

Veganism

Dr Matthew Cole

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NB: 'SLIDES' refer to a PowerPoint presentation, unavailable due to copyright

Introduction – What is veganism? (SLIDE 2)

In today's lecture I'm going to outline a vegan critique of the unsustainability of intensive agriculture, and especially animal farming, in economically 'developed' countries. Before doing that, it's worth clarifying what I mean when I talk about veganism:

A vegan is someone who eats a diet entirely composed of plant foods. An ethical vegan attempts to minimize as far as possible the harm s/he causes to all animals (nonhuman and human) in the course of her/his life. This may include: choosing to eat a vegan diet; preferring plant, mineral or synthetic based toiletries and cosmetics; wearing plant based or synthetic clothing; encouraging veganism in non-vegans; campaigning against unnecessary human activities that harm human and nonhuman animals, such as animal farming, hunting, vivisection, or the use of nonhuman animals for human entertainment. (Own definition). The key point here is that veganism includes a dietary practice, which we might describe as a series of techniques or competences in relation to food, but also a conceptual framework: a philosophy or way of life. (**NB in relation to Foucault's view of ethics**, we can think of the conceptual framework of veganism as a set of moral principles, embedded in discourses/texts, to which vegans relate through their techniques of consumption and activism).

PROCESS: One important thing to note from this definition is the phrase 'attempts to minimize' - it is impossible to avoid inflicting any suffering through the course of one's life, so the ideal of living a 'harmless' life is a vanishing horizon. However, this orientation encourages learning and thinking about new ways to reduce needless suffering and exploitation – veganism is an ongoing journey of discovery, not a final state of perfection (an important point in relation to utopian studies). To explain this further:

Conceptual framework of veganism (SLIDE 3)

In activist and philosophical literature, veganism most often rests on a tripartite conceptual framework: animal rights; environmental sustainability; human health. The second element of this framework is most obviously relevant to theories of sustainable development, not least through its interconnections with arguments for redistributive justice in the food system, but I want to argue that in fact all three are, or ought to be, interdependent. In addition, my paper (which hopefully you've had a look at) argues for the addition of a fourth, aesthetic, element to the conceptual framework of veganism. Also important, but often neglected, is a spiritual element. In this respect, veganism is influenced by non-western traditions, including

Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Linked to this element of spirituality, though not necessarily dependent on it, is the underpinning ethic of veganism: **compassion.**

Compassion is of course not unique to veganism, but veganism is interesting in the way it seeks to *extend* compassion beyond species barriers and break down hierarchical ways of thinking that are deeply embedded in Western traditions. For that reason, I refer to it as 'posthuman' compassion. The key point to bear in mind for now is that veganism de-privileges anthropocentric ways of thinking. In particular, veganism invites us to question our conventional way of thinking that most humans 'count' as subjects while most animals are only treated as 'objects' and denied subjectivity. It is only through treating animals as de-individualised objects that industrialised farming is made possible. To illustrate what I mean, a vet on a recent TV show described a sheep as 'food in a wrapper'. Through this type of language, we allow ourselves to stop thinking of animals as individuals with an emotional life, with an interest in pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, in socialising with their own kind, in enjoying the varied experiences open to them through their life course, and so on. Posthuman compassion minds us to treat all animals (including human animals) as subjects: just as we ought to protest against the portrayal of women as fetishised sex objects for heterosexist gratification, we ought to protest against the portrayal of animals as objects for our pleasure, whether it be for food, entertainment, 'sport', or whatever.

I will not have time to cover all of these elements of veganism in the lecture (in particular we won't look at the health, aesthetic or spiritual aspects - we would need a whole course to do the subject justice). To orient our thinking though, the following quote captures a lot of the vegan perspective on meat eating in one paragraph:

The problem (C. David Coats quote) (SLIDE 4)

Isn't man an amazing animal? He kills wildlife – birds, kangaroos, deer, all kinds of cats, coyotes, beavers, groundhogs, mice, foxes, and dingoes – by the million in order to protect his domestic animals by the billion and eats them. This in turn kills man by the million, because eating all those animals leads to degenerative – and fatal – health conditions like heart disease, kidney disease, and cancer. So then man tortures and kills millions more animals to look for cures for these diseases. Elsewhere, millions of other human beings are being killed by hunger and malnutrition because food they could eat is being used to fatten domestic animals. Meanwhile some people are dying of sad laughter at the absurdity of man, who kills so easily and violently, and once a year sends out cards praying for "Peace on Earth" (C. David Coats, 1989, *Old Macdonald's Factory Farm*, Continuum, New York, p.13).

