
1. The central claim of the article
[Section 1: The central issue]

A human-centered ethics, based on a concept of human dignity, is not necessarily speciesist (“anthropocentric” in the “bad” sense), as Peter Singer and other animal liberationists claim (pp.1-2).

2. Argument
[Section 2: The argument against]

A. Setting the argument in context: history of the opposing argument and rise of the term “speciesism” (pp.2-4). The emergence of animal liberation alongside environmental ethics. However, environmental ethics owed its initial success to its human-centered nature (i.e. environmental damage to food crops).

B. However, against the concept of speciesism being applied to an ethics of human dignity: (i) all ethics (speciesist and non-speciesist) are epistemologically human-centered, because it is human beings who reason ethically; (ii) it is not speciesist to make a claim for human dignity, because doing so does not mean disregarding other creatures as having no moral worth (p.4).

Glossary: “epistemology” – the philosophy of knowledge; what is truth? what can we know? how do we know that we know it? how do we acquire knowledge?

[Section 3: The argument for]

C. Setting the argument in context again: history behind Kirchhoffer’s own argument and the rise of the concept of “human dignity.” The concept of human dignity arose in international law (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) in an effort to prevent the atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust recurring. Human dignity has been applied to the rewriting of the South African constitution to prevent relapses of the racism of the Apartheid (pp.4-6).

[Section 4: The argument against]

D. Kirchhoffer’s main arguing partner, Peter Singer, says that ethics asserting human dignity are speciesist, because they oppose the killing of human beings (particularly foetuses, the old, the dying, infants) while condoning the mass killing of animals for meat. According to Singer, this reprehensible when the animals being killed have more “capacities” than the human beings who are protected (p.7).

E. Kirchhoffer’s response: clarification of the term “human dignity”: is this dignity based upon species membership or some capacity; is it something human beings are born with do they acquire this dignity? (Table 1 and pp.7-9).

[Section 5: The argument against]

F. Singer’s proposal: in ethical discourse, replace “human dignity” with “dignity of persons.” Singer defines “person” on the basis of sentience, i.e. capacity to feel pain or pleasure, which gives that
creature a moral “interest” in avoiding pain. This has the following consequence: not all humans are persons, not all persons are human (p.10).

G. Kirchhoffer’s counter-argument: (i) Singer’s proposal is reductionist – it reduces “dignity” to the notion of suffering itself when dignity actually refers to the worth the being who is suffering; (ii) Singer’s proposal appeals to the lowest common denominator, which does not help sorting out competing interests; (iii) Singer’s proposal does not avoid speciesism, because of the problem of where to draw the line of moral worth between different beings (rational vs. non-rational, sentient vs. non-sentient, living vs. non-living, etc.) (pp.10-12).

[Section 6: The argument for]

H. Kirchhoffer’s main argument: human dignity should be based upon the human being as “multidimensional.” The steps of his argument: (i) all ethics are epistemologically human-centered (i.e. based upon human ways of thinking), because it is human beings who ask the ethical questions; (ii) human beings are complex, multidimensional creatures, so “human dignity” should be thought as both inherent and acquired, based upon both species membership and capacities; (iii) human beings are moral beings – as beings of moral worth, our interactions with the natural environment and animal world should be morally responsible (pp.12-16).

3. Conclusion
[Section 7: Summing up]

a. Being human-centered does not mean one has to discriminate against other species (pp.16-17).

b. Multidimensionality means those human beings without certain capacities still have the full moral worth of being human (p.18).

c. However, the multidimensionality of human beings means they have a duty of care to other species and to the environment (p.18).