THE POLITICS OF VEGANISM

One common flow
One common breathing
All things in symphony

Hippocrates

Shifts of consciousness, sometimes
gradual, sometimes dramatic, are not
beyond the writ of the human species

Linzey (1993:523)

Emma McGrath

Introduction

This discussion will examine the ethical and political foundations of the philosophy of veganism to ascertain the desirability of the adoption of a vegan lifestyle. It will explore the ways in which this value system is marginalised within modern society. The ethical, philosophical, environmental and pragmatic considerations underpinning the ideological framework of veganism will be examined, to support the view that the benefits of veganism outweigh any detriment. Yet despite the proposed desirability of such a vegan lifestyle at levels of individual, social and global concern, there are many limitations that restrict the widespread recognition and adoption of veganism and the latter half of this discussion will be devoted to an examination of these issues.

For definitional clarity, non-human animals will be termed "non-humans" within this discussion, as is the practice adopted by Peter Singer in his seminal work, Animal Liberation [Singer, 1995], a text central to this discussion due to its importance to the contemporary animal liberation movement. The term "animals", often used to refer exclusively to non-human animals, is a generic term which, in its strict sense, must also encompass human beings.

It is accepted that, in our post-modern world, there can be no absolutist arguments, as all arguments are informed by values and values cannot be proved [Seidman 1992:68]. The challenge in developing an argument is to acknowledge the value-base of the author. The following discussion is voiced from a value-base informed by veganism.

1 The belief that the liberation of animals and environmental protection is best achieved by a complete abstinence from the consumption and usage of animal products.

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Furthermore, it is impossible to fully explore the ways in which veganism is marginalised and its potential contribution without taking into consideration a myriad of related issues. Veganism is an ideological issue and the expression of all ideologies can only be understood within the context of the multiplicity of sociopolitical factors which foster or inhibit their expression within any society. Consequently, although the focus of this paper remains on veganism, related issues, such as economic, environmental and global equity will be examined.

It is acknowledged that the following analysis of the limitations to veganism will be situated predominantly within the western context, as it is the thesis of this paper that it is in the wealthy, western world that the problems of excess animal consumption and wastage are generated. It is submitted that not only do less developed countries suffer needlessly due to western practices but that eastern cultures particularly are more inclined to food preparation that has traditionally avoided animal products.

Furthermore, although this discussion focuses on the consumption of animal products, this is not to imply that other issues relating to the welfare of animals, such as the existence of zoos, sport hunting, skinning, and the use of animals for experimentation and research, are not of concern to the author. By necessity of length, however, this paper is limited to one, albeit an extremely important, area in which the exploitation of animals warrants great alarm and action - the consumption of animals and their products.

There is scant literature available on veganism, which is a limitation to the philosophy of veganism in itself. The politics of meat-eating has been historically excluded from mainstream academic debate, with the valid ethical-political concerns of animal rights activists dismissed as disparagingly as the rights of the animals they seek to protect [Singer, 1995:xii]. Due to the absence of academic writing on the philosophy of veganism, the sources cited in this paper are drawn predominantly from the related literature on vegetarianism, animal rights and environmentalism.

The Branching of the Liberation Tree

The main theorists of animal liberation fall into two broad streams. The first approach is utilitarian, whereby the treatment of non-humans is assessed in light of a desire to maximise a utility function: prominent advocates of this view are Singer and Bentham. By this theory, animals have the right to equal consideration on the grounds that they can suffer pain and thus have interests, not on the basis of rights. Singer's philosophy is concerned with minimising the suffering of non-humans. Yet Singer's approach has been criticised as too narrow by other animal rights philosophers such as Rawls, Nozick, and Regan. While it balances the interests of humans and non-humans, they find Singer's approach lacking in that it does not consider the 'separateness' of individuals [Preece & Chamberlain, 1993:275].

