

ESSAYS

Resisting the Globalization of Speciesism: Vegan Abolitionism as a Site for Consumer-Based Social Change

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Abstract

Globalization has exacerbated speciesism both socially and economically. Veganism and its subsequent labeling schemes have arisen as an important political site of resistance to growing non-human animal inequality. This paper explores globalization's impact on non-human animals, veganism and vegan labeling, as well as important divides within the modern non-human animal rights movement in regards to utopian and pragmatic approaches to alleviating growing speciesism.

Keywords

Globalization, veganism, labeling, animal rights movement

Introduction

Globalization is a hugely contested idea (Held and McGrew, 1999; McMichael, 2008; Steger, 2009). How it is defined and whether or not it is a new phenomenon are two of many debates within the discourse (Steger, 1999). Just as varied as the conceptualizations of globalization are claims to the impacts it is having. Transformed connectedness, the spread of capitalism, (Giddens, 1990), technological change, the acceleration of consumption, and the uneven access to resources (Harvey, 1989) are some of many observations used to identify the phenomenon of globalization. It is sometimes described as an internationalization, Westernization, modernization, or respacialization (Held and McGrew, 1999). Despite various conceptualizations, there is some consensus among scholars that globalization has

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significantly challenged or restructured social, economic, and political spheres both locally and internationally (Raynolds, 2009; Steger, 1999).

Often, globalization is associated with deepening global capitalism (Hoogvelt, 2001) and the global spread of neo-liberalism (Held and McGrew, 1999). By the end of the 19th century, Western capitalist ideals in regards to *lassiez-faire* economic conditions had expanded to create a capitalist global economy with an international division of labor (Hoogvelt, 2001). Based on Adam Smith's concept of the invisible hand (Smith, 1776), it is argued that participants who act self interestedly in the economy with little government interference ultimately benefit all of society. The neoliberal perspective recognizes that this system does create inequality, but that inequality also promotes hard work, talent, and ingenuity. While inequality may persist, the overall well-being for participants will be improved (Firebaugh and Goesling, 2004). Yet, critics, particularly of the Marxist tradition, argue that preexisting inequalities are exacerbated, unequally distributed (Stiglitz, 2002), and informed by historical situations of third world dependence on Western nations: "[. . .] at all times, and at all levels, the 'invisible' hand was guided and steered by politics and power, and that it always, and indeed cumulatively so, ended up in the concentration of wealth and prosperity for some people in some places, while causing abject misery, poverty and appalling subjugation for a majority of people in most other places" (Hoogvelt, 2001: 15). Free-trade neoliberalism, it is argued, suppresses government through corporate power and creates significant deprivation for many within the system (Chomsky, 1999).

When defining and discussing globalization, we generally do so in reference to human animals. Yet, non-human animals, too, are experiencing much of this phenomenon and are arguably the most impacted by exacerbated inequalities created under neoliberal globalization. Global meat production has increased more than five-fold since 1950 (Nierenberg, 2003). Two-thirds of the increase in meat consumption in 2002 occurred in the developing world (Nierenberg, 2003). In 2009 alone, almost 57 billion non-human animals were slaughtered (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2009). This figure is not accounting for aquatic non-humans or the exploitation of those not immediately killed for their products. Other non-human animal industries are expanding as well. Fur sales have increased in Russia, China, and Korea, creating new markets for U.S. and Canadian pelts (Dasgupta, 2006). In another example, Humane Society International reports a surge in developing countries for marine parks which rely on captive marine mammals to draw audiences (2010).

Under neoliberal capitalism, non-human animals are generally understood only as commodities. However, because non-human animals are also sentient, their plight warrants immediate attention. Consequently, this commodification, or the objectification of bodies and labor into products, is increasingly recognized as misplaced and has triggered a consumer backlash. This discontent with non-human animals as commodities and property has been enveloped by the newly established vegan abolitionist movement (Francione, 1996a; Torres, 2007). Increasingly, those in the West who have turned to veganism have done so for ethical reasons (Maurer, 2002) and those who have turned to abolitionism as well are interested in the complete cessation of non-human animal use and exploitation (Francione, 1996a).

