“Concise, incisive, and written with exemplary clarity, this book provides all of the background necessary to understand the philosophical and political stakes of current debates around the status of animals in relation to humans. It will appeal to non-specialists and specialists alike.”

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“A major work of synthesis that makes sense of the already almost unsurveyable field of critical animal studies. Practical and pragmatic, yet carrying a strong theoretical punch, it will be a point of reference for future discussions in the field.”

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“Surveying the disparate and sometimes rocky terrain of animal studies from Aristotle through Haraway with grace and insight, this little book synthesizes an abundance of material, movements, and positions in a breathtaking, not to mention extremely helpful, manner.”

KELLY OLIVER, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

The rapidly expanding field of critical animal studies now offers a myriad of theoretical and philosophical positions from which to choose. This timely book provides an overview and analysis of the most influential of these trends. Approachable and concise, it is intended for readers sympathetic to the project of changing our ways of thinking about and interacting with animals yet relatively new to the variety of philosophical ideas and figures in the discipline. It uses three rubrics—identity, difference, and indistinction—to differentiate three major paths of thought about animals. The identity approach aims to establish continuity among human beings and animals as a basis for grant-animals equal access to the ethical and political community. The difference framework views the animal world as containing its own richly complex and differentiated modes of existence in order to allow for a more expansive ethical and political worldview. The indistinction approach argues that we should abandon the notion that humans are unique in order to explore new ways of conceiving human-animal relations. Each approach is interrogated for its relative strengths and weaknesses, with specific emphasis placed on the kinds of transformational potential it contains.

MATTHEW CALARCO is Associate Professor of Philosophy at California State University, Fullerton.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to provide a brief account of some of the central theoretical and philosophical trends in the rapidly expanding field of critical animal studies. As work in critical animal studies has come increasingly into contact with different disciplines and social movements, I have received numerous requests for such a book from students, colleagues, correspondents, and activists involved in various social justice struggles. These individuals are generally committed to rethinking our attitudes toward and interactions with animals but tend to be relatively new to the wide variety of theoretical frameworks and positions on offer in the field. I have written this book with that specific audience in mind. As such, my aim here is neither to persuade the reader of the necessity for basic changes in our ideas and practices involving animals, nor is it to provide a general introduction to the wide variety of interdisciplinary topics that are discussed in the field. Other authors have carried out such work ably and admirably.¹ What I do aim to provide is a basic theoretical grid that will help readers gain access to some of the main philosophical themes in critical animal studies so they can eventually take up the original works in more depth on their own.
I have used the term “critical animal studies” here, which has become the dominant label for the kind of perspective adopted in this book. Critical animal studies is often distinguished from other approaches to animal issues, such as animal studies, animal ethics, and so on, with critical animal studies understood as being more explicitly and radically political and the latter approaches as moderately political or even apolitical. I will not place a great deal of weight on this distinction in what follows, as I would suggest that transformative potential regarding animal issues can be found in various approaches to animal studies and even in discourses that are not explicitly radical. Moreover, given the interdisciplinary and intersectional nature of much of the work done in critical animal studies, there is a need to engage with a wide array of traditions, texts, and strategies that go well beyond the particular theoretical traditions that are sometimes thought exclusively to undergird the field. That being said, the line of thought I pursue here is animated primarily by the same kinds of ethical and political concerns characteristic of people working in critical animal studies. Thus, I explain each of the frameworks on their own terms, but my critical assessments of them are driven by what I take to be their respective ethical and political potentials and shortcomings.

Perhaps a note on my personal involvement in struggles for animal justice will help to explain further the orientation that I take in the book. I first started to learn about the factory farming system, experimentation on animals, and other forms of animal exploitation in my mid-teens. Shortly thereafter I became a vegan, and I have been passionately involved in animal justice and related social justice movements ever since. Over the past two and a half decades I have worked with activists and organizations of all sorts, from small collectives and local grassroots struggles to large national and international organizations and campaigns. I doubt that a single day has passed in that time when I have not given something of my time and energies to animal issues. My hope has always been to contribute something to those groups and organizations that make concrete changes in the lives of animals and that provide animals with the space for richer and more joyful lives.

At the same time, I have found it necessary to reflect critically and theoretically—which is to say, philosophically—upon the kinds of frameworks and strategies that have become dominant in pro-animal politics. When one is deeply involved in political struggles, it can be hard to detect lingering dogmas or shortcomings inside those struggles. Philosophy and other fields of critical thought provide us with tools that help to identify some of these limitations and thereby to create the conditions for living and thinking differently. The frameworks analyzed here all have this kind of potential in differing ways and to differing degrees. Thus, even as I am critical of certain ideas and positions, I am not dismissive of the thinkers and activists who have formulated them. I have learned a great deal from all of them, and I believe that they all have important things to offer us in the present.