The second stream within the animal liberation movement features predominantly a Kantian perspective, whereby "all who have inherent value have it equally, whether they be human animals or not" [Regan, 1983:44]. Theorists such as Regan adopt a deontological approach, denying the adequacy of "consequentialism", and endeavouring to show that animals are ends in themselves, with their lives having an inherent value independent of their benefit to humans. This view advocates a more absolutist prescription of the ways in which animals should be treated, in contrast to Singer's more open approach, which requires only that all non-humans be treated equally.
While the philosophical approaches taken by Singer and Regan are demonstrative of the two most prominent voices within the animal liberation movement, such voices are not exclusively representative of the multiplicity of different perspectives. For example, Carl Jung, in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* [cited in Preece & Chamberlain, 1993:283], rather than offering a political or philosophical justification for his abstinence from eating animals, says simply:

> I could never free myself from the feeling that warm-blooded creatures were akin to us and not just cerebral automata....My compassion for animals did not derive from Buddhist trimmings of Schopenhauer's philosophy, but rested on the deeper foundations of a primitive attitude of mind, on an unconscious identity with animals.

This statement reflects an alternative approach to defending the rights of animals.

**My Family and Other Animals (or the Politics of Speciesism)**

To understand the debate surrounding whether it is morally justifiable and desirable for humans to consume animals and their products, the differing views on the politics of speciesism and the question of whether animals have rights in need of consideration must first be evaluated. Speciesism is "a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species" [Singer, 1995:6]. The human arrogance by which we profess absolute entitlement to feast upon other living beings and place our desires above their right to life derives from a form of speciesism justified in much the same manner that proponents of racism or sexism justified white and male superiority respectively. As Singer asserts [1995:xii-xiii]:

> I believe that our present attitudes to these beings are based on a long history of prejudice and arbitrary discrimination. I argue that there can be no reason - except the selfish desire to preserve the privileges of the exploiting group - for refusing to extend the basic principle of equality of consideration to members of other species. I ask you to recognise that your attitudes to members of other species are a form of prejudice no less objectionable than prejudice about a person's race or sex.

Regan [1983:129] affirms this when he states: "If to cause suffering is wrong, then it is wrong no matter who is made to suffer". Yet although there is now a philosophical consensus with respect to considering the interests of others, few philosophers have extended the principle of equal consideration to members of other species. Of the theorists who have considered this issue, some, such as Frey [1983:110], accept unfettered human superiority. "There is nothing speciesist about this: we find human life to have a much higher quality than animal life, not on the basis of species, but on the basis of richness". Such speciesism is used to justify atrocious abuses towards animals on the grounds that they are for the benefit of humankind, a superior species.

Speciesism not only operates to marginalise the rights of animals, it also results in the favouring of certain species of animals. Singer [1995:ix] recognises this early in his work, in parodying the way carnivorous humans profess to be animal lovers by looking after their pet dog. Such hypocrisy manifests itself in public outrage at the killing or mistreatment of "cute", "cuddly" domestic animals, yet indifference or support for the slaughter of cows or sheep.

**The Moral Highground**

Furthermore, the practice of eating animals and their products is so ingrained in western society
that the issue of whether humans are ethically and morally entitled to do so is seldom considered [Regan and Singer, 1976:iii]. Yet the ethical justifications for the imprisonment, torture, and slaughter of other species by humans must be examined to determine whether the philosophy of veganism is morally and practically desirable. If animals are denied the right to life and lack of suffering on the grounds of certain characteristics, such as sentience or rationality, such criteria must necessarily be extended to deny these basic rights to classes of humans, such as the mentally disabled, handicapped, infants and elderly [Dombrowski, 1984:143]. The analogy is often drawn between animals and the weak members of society, particularly those without the means or ability to stand up for themselves and their rights. The similarity of animals to humans, in their biological, emotional, rational, and moral capacities, demands that animals be vested with consideration equal to that of humans [Preece & Chamberlain, 1993:263].