(**NB:** note the ironic sexism in the quote – although this may be a fairly accurate description – it is men who are primarily responsible for these processes, breeders, farmers, slaughterers, butchers and consumers – men eat more meat, especially red meat. What are the implications of this for the construction of masculinity? For more on this see Carol Adams: *The Sexual Politics of Meat*).

The detailed critique

So, let's get into some detail, add some leaves to the tree so to speak. I'd like to start with looking at the most obviously relevant aspect of veganism, its contribution to contemporary environmental debates (**SLIDE 5**). Most topical at the moment is global warming. This slide indicates what are generally taken as the key problems facing us in respect of global warming: air and road travel, power generation, what to do with waste. Food is only highly visible in relation to debates about food miles in popular discourse, so it's really a subset of the transport debate. What is missing from this picture?

(**SLIDE 6**). Livestock farming. (note that the brown stuff on the ground is compacted shit, not earth).

And not just from popular perception, but also within academia (**SLIDE 7**). Why is this a problem?

(**SLIDE 8**) Well, even the UK government is becoming aware of the unsustainable environmental impact of livestock farming, as David Miliband put it earlier this year, "...the livestock sector generates more greenhouse gas emissions than transport, and over 30% of European GHG come from the food and drink sector..." (2007). It is worth stressing that this means ALL forms of transport combined – livestock generates 9 times the GHG of air travel alone for instance.

What does this mean exactly?

(**SLIDE 9**). According to the FAO's recent report, *Livestock's Long Shadow*, livestock farming generates 65% of human-related nitrous oxide, which has 296 times the Global Warming Potential (GWP) of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂). Most of this comes from animal manure. Livestock also accounts for 37% of all human-induced methane (methane is 23 times as warming as CO₂), which is largely produced by the digestive system of ruminants – in other words, burps and farts, especially from cows. In total, the report estimates that 18% of CO₂ equivalent emissions come from livestock farming

At the same time, we are living through a period of rapid acceleration of global demand for animal foods: World meat production has quadrupled in the past 50 years and livestock now outnumber people by more than 3 to 1. This increase is still very unevenly distributed: 'Since 1950, meat consumption has doubled among the world's richest 20%, whereas the world's poorest quintile has not increased its consumption of meat much at all' (Horrigan *et al.*, 2002: 445). The contribution of livestock farming to global warming is therefore likely to increase in importance. Keyzer *et al.* (2005) argue that projected increases in global demand for meat are unmatched because the earth will not be able to sustain the increased levels of feed crops 'needed' for the increased livestock population. China for instance, has increased the share of its per capita calories derived from animal products from 6% in 1971 to 21% in 2003, and the trend is accelerating. (For interest, the UK figure for 2003 was 30%, a downward trend from 38% in 1971. The highest recorded current total is from Iceland, at 41%, the lowest from Mozambique, at 2%. The figures for dietary fat and protein sources are even more startling – 57% & 57% from animal sources respectively for the UK in 2003 – figures from FAO website).

Meanwhile, this intensifying demand goes on in the context of startling global inequalities in access to food: The FAO report of 2006, **The State of Food Insecurity in the World** estimates that there are around 820 million

undernourished people in developing countries, which only represents a very modest downward trend.

<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000433/index.html>. These two maps (from the FAO) illustrate inequality of food supply across the world (**SLIDES 10 & 11**).

But what these maps don't show is the relative environmental impacts of these differences – there is not a straightforward equivalence. White stresses the striking inequality of the environmental impacts of Western dietary preferences: 'while the average North American consumed about 50% more calories than the average African in 1995, the North American's diet generated approximately 175% more environmental impact than the African's diet'. **The principle reason for this was the level of animal products consumed.** Meat and dairy products have a disproportionate environmental impact. This next map illustrates the global pattern of consumption of animal products (**SLIDE 12**). White also argues that 'the degree of inequality in environmental impact is roughly 2.5 times the inequality in the distribution of food'.

To make a bit more sense of this, here's a table that illustrates the contribution of animal products to the food 'footprint' of the SW of England (**SLIDE 13**).