This paper will examine how globalization has impacted non-human animal inequality insofar as it has been exacerbated by the global deepening of neoliberal capitalism. It will explore vegan abolitionism as a bottom-up, consumer-based resistance movement responding to increasing inequality. It will also briefly examine the present discourse between utopian and pragmatic approaches within the non-human animal rights movement. Vegan abolitionism challenges pragmatic, mainstream welfarist reform and envisions a critical utopia where there is no exploitation or use of non-human animals. It is argued that the increasing use of non-human animals is one of the most critical consequences of globalization and requires sincere attention. It is also argued that veganism offers an important site of resistance to globalization's negative influence. Specifically, vegan abolitionism is the most appropriate approach as it seriously considers our moral obligation to non-human animals and adopts an incremental, vegan consumption-based action towards ending non-human animal use altogether.

For the purposes of this paper, veganism will be defined as an ideological belief that the abstinence of non-human animals' use has the power to liberate non-human animals (McGrath, 2000). Furthermore, this paper's use of the term speciesism will be guided by Ryder's understanding: "Our moral argument is that species alone is not a valid criterion for cruel discrimination. Like race or sex, species denotes some physical and other differences but in no way does it nullify the great similarity among all sentients [sic]—our capacity for suffering" (1989: 6). In other words, speciesism is discrimination based on species membership which fails to recognize equality of sentience.

Globalization and Speciesism

As previously discussed, globalization is defined and conceptualized in various and in sometimes competing ways. Most scholars agree that globalization represents significant technological change and an intensification of connectivity that influences social, economic, and political realm with uneven reach and results (Raynolds, 2009). Because this article examines the commodification of non-human animals and consumer resistance, the conception of globalization as a deepening of neoliberal global capitalism will be utilized.

Hoogvelt (2001) distinguishes four major periods of capitalist expansion which influences modern understandings of globalization. The Mercantile phase from approximately 1500 to 1800 was characterized by European expansion and plundering as Western powers searched for gold, spices, and slaves in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Colonial period, from 1800 to 1950, was defined by Western imperialism and the creation of third world dependency relations on first world nations. The Neocolonial period from about 1950 to 1970 saw reinvigorated colonization through developmental projects. Here modernization theories emerged seeking to develop third world nations according to the Western model. Dependency theories also emerged that recognized the importance of imperialism in perpetuating poverty and stagnating economies in third world nations. The Postimperialism period from approximately 1970 to today is characterized by the perpetuation of peripheral dependence on the core through debt. Furthermore, this period has seen a new international division of labor whereby newly-industrializing economies are more intensively integrated into the world market while other peripheral nations are marginalized (Hoogvelt, 2001). The failure of the world capitalist system in expanding the market in the periphery in the 1970s and 1980s led to crises in capitalism and a reconfiguration of the capitalist model (Hoogvelt, 2001). New technologies and production paradigms meant a switch from the mass production and accumulation of Fordism to a global economy that valued knowledge and information (Hoogvelt, 2001). Global market exchange, then, is not a new phenomenon. Furthermore, current global inequalities are part of an ongoing historical project of Western domination. Globalization can thus be conceptualized as the next phase of world capitalism whereby capitalist integration is deepening (Hoogvelt, 2001). It is a new development promoted by nation-states designed to reinvigorate accumulation (Gritsch, 2005).

Held and McGrew (1999) also define globalization as a stretching of political and economic activities. Others emphasize the sharp increase in connectedness, technologies, and information (Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1989). Non-human animal agriculture has been heavily influenced by these trends. Following World War II, the American fascination with industrialization and the rise of Fordist production systems led to a corporate domination of agriculture and an emphasis on efficiency and productivity (Rollin, 2006). This, in turn, led to a dramatic increase in non-human animal production and cemented the commodity status of non-human animal labor and life. Unfortunately, this capitalist focus on efficiency and productivity coupled with the commodification of non-human animals is becoming a global phenomenon.