A further argument that is often raised against the claim that the mistreatment and slaughter of animals is unethical is that animals are so fundamentally different from humans that they are not entitled to any, let alone equal, consideration. Sapontzis [1985:251-6] calls this the reciprocity requirement, whereby only those who respect the moral rights of others are entitled to moral rights and it is thus ethically defensible to treat animals as resources for fulfilling human interests. Consequently, hens are seen as machines for transforming grain into eggs, cows as milking machines and sheep as walking legs of lamb. Animals are seen as objects for human use and advantage, with no consideration given to the welfare of the animals [Singer, 1987:5]. There are even those who dispute that non-humans can suffer or have interests and are indeed unconscious automata in accordance with Descartes' belief that animals are machines, incapable of suffering pain or neglect [cited in Smith, 1999:67].

Yet non-humans are marginalised without the means to represent themselves and speak out for their rights.

A strong argument relating to the issue of whether animals are entitled to ethical and moral concern is expressed by Sapontzis [1985:256] when he states:

If our sense of a global, moral community derives from our ability to be moved by and feel obligated to help relieve the suffering of others, then that animals are unable to enter fully into familial, economic etc relations with us does not preclude their entering into a global, moral community with us and benefiting from having moral rights against us. It would be our inability to feel moved by and obligated to help relieve the suffering of animals which would prevent the extension of moral rights to animals on the grounds of this sort of community.

This argument that non-humans are entitled to moral rights and consideration strengthens the case in favour of the philosophy of veganism.

A pragmatic issue which must be addressed is that, far too often, the debate over whether animals have rights, albeit legal, moral, or otherwise, occupies the academic literature and excludes the discussion and consideration of methods of protecting animals. The complex question of balancing human and non-human rights leaves little thought for the more pragmatic ways in which animal exploitation may be minimised or extinguished. It is argued that, at the heart of the concerns of animal liberationists must be the rights of the lives they seek to protect. And the abstract balancing of considerations must not lose sight of the practical and immediate goal of alleviating the suffering of non-humans.

While there is a great diversity of opinion as to whether non-humans have, or should be accorded, legal rights [Rollins, 1981; Hearne, 1994], there is a
strong argument for the enactment of legislation aimed at protecting animal rights [Nelson, 1987:176-7]. Yet the legislation is only a reflection of the current social values regarding the treatment of animals. The laws that are passed are couched in primarily negative terms, to punish gross mistreatment of animals, rather than to motivate positive acts of compassion towards non-humans. Furthermore, the legislation inevitably begins by taking human interests into account [Blackman et al, 1989:275]. Nevertheless, it is argued that a legislative response to the atrocious treatment of animals provides a framework which might contribute to a societal change in attitude.

Better Ways of Meating Ends

Perhaps there may have been the potential for more ethically-defensible methods of factory farming to be developed, so that humans could have their flesh and eat it too, without the burden of conscience. Yet economic considerations exclude this possibility. Factory farms were developed as an initiative to meet the growing demands for meat, dairy and eggs, to minimise costs and maximise profits. High-tech farming is based upon the principle of maximising production at the least possible cost to the industry, irrespective of the cost to non-humans and employees [Blackman, 1989:9]. As Preece & Chamberlain [1993:215] opine: "In intensive farming, the only time any consideration is given to the animals is when it is profitable to do so".

Whilst the primary concern of this discussion is the welfare of non-humans, which, it is argued, is protected and advanced by the adoption of the philosophy of veganism, an important flow on from this is the effect of the vegan diet on the environment. The environmental detriment caused by the consumption of meat is well documented. It includes wastage, pollution, the production of less nutrients, deforestation and the associated extinction of many species of animals by the destruction of their habitats, ninety percent of which live in the tropics [Singer, 1995:169]; and the methane effect. Preece and Chamberlain [1993:226] list the environmental benefits that would directly result from a decrease in meat consumption, including the availability of agricultural land previously used for livestock, reduction of the wastage of water used in producing the feed for livestock and a return of the wetlands. Furthermore, a wide-scale adoption of a diet based upon grains and vegetables would reduce grain prices and make far more bulk food available for less affluent countries.