In short, economically 'developed' nations benefit from a greater availability of food, but inflict a much higher level of environmental damage as a result of this, which raises important questions of justice, in terms of who is and who should be paying the price for this double inequality. Livestock farming has a greater impact because it is more resource intensive, but there are a range of other downsides to it as well:

Why else is livestock farming environmentally damaging? (SLIDE 14)

1. **GLOBAL WARMING (ABOVE)**
2. **INEFFICIENCY: Meat is hugely inefficient** in meeting human nutritional requirements. Many more people can be fed on a given area of land if they eat plants rather than eating animals which have already eaten the plants (up to 20:1 ratio of edible protein from legumes [beans and peas] compared to beef). 'Livestock farming requires a greater amount of resources per unit of food than other types of agriculture. For example, cattle must eat approximately 7kg of grain in order to generate a single kg of beef – pigs 4:1; chicken, 2:1.' (White, 2000: 149).
3. **LAND USE:** This means that more and more **land** is used up for agriculture – we 'need' it to feed the animals, although we already grow more than enough to feed the people of the world: Meat production therefore necessitates **vastly intensified crop production:** Globally, '40% of the world's grain currently goes to feeding livestock and is therefore unavailable for human consumption' (White, 2000: 146, also Leitzman, 2003). In the USA, this figure rises to 66% (Horrihan *et al.*, 2002: 447).
4. **SOIL EROSION:** And this land use is unsustainable due to the levels of soil erosion and the degradation of soil fertility caused by intensive

farming methods – we are using it up. At the extreme, this leads to **desertification**, which the Worldwatch Institute claims is already happening to around 15% of the entire land surface of the planet (in Horrigan *et al.*, 2002: 447). ‘Feedlot cattle (and industrial animal agriculture in general) destroy topsoil because growing grain for this industry requires so much cropland’ (Horrigan *et al.*, 2002: 447). As well as the indirect effects of chemical use on intensively farmed cropland (more on this in a moment), livestock farming has a direct effect in relation to overgrazing – cattle can directly destroy the productive capacity of soil by stripping vegetation that holds soil together and compacting soil.

5. **FERTILIZERS:** Intensified crop production means more use of **fertilizers:** In 1998, 137 million metric tons of chemical fertilizers were used worldwide. Chemical fertilizers degrade soil quality, and eventually *reduce* yields of crops compared to long-term use of organic fertilizers (for this reason, organic farming methods can therefore be *more* productive than intensive methods over the long-term of 20 years or more for certain crops).
6. **PESTICIDES:** It also means more use of **pesticides:** about 3 millions tons are used annually across the globe. David Pimentel estimated that only 0.1% of pesticides reach their intended targets. The rest kill beneficial insects and reduce bird populations, as well as polluting surface and groundwater.
7. **WATER:** water resources are depleted in 2 ways by intensive farming: first by pollution, which leaves polluted waters unsuitable for other uses, and secondly, by using up unrenewable water sources such as underground aquifers. The EPA estimates 70% of US water pollution to be caused by farming. Livestock’s Long Shadow reports that livestock accounts for 64% of ammonia production, which is a key component of ‘acid rain’. Globally, 2 thirds of water use is accounted for by agriculture (Horrigan *et al.*, 2002: 447). **Meat production in particular wastes water** relative to crop production (estimates vary, and the precise figure is controversial, but figures range between about 400-2500 gallons of water to produce a pound of meat – depending on the type of animal and the conditions it lives in, compared to around 60 gallons needed to produce a pound of wheat). The most conservative estimate comes from the US cattle industry, so even by this figure, beef production uses nearly 7 times the amount of water that wheat production uses. Horrigan *et al.* estimate that feedlot systems (like that shown in the picture earlier) produce only 1000 calories of beef protein for every 35,000 calories of fossil fuel energy expended (2002: 448).
8. **ENERGY:** Livestock farming uses energy at every stage: in pesticide and fertilizer manufacture, in on-farm machinery (and intensive systems such as battery farms require additional energy for temperature control and lighting), the mechanized processes of slaughter, butchery, processing, transport, refrigeration, cooking and so on (note that plants, while often eaten cooked, can also often be eaten raw, which is not the case for most animal flesh).
9. **BIODIVERSITY:** Another consequence of the increased demand for

crops that the meat industry drives is deforestation, and what the philosopher Michael Fox calls '**ecocide**' – by this he means a massive acceleration of the rate of species extinction, especially in rainforests. Also remember the impact of agri-chemicals in killing off other species besides 'pests'