As you read through the chapters that follow, I hope you will take the same charitable approach to the frameworks under discussion. The main goal should be not simply to assess each framework in view of its internal coherence or argumentative rigor and accept or reject it accordingly. Instead, I would suggest trying to get inside—to inhabit—each perspective in an open and charitable manner. Linger with each perspective for a while, and explore how it might allow us to think differently and, more important, how it might enable us—both humans and animals—to live differently.

Allow me to provide in closing a brief overview of the chapters you are about to read. I recommend reading the chapters in order, as they build on one another in important ways. In Chapter 1, I examine the key notions that constitute the foundation for many of the modern movements for animal liberation and
animal rights. I call this approach to animal issues the identity approach, inasmuch as it founds its ethical and political frameworks on human-animal identity. While identity theorists do not maintain that human beings and animals are identical in every respect, they do argue that our shared evolutionary history has given rise to fundamental similarities in terms of certain ethically relevant traits, such as sentience, subjectivity, and intentionality. If we accept the basic ethical principle of treating likes alike, then this would imply, identity theorists argue, that we need fundamentally to rethink our attitudes toward and interactions with animals who are similar to human beings in ethically relevant ways. I close the chapter with an examination of the central ethical and political upshots of this framework as well as some of its critical limitations.

Chapter 2 engages with the difference approach to animal studies found in the writings of philosopher Jacques Derrida and related theorists. Difference theorists in general tend to have a critical relation to standard conceptions of human nature and ethics and seek to develop in their place a more relational conception of human beings based on the radical singularity, or radical difference, of individuals. Pro-animal theorists in this tradition have noted that these critical reworkings of our basic ideas about human nature and ethics also call into question traditional ideas about the human/animal distinction and ethical relations with animals. They argue that a thought of difference, when pursued in view of its implications for animals, can generate an expansive notion of ethics that acknowledges the importance of human-animal relations and that respects the singularity of animals. While this framework offers many important insights as well as correctives to other animal philosophies, I suggest that it contains certain shortcomings in terms of its approach to the human/animal distinction and its politics.

Chapter 3 examines the indistinction approach, which aims to think about human-animal relations in a manner that deempha-
accounts of animal behavior are guilty of unjustified anthropomorphism; other critics argue that there are different, multifactoria: ways of distinguishing human beings from animals that would answer some of these challenges to human uniqueness. We need not wade into the fine details of these debates here. But we can note that, however the debates turn out with regard to any given claim concerning animal behavior, it is clear that facile attempts to maintain that all human beings are exclusively in possession of some particular trait or set of traits that nonhuman animals lack (language, self-consciousness, tool use, awareness of death, or some other capacity) are becoming ever less tenable.

PHILOSOPHICAL ANIMALS

The fundamental breakdown in the effort to delimit sharply human beings from animals is an important intellectual and scientific development for the philosophers and theorists discussed in this chapter. They view their own work as carrying through on the philosophical implications of this event. And in so doing, they also see themselves as working in opposition to a long-standing, dogmatic tendency within the Western philosophical tradition to deny fundamental similarities among human beings and animals. Now, to state that philosophy has traditionally been dogmatic about animals might seem strange at first blush, for what attracts many people to philosophy is its insistence on rigorously calling into question the dogmas and unthinking prejudices of its time. And, while philosophy’s historical reputation for being a leading voice of critical thought is often wholly deserved, on the issue of the distinction between humans and animals and the ethical worth of animals, it has unfortunately and frequently failed to live up to its more admirable ideals. In fact, in many ways, philosophy in the Western tradition has been one of the chief architects in constructing the traditional philosophical and ethical dogmas we have inherited concerning animals.
Consider, for example, one of the founding figures of ancient Greek philosophy, Aristotle. According to Aristotle, animals are best understood as belonging to a naturalistic schema in which they are situated between plants and human beings and as being ultimately (if not entirely) placed in the service of human beings. In Aristotle's schema, plants have life, animals have life and perception, and human beings have both characteristics along with rationality (the Greek word for rationality here is logos, a rich term referring to the capacity for discursive language, reason, and other similar traits). Given this ascending scale of the complexity of life, and given that nature makes nothing "in vain," Aristotle suggests that it is evident "that plants are for the sake of animals, and that the other animals are for the sake of human beings, domestic ones both for using and eating, and most but not all wild ones for food and other kinds of support, so that clothes and the other tools may be got from them."3

Animals' lack of rationality also leads Aristotle to insist that they are not genuinely political. Animals are equipped only with "voice" (phoné, akin to mere sound or code), which is capable of expressing pleasure and pain but is insufficient for political life. Human beings, by contrast, are capable of rational discourse (again, the Greek term is logos), a capacity that allows them to express "what is beneficial or harmful, and hence also what is just or unjust." As Aristotle goes on to note, "[i]t is peculiar to human beings, in comparison to the other animals, that they alone have perception of what is good or bad, just or unjust, and the rest. And it is community in these that makes a household and a city-state."4 Aristotle’s teleological schema and his claims about animal capacities might appear, from our contemporary perspective, rather outmoded; but his assertions that animals lack rationality and can be seen as resources for human beings have nevertheless dominated the vast majority of subsequent philosophical discourse in the West up to the present.

