose out of the circle we call humanity, once they understand the catch. Speciesism proposes that *if X is not the same species as Y, then it does not enjoy the same moral treatment*. It is fallacious because it immediately brings to mind analogies. As Peter Singer observed in his first books, the proposition could just as easily read *if X does not have the same sex as Y, then they do not enjoy the same moral treatment* and so on. From speciesism emerges a notion of humanity built on boundaries or borders: what is outside does not deserve respect and curiosity precisely because it is outside. Thus begins the first profile of anthropocentrism. A lonely person, poor in the world, poses no questions about the metaphysical diversity of life. They observe only that there are flowers, stones, and strange creatures around them. The consciously speciesist human asks few questions and, due to this blindness, accepts strange answers. Where does our food come from? Why is the planet increasingly massacred by pollution? What are our clothes made of and who are our drugs tested on? A world exists that is submerged or invisible. We choose not to see it, and this choice supports the visible world.

Trying to go from the physical to the metaphysical, the speciesist human denies and represses animality starting with their own. But what is it, animality, if it is anything at all? (Intuitively, it seems the property of being an animal). During the final phase of his thinking, Jacques Derrida gave a famous speech for the Adorno Prize in 2001 arguing that animality was the fundamental entity with which the philosophy of the future should have contended. Here we are, around fifteen years later, doing just that. First, I define animality *prima facie* as the necessary but hidden (opaque) property of

specialized human life forms. Second, I define animality as the presence of oneself – a topic that will appear on every page of this book. The speciesist human has repressed their animality and denied that of animals. This supports the lawfulness of the “human and animal” conjunction.

But the conjunction, which is often understood as a (exclusive) disjunction, is simply not there. Why? The simple answer is that there is nothing to divide. The animal, or rather the word “animal”, compresses everything within itself and distorts the perception of biodiversity. The more complex answer is that logically, one of the two conjuncts is false so the conjunction necessarily disintegrates. If the conjunction also compresses us, who pretend to be inside the enclosure, things would not be so terrible. Being part of all animals is an excellent point of departure before starting to differentiate species with articulated taxonomies. On the contrary, speciesist humanity places itself within a privileged ontological condition by positioning one particular social world (the one built by *Homo sapiens*) as the only possible world. Here, a social ontology collides with the whole ontology. When philosophy tries to confront an articulated topic such as this, it is often not enough in itself. Rather, philosophy requires an expected intruder. As the ancient Chinese proverb says, “One ant may well destroy an entire dam”<sup>3</sup>.

The second paradox is as follows: a humanity that consciously chooses speciesism is deeply rational. This is not so much because humanity exercises reason properly, but because it makes reason its distinctive feature. Within the image of the human that I am exploring here, reason is technically the cut, the divide, across the living: we think, therefore we are. And what is that human activity

---

<sup>3</sup> P. Apsein, *Chinese Proverbs. The ancient oriental wisdom to meditate*, Biesse - Brancato, Catania 2009, p. 15.

through which reason is exercised as an end in itself? Philosophy. It turns out that philosophy, which opposes speciesism, essentially attacks itself. At the very least, it attacks Western philosophy (and I will return to this philosophical geography later).

In fact, speciesism is a use of reason as a not indifferent virtue. The human speaks; the animal does not. The human thinks; the animal does not. The human is self-conscious; the animal is not. The circus of stereotypes, although falsified on several occasions by specialist literature regarding studies on animal cognition<sup>4</sup>, is not afraid of anything. But there is also a side of speciesism that uses reason specifically to undermine the stereotype that reason distinguishes us from animals. Ironically, it has even more speciesistic outcomes that we must confront immediately. This is because it is the first difference that I will bring out between different approaches to overcoming humanism. This first difference is between the posthuman model (which I defend at the end of this text) and other models. Among these latter ones, the most famous is obviously the *Übermensch* or superman.