10. **SHIT:** Meat production also **vastly increases the production of waste:** a kilo of edible beef equates to 40 kilos of shit, which contributes to pollution – levels of livestock production in some areas (notably the USA) have exceeded the capacity of the land to absorb the manure that the animals generate. The USDA estimates that the US meat industry produced 1.4 billion tons of waste in 1997 alone: 5 tons for every US citizen. One result is that excrement is collected into vast lagoons, which are prone to leakage, or spread over fields where the excess is washed into rivers and coastal waters by rainfall. This excess feeds 'algal blooms' – explosions in the population of marine algae in the world's oceans. These in turn exhaust the ocean's store of oxygen, beneath the ocean surface, and create what are called 'dead zones'. One example is the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, which reached a size of 20,000 square kilometres in 1999. Another result is that residential areas close to factory farms become almost unliveable due to the permanent stench that pervades the immediate surroundings.

Beyond these immediate environmental impacts, there are some important sociological impacts (SLIDE 15):

1. The resource pressures and clean-up problems deriving from meat production provide the **tacit legitimization for technological solutions.** You may have heard recent discussion (for instance from NFU spokesman in Radio 4's 'Farming Today' program) of the idea for harvesting the flatulence of cows in sheds and using the methane for power generation. But it is crucial to remember that these 'solutions' are entirely driven by demand for meat, eggs and dairy products. Thinking about Beck, we can see an apparent 'risk' of food scarcity in respect of animal products being conditional on the **social construction of animals** as manipulable, impersonal, and ultimately expendable objects, rather than as subjects of a life with their own interests, emotions, and lust for life. As Ruth Harrison put it in the title of her ground-breaking book, in the last 60 or so years of human history, we have come ever closer to creating 'Animal Machines'
2. There is an extension here of the **instrumental rationality** that Weber identified in the context of capitalists relationships to their workers – animals are reduced to technological artefacts, without autonomy, and without purposes of their own – in other words we are seeing here a key motif of the dominant mode of relating to the 'natural' world in modernity.
3. Furthermore, **organic animal farming is no solution** – the ecological unsustainability of mass organic livestock farming means that it will always produce expensive meat that only wealthier people can afford – so they can pay to appease their consciences and still eat steak, while continuing to feel morally superior to the poor who are left

with antibiotic and hormone ridden gristle burgers. Think **Bourdieu and Distinction**. Food is one more aspect of hierarchical class relationships. Conversely, as we'll see at the end, organically produced plant foods could be produced on a sufficient scale to be affordable and accessible to everyone.

Anthropocentrism? (SLIDE 16)

But what does 'meat production' really mean? The kind of statistics I gave earlier don't really communicate what is happening to individual animals (animals, especially 'food' animals, are referred to in 'mass' terms: cattle, pigs, fish, sheep, and are not usually named individuals. Giving an animal (human or nonhuman) a name marks that animal as a unique and irreplaceable individual. Withholding a name reduces animals (including humans) to interchangeable units). Accurate statistics on the number of animals slaughtered for food globally are impossible to come by, not least because of our tendency to view animals as objects, or things. Estimates I have seen range from between 50-100 billion animals currently killed for human food globally every year. An incomprehensible scale of killing.

In the UK, **DEFRA do provide some more reliable figures: approximately 1 billion animals** are reported as being killed for human food in the UK every year. This is a very conservative figure however, it doesn't include animals killed as 'waste' – for instance male chicks are 'unproductive' as meat or (obviously) as egg producers, so are killed in the first few hours of life. Given that the figure of 1 billion includes around 800 millions chickens, we should add a few hundred million more to the total. The DEFRA statistic also excludes marine animals, which also would add several hundred million to the total. Fish in particular tend to be treated in terms of aggregate weight, and very rarely as individual animals.

From a vegan perspective, it is important always to remember when using these kinds of statistics that what we are talking about is an aggregation of individual lives. An ethic of **posthuman compassion** means that not just human life and death should be treated as significant. These images from mechanized slaughterhouses illustrate how the significance on each individual animal's death is obscured by the routinization, speed and scale of the process. Because vegans view the life of all animals as morally significant, no animal death is trivial. For that reason, **reducing our consumption of meat is not enough**, because the issue is not just one of sustaining human populations within environmental limits, but of eliminating as far as is possible unnecessary suffering and death. Given that we do not need to eat animals in order to be healthy, these deaths are not morally excusable: each one is tragedy.

