

Veganism: The Humane Solution to Human Misdeeds

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There are many issues that humans have created in their own environment that are detrimental to them as well as the other species they coexist with. These issues even threaten the health of the planet itself. Humans developed to be the dominant species by eating animal protein (Dale, 2003). The cavemen who developed into Homo sapiens ate larger amounts of protein and that gave their brains the ability to develop larger and gave humans the cunning to survive. Humans over the centuries have used that brain power to develop farming and other methods to live a more comfortable lifestyle. However, the farming of our grandfathers has evolved into factory farming over the last 50-60 years. These methods affected by economics and politics have begun to decide our fate. Poor health and pollution are two major issues we now have to deal with. This method of raising animals and food is generally the best in the terms of making money, but the hidden costs are our health and living spaces. Humans no longer need to eat animals as more ecological and efficient means of gathering protein are now available. Humanity must turn to veganism if it expects to survive on this planet, as health issues and ecological disaster will consume us otherwise.

Using factory farming of animals causes rampant disease and severe suffering of the animals and should not be allowed to continue. The way animals are grown for food today has been designed to create meat that is affordable for all while making corporations wealthy. The animals are grown the fastest way possible to create a product that while cheap is no longer as nutritious and is rampant with disease. The animals are pumped full of antibiotics so they do not die before slaughter or kill us when we eat them. "Cows raised on grass simply take longer to reach slaughter weight than cows raised on a richer diet, and for half a century now the

industry has devoted itself to shortening a beef animal's allotted span on earth"(Pollan, 2006, p.72).

All food animals in factory farms are treated merely as products. Concern for their welfare only comes into play if the product is unable to make it to slaughter. For example, chickens beaks are cut off without pain killers as chicks because in a normal environment chickens will peck each other and fight if they are too close (Friedrich, 2002). The industry shoves 10,000 chickens into an enclosed area that should have many less. This causes fighting, so no beaks mean no pecking. Imagine the pain involved in cutting off the chicks beak without any pain killers. The chicken's beak is as sensitive as a human's finger-nail cuticle, so the pain is excruciating. This among other practices such as male chicks in the egg industry being separated and immediately ground alive in a crusher into fertilizer and a protein additive for chicken feed because they can't lay eggs. They are fed back to the other chickens in their feed. This practice is just not humane. "Similarly, pigs raised for meat are kept in bleak, dreary pens with little to do. These highly intelligent and social animals resort to chewing one another's tails (called "tail-biting") out of boredom, and to satisfy their natural urge to chew, sometimes to the point of damage" (Brown, 2011 p.5).

Food animals are often packed into spaces that are too small for them to thrive. They generally have to sit in their own excrement and urine. "Then there's the deep pile of manure on which I stand, in which 534 sleeps. We don't know much about the hormones in it—where they will end up, or what they might do once they get there—but we do know something about the bacteria, which can find their way from the manure on the ground to his hide and from there into our hamburgers"(Pollan, 2006 p. 81). The food lots pump the animals with large

doses of antibiotics just to keep these animals alive long enough to be led to slaughter. Their internal systems are bombarded by hormones that try to make them grow much faster than nature intended. They are in constant suffering and pain because of this. Their lives are nothing but continuing pain and stress both physically and mentally until they are put to death.

Extreme levels of pollution from factory farming, including large amounts of toxic runoff, poison our environment. The large number of animals in factory farms produces massive amounts of manure, urine, hormones, and other chemicals. The animal's feces in the old days could be used to directly fertilize our crops. The toxic by-products are no longer usable in that way and the waste is kept in large manure lagoons. Pollan(2006) explains that you can't use it on fields as the chemicals and heavy metals are so high they would kill the crops, and it has been determined that runoff once downstream can cause strange sex features in fish (p.79).

The chemicals in the water, air, and earth near these facilities are very toxic to those who live and work there. "The stench can be unbearable, but worse still; the gases contain many harmful chemicals. For instance, one gas released by the lagoons, hydrogen sulfide, is dangerous even at low levels. Its effects -- which are irreversible -- range from sore throat to seizures, comas and even death" (NRC.org, 2005, p. X). The bacteria that live in this waste are very deadly. The emergence of a superbug that has the ability to wipe out humanity is a distinct possibility. Virus and bacteria tend to mutate if the need arises to accomplish their ultimate goal, which is to replicate. All the medications given to these animals to keep them alive could eventually mutate a current version of a virus that we will be unable to stop in time. Removing these animals entirely from the food chain by becoming vegan could eliminate this threat.

Changing to a vegan lifestyle will help decrease demand for animal products. Vegans adopt a strict diet that does not include any animal products such as meat, dairy and eggs (IDAUSA.org, n.d.). But they also do not wear leather, furs or use any other animal products. Shampoos, makeup, and many other products use leftover animal wastes as fillers, colorants, preservatives, etc. The food, clothing, medical, toiletry industries, and many others are all linked. Scraps from one industry are used in another. 'Waste not, want not' fits right into the corporate bottom line. Do you think the bones from a cow are buried? No, they are made into gelatin so your cherry Jell-O can be firm. How about what makes your lipstick solid? That comes from excess animal fat. And the red color? Crushed and dried red insects create carmine and that helps make a deep red possible. Trying to change people's minds about the products they use is a difficult task as most people don't spend much time worrying about the welfare of animals. Becoming vegan is a huge separation from 'normal' society. It takes a lot of work reading labels and doing research if you want to try and avoid all of these things and more. Labels do not always tell the truth anyway as corporations are able to 'hide' ingredients in other names.