Another influential discourse on the human/animal distinction is provided by the founding figure of modern Western philosophy, René Descartes. Starting from mechanistic premises, Descartes argues that animals (although alive and capable of sensation) are essentially indistinguishable from machines and that their behavior can be fully explained without recourse to notions such as mind and self-awareness. Animals in his account are complex automata, beings that can react to external stimuli but lack the ability to know that such reactions are taking place.

Cognizant that this kind of mechanistic explanatory framework might sweep up human behavior within its scope, Descartes maintains that even though human bodies can be largely explained using the same premises, we are uniquely co-constituted by a second substance, mind, by which he means rational, discursive, reflective self-consciousness. Proof of the lack of humanlike mind in animals, Descartes argues, is to be found in the dual fact that animals are able neither to "make their thoughts understood" through language nor to solve problems in creative and novel ways beyond the mechanical "disposition of their organs."5 Given that animals lack mind and a sense of self, experimenting on them (for which Descartes is notorious) and killing them for food pose no ethical problems. As Descartes notes in a letter to Henry More, his position "is not so much cruel to animals as indulgent to human beings... since it absolves them from the suspicion of crime when they eat or kill animals."6 As with Aristotle, Descartes's ideas about the human/animal distinction appear rather untenable today, given what we now know about animal cognition. Yet the notion that there is a sharp difference between human beings and animals; that rationality, mind, and self-consciousness are the chief markers of that difference; and that such differences justify the exclusion of animals from ethical consideration are ideas that remain hegemonic in certain quarters today.

Let's consider one final example of traditional, Western philosophical ideas about the human/animal distinction, this one from the famous Enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant. As is
the case with Aristotle and Descartes, Kant denies that animals possess rationality and self-consciousness. Indeed, it is the human capacity to think and act reflectively and rationally that, according to Kant, renders human beings altogether different in “rank and dignity” from all animal and other nonrational beings and that disallows us from reducing human beings merely to the status of instruments to be used for accomplishing our projects.7

Kant insists that inasmuch as animals lack autonomy and moral agency, they can be justifiably used as mere instruments, as mere means to human ends, whether in the form of food or as subjects of painful experiments. To be sure, he does not believe that the lack of autonomy among animals licenses human beings to treat them in any way they might see fit. Departing from Descartes, Kant cautions us against unnecessarily cruel treatment of animals, recognizing that “animal nature has analogies to human nature” and that an animal who has served humans well “deserves reward.”8 But his chief concern here is not with what violence toward animals does to animals themselves; rather, his worry is that mistreatment of animals might lead to the mistreatment of other human beings. Hence, Kant argues for the necessity of cultivating “tender feelings toward dumb animals” that will ultimately assist us in “developing humane feelings toward mankind.”9 With Kant, then, we find yet another philosophical framework that seeks to justify the exclusion of animals from the ethical and political community based on their supposed lack of a particular capacity.

This very brief overview of three central philosophers’ views on the human/animal distinction illustrates the claim made earlier that many of the major figures in the tradition have offered rather disappointing and uninspiring ideas about animals and their ethical standing. Not only have influential philosophers repeated many of the anthropocentric tendencies of the dominant culture, but in many cases they have sought to provide a rigorous justification for many of our most violent modes of inter-

action with animals. There are certainly instances in the history of Western philosophy of counter-discourses that challenge anthropocentrism and that question injustice toward animals, so we ought not paint an entirely negative picture of philosophy on the issue.10 However, it must be said that mainstream Western philosophy has served as more of an obstacle than an aid in helping us to think critically about the human/animal distinction and our attitudes toward animals.

NEO-DARWINIAN ONTOLOGY

So, how might we begin to break out of the intellectual and practical framework inherited from the dominant discourses in the Western philosophical tradition? The pro-animal philosophers we examine in the remainder of this chapter argue that the path beyond this limited framework is twofold. The first step is to update our ontology of the human/animal distinction. (By “ontology” is meant an account of the basic structure of and relations among beings, of the “basic fabric” of things; in the case at hand, the kind of ontology at issue concerns how human beings and animals are constituted and related.) The second step is to construct an ethics that does justice to this revised view of animal existence, an ethics that doesn’t simply seek to justify the status quo but endeavors to correct the dogmas and critical limitations that structure our ways of thinking about and interacting with animals. Let’s examine these two steps in turn.

