

Advancing Veganism in a “Post-Vegan Society”: A Review of *Veganism: Politics, Practice, and Theory*

Eva Haifa Giraud, *Veganism: Politics, Practice, and Theory*. Bloomsbury, 2021. 208 pp.

With there being so many compromises necessary to mainstream veganism in a deeply speciesist society, how has the scholar-activist community negotiated its commitment to social justice for Nonhuman Animals? Giraud's *Veganism: Politics, Practice and Theory* examines these emerging conflicts at a historical point in which the cultural and political expansion of veganism allows for (and necessitates) philosophical reflection. Veganism is at a crossroads, and careful thought must be exercised to determine the most effective and inclusive strategies moving forward. How can veganism be promoted in such a way that highlights its accessibility while also remaining sensitive to pervasive food insecurity? How can veganism celebrate the diversity of traditional plant-based foods without appropriating or obscuring their cultural linkages? How can Nonhuman Animals be included in vegan advocacy without demeaning them or repelling the public with particularly violent imagery? What roles do social media, sanctuaries, and anthropocentrism play in advancing the interests of Nonhuman Animals? These conundrums, and many more, challenge the reader as they traverse the pages.

At times the complications are so many, one wonders if Nonhuman Animals are being lost from the conversation. Giraud notes that the growth of veganism as a diet has obscured the injustices faced by Nonhuman Animals, and it remains the case that many of the key debates in vegan ethics concern human wants and needs. Nonhuman Animals, unfortunately, become absent referents. Identity politics now dominate the vegan discourse, and perhaps necessarily so as veganism is not just about advocating for Nonhuman Animals but also about changing how various classes, races, ethnicities, genders, and other groups engage with food and consumption. Feminist theory and critical race theory are generously examined by Giraud in this respect to frame the discussions of social movement strategy. In particular, feminism, having reached a similar level of visibility in mainstream culture amidst pervasive gender inequality and men's violence against women, serves as a guide (and warning) for vegan advancements. Veganism, like feminism, has been co-opted and depoliticized by the marketplace. Pleasurable consumption with many

exciting choices is now the dominant frame in mainstream society. Radical collective action has become noxious, even archaic. Meanwhile, the violence experienced by Nonhuman animals (as well as girls, women, and other feminized groups) remains systemic.

Veganism, though mostly theoretical, does substantiate some prevailing debates and opinions in the vegan community with original qualitative interviewing. Respondents are based in Britain, but Giraud takes care to highlight similarities and differences between British and American vegan cultures and the associated societal restraints with which they must contend (Giraud is also highly attentive to global differences beyond the Anglo and American experiences). Otherwise, there are many areas where ethical and strategic dilemmas related to vegan outreach might have been substantiated by engaging the quite robust field of vegan psychology. For instance, the concept of flexibility examined in the context of post-feminist theory and its conductivity to neo-liberal market practices is enlightening, but it would also be useful to explore evidence from empirical studies on the flexitarian strategy as it manifests in vegan activism. This lack of empirical engagement also lends to the feeling of frustration that emerges from the book's ultimate thesis: The popularity of veganism will inevitably entail some ethical compromises and imperfections. Might we look to science to identify evidence-based solutions? Although feminism and critical race theory are deeply entangled with vegan studies (and rightly so), they can run the risk of overindulging in critical thinking to the point of impracticality. These theories also risk reifying identity differences to the effect of complicating collective action.

That said, *Veganism's* strength lies in its deep contemplation of complicated issues drawing on sociological theory and qualitative research. Although social psychology can offer concise tests of vegan strategies, it has a comparatively weak regard for the influence of social structures and institutions. The comprehensiveness and timeliness of *Veganism*, furthermore, marks it as an exceptionally useful reference for both students new to vegan studies as well as seasoned scholars and activists who would benefit from a heavily cited, carefully considered collection of leading discourses in the field. Students and researchers aiming to contribute directly to the advancement of vegan studies will find *Veganism's* survey of debates especially useful for flagging areas where more work is needed. Researchers, be they professional, activist, or student, all share the passion to answer one question: How do we get more people to go vegan? The answer to this question is infinitely complex and will require a global, multi-generational team of committed scholars and

activists to ascertain. Giraud's *Veganism* provides a sophisticated, balanced, and well-referenced map of what we know and what we have yet to learn.

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