What alternative does veganism offer us then? (SLIDE 17)

Animal rights is a complex topic that we don't have time to get into, but here are a couple of contributions that are relevant to the environmental debate: If we view the consequences of livestock farming purely in terms of the environmental impact on human populations, even in terms of the injustice of world hunger, we are guilty of speciesism, in other words, or not taking account of the deaths of the animals involved as significant for their own sake.

Speciesism was a term coined by Richard Ryder in the 1960s (the Australian philosopher Peter Singer made it much more famous in his book *Animal Liberation*, 1975), and refers to the equivalence between human exploitation of other species and the way that other power relations operate, such as sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism and so on. In other words, if we treat other animals differently to the way we treat each other, simply because they are other animals and not humans, then we are guilty of speciesism.

Speciesism: Giving moral preference to the interests of members of one's own species, over identical interests of members of a different species, *solely because it is a member of your species* This is taken further by Joan Dunayer in her recent book of the same name: 'A failure, in attitude or practice, to accord any nonhuman being equal consideration and respect'.

An alternative view is the moral imperative of '**Letting be**': Renouncing the claim to dominate, control and manipulate (from Thomas Merton, used by Oxford philosopher and theologian Andrew Linzey). This view is particularly relevant to biodiversity, and also relates directly to concrete examples of enacting vegan principles in sustainable farming practices, which is what we'll turn to now:

What sustainable solutions does veganism offer?

So, we have seen the way that veganism informs our definition of some of the problems of our current food system, but what solutions does it offer? There are obvious implications that a large scale switch to vegan diets would reduce demand for land and water resources, reduce pollution, reduce or eliminate the suffering of billions of animals, ease the human and financial burden of degenerative disease, and so on. But what would this actually imply for our landscape, and for the way we produce food?

An early statement of the vegan alternative came from Jon Wynne-Tyson (**SLIDE 18**)

'What is required is a change from traditional agriculture to intensive horticulture, with careful composting of all wastes with plant materials to keep the land in good heart without animal manure or artificial fertilizers. The landscape of a vegan world would show small fields of cereals, fruits, vegetables and compost-producing plants surrounded by shelter-belts of fruit and nut-bearing trees. Hill slopes and other areas unsuitable for cultivation would be used for trees of all types, as a renewable source of fuel and raw material for many purposes, as well as for their function in maintaining the environment. One-sixth to one-third of an acre per head would be required for the vegan diet. Even in densely populated England, which has nearly an acre for each inhabitant, wide areas would be left for wild life and recreation.' (*Food for a Future*, 1979).

Sustainable agriculture and compassion

It might seem that there is no necessary connection between veganism and sustainable agriculture if veganism is interpreted purely as a **dietary practice**, but once we widen our understanding of veganism to include the ethic of posthuman compassion, this connection does start to make sense – in other words, care for the environment and the animals and plants it supports (including ourselves) is a logical extension of the ethic of compassion.

To explain further: if we are cognizant of the effects of unsustainable agricultural systems on other people and animals, an ethic of compassion compels us to seek solutions for their sake, and not just for our own.

The solutions encouraged by a vegan perspective match Wynne-Tyson's image: local, subsistence agriculture as the first priority. Exchange of produce, or trade, is supplemental and in the first instance directed towards meeting any nutritional deficiencies in what can be grown locally and seasonally. Of course if surplus food can be grown, there is no reason why trade could not flourish, so that we could continue to enjoy imported tropical plant foods, and we could export some of our domestically grown produce in return, given methods of transport and storage that were within our biophysical limits. As Horrigan *et al.* put it, '[a] more sustainable food system would involve closer connections between producer and consumer, meaning more direct marketing of foods to local consumers (through farmers markets, community-supported agriculture farms, farmer cooperatives, etc.)' (2002: 446). A key motif of vegan-inspired approaches is a collapsing of social, physical and symbolic distances: e.g. between humans and other animals, between producers and consumers (in fact more consumers may also become producers), between ourselves and our food. Let's look at a couple of examples:

Vegan Organic Network & Ecology Action (SLIDE 19)

First a **potential objection**: we have been implicitly focussing on the value of veganism as a compassionate ethic from a Western perspective. In my view this is a valid perspective from which to start, given that we in the West are responsible through our dietary choices for the vast bulk of animal exploitation and suffering, and the environmental damage that results. Nonetheless, it might be argued that there is a **neo-colonialist** agenda in seeking to promulgate sustainable subsistence farming in favour of intensive profit-oriented farming in the 'developing' world. A counter-argument would be that at the moment, the general trend, encouraged by the major financial institutions of the West, is to encourage the spread of SAD (the Standard American Diet), based on livestock farming, and with it the environmental, human health (obesity, heart disease, breast, colon, prostate cancer, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure), and animal harms that go with it. It also locks developing nations into dependent patterns of trade with the West which are unnecessary – this returns us to the **C. David Coats** quote that we started with.