In terms of the human/animal distinction, the philosophers we’re examining here all share an ontological perspective influenced by Charles Darwin that stresses the fundamental continuities found among human beings and animals. Rather than maintaining a sharp break between human and animal life (as Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant all do), Darwin places human beings squarely among animals, arguing that it is only human arrogance that would allow us to think we have non-animal,
non-natural origins. Darwin is at great pains to demonstrate the phylogenetic continuity of all animals with life as a whole, and he stresses that there is “no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties.” To this end, Darwin seeks to demonstrate the similar emotional and behavioral lives of human beings and animals, thereby anticipating much of the cognitive ethological work mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The image of human beings we receive from Darwin is thus one in which we fit squarely within and at the very late edge of a multipronged branch on the tree of life. In biologist Stephen Jay Gould’s illustrative phrase, human beings should be seen as a “tiny, late-arising twig on life’s enormously arborescent bush.”

That we should find such deep continuity among life-forms as a whole, and among human beings and animals in particular, should come as no surprise if we start from an evolutionary perspective. One of Darwin’s chief insights is that differences between humans and animals are best explained as differences of degree rather than of kind. There are no huge leaps, abysses, or breaks between species; rather, humans, animals, and all life-forms are participating in the same story of life’s evolution, a story that stretches back some 3.5 billion years. Although, as a vestige of the philosophical and religious traditions of the West, we tend to think of “the human” as forming a separate, natural kind with certain essential traits that we uniquely possess, evolutionary biology has taught us to be critical of that way of thinking. To locate traits that are universally distributed among the human species but that do not appear to some degree in other species would be highly unusual; and even if such a trait or cluster of traits was to be found only among the human species, such a situation would be, as philosopher of biology David Hull notes, temporary and contingent. For identity theorists the chief lesson to derive from this evolutionary perspective is that a shift needs to be made away from a parochial focus on human unique-

ness toward an understanding of how many basic human traits are found throughout the animal world. Identity theorists do not, of course, argue that human beings and animals are similar or identical in every single respect; but they do insist, on evolutionary grounds, that there is often a deep continuity among human beings and animals with respect to certain ethically salient traits and capacities, such as sentience, cognition, subjectivity, and so on. We will examine a few of these shared, ethically relevant traits in more detail later.

**Equal Consideration of Interests**

The second step used to overcome traditional dogmas concerning animals is the deployment of the principle of *equal consideration of interests*. This principle is common to many ethical frameworks—in fact, many philosophers consider it to be the founding gesture of ethics per se. The basic idea behind the principle is that equal ethical consideration should be given to interests that are relevantly similar, regardless of the individual whose interests they might be. In pro-animal theorist Gary Francione’s terms, equal consideration means “treating likes alike.” Thus, if an animal has interests (for example, in not being harmed, or not being removed from a particular habitat), the principle of equal consideration of interests suggests that we are called to take those interests into account in our ethical deliberations. The principle also implies that no argument is actually needed for extending ethical consideration to animals; they and all other beings who have interests deserve ethical consideration as a matter of principle. The burden of providing argumentation and reasons lies, instead, with those who deny consideration to animals (or any other individual who has interests). If we were to override or ignore animals’ interests, to treat their lives as mere means to our ends (to use Kant’s language), this principle suggests that we would need compelling reasons for doing so.
To underscore the point made in the previous section, it is important to remember that pro-animal theorists who work within a neo-Darwinian framework do not wish to argue that human beings and animals are identical in every respect, only that there are certain similarities or identities present among human beings and animals that are ethically relevant. In this case, what human beings and animals both share are interests. Thus, if ethics asks us to take the interests of others into account, and if animals have interests, then we would need some nonarbitrary, compelling reason for not including animals’ interests in our deliberations. When we arbitrarily override other human beings’ interests—perhaps because of differences in their race, class, gender, or intellectual limitations—that is said to indicate an unjustifiable prejudice (racism, classism, and so on). The same is true if we override the interests of animals simply because they are not members of our species; the unjustifiable prejudice here would be a kind of speciesism, or granting of unjustified privilege to our own species. At bottom, then, the principle of equal consideration of interests is used to claim that beings who are identical or fundamentally similar in ethically relevant ways deserve identical or fundamentally similar consideration. It is primarily this focus on the fundamental identity and similarity of humans and animals along ethical lines that gives rise to the label of identity I am using to describe the pro-animal philosophers of this chapter. Let’s now turn to a brief examination of the work of three of the most influential philosophers who employ this approach: Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and Paola Cavalieri.