Despite defending a kind of superanthropocentrism, Friedrich Nietzsche was a great critic of a certain anthropocentrism. He was also a theorist of animality and its recovery in various (not always happy) forms. His idea is that the human being must recover animality before becoming a superman. Animality can be recovered by learning to use power like that of birds of prey: hit and terrify the prey (eliminate morals). Nietzsche's argument further characterizes the image of man that emerges from speciesism. If you indeed recover animality, opening up the fence of anthropocentrism, you do it only and always for the recovery of instincts and the basic

---

<sup>4</sup> On the subject I refer to L. Caffo, *In the Corridors of Animal Minds*, in "Journal of Animal Ethics", IV (2014), n. 1, pp. 103-8.

functions of the animal that we are. Being a speciesist, says Nietzsche, means acting according to nature. Everything is prey and predation. We eat and are eaten. Likewise, every form of asceticism (such as vegetarianism, which Nietzsche mocks several times in his *The Gay Science*) mortifies the essential structure of our form of life. Thus, speciesism becomes a two-faced Janus. We are either solitary and without animals, or an animal among animals (*homo homini lupus*).

In this sense, speciesism is a narrative that describes and prescribes our behavior. We have always slaughtered animals and technological advance has only increased the quality and quantity of this massacre. Continuing to do so is right, noble, and (as in Nietzsche) could even be a preferential passage to a future humanity. Here, there emerges a humanity that distances itself by philosophical choice from everything that cannot be said to be human. The planet is thus not merely our home; instead, the planet is ours. Without this awareness, anthropocentrism would be nothing because, trivially, nothing would be coherent. To act as we act, we need a frame that orients our actions – and speciesism is the frame of all the frames. The great ethical challenges that characterize the present, from deep ecology to the radical feminism that rightly wants to eradicate the inferior position women in many of contemporary societies, all have the same limit: what is not human is simply absent.

Speciesism, honestly, is the limit of all morals. All is well among those with whom you must be, of course, but what about those tens of billions of animals massacred every year? The conscious speciesist closes his eyes, keeps his back straight, and remains still in his anthropocentrism. To him, we humans are everything. Yet one day, sooner or later, they happen to meet the gaze of an animal or feel that a tree is more than a source of timber. When they do, something



breaks. Philosophy becomes wider to take on a point of view that does not belong to it. “the animal looks at us and we are naked in front of him. Thinking, perhaps, starts right here”<sup>5</sup>.

### **SHORT NOTE: What is antispeciesism?**

Antispeciesism is the opposite of speciesism in the sense that the emerging world is literally a reversal of the speciesist one. Antispeciesism is said to deal with the “between” of things<sup>6</sup>. From an ethical point of view, it is simply the position that denies speciesism’s solid arguments of resistance. Essentially, belonging to a species different from ours is not in itself ratification for a different moral treatment. The arguments for which we respect humans then apply to all other animals, given they are good arguments. The boons of this theory, which was espoused by thinkers such as Peter Singer, Paola Cavalieri, and Tom Regan in its first formulation, all lie in the ability not to be a simple moral animalism. That is, it takes care (in a more or less sophisticated way) of the fate of non-human animals. Antispeciesism is the crisis of anthropocentrism in its ethical connotations, as Tiziano Terzani better explains: “All society is built to give a chord to violence: and violence generates violence. For this reason, even my vegetarianism is a moral choice”<sup>7</sup>. If one wants to go against violence, which is a typical expression of anthropocentrism, one needs to question violence as such. One of the most heinous and perhaps the most senseless uses of violence is the one *Homo sapiens* dedicates to animals.

---

<sup>5</sup> J. Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2006), edited by M.-L. Mallet, Jaca Book, Milan 2006, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> For this notion, see chapter i of G. Clément, *The environment alternative* (2014), Quodlibet, Macerata 2015.

<sup>7</sup> *Anam the nameless. The last interview with Tiziano Terzani*, edited by M. Zanot, Longanesi, Milan 2005.

