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"Anthropocentrism: A Misunderstood Problem"

Hayward, Tim

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Anthropocentrism can intelligibly be criticised as an ontological error, but attempts to conceive of it as an ethical error are liable to conceptual and practical confusion. After noting the paradox that the clearest instances of overcoming anthropocentrism involve precisely the sort of objectivating knowledge which many ecological critics see as itself archetypically anthropocentric, the article presents the following arguments: there are some ways in which anthropocentrism is not objectionable; the defects associated with anthropocentrism in ethics are better understood as instances of speciesism and human chauvinism; it is unhelpful to call these defects anthropocentrism because there is an ineliminable element of anthropocentrism in any ethic at all; moreover, because the defects do not typically involve a concern with human interests as such, the rhetoric of anti-anthropocentrism is counterproductive in practice.

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