**Philosophies of Human-Animal Identity**

Peter Singer, an animal liberationist philosopher, works in the utilitarian ethical tradition of such thinkers as Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Henry Sidgwick. As a utilitarian, Singer argues that the chief ethical task is to maximize utility, or in more common language, to bring about “the greatest good for the greatest number.” Sometimes referred to as the Greatest Happiness Principle, this utilitarian norm aims at increasing in an impartial manner the amount of happiness, pleasure, or preference satisfaction among all of those who are affected by one’s actions. To be affected by another’s actions is to have some stake in how one is treated and to have preferences for one state of affairs over another. Utilitarians refer to this broad capacity for being affected, and the more specific capacity for feeling pleasure and pain, as being sentient.

We commonly and uncontroversially attribute sentience to most human beings and consider this trait important for questions of ethical consideration; but the key question in the context of our discussion is whether animals are sentient and belong to the community of those who are affected by one’s actions. Consistent with Darwinian premises, Singer views sentience as an evolutionary adaptation and argues that it is found not just among human beings but among a wide variety of animals as well. The shared sentient condition of human beings and animals would thus entail that, when one is engaged in ethical deliberation, animals are also deserving of having their interests equally taken into account. In other words, Singer combines an ontology of sentient human-animal continuity with the ethical principle of equal consideration to arrive at the conclusion that all sentient animals—whether human or nonhuman—are equal.

If we adopt this framework of equal consideration of interests for all sentient human and nonhuman animals, then serious questions arise concerning such practices as killing animals for food and experimenting on them for cosmetic testing and medical reasons. Can such practices be justified? Utilitarian theorists like Singer do not have absolute, ready-made answers for such questions, and no particular practice involving the causing of pain is ruled out as such in advance within this framework. We arrive at answers to questions about how to act ethically from the
that we typically grant such subjectivity to (most) human beings—but do animals also show signs of being subjects-of-a-life? Following evolutionary biological premises, Regan builds a detailed case for why we should believe that subjectivity is not the exclusive possession of human beings; and much of the recent work in cognitive ethology bears him out on this point. It must be said, though, that subjectivity is probably not found in this more complex form among many animals—a point that Regan concedes and one that has serious implications for the scope of this kind of animal ethics.

So, if subjectivity is not as broadly present among animals as sentence, why does Regan choose this criterion as being the one that is most ethically relevant? The reason is that Regan works within a different ethical tradition than Singer does—the ethical tradition of rights theory. Inspired by Kantian themes (but avoiding Kant’s exclusion of animals from direct ethical consideration), Regan’s version of rights theory views utilitarianism as a problematic ethical framework inasmuch as it is aggregative in determining the greatest good, thereby allowing certain individual rights sometimes to be overridden in the pursuit of the greatest good for the greatest number. Regan fears that in the case of animals such an approach encourages us to continue seeing animals as mere numbers or resources figuring in our calculative deliberations rather than as individual subjects with rights that ought not in principle be overridden.

The ultimate aim of Regan’s rights theory is to remove all human and animal subjects from the category of resources and commodities and to grant them inherent, noninstrumental value. Kant’s rights-based ethical theory effectively accomplishes this same aim with human subjects; and Regan argues there is no major barrier to extending the same basic notion of respect to animals insofar as many animals show evidence of having the same kind of subjectivity as human beings have. Of course, the implication of this kind of rights-based egalitarianism utilitarian perspective only by calculating whether a given action or practice maximizes utility. With regard to such practices as eating and experimenting on animals, Singer argues that our widespread and most common ways of engaging in these activities cannot be justified, inasmuch as they do not maximize aggregate utility. In eating animals and experimenting on them, we sacrifice their most important preferences and interests (among the most important interests would be avoiding the horrific pain often involved in these practices) in favor of our own interests that are comparatively trivial (trivial pleasures would include the enjoyment of eating meat, or the advantage of arriving at scientific knowledge through painful experiments that could likely be gained by other, noninvasive experimental means). One could imagine scenarios under which causing animals harm might, in fact, maximize utility; but, as Singer insists, such scenarios do not usually match the realities of the factory farming system or the real-world practices surrounding animal experimentation. As such, we must be prepared to rethink some of our most common interactions with animals in a profound way.