Societal reactions to these changes range from isolationism to conformity. However, there is some evidence that a global culture is emerging (Feathersone, 1990; Steger, 2009). These new cultures are globally conscious and meld traditional and modern, moving towards cultural homogeneity in response to the tension of globalization (Featherstone, 1990: 1). In India, for example, the influence of Western lifestyles has dramatically increased the institution of pet ownership. However, the Western pet food industry has had to alter pet food to meet Indian vegetarian standards before import (Sangeetha, 2009). Also in India, Western fast food chain McDonald's is catering to Indian vegetarianism and does not sell pork or beef (Petrun, 2007).

Unfortunately, these compromises have not led to a global culture that is in anyway morally obligated to non-human animals. The Western-influenced Indian pet industry, for example, reinforces the ideology that non-human animals are property and pet ownership has increased. Pet overpopulation in India is at a critical point (PETA, ~2009) with over 30 million street dogs and numerous human deaths from rabies (Falconer, 2009). Similarly, the compromise nurtured by McDonald's India is cause for concern. While no McDonald's in India sells beef or pork and in lieu of vegetarian entrees, the chain has supplemented its menu with chicken products (Petrun, 2007). And, increasingly, chicken is not seen as contradictory with the Indian vegetarian diet (Kala, 2005). This creation and exacerbation of a demand for chicken flesh spells disaster for the billions of chickens who must suffer and die to meet that demand. Between 2000 and 2005, chicken consumption in India doubled (Kala, 2005). Beyond McDonald's influence, the Indian vegetarian diet in general is under attack: "Home to over 90% of the world's Hindus, Hinduism is the world's only major religion with a streak of vegetarianism. But globalisation [sic] is changing that, as Indian food habits move in tune with a meat-eating world" (Kara, 2005). Additionally, beyond rising meat consumption, the

reliance on non-flesh non-human animal products is on the rise also mirroring the Western diet (Kala, 2005). India is now the largest dairy producer in the world (Thakkar, 2009).

Reinforcing the socio-cultural aspect, globalization and speciesism are intrinsically linked to the economy. As previously discussed, many scholars argue that a neoliberal global common market has materialized which has meant the spread of capitalism and inherent inequalities (Giddens, 1990; Hoogvelt 2001; Steger, 2009): “Neo-liberalism has indeed used the tools provided by generic globalization to construct a global system of domination” (Evans, 2008: 275). And, while the actual state of inequality for humans resulting from globalization is in debate (Held and McGrew, 1999), there can be no question that non-human animals are suffering a dramatic increase in inequality based on the dramatic increase in numbers used and slaughtered.

Non-human animals are exploited in two ways: their labor is exploited (in the form of wool, honey, reproductive excretions such as milk or eggs, etc.) and they themselves become commodities (in the form of their flesh, as companions, etc.) (Torres, 2007). The extraction of surplus value from the labor and lives of non-human animals is foundational to many aspects of the current global economy. In 2004, the top fifteen dairy industries, both global and regional, brought in almost 100 billion in sales (Blayney et al., 2006). In 2006, the global production of eggs had risen to 65 million tons (Sluis, 2008). In less direct ways, the exploitation of non-human animals is realized through the grain industry, the automobile industry, the pharmaceutical industry, and so forth:

[...] if we scratch the surface of common aspects of our society, we see animals commodified, and this and hidden and obscured as part of the ideological machinery of capitalism. [...] Behind these seemingly everyday products is a vast array of hidden institutional, cultural, and economic logics that depend on the exploitation of animals to produce a profit. (Torres, 2007: 55)

Furthermore, this growing economic reliance on non-human animals is beyond coincidental or natural, but rather, it could be seen as a product of global power differentials and Western domination.

Following World War II, the United States food-aid regime pushed overproduced, subsidized commodities onto third world nations. This challenged viability and profitability of local food production in these third world nations, creating a food dependency on the United States and transforming traditional diets (McMichael, 2008). In particular, the United States glut in cheap grains intended for non-human animal feed created a growing reliance on non-human animal consumption in areas previously absent of such markets. United States

policy furthered this growing dependence by funding local development in non-human animal production in third world countries to provide greater markets for this surplus grain (Insel, 1985). So, rather than a simple reflection of growing affluence in third world countries, the growth in non-human animal use is largely a result from Western manipulation and domination: “[...] dietary differentiation reflects who controls production of certain foods [...]” (McMichael, 2008: 75).

