

Veganism

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It's common for many to view the veganism movement as 'extreme'. The idea of swearing away not only meat, but *all* animal products in general, can seem like an over-reaction, a notion so divorced from our daily lives that it can be easily deemed extremist. But to me, it's actually quite mind-boggling that I would be considered extreme for being a vegan.

Veganism is only extreme when you view it through the preconceived

lens of the status quo, a status quo that dictates that it is 'normal' to kill and eat non-human animals and to abuse them for the purpose of denying their eggs, milk and other products. Let me tell you what I consider extreme—drinking breastmilk from another animal. We routinely take and drink the breastmilk from another species. It's not even the milk of an ape, but the milk of a bovine. We take the breastmilk of a completely different species that is meant for a calf! We then take that milk, put sugar in it, make milkshakes, freeze it and make ice cream, and consume it in a variety of ways. *That* feels extreme.

Another very 'normal' practice that I consider extreme is the act of eating a hamburger. What can be more extreme than saying, "I fancy a hamburger today, so let's go stick a bolt gun into this animal's brain so we can chop them up and eat them." Nothing is more extreme than when we feel it's totally acceptable to kill other sentient beings that share our own capacity for love, friendship, suffering, pain and fear. Just like us, they don't want to die; they yearn to survive, and they fear death. Yet we feel like we can do whatever we want to them, just because their bodies taste good, or their breastmilk tastes good.

What often gets forgotten is that for most of human history, humans actually ate a plant-based diet. That was the norm for a very long time in our 300,000 years of existence. In the grand scope of human history, our present animal-eating culture is actually a very small blip. The hunter-gatherer phenomenon is only a recent economy that human societies have developed. Before that, humans were mostly gatherers, and they were mostly vegetarians. They scavenged whatever they could eat, and the archaeology is clear that their diet was mostly plant-based.

When the landscape shifted about 10,000 years ago, hunting became a little easier and more realistic, albeit still extremely dangerous. People were still quite heavily living off plants, berries, fungi, and vegetarian foods. It wasn't until the dawn of agricultural societies that it became 'normal' to domesticate other animals. And such domestication

coincided with this philosophy that it was okay to completely dominate another species for the purposes of convenience, profit, and a variety of other reasons.

We have this tendency to think that anything that deviates substantially from our present-day norms is extreme. And anything deemed extreme is subsequently viewed in a negative light. But I would encourage people to think outside the status quo. Just because something has become normalized by the masses doesn't mean it is right. And often, if you look back in history, you will realize that our present-day status quo is actually quite different from the norms of the past. Thousands of years ago, it would have seemed extreme to eat and manufacture meat and animal products in the way we do now. So how extreme can veganism truly be viewed today, when being vegan was a core of humanity for so much of our past?

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