May All Be Fed

Not only does the consumption of animals and their products negatively impact upon the environment, it is another example of the inequity of global wealth distribution. While the majority of the world is malnourished, the affluent west consumes a gross excess of animal products and, in so doing, deprives the rest of the world of basic nourishment. The evidence is well documented, showing the excessive protein and energy wastage involved in meat, dairy and poultry production [Singer, 1995; Powter, 1995:212; Mason & Singer: 1990]. Furthermore, many other basic resources are also wasted, as the production of one pound of steak costs five pounds of grain, one gasoline gallon worth of energy, 2500 gallons of water, and thirty-five pounds of eroded top-soil [Singer, 1995:166]. As Singer states, "[t]he food wasted by animal production in the affluent nations would be sufficient, if properly distributed, to end hunger and malnutrition throughout the world". Furthermore, the resource wastage created by the production of animal products, while not problematic in the affluent west, dramatically impacts upon the inhabitants of less developed nations and their environment. It is the forests of such nations that are destroyed with scant benefits to the country’s inhabitants.

The threat of global famine has led to the realisation that the modern methods of meat and dairy production waste far more protein and energy than they produce, and are not realistic, practical nor humane methods of food production [Regan & Singer, 1976:iii]. As Singer [1995:169] states:

Forests and meat compete for the same land. The prodigious appetite of the affluent nations for meat means that agribusiness can pay more than those who want to preserve or restore the forests. We are, quite literally, gambling with the future of our planet - for the sake of hamburgers.

The examination of the ethical and moral foundations of the ideological framework of veganism, and the environmental and global effects which directly result from the consumption of animals and their products, supports the philosophy of veganism within this discussion. Yet there are a number...
of ways in which this philosophy is marginalised within modern society. This discussion will now turn to an examination of these limitations.

The Silence of the Lambs

A chief limitation to the philosophy of veganism which must be acknowledged from the outset is the lack of a voice for non-humans to assert their rights. As Singer [1995:247] states:

Animal Liberation will require greater altruism on the part of human beings than any other liberation movement. The animals themselves are incapable of demanding their own liberation, or of protesting against their condition with votes, demonstrations, or boycotts.

Historically, movements towards the liberation of the oppressed have been heralded by the incessant demands of the leaders of the oppressed. It is only the disempowered who can truly understand and articulate their plight. Yet non-humans are marginalised without the means to represent themselves and speak out for their rights. Thus, the lack of a means for animals to audibly articulate their grievances must be acknowledged as a fundamental restriction against the recognition of the rights of animals, which impacts directly upon the marginalisation of the ideological framework of veganism.

Anthropocentrism

Perhaps the greatest way in which veganism is restricted within modern western society is that humans not only perpetrate, but also benefit from, the oppression. This is a major barrier common to repressive regimes, such as the system of slavery in South America and the global repression of women. Human self-interest and inertia against change has given rise to arguments that it is philosophically justifiable to eat meat whilst deploring the modern practices which exploit animals [Frey, 1983:89]. Yet it is argued within this discussion that the plight of nonhumans will only be improved if the philosophical condemnation of the modern methods of meat and dairy production are accompanied by the choice to not financially support the companies perpetuating this exploitation.

Pigs Might Fly

A further restriction lies in the existing ignorance pertaining to veganism and the traditional myths of a healthy diet. In 1914, Henry Salt, in The Humanities of Diet [cited in Regan & Singer, 1976:140], wrote of vegetarianism:

There are many signs that the public is awakening to the fact that there is such a thing as food-reform. The reception of a new idea of this sort is always a strange process; and has to pass through several successive phases. First, there is tacit contempt; secondly, open ridicule; then a more or less respectful opposition; and lastly, a partial acceptance.

Although Salt referred to vegetarianism, the methodology described is relevant to veganism in so far as, by the process outlined, vegetarianism gradually gained acceptance as a valid and rational ethical and dietary choice. There is still opposition to vegetarianism, as the belief that eating meat is natural and healthy still permeates society [Boonin-Vail, 1993:79]. Yet the way in which the philosophy of vegetarianism is perceived has markedly evolved. This is the opposition which veganism still faces and the lack of information of the possibility of maintaining good health and lifestyle whilst following a diet free of animal products compounds the difficulties.