Thus, non-human animals have become increasingly integral to much of the global economy as part of Western cultural expansion and deliberate food dependency. Polanyi (1957), however, argues that this globalizing neoliberal system and its perpetuation of exploitation is problematic, as the market is not serving society, but rather society is serving the market. This system fails to mitigate risks or offer social protection (Evans, 2008). The neo-liberal paradigm argues that welfare programs and other civic services that might be provided by the state interfere with economic activity and should be privatized (Jessop, 1993). Instead, the state should function only to manage territories and uphold optimal economic conditions. Central to Polanyi’s analysis of neoliberal failure is the commoditization of that which cannot, or should not, be treated as though it could be exchanged (Evans, 2008). He points to land, labor, and money as the primary market commodities that are not true commodities and are thus fictitious (Polanyi, 1944). A hyper focus on the market can lead to a commodification of the fictitious (in this case, the lives and labor of non-human animals). It can also lessen protection for important social issues (in this case, mass non-human animal exploitation) and increase inequality. As a result, fictitious commodification, he argues, sparks resistance from below.

New social movements have arisen to address the social shortcomings, economic weaknesses, and political issues raised by globalization. These movements are characterized by a criticism of the economic focus, social injustices, and hierarchies created by globalization. Concerned with global justice, these movements question dominant values and power relations (McMichael, 2008) and are a representation of changing popular forces and an inevitable social response to neoliberalism (Amoore et al., 2006). Because the state and the economy are so closely intertwined, it is argued by some that political resistance must necessarily arise from civil society (Amoore et al, 2006; Francione, 2009a).

The Vegan Movement: A Bottom-Up, Consumer-based Site of Resistance

In response to this rapidly expanding speciesism, the vegan abolition movement (as distinct from those who adopt veganism for reasons of health, trend, etc.) has become a pertinent social movement concerned with the neglected rights of non-human animals and functions as a consumer-based site of resistance. While in various points of Western history, many groups have abstained from some or all non-human animal products, it was not until the 19th century that major social and political headway were made in terms of group membership, social acceptance, and law reform (Spencer, 1996). Historically, the Western vegetarian movement did generally eschew the consumption of all non-human animal products, however, modern vegetarianism has come to include non-human animal products and has become less concerned with use (Davis, 2010). Vegetarianism today is focused merely on the exclusion of non-human animal flesh from the human animal diet and is variable in elimination of non-food non-human animal products from consumption patterns (i.e. leather and mainstream toiletries which contain slaughterhouse renderings). Furthermore, vegetarianism does not contend with the ethical problems of dairy and egg industries which continue to entail the exploitation and death of non-human animals and their offspring. The modern vegan movement was initiated with the establishment of The Vegan Society in Britain in 1944 in response to these ethical inconsistencies of vegetarianism (Watson, 1944). Veganism is the abstinence from all non-human animal products and explicitly challenges the property status of non-human animals (Francione, 2008):

As a direct protest against the commodity form and property relations that animals are subject to, it is a great refusal of the system itself, a no-compromise position that does not seek reform, but which seeks abolition. For anyone who wants to end animal exploitation, living as a vegan is living the end that we wish to see—no one will exploit animals for mere choices of taste and convenience. (Torres, 2007: 131)

Veganism in this abolitionist sense, then, directly opposes the commodification of non-human animals and recognizes consumption as a political action. Furthermore, vegans reject “organic” and “humanely-raised” non-human animal products often promoted by the mainstream animal rights movement (Singer and Mason, 2006; Rollin, 2006) as these continue to include the actual consumption of non-human animal products and continue to use non-human animals as resources. Hence, while the vegan abolition movement is certainly concerned with the treatment of non-human animals in the production process, its fundamental concern is with the existence of non-human animal products. Non-human

animal life and labor are seen as fictitious commodities. Therefore, values-based labeling which focuses on process and quality (Barham, 2002) is rejected by veganism as irrelevant (or even counterproductive) to the concern with non-human animal use.

