

# Anthropocentrism, Materialism, and Racism

Alright y'all, sit back, relax, and get ready to read an adderall (prescription) and coke (soda) fueled rant about a subject I made up last week. I'm not saying that I am the first to speak on this topic, I am saying what you're about to read is all made up and the points don't matter.

The human desire to elevate themselves over others is nothing new to anyone. Whether the line in the sand is race, gender, nationality, skin color, sexuality, species, or *type* of matter, humans have always tried show how the group they are a part of is superior to the others. At this point you-- yes, you, hi reader! -- may be a bit confused about the list I mentioned. The first few examples make sense, race, gender, and the like are what we usually think of when we think of humans saying one group is better than the other, however, the last few are normally not considered as categories on par with race. The use of race, gender, sexuality, and other categories that have traditionally been used to separate groups seem very clearly wrong today while the others seem as a perfectly fine place to draw a line. What is important to remember is that at some point separating groups based on race was considered perfectly fine, if not encouraged through various channels. Churches preached on the importance of these distinctions and philosophers of the time wrote on these topics as well. The point of saying this is that I want to show how during their times, these chauvinist ideas were not only prevalent, but widely accepted and believed.

When Hume stated that "A blind man can form no notion of colours; a deaf man of sounds." and said it was the same as how "A Laplander or Negro has no notion of the relish of wine." his racist views came across very clearly. No one will try to defend Hume's point by arguing that Africans are not intelligent or sophisticated enough to appreciate the taste of a fine wine, they will instead say that Hume is blatantly chauvinistic and racist, he severely misunderstands how race works and is going off the assumption that his race is the superior one.

Even those who love Hume, such as myself, will cringe at the stupidity conveyed by racist statements like the one I have brought up. Going past Hume, anyone who tries to argue that one person is better than another simply due to their race, or gender, or nationality, will be met with plenty of resistance. However, Singer's view that discriminating between humans and other animals is bad, meaning that Speciesism is similar to racism, does not have as much support as the view that discriminating between races is bad. Going further, Searle receives applause and congratulations when he states that computers can never achieve consciousness due to the material they are made of. I have received weird looks when I say Searle is a blatant chauvinist, people don't draw as much issue with the thought *computers will never be conscious because of the way they are constructed* as they do with the thought *Black people can not have the same intelligence as white people because of the way their brains are constructed*.

The difference in reaction is not a big deal to most people, the second statement is horribly offensive while the first is simply a rational thought after all, right? Both of those statements are rational arguments, the main difference is that we acknowledge that the second has false premises and is coming from a point of view of white superiority and hate. What most people don't feel comfortable saying, yet, is that the first statement is coming from a place of human superiority, and not simply rational thought based in facts. We have managed to evolve from blatantly racist statements, but we never gave up our desire to be superior and put others down. Searle tries to avoid sounding blatantly chauvinistic by saying that any animal could potentially have consciousness, not just humans, because they are made up of similar matter. This is a materialist, used here in the same way as racist, way of thinking. Simply because we are made of organic matter does not mean that we have consciousness or that consciousness is

unique to us, however, opponents of consciousness in AI feel comfortable taking these premises. It is funny how the same people who are willing to take consciousness away from AI are willing to give it to children who are not able to think much differently from AI. For the full argument, feel free to read Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* or argue with me in real life, but a child distinguishes red and not red in the same way any photoelectric cell can, they can not conceptualize anything for a period of time. We are comfortable with giving children consciousness at birth because we see ourselves in them and we see the potential for consciousness in the future, so we assume they have it since birth. Consciousness in this sense is defined as the ability to put items into various categories, understand the categories, and argue with others as to which category an object belongs to.

Okay, who cares though? What is the point of all this? Don't worry I'll tell you, please don't leave. My point is that we have an anthropocentric bias and this bias has been causing us to accept certain arguments simply because they appeal to our anthropocentric views. If we want to practice philosophy correctly, that is to seek for truth, or meaning, or morality, or what have you without clouded vision, we have to acknowledge our bias and work to fight against it seeping into our philosophy. This will not be an easy thing to do, having someone genuinely acknowledge their biases usually isn't, but it should be a focus of those is philosophy if we actually care about discovering the truth, or getting as close as we can to the truth for my pragmatists out there.