In line with Singer and other identity theorists, animal rights philosopher Tom Regan seeks to establish a fundamental evolutionary continuity between human beings and animals in regard to ethically relevant traits and then apply an egalitarian ethics in view of that shared trait. For Regan, though, the most ethically relevant property that human beings and animals share is subjectivity (or being a subject-of-a-life, to use Regan’s preferred term) rather than simple sentience. This more complex property includes having conscious preferences and the capacity to feel pleasure and pain, as well as the advanced abilities to “believe and feel things, recall and expect things.” For Regan, “all these dimensions of our life,” including “our continued existence or our untimely death,” these are things that Singer downplays in terms of their ethical importance regarding animals, are what give individuals their subjectivity and dignity. Regan would note
is an extremely rigoristic ethics, one that calls for the total abolition of all instrumental and disrespectful treatment of animals. In contradistinction to Singer's utilitarian approach, there are virtually no scenarios that one might construct within an animal rights framework where eating animals, hunting them for sport, experimenting on them, or using them for entertainment would be ethically justifiable. Such practices on the rights view would be ruled out in principle, whether or not they might maximize aggregate utility.  

Singer's and Regan's pro-animal, continuity-based, egalitarian approaches to animal ethics have been influential in reorienting philosophical discourse on animals away from many of the traditional dogmas that we examined previously. The appeal of their writings to those working outside professional philosophy has, however, been limited to a certain extent by the fact that the normative frameworks they use (utilitarianism, rights) are somewhat peculiar to academic philosophy and not necessarily shared by people who do not work in the field. Paola Cavalieri seeks to remedy that limitation by developing an animal ethics that shares many of the sentiments we find in Singer's and Regan's writings but that is grounded in a widely shared normative doctrine: the universal doctrine of human rights. Although this approach seems at first blush to be paradoxic (human rights for animals?), Cavalieri argues that human rights are, according to their own logic, not exclusively human.

Cavalieri employs the same basic argumentative strategy that we have seen in Singer and Regan. If we start from the idea that the doctrine of human rights is widely shared and should serve as our point of departure for ethical discourse, then we need to identify the ethically relevant characteristic or criterion that grants human beings access to the realm of rights holders. Cavalieri follows philosopher Alan Gewirth in suggesting that human rights are actually aimed at protecting very basic modes of intentionality and agency. In Cavalieri's words, intentionality is "characterized by the capacity to enjoy freedom and welfare, as well as life which is a precondition for them." If we were to choose another, more exacting criterion (say, higher-order rationality), we would risk drawing the line of inclusion too narrowly and excluding large numbers of human beings from rights protections.

But if human rights are aimed at protecting the intentional agency of human beings, why should we ignore the same characteristics when they appear in animals? Cavalieri argues, against Descartes and following Darwinian evolutionary premises, that intentional agency is not distributed exclusively among human beings but can be found elsewhere in the animal kingdom. And based on the basic notion of equal consideration, or "treating likes alike," it would seem patently inconsistent and unfair to respect intentional agency in human beings while ignoring the same capacity when it appears in nonhuman beings. Given that animals and human beings are relevantly similar or identical at the level of intentional agency, it turns out that human rights are not exclusively human but extend outward to include a wide number of animals as well. Cavalieri thus argues that the same basic rights to noninterference that are promised to human beings should be extended to animals and that animals should be protected from the routine institutional violence to which they are subjected. As does Regan, she urges that animals should be seen not as human property but as full and equal members of the moral community.

IDENTITY IN PRACTICE

The ethics of identity that we find in Singer, Regan, Cavalieri, and related animal ethicists has much to recommend it. With its stress on evolutionary continuity, it helps us gain a critical edge on the dogmatic binary conceptions of the human/animal distinction that we find repeated throughout much of the history of
Western philosophy and culture. And while this approach does not (as noted previously) require positing the full identity of human beings and animals in every respect, the idea that certain fundamentally relevant ethical characteristics (sentience, subjectivity, intentionality, and so on) are found in identical or similar forms among human beings and animals is a significant corrective to the counternecessity in the tradition toward human exceptionalism. Likewise, the arguments these philosophers make for consistency in our ethical reasoning—that is, for “treat

Another important advance that the identity approach offers is that it raises the question of moral considerability—that is, the question of who should count morally and why—with significant and destabilizing force. By raising direct questions concerning the ethical lines that are supposed to separate human beings from animals, identity-based theorists do not allow us to rest easily with a vaguely progressive “humanist” ethic that would purportedly include all human beings but leave animals outside the moral community. Though all of the major identity theorists share the progressive desire to establish an ethic that would include the vast majority of human beings, they demonstrate with admirable rigor that any such broadly constructed ethic will undoubtedly (if it is to be consistent in its reasoning) have to include animals within its scope.