Instead, the vegan movement represents a bottom-up consumer political action: “Veganism [...] is a daily, lived expression of ethical commitment and of protest” (Torres, 2007: 134). Singer and Mason (2006) posit that a mass adoption of veganism could stop the demand for non-human animal products, and cause non-human animal businesses to stop production and shift to new industries. Thus, what we choose to purchase and consume can become an important political act (Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007; Singer and Mason, 2006). Furthermore, by continuing to consume products which represent objectionable ethical practices, the consumer is responsible for upholding that injustice (Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007). Fortunately, it can be argued that the very tools of globalization used for dominance and inequality might also be used to alleviate these problems (Evans, 2008). The interdependence so characteristic of globalization for example, could prove its most important weakness. In this situation, power exists below as it is heavily dispersed and intertwined. Thus consumers have the ability to disrupt the status quo, affect politics, and harness the disruptive potential and the possibility for change inherent to globalization (Piven, 2007). Society, it is argued, can be shaped and benefited by the consumer’s economic vote (Dickinson and Hollander, 1991).

Here the consumer-citizen is engaged in merging economic action with political action in hopes of creating social change with certain choices in consumption (Parker, 1999). To facilitate this consumer-based change, labeling has emerged to indicate products that are free of non-human animal ingredients. Specifically, there is an increase in vegan labeling (Yacoubou, 2006). Established in 1991, the Vegan Society operates the international vegan standard trademark (Figure 1) which requires companies displaying the trademark to adhere to specific criteria such as the abstinence from non-human animal ingredients, testing, genetically modified organisms, and contamination from non-vegan sources in production (The Vegan Society, 2009). Thousands of products sold across the globe are certified for this trademark. While the trademark is registered internationally, producers must trademark on a country by country basis (Therkelsen, 2010). The certified vegan logo (Figure 2) is similarly popular and holds comparable guidelines (Vegan Action, 2009).



Figure 1: The Vegan Society Trademark Figure 2: Certified Vegan Logo

As there are no federal guidelines or third party certification for vegan labeling, each certification group upholds its own guidelines (Yacoubou, 2006). While the Vegan Society trademark and the Certified Vegan logo are widely used, other smaller scale certifications are utilized. Additionally, grocers and producer are also self-labeling products (Yacoubou, 2006). The current inconsistency between various vegan labels and the ease of circumventing them altogether with self-labeling could become problematic in regards to ingredient accuracy and ethical consistency. Further, the mainstreaming of ethical consumption labeling can be subject to a dilution of moral vision as the project grows (Raynolds, Murray, and Wilkinson, 2007). Despite these concerns, vegan labeling does address the shortcomings of values-based labeling (i.e. Animal Care Certified, Certified Humane, etc.) and assists consumers in avoiding non-vegan products altogether. Further, as globalization exacerbates non-human animal consumption, these labels may hold some transformative potential in guiding consumer choice away from non-human animal products and counter capitalist trends towards the deepening commodification of these animals.

However, consumer-based resistance is argued by some to be counterproductive in that it continues to function within capitalism and supports rather than challenges it (Johnston, 2008). A hyper-focus on consumption can delude social action by overriding initial concerns with citizenship and obligations and responsibilities to society. An example is seen in the emergence of vegetarian sandwiches in some major fast food chain menus. The increased availability, affordability, and convenience of non-meat options in fast food menus might be seen as a way of easing meat eaters into a vegetarian diet (Iacobbo and Iacobbo, 2006). Specifically, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals celebrated the addition of a faux meat sandwich to the menus of Canadian Kentucky Fried Chickens by stationing their scantily-clad “Lettuce Ladies” at KFC restaurants to hand out free samples (The Windsor Star, 2008). KFC and other large fast food chains, of course, still derive the majority of their profit from the exploitation of non-human animals. Efficacy and ethical consistency might be called into question when supporting these restaurant chains with the purchase of any sandwich, vegan or not. It can be argued that, in this instance, useful social action could be overshadowed by an over reliance on the power of consumer choice.