The UK based Vegan Organic Network promotes methods of subsisting on plant foods that eliminate our dependence on the exploitation of other animals. They produce a set of standards for organic, vegan farming. Here's a summary of their main principles:

1. No artificial chemicals, GM organisms, animal manure or slaughter by-products
2. Preserve soil fertility using plant-based materials
3. Favour biodiversity, reduced working of the soil, and the use of perennial

and native plants, reducing environmental impact by buying and selling
produce locally

4. The system focuses explicitly on tolerance and accepts as a first principle that part of the harvest goes to nature. Repellents (not pesticides) used as last resort

5. By nourishing the soil and reducing the amount it is worked, an active fauna enriches and improves the soil: above all the earthworm.

6. The Stockfree Organic Standards, produced by VON, are the definitive guide to all aspects of vegan-organic growing.

In the USA, Ecology Action promote a similar approach (**SLIDE 20**). They point to the degradation of the soil that results from conventional, intensive methods, and also avoid dependence on animal exploitation in their growing system:

“In the GROW BIOINTENSIVE system, soil fertility is maintained by allotting 60% of what is grown to compost crops. A focus on the production, through these crops, of calories for the gardener and carbon for the soil can ensure that both the gardener and the soil will be adequately fed and that the farm will be sustainable. Because this biologically-intensive method requires much less area to produce the same yield of crops as conventional agriculture, if it were used globally at least one-half of the world's acreage could be left in the wild for the preservation of the all important plant and animal diversity.”

Here are some of the other environmental benefits they claim (**SLIDE 21**):

- 67% to 88% less water
- 50% to 100% less fertilizer
- 99% less energy than commercial agriculture, while using a fraction of the resources.
- Produce 2 to 6 times more food
- Build the soil up to 60 times faster than in nature, if properly used
- Reduce by half or more the amount of land needed

LABOUR: One point to note is that these sorts of subsistence systems require more labour input from a greater number of people (this is one reason why they are less resource intensive in terms of fossil fuel). How can this be made practicable in the context of a long-hours work culture? This is an important issue that we'll return to in later weeks, but for now, it's worth thinking about this: the more labour we expend on subsistence farming, the cheaper our food is, and the less time we have to spend making food choices, transporting food, processing it, and preparing it. The less time and money we devote to these issues, the less we are in need of money to feed ourselves, in other words, there is a potential (but under explored) link between autonomous food production and liberation from dependence on the labour market (this is where my current research reconnects with my PhD research

on unemployment). There is no straightforward equation between the two – expenditure on food is a declining component of household budgets, but there is a general point to be made about the connection between rising materialism and the socially constructed ‘necessity’ to work long enough to earn the money to sustain the levels of consumption it entails – more on this in future lectures.

Conclusion

Michael Fox suggests a utopian element to veganism in his argument that it represents ‘a differently oriented worldview – a new vision of how our lives on the planet ought to be led’, he adds that heightened awareness of ecological issues ‘opens our minds to the possibility of change through the formation of new values’ (2000: 164). In the context of biological diversity, Fox argues for valuing ‘otherness’ for its own sake: preferring heterogeneity over homogeneity, or species abundance over monoculture. If we relate this valuing of otherness back to speciesism, we might reflect on what an anti-speciesist agenda might look like. It might encourage us to learn from and wonder at the differences between us and other animals, who may be faster, stronger, more perceptive, more enduring, more trusting, more loyal, and certainly less cruel than ourselves. Instead of subjugating them to our instrumental purposes, we might get closer to them through trying to understand how they live their lives when free of our interference. Instead of seizing on supposed inferiorities of other animals compared to humans, anti-speciesism might make us more humble about our own limitations, and more respectful of other living creatures. As Fox concludes, the liberation of humans is compatible with the liberation of all other animals: veganism can substantially liberate us from depending on the exploitation and suffering of other animals, and can help to deepen our sense of compassion and kindness to other living things, so that we can feel a part of their world, and not apart from it.

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