The traditional belief that, to be healthy, one must daily consume foods from the five food groups is deeply ingrained in western culture. The paradox is that meat and dairy are responsible for a vast amount of the lifestyle related diseases and incidents of food poisoning in western society [Regan & Singer, 1976; Powter, 1995; Singer, 1995]. The testing, in 1989, of five poultry processing plants in the leading poultry-producing region of the US found salmonella levels of 57.5% in the poultry sold for human consumption, and 2000 Americans die of Salmonella poisoning each year [Powter, 1995:285].

Powter [1995:289] states that "[m]eat is the most chemical-ridden food in the US diet. Currently some 20,000 to 30,000 different drugs are administered to animals... Of the 143 drugs and pesticides GAO identified as likely to leave residues in raw meat and poultry, 42 are known to cause or are suspected of causing cancer, 20 of causing birth defects, and 6 of causing mutations". This is not to mention the saturated fat, cholesterol, antibiotics, faeces, hormones and growth hormones.
stimulants that are contained in the carnivorous meal [Powter, 1995:82]. Yet the majority still ironically fears that to eliminate meat and dairy from their diet is a potential health hazard, which operates as a restriction to the acceptance of veganism within contemporary western society.

Yet the dearth of public information relates not only to human nutritional requirements for good health, but also to the processes by which animal products are converted into our meals. As Singer states [1995:95]:

We are ignorant of the abuse of living creatures that lies behind the food we eat. Buying food in a store or restaurant is the culmination of a long process, of which all but the end product is delicately screened from our eyes. We buy our meat and poultry in neat plastic packages. It hardly bleeds. There is no reason to associate this package with a living, breathing, walking, suffering animal.

Walking the Talk

The force of habit is also a major consideration, as the process of eating cannot be seen exclusively in scientific terms of nourishment, and must be examined within the context of the cultural habits, ceremonies, and traditions that relate to eating.

The modern methods of food purchasing and consumption are far distanced from the reality of the processes by which animal products are produced. A central problem with the distancing of humans from such processes is that the exploitation of animals remains, for most, an abstract philosophical concept that is not sufficiently relevant to our everyday lifestyle to instigate the transition to veganism.

As Oliver Goldsmith [cited in Preece & Chamberlain, 1993:224] phrased it so aptly, "they pity, and they eat the object of their compassion". But while many may see their choices as insignificant to the welfare of animals, it is not only the farm industry lobbyists who defend modern intensive farming conditions, it is everyone who purchases their products. Whilst there is a substantial rift between an intellectual and moral acknowledgment of the atrocities inflicted upon animals by the traditional western diet and the pragmatic decision to put such ideology into practice by abstaining from consuming animal products, the plight of non-humans will be improved only by seeing the choices we have as to the foods we purchase and consume as choices for us to make, choices that do impact upon the reality of millions of non-humans. In this, we should follow Beaumont and Fletchers' sentiments [cited in Preece & Chamberlain, 1993:212]: "Deeds, not words, shall speak for me".

The Truth of Old Macdonald's Farm

A further way in which the philosophy of veganism is marginalised is by the wide birth that exists between the common myth of our treatment of non-humans and the reality, especially of intensive factory farms. The reassuring myth, despite information to the contrary, is that eggs are produced by happy hens that scratch around the farm, that cows graze all day, and end up on our plates only at the end of a long life, and that pigs happily roll in mud. Yet there is a vast gap that exists between the myth and reality of modern methods of factory farming, a reality that manifests itself in cramped hens demobilised by lack of movement, light, companionship and disease. Animals are mutilated by debeaking, dehorning, tail docking and castration without anaesthesia [Preece & Chamberlain, 1993:224].