Resistance through consumption has also been criticized in regards to access (Johnston, 2008). Consumer choices, diets, and taste are restrained and influenced by socioeconomic status (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Bourdieu, 1984; Bryant and Goodman, 2004). Middle-class persons are in a better position to afford special diets, and it may be no coincidence that vegetarians and vegans are more likely to be middle class (Maurer, 2002). Certainly, extra cost, time (Singer and Mason, 2006), and inconvenience (Cole, 2006) can impede adoption of veganism for some socioeconomic statuses. It might also remain that the cultural capital conducive to the adoption of veganism is lacking for lower classes or other minorities (Harper, 2010). The vegan abolitionist movement would be wise to meet these challenges to consumer-based resistance and continue public outreach across different socioeconomic strata as to the potential ease, affordability, and palatability of veganism. It would also benefit from the incorporation of reflexive consumer practices which, “[...] offer the prospect of thoughtful, politicized engagement with the food system” (Johnston and Szabo, 2010). This reflexivity can encourage consideration beyond self interest and encourage sincere concern with those negatively impacted by modern food systems and needs not be restricted by socioeconomic status (Johnston and Szabo, 2010).

Given these criticisms, consumer-based action should not be seen as the only site for resistance. For example, some have argued that legislative action to protect non-human animal rights might spur a change in public attitude (McGrath, 2000). Though, this has been disputed by others who argue that law can only be successfully enacted when it reflects preexisting public attitudes (Francione, 1996b). A critical mass of vegans and the discontinued perception of non-human animals as property would be required before law could successfully liberate (Francione, 1996b). Moral shocks (namely graphic narratives or imagery), too, have been employed to draw attention to the need for veganism (DeCoux, 2009; Jasper and Poulsen, 1995). However, the efficacy of such tactics has been called into question. Francione suggests that, while narratives are important, graphic advocacy could turn the public towards welfare reform. If used at all, he argues that narratives must be used in context with abolitionist theory to effectively advocate for an end to non-human animal use (Francione, 2009b). Protests, demonstrations, and open rescues, too, can become counterproductive. These tactics are often focused on one issue, such as fur, meat-free Mondays, or factory farmed chickens. Francione argues that these tactics tend to single out certain types of exploitation as more important than others and undermine the need for complete abolition (Francione, 1996). These types of advocacy, if used at all, must be carefully utilized within abolitionist theory to clarify that all types of animal use are equally

unacceptable and that reform is not the end goal. Beyond these tactics, other forms of direct action, such as leafleting, tabling, speaking engagements, and other forms of public education, have been utilized. Vegan education is necessary to give weight to vegan labeling and vegan consumption. Veganism is inherently involved with the transformation of consumer choices, but activism in the form of vegan outreach and education is critical to recruiting new vegans and addressing potential problems with blind adherence to consumer resistance and socioeconomic barriers.

Utopian and Pragmatic Approaches to Globalized Speciesism

As discussed previously, there are two groups of labeling concerned with non-human animal products: vegan labels and values-based labels (“organic,” “grass-fed,” etc.). The divide between these two types of labeling is indicative of a larger conflict regarding non-human animal welfare. Welfarism, the dominant group, does not necessarily challenge the use of non-human animals or recognize veganism as necessary. Instead, it is concerned with suffering and addresses that suffering with a strategy of institutional reform (and is supportive to values-based labeling) (Francione, 1996a). Welfarism adopts a pragmatic approach, presuming that the present domination of capitalism through neoliberal globalization is the reality of the present and probably the reality of the future (Ball, 2009; De Sousa Santos, 2008; Rollin, 2006).

In opposition, vegan abolitionism challenges the *use* of non-human animals and the subsequent property status of these animals. Strategies of reform are understood to make institutions of non-human animal use more efficient and productive, thus, they are counterproductive to the suffering of non-human animals. Vegan abolitionism also accepts veganism as a necessary baseline (Francione, 1996a).