Being antispeciesist means considering one's own life less "proper" than we are used to thinking. Life exists in its infinite and passing forms. We think of antispeciesism as the idea that the life of others cannot be abused. Within antispeciesism, we think of others as possessing a body regardless of the animal form this body assumes: "the animal was the other, the stranger [...] did not appear individual"<sup>8</sup>.

### **Which kind of humanity follows from antispeciesism?**

The picture of humanity that follows antispeciesism is an open construction site. I have proposed a weak approach to this theory<sup>9</sup>. In my approach, the conceptual assumption of the animal's point of view departs from the human one. This is needed to break the barrier of anthropocentrism. Consciously antispeciesist humanity (which is rare, but exists nonetheless) lives in the world with awareness of being one of countless living beings. Humanity is not qualitatively superior to others, but strong in its specific responsibility. Unfortunately, we are the only species that consumes this planet for many more resources than needed for survival.

When Singer first uses the term antispeciesism in a technical way, he presumably does so because he believes he must attack a prejudice. This prejudice claims that species diversity leads to thinking about moral diversity. Singer analyzes the claim through analogies with sexism or racism, and observes that its structure contains the vice of believing extrinsic or biological qualities to be ethical ones. The history of antispeciesism as a narrative is a recent one – too recent. It

---

<sup>8</sup> C. Pavese, *The job of living. Diary 1936-1950*, Einaudi, Turin 2014, p. 301.

<sup>9</sup> On several occasions, but for a quick articulation of his assumptions: L. Caffo, *Weak antispeciesism*, in M. Andreozzi, S. Catiglione and A. Massaro (ed.), *Animal emotions. Research and disciplines compared*, led, Milan 2013, pp. 77-88.

is therefore a history of islands: humanity organized into pockets of containment for violence that is contested at the root. This history is populated with associations, animal shelters, demonstrations, and the regulation of personal behavior that have no value aside from the value of civil disobedience. Antispeciesism makes manifest the practical and revolutionary value of certain forms of thought. In this case, however, the criticism exercised towards the social world is unfortunately complex. The humanity that emerges is uncertain because it is unpredictable.

We have always positioned ourselves in opposition to animality. Our story inevitably coincides with the distance we place between ourselves on the one hand, and animals and nature on the other. In this sense, antispeciesism is the demolition of a fence whose exterior we have never seen except through mental experimentation. At this point, it's up to you to imagine it.

What is *possible* thus rightfully falls within our field of investigation: what would life look like for a humanity that respects the animality of others along with its own? Without this imaginative passage, anthropocentrism remains firm. This is because it passes from human actions. The limits we impose around the possibilities for our actions set the boundaries for our possible worlds. The idea we call antispeciesism then has some practical consequences that should never be mistaken for causes.

From this moment on, we will begin to define the contemporary posthuman through images and suggestions. These will be connected in a complete outline through a path that intentionally departs from previous models. We think, stereotypically, of the image of the Zen monk. We then immediately move away to the image of the posthuman as a half-robot human that emerges from a

philosophical literature confusing posthumanism with transhumanism<sup>10</sup>. Antispeciesism attacks anthropocentrism and contributes to the development of posthumanism through ethics. These ethics are, as too often has been said, imbalanced when it comes to customs and consumption. But they are also, above all, attentive to the observation of animality as “presence to oneself”. Antispeciesism is not only denial of the species boundary as a moral boundary, but a recovery of animality. This is accomplished in an equal and opposite manner as that prescribed by Nietzsche.