Due to the excessive demand for meat and animal products, these practices are widespread. Automated slaughter houses process up to twenty-one million chickens per day in the United States alone, more than six billion in the United States per year [Powter, 1995:284]. The exploitation and abuse of non-humans is shocking and occurs on a massive scale. As Preece & Chamberlain [1993:221] conclude:

Of all the crimes committed by humankind against the animal kingdom, the treatment of intensively farmed poultry is the worst. If we think of ourselves as more civilised than the Roman hordes that slaughtered the animals in the amphitheatre, we must think again. A future kinder, gentler, and more humane generation will look back with abject horror on our incredible cruelty to the poultry world - and consider us decidedly less humane than the Romans.

Thus, there is a loud silence surrounding the inhumane practices of the factory farming industry, which helps to marginalise the philosophy of veganism.
Exploding the Myths

A further limitation to the philosophy of veganism is the power exerted by multinational corporations, with their continual persuasive propaganda aimed at inducing the public to consume their products. The alluring power exerted by the advertising of multinational corporations leads us to place faith in their company and to eat their food, mindless of the detriment to non-humans, the environment and our health. A prime example of this is McDonalds, the world's largest user of beef, the company with a greater record of animal abuses than any other [Mason & Singer, 1990:102]. The advertising of this franchise is annually in excess of one billion dollars, and it lures children by the novelty of its free toys, birthday parties, playgrounds and the Ronald McDonald clown. The environmental degradation created by this organisation is appalling: the destruction of the tropics and rainforests and associated extinction of thousands of native species, the exploitation of underdeveloped nations for land to farm cattle, the global warming created by the methane effect from cattle reared for slaughter, the thousands of tonnes of unnecessary packaging, the pollution and the landfill sites of wastage. Yet the public image created by the wealth of advertising is of a positive, even charitable organisation, hence the profits generated by McDonalds are enormous. The power of such multinational corporations marginalises the philosophy of veganism by creating and perpetuating the illusion that their products are not objectionable nor harmful, thus inducing the public to consume their food, innocent of the effect of each hamburger on animals, the environment and their health.

The dairy industry is also a potent force in marginalising the philosophy of veganism within society. The United Dairy Industry Association spends $110 million per year on advertising in the US alone [Powter, 1995:301] to perpetuate the myth that milk is essential and to instil within us the fear of not drinking enough, lest our bones crumble. With that amount of advertising capital - and the television, radio and print propaganda it translates into - it is arguable that any product could be made to appear not only appealing, but essential [Powter, 1995:301-2]. Yet the power of the dairy industry is not only used for positive advertising, but also to repress any adverse information. A study showing that many of the health problems of western society are caused by an excess consumption of dairy, rather than an insufficient amount, was repressed by the US National Dairy Council and exemplifies the "raw political power" that the money of the dairy industry can purchase [Powter, 1995:138]. "The dairy industry has historically been among the largest contributors to the campaigns of those running for federal government offices, and officeholders have returned the favour" [Mason & Singer, 1990:130]. As Powter [1995:162] concludes: "Thanks to Western dietary habits, decades of nutritional misinformation, and - more recently - aggressive advertising campaigns, the average American consumes over 840 pounds of animal products each year". Thus, the clout of the dairy industry is a substantial hurdle to the recognition and adoption of veganism within contemporary western society.

Whilst an avoidance of animal products is historically recognised throughout the eastern world and by religious cultures such as Buddhism and Hinduism, the concept of veganism is a relatively new concept in the affluent western world. As such, there are still limitations relating to the unnecessary number of animal products added to most foods, many of which are obscure. Whilst there is now a far greater availability of vegetarian foods in supermarkets, restaurants and fast food shops, there is scant availability of foods without any animal products.

The recent scientific embracement of genetic engineering also poses difficulties, as the outcry of the Jewish community over the manipulation of tomatoes to contain pork genes exemplifies. While the implications and ethical issues relating to genetic engineering are yet to unfold, such technological development brings with it the potential for a decreased availability of foods produced without the exploitation of animals.