Standing opposite to welfarism, abolitionism is often negatively contrasted as utopian (Phelps, 2009; Szybel, 2007). However, vegan abolitionism could be understood as a necessary and critical utopia as it envisions an alternative society: “[...] On the basis of this alternative vision and the credible possibility of fulfilling it, the present is considered as violent, intolerable, and morally repugnant” (De Sousa Santos, 2008: 253). Utopian visions pose a threat to the exploitation and oppression of the established status quo (Moynan, 2000). By these understandings, then, vegan abolition forms in opposition to the gross inequalities suffered by non-human animals and envisions and strives for a world where these animals are

no longer burdened by human exploitation. Veganism speaks to a “[...] utopian moral value of posthumanist/posthuman compassion” (Cole, 2006). As a utopian vision, veganism challenges what we believe to be necessary and absolute in society, offers alternatives, and can be transformative (Cole, 2006). Yet, most welfarism criticizes vegan abolitionism on two major points: we must work to reduce suffering in the here and now and total abolition of non-human animal *use* is an unachievable goal.

It is often argued that total abolitionism will never be attained (Rollin, 2006). Therefore, resources spent towards an unrealistic goal are wasted. Then, if vegan abolitionism is wasting resources, the suffering of presently exploited non-human animals remains unaddressed: “Obviously, McDonald’s is not going to become vegan tomorrow. In the meantime, we can help lessen animals’ suffering by supporting reforms” (Ball, 2009).

Unfortunately, there is little hope of reconciling these two approaches. While it is necessary for the pragmatic approaches to have a utopian vision to incite mobilization and work towards a societal paradigm shift, there is often a sense of urgency which necessitates short term action (De Sousa Santos, 2008). Sadly, welfarism, working under this sense of urgency, fails to address the paradigm shift necessary to truly address non-human animal exploitation. Welfarist short-term action only serves to make non-human animal exploitation more efficient and is thus counterproductive (Francione, 1996a). On the other hand, the vegan abolitionist movement challenges the consistency of short-term welfare reforms which improve productivity and compromise social justice for non-human animals. To address urgency, abolitionism pushes for further vegan education and the subsequent building of a vegan critical mass. A vegan diet, which directly rejects consumption of non-human animal products, is considered immediate action. Any other immediate action must constitute a prohibition which is not constitutive of the exploitative institution and which recognizes a non-institutional non-human animal interest (Francione, 1996a). The vegan-based abolitionist animal rights movement is new and continues to develop. As such it retains potential as a critical utopia, particularly as the pragmatic welfarist approach has failed to achieve significant improvement for non-human animals.

Conclusion

The staggering magnitude of non-human animal exploitation aggravated from globalization’s spreading capitalist neoliberal markets and Western lifestyle norms has caused a societal

backlash in the form of consumer-based resistance. The vegan abolitionist movement has become an important site for this resistance, insisting that every purchase is a political action which can protest or perpetuate the injustices done to non-human animals. Vegan abolitionism in particular has the potential to elaborate a critical utopian vision for the movement but also provides pragmatic, short-term action through consumer choice. The vegan abolitionist movement, as a new social movement, challenges hegemonic discourse and ideology perpetuated by globalization and bridges political action with economic action. Vegan abolition challenges the taken-for-grantedness of neoliberal globalization. It also challenges fictitious commodification of non-human animal life and labor as well as ongoing domination and hierarchies of power. However, the abolitionist movement might improve efficacy and avoid important contradictions by incorporating reflexivity. This reflexivity should recognize the potential capitalist co-option and moral disillusion sometimes connected with movement growth. It should also focus on eroding socioeconomic barriers to participation. Furthermore, vegan abolition could be benefited by beginning to look beyond the consumer vote and embracing non-economic tactics and creative vegan education.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the editing staff of the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* for their helpful direction and several suggestions for relevant sources. I would also like to thank Dr. Laura Reynolds of Colorado State University for her thought provoking course on globalization and for encouraging my application of issues of globalization to non-human animal studies.

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