Perhaps the most important implication of the identity-based approach is that it asks us to transform our individual and collective lives in the direction of achieving justice for animals. At the most basic level, we are being asked to challenge our speciesist prejudices and change our consumption patterns away from products that cause harm to animals (for example, we might make the ethical decision to become vegan or avoid using products that have been researched and developed by experimenting on animals). Some identity-based theorists have been tempted to limit political transformation primarily to these kinds of personal changes, urging us to see individual veganism and cruelty-free consumerism as the chief means whereby speciesism is challenged. I later offer some critical remarks in regard to this emphasis on personal ethics. But before I take up that point, I want to emphasize that many other identity-based activists have suggested (and I think rightly so) that we must turn our attention to the collective, political level and seek transformations there as well. Indeed, the ideas that we have been examining in this chapter—that humans and animals share much in common, that there are strong reasons to adopt a more egalitarian ethic toward animals, and so on—have formed the foundation for the work of many important animal welfare and animal rights organizations as well as for specific political and legal initiatives for animal justice. These ethically based political movements constitute perhaps the most important fruits of the identity approach.

One particularly noteworthy example of such legal-political initiatives is the Great Ape Project. Two of the authors considered here, Peter Singer and Paola Cavalieri, are founding members of this project, and Tom Regan has also contributed his own work and support to this initiative. The aim of the initiative is to “extend the community of equals to include all great apes: human beings, chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans.” The contributors argue that the foundation for this extension is located in the rich social, emotional, and cognitive lives shared by the great apes, the very characteristics that we appeal to for the inclusion of human beings within the moral community. Despite certain differences among the great apes, supporters of the Great Ape Project argue that there are fundamental continuity and identity among them in terms of ethically relevant traits. As such, supporters of the project call for the extension of basic human rights principles (including the right to life, the protection of individual liberty, and the prohibition of torture) to the
great apes. The ultimate goal is to have these basic rights for great apes enshrined in national and international law. In 2008, the Spanish Parliament passed a (nonbinding) motion to have its laws reflect the basic principles laid out in the Great Ape Project; and the hope is that other nations and international legal bodies will follow suit. At present, the basic framework developed by the philosophers and theorists discussed here has been the inspiration behind legislation that has helped curb invasive research on great apes in the United States and a number of European countries. Were such legislation expanded to include all of the principles laid out within the Great Ape Project, and were it adopted on a broadly national and international basis, it would mark a monumental departure from the status quo treatment of animals in most industrialized nations.

**THE PROBLEM OF LOGOCENTRISM**

Despite these and other merits of the identity-based approach, there are crucial limitations to this way of thinking about and framing human-animal interactions. One limitation concerns the lingering logocentrism found in this approach. Logocentrism refers to an uncritical focus and overemphasis on *logo*, understood here as reason and its associated capacities and faculties (language, consciousness, subjectivity, and so on). Now, as we saw with Aristotle and Descartes, rationality in this broad form is what is supposed to separate human beings from animals. Identity-based thinkers contest this kind of clean division of human from animal based on *logo* and argue instead that reason appears in varying forms and degrees among other animals; so their logocentrism should not be confused with the traditional philosophical variety. Instead, logocentrism reappears among identity-based philosophers in the process of developing a systematic way of making sense of our obligations to animals. Philosophers of the sort we are discussing in this chapter generally believe that the case for extending ethics to animals must be based on reason and argumentation alone and that any appeal to emotion or pity in building one’s case must be avoided. (Indeed, many philosophers argue that such appeals to emotion or pity in the course of making an argument are logical fallacies.) Further, there is a fear among mainstream philosophers that anyone who seeks to bring animals into the sphere of moral consideration will be charged with sentimentalism, and both Singer and Regan answer this potential charge by insisting that their respective versions of animal ethics stand and fall on reason alone.32 In recent years, feminist theorists have questioned this kind of logocentrism by (1) demonstrating the ways in which reason should be seen as continuous with emotion33 and (2) showing that care and emotion should play an essential role in ethics more generally and in animal ethics in particular.34 The privileging of reason over emotion is, from this feminist perspective, a continuation of the logocentrism of human-centered and male-centered thinking and a pernicious dogma that the identity discourse needs to question more thoroughly.

Another form of logocentrism appears among identity-based theorists when they try to explain what gives rise to the project of animal ethics in the first place. What is the driving force that makes us change our individual behavior? What creates the dramatic shift in our lives toward animal justice? Here, too, many philosophers pride themselves on believing that it is reason (and reason alone) that has transformative force. We change our thinking and practices with regard to animals, this line of thought suggests, because we are unable to refute the arguments that animal ethicists offer. The pain of contradiction in our behavior and thought is so powerful that it forces a change in the direction of consistency and justice. It would be unwise to deny that some people (professional philosophers in particular!) might find philosophical arguments sufficient for such transformative purposes; but it would be equally unwise to insist that reason always serves as its
own foundation. There are multiple emotions, affects, and other extra-rational modes through which our thinking and interactions with animals might be called into question and transformed; and to suggest that philosophical argumentation plays the only or even a primary role here is a contentious claim. In the next chapter, we examine the work of difference-based theorists who argue that this kind of logocentrism blocks access to a wide variety of alternative and promising ways of thinking about animals and transforming human-animal interactions.