Guerilla Warfare

A further way in which the philosophy of veganism is marginalised in modern society is that the direct action undertaken by animal liberationists who believe in vigilante justice results in the entire movement being seen as a far left and radical response that is extremist, irrational and irrelevant. Smith [1985:28] compares animal liberation activists derogatively to anarchists or urban guerillas, due to their violent methodology, and states,
"[t]he fact that they have endangered or created distress for many of the animals they profess to aid gives even more reason to be suspicious of their true intentions". Direct action is likely to alienate public opinion [Garner, 1993:223] and the direct action of more militant animal liberationists is, paradoxically, a way in which the philosophy of veganism is marginalised within modern society.

A final restriction on veganism, despite being a positive step towards the liberation of animals, is vegetarianism. Vegetarianism may be seen as a restriction in that vegetarianism is viewed by many as the ultimate personal contribution towards alleviating non-human suffering, with veganism seen as excessive, unnecessary and too difficult. Yet while vegetarians are making an important contribution towards the reduction of cruelty to animals, viewing vegetarianism as the ultimate goal is a limitation. Most vegetarians still consume dairy products, which are derived from a dairy cow kept continually impregnated and hence lactating, the calves having been taken away after only forty-eight hours [Preece & Chamberlain, 1993:220]. Most vegetarians do not eliminate eggs from their diet, which are produced by battery hens kept in cages with no room to move, the cages slanted to allow the eggs to roll forward, which places a constant stress on the hens. They are so frustrated they peck and claw each other, lose their colour, develop brittle bones, are debeaked, unable to stand, are kept in semidarkness, and live for less than one fifteenth of their natural lifespan [Preece & Chamberlain, 1993:220-23]. Thus, while it is acknowledged that adopting a vegetarian diet is an important contribution towards lessening the suffering and exploitation of non-humans, it is the thesis of this discussion that such suffering can only be truly alleviated by the adoption of the philosophy of veganism.

**Sacrosanct Slaughter**

One argument that might be mounted against veganism relates to the expression of respect for cultural and religious diversity and tradition. For many cultures, the acceptance of food signifies a respect for the individual and for the occasion or custom. Hence a difficulty with a diet that is restrictive within the western cultural norm is that the desire to avoid consuming animal products may often be misinterpreted as a rejection of a foreign cultural or religious practice.

**Swan Song**

It is therefore apparent that there are a number of processes by which the philosophy of veganism is marginalised within modern society. This discussion has explored the ethical underpinning of veganism, the history of vegetarianism and the animal rights movement, the legal rights of non-humans and the related environmental issues and global considerations to provide an epistemological foundation for veganism and to explore the contribution of this philosophy. The various limitations to this philosophy have been examined. They included: the lack of a voice for animals, the lack of public information and the myths of a healthy diet, the human benefit derived from the oppression and exploitation of non-humans, the rift between ideology and pragmatics and between the myth and reality of modern farming conditions, the effect of multinational corporations and their financial power, the privileging of economic considerations, cultural and religious tradition, the more extreme liberation tactics employed, and the social resistance to eliminating animal products other than meat from the daily diet. Veganism is an effective political boycott and is a practical expression of discontent at the current practices of the animal industry. In the words of Singer [1995:161], it is a "highly practical and effective step one can take toward ending both the killing of non-human animals and the infliction of suffering upon them".

**Bibliography**


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Hare
from:- The Gentlewoman's Compendium of Cookery and Housewifery (c. 1845)

First, catch your hare:
husband, you'll need to be up early
and quick
run like a hound
at first sniff of the game
Hang head down for 7-10 days before paunching:
I should hang my head instead
listen for my husband's step
as we kick the bowl that catches blood
dripping aback the kitchen door
taking our pleasures where we can
Skinning: the head is usually left on – slit along the belly
& when loose, turn the skin & peel it off like a stocking:
silken stockings peeled off slow
as we make sport
just keep your head young buck
then run like a hare
you'd be skinned alive if we were caught
This is always a popular dish:
forbidden makes it fabulous
the sauce is rich I taste it dangerous
on his lips
For the gravy: half-pint of port wine:
there's gravy enough to go around
yet this day I'll do my duty
pass the buck
hang my mouth where the soup drips
and play the game

Paula McKay