Let's start from afar, from proposition 6.4311 of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Clearly carrying a mystical flavor, the proposition states that “he who lives in the present lives eternally”. But who is it that lives in the present, mysticism aside? He who, devoid of memory (or at least long-term memory), does not possess a consciousness that allows him to think about himself in the past or project himself into the future. Children would be good candidates for such, but they are counted in eternal time; they grow up, they become adults, they remember and hope. They are mortal and, therefore, doomed to despair. Where Wittgenstein saw a resource, Martin Heidegger complained of a limit. For Heidegger, only the animal lives in an eternal present. This present lacks the temporality added to the *being* that is the basis of *being-there*. Here, the animal cannot die. But if we put the two arguments together, the limit is quickly circumvented: the animal does not die because it lives in the present and is therefore eternal. Like the Borges tiger, “in his world there are no names and no past, nor future, only a true instant”<sup>11</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> A happy island in this sense, where the distinction is clear, is G. Leghissa, *Posthuman by choice*, Mimesis, Milan-Udine 2015.

<sup>11</sup> J. L. Borges, *The other tiger* (1960), in id., *Poems* (1923-1976), trad. by L. Bacchi Wilcock, Rizzoli, Milan 1980, p. 121.

Still, we overlook the fact that there are many animals. As we know from cognitive ethology, some (think primates) have the ability to represent themselves not only in space but also in time. So instead, we can consider animality a property that I call the “absolute presence to oneself”. It expresses the problems of anthropocentric humanism (and of humanity, by extension), which derive largely from the inability to live in the “here and now”. Antispeciesism is grafted on the resolution of this inability. It is not an ethical movement for its own sake, but as part of the metaphysical process that leads to the posthuman. The Zen monk is the model for antispeciesism due to the form of life it expresses. The monk seeks peace in awareness of the moment and accepts its limits. So what do we learn from animality? The answer is a negation: nature, which is common to living with humanity, has been conceptually eliminated by humanity.

Human beings live within a narrative that allows us to simplify a justification for our actions in the present and in the future. Paradoxically, speciesism is a positive narrative where we can do this or that without caring for the fate of animals as they lack moral status. But antispeciesism is a narrative that is absolutely negative if it is an end in itself. In this narrative, we cannot do this or we cannot do that because animals suffer. The idea of the world that is expressed in antispeciesism, whatever its form, is simply incorrect. We don’t need something that expresses a more or less articulated set of totems and taboos. Rather, we need a possible alternative world compared to the one that is criticized. In this sense, the image of humanity that emerges from antispeciesism is useful as part of a larger whole – but useless if left to its solitary destiny. The antispeciesism that I use is a weak one: it is necessary to weaken arguments that are not aimed at eliminating the pain of the animals (such as respecting them for ecological, political, health-giving

reasons, etc.). In this way, the power of the conclusion is strengthened. Animality must be unleashed, like Nietzsche's dancing star, beyond any possible forecast.

## **The first transformation**

The antispeciesist pill has a bitter taste. Once taken, its effects are apparently devastating. For one, it acts on sight so what was invisible becomes evident. The social world, regulated by us, is revealed as basically a slaughterhouse. Meaningless death authorized by speciesism lies everywhere around us. If we understand that it is possible to live without harming the billions of animals we slaughter every year, what pushes us to continue on? We have the economy, politics, and tradition, of course – but that's not enough. Our image of humanity, a recent invention of the social sciences according to Michel Foucault, is a hologram projected on a wall without shadows. Indeed, being a speciesist helps happiness (a bitter topic that no antispeciesist philosopher has ever wanted to analyze): the simple awareness of being unique and special is wonderful. In this view, everything else is ontological furnishing. From prehistory to contemporary times, the flavor of meat has made the human being a more noble descendant than the cannibal in fur. This flavor is much more than a panacea for the palate. It is an anesthetic for the soul and here is where the image of the monk returns. This is because if you move the axis of happiness from needs, where it has always been, you must find another place to orient it. A simple meal or a humble life in harmony with nature do not seem to be able to compete with the manager's American dream of enjoying his hamburger while watching an NBA game on television. If even the most speculative and theoretical philosophy fails to consider an overall revolution in the image of humanity that we call "Western wellbeing" (but which is actually a massacre of