BEYOND SPECIESISM

The tendency to view animal ethics as comprising primarily giving reasons and being grounded in argumentation leads many philosophers to think that violence toward animals can be largely explained as a consequence of "irrational" thinking and behavior, a failure on the part of individuals to be consistent in their ethical reasoning and practice. We saw earlier that identity-based philosophers use the term "speciesism" to refer to the irrational prejudice that places animals outside the ethical community without compelling reasons for doing so. They use the term "speciesism" (with its "-ism" suffix) in order to link it to what they consider to be similar kinds of irrational and unethical prejudices such as racism and sexism. Just as racists and sexists fail to treat likes alike in terms of race and sexual difference, so, identity theorists argue, speciesists fail to give equal consideration to relevantly similar members of other species.

The term "speciesism" has become central not just among identity-based theorists but also among much of the work being done in the broader field of critical animal studies. I would suggest, though, that this term fails adequately to capture the problem at hand concerning the main origins and causes of the subjugated status of animals and their violent exploitation. The limitations with the concept of speciesism become clearer if we think about it in relation to the posited analogues of sexism and racism. Social science discourse about sexism and racism has convincingly demonstrated that sexism and racism are not explicable solely or primarily in terms of the irrational beliefs and behaviors of individuals. Instead, we have learned through this discourse to see sexism and racism as the result of long-term historical, linguistic, institutional, cultural, and economic systems of power. As such, it would be absurd to suggest that sexism and racism can be challenged primarily through changing the purchasing habits of individuals and garnering support for certain legal initiatives. Contesting sexism and racism requires us to rethink the whole of our individual and social lives and to make fundamental changes across multiple institutional and economic discourses and practices. The same is true, I would suggest, with regard to addressing the subjugated status of animals in the dominant culture. The problems we are facing in trying to change the status quo concerning animals go well beyond addressing the supposedly "irrational" modes of thought of individuals and require us to think broadly and deeply about how violence toward animals is foundational to our cultures and lives at innumerable levels.

In place of speciesism as the point of critical contestation, I suggest that we see the problem at hand as being an instance of anthropocentrism, or human-centeredness. It might seem that I am splitting hairs here in trying to distinguish speciesism from anthropocentrism, but I believe a great deal hinges on making this distinction and seeing it clearly. "Anthropocentrism," as I define the term, refers to a set of relations and systems of power that are in the service of those who are considered by the dominant culture to be fully and properly human. What it means to be fully and properly human changes, of course, across time; and, in a concomitant manner, the way in which the human/nonhuman line is drawn also shifts. In the dominant history of Western culture, in particular, animals and animality (or animal-
ness) have always figured in significant ways for how the human and nonhuman are distinguished—so it is important that we attend to how human-centeredness is founded simultaneously on a relation to and exclusion of animals.

What is essential to emphasize here is that neither today nor for most of the dominant history of Western culture have those in power been speciesist. Reigning notions of ethics, community, and even of humanity itself have almost never tracked along the lines of biological species; and even the most liberal and progressive forms of humanism have openly excluded large swaths of humanity from their scope of concern. In other words, the dominant trends in our culture have never been toward respect for the species as a whole but rather for what is considered to be quintessentially human—and this privilege and subject position have always been available only to a small subset of the human species. Thus, when animal ethicists locate one of these quintessential human capacities (say, intentionality or subjectivity) among animals and build an ethics based on that shared identity, they are not displacing anthropocentrism but are instead offering another iteration of it. To be sure, they are not guilty of speciesism in the sense that they allow for ethical obligations to cross species lines. But speciesism isn't the real problem here. The problem is a series of ideas, practices, and institutions that aim to protect the privilege of those deemed to be fully human over and against the nonhuman; and it is through a complex and violent relation to animals, animality, and "nonhumans" of various sorts that this system establishes and reproduces itself. From this perspective, it becomes clear that the identity-based approach is anthropocentric in a deep and problematic manner. Not only does this approach fail to provide us with a framework that would include all human beings within its scope, but it is also unable to include vast numbers of animal beings and species. Consistent with anthropocentric logic, this framework seeks to develop a notion of ethics and moral community that rotates around what is con-

sidered to be quintessentially and relevantly human; it just so happens that certain animals happen to be "human" enough to grant them standing. The fate of other animals, humans, and nonhumans who are not sufficiently like "us" would remain, within the identity framework, as precarious as ever. The difference approach, to which we now turn, attempts to help us address this limit and develop a more capacious and less exclusionary approach to animal ethics.