People also do not always worry about their own health, as they assume prepackaged foods are healthy because it says so on the package. Our economy is tuned to the desires of the people because the corporations want their money. If we all began to care that animals were being abused and turned to veganism, the demand for animal products would wane. Companies only care about their profits, so if demand dropped the product would be discontinued or reformulated with different ingredients. Right now in this country there is a

trend toward cruelty free products. Vegetarianism and veganism are on the rise and if they became the norm, factory farmed animals would no longer exist.

Becoming a vegetarian is actually not enough. It is a good first step in refraining from eating meat, but since all the industries are completely entwined with one another merely changing to a diet that still consumes eggs and dairy changes little. The suffering still continues and dairy farms are run as factories as well. The filth and diseases that are in a slaughterhouse or feedlot are not much different on a large dairy farm. Cows are still locked in stalls most of their lives and are kept pregnant most of their 3-4 year life span. A cow can live normally a few decades but the stresses of dairy production use a cow up in a much shorter time. And where are the calves from the dairy cows? They are sold for veal. So yes you may be against eating veal, but if you eat that grilled cheese sandwich, or that ice cream cone you still support the veal industry. As I said, becoming vegetarian is a good first step but it does little to stop the suffering since so many industries work together to create as much profit as possible.

Challenging others to look at their lives and see the harm they help cause may help veganism thrive and end the abuse to animals and ourselves. Embracing a vegan lifestyle solves many problems in regards to health, morality, and threats to our planet. If a person stopped to look at how their choices affect the lives of animals, people and our environment and actually cared, many would make some serious changes. At a Living Green Festival in Australia student Jessica Ferry mentions that our dietary choices is a large portion of our carbon footprint ("Taste of a," 2011). Our carbon footprint is how much as an individual we harm the planet with the burning of fossil fuels. The more carbon that goes into the air, the more greenhouse gases that accumulates. This is heating our planet and the possibility of a new ice age is on the horizon. On

top of all the carbon from trucks shipping our food is the fact that all the food animals' on the planet also contribute about 28% of the greenhouse gases in the form of methane! (EPA.gov, 2007) That is second only to those trucks and cars on the road. Every time we purchase an item that is shipped from 2,000 miles away as opposed to being from a local farm we are wasting fuel and are helping build carbon dioxide in our atmosphere.

If people were to look at what their daily habits do to the planet and themselves more, they would see that those habits are shortening their lives. Cancer is still a huge killer in the world and it has been determined that many cancers are caused by consuming animal proteins (Fulkerson, 2011). Many other diseases can also be tied in one way or another to consuming animals. Obesity is an epidemic in many of the industrialized countries. The ratio of obese to healthy people is about 50%, and being obese leads to many other health risks such as high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. This epidemic started in the decades after factory farming took over the industry. Being able to afford to eat meat has always been a status symbol. Imagine eating meat every day! That was not possible just 100 years ago. For many eating meat was a once a week thing if that. With cheap meat being readily available people tend to pack on much more of this calorie dense food than they need and this in part leads to us being a species that consumes way too much. After several generations it has become ingrained in our culture and our society has adjusted to compensate. Pharmaceutical companies produce more drugs to fix our 'problems' and on the other end fast food supersedes everything. The constant see-saw effect keeps our health out of balance. And this allows those corporations to continue making more money by raping the environment with pollution, and

destroying our health to keep us dependent on them. Refraining from eating meat alone can make a huge difference and doctors and scientists are starting to see this.

Does anyone remember the mad cow scare? Studies have found that the human Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease or vCJD is not a virus or bacteria but a protein called a prion. Our brains use prions for their natural processes but a mutated prion from tainted meat will begin to slowly eat holes in your brain. It is thought these prions are spread more in current farming practices as they come from the nervous system. Since slaughterhouses are like factories, all the tissues can touch each other. Cleanliness is second to efficiency. It is a brain wasting disease, and Alzheimer's it turns out works the same way. Factory farming really took over in the 50's, and it can take decades for vCJD to manifest itself. Alzheimer's deaths took a dramatic jump in the late 70's. In 1979 there were 653 deaths due to Alzheimer's. In 2002 there were 58,785. (Kelleher, 2004) In 2008 there were 82,476. (Alzheimer's Association, 2011) That is an over 12,000% change in just 3 decades. If that rate continues to rise at the same percentage in 30 years it will be 10 million per year that forget their families and then die. Scientists are now thinking the two diseases are related or the possibly the same. Both are prion diseases; the only differences are some of the symptoms. Our government has sworn that there have been only a handful of vCJD cases, but if they are the same disease that is obviously not true.

If our society does not change its ways, the balance of nature will collapse in some way or another; devastation of humanity will be the end result. Becoming vegan is your duty if you care about any of the following: animal abuse, the environment, your health, your children's health. Our planet will only be able to support us if it is here to do so. "Ultimately the entire earth suffers as the soils deteriorate and disappear, as pollution and poisons destroy wildlife



and diversity, and as clean water is destroyed. The Green Revolution has resulted in an unsustainable system of agriculture that benefits only a few as it rapes and destroys the earth” (Stevenson, 2011, p. X). We can only live and be happy if we are not obese and full of disease. The animals that are raised in factory conditions will kill us in some fashion, by being devoid of nutrition and full of disease, or because some superbug is created in all the filth they live in. The conditions that animals live in to fulfill our needs are unconscionable. Human morality is in question here. Is it okay to torture a cow throughout its life so I may have a steak, or have collagen in my shampoo? Veganism is the solution. It is ethical, economical, rational, and healthier. There are many places on the web to read on these issues. Peta.org is a good place to start. Become involved and help ensure we all have a place to live by turning to veganism.

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