

Egoist Vegan: Some Thoughts on an Individualist Animal Liberation

Flower Bomb

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For any readers who may not already know, “egoism” or egoist anarchism or anarcho-egoism, is a school of thought originally found in the writings of 19th-century existentialist philosopher Max Stirner.

Stirner’s egoist philosophy suggests that identities used to uphold social hierarchies in society are ‘spooks’ in the mind rather than fixed, universal truths. The personal acceptance of these spooks as irrefutable truths ultimately plays into the normalization and maintenance of industrial society. Rather than personal surrender to these spooks – including the very notion of Society itself – Stirner’s egoism suggests an individualist rejection of any and all social constructs used to preserve hierarchical control and domination.

“To affirm the individual is to destroy the species. I find myself experiencing bio/eco-centrism as ego-centrism. From this, I have found a union of egoists that includes all living beings, where anti-speciesism is a living encounter, not a dead-moralistic revolutionary Cause.” -Julian Langer from *An Eco-Egoist Destruction of Species-Being and Speciesism*

In the quote above, Langer beautifully summarizes *individual* as ungovernable by species, recognizing an anti-speciesist union with all other living beings. Human supremacy is one of many worldviews that attempts to transform complex life into identity-based groupings. My egoist critique of ‘Human’ as an identity and concept is no more sophisticated than my critique of race and gender; I reject any socialized binary worldview that pre-supposes categorical divisions based on hierarchy. Regardless of the noble efforts by those who are bound and determined to reform and re-define what it means to be *human*, humanism, in my opinion, will always be an enemy of the wild – of those who adapt badly to the civilized life of caged conformity. The identity and ideology of humanism is loaded with assumptions of superiority used to justify control and domination over non-human animals. As an egoist, I too recognize anti-speciesism as a living encounter. As an anti-authoritarian I reject all supremacist ideologies including those

that privilege my comfort and existence above the lives of others. So as an anti-speciesist I reject any species-based privilege or intrinsic morality that entitles me to control and dominate another animal.

For eons, human supremacist has enjoyed an ever-expanding, moralist entitlement to those animals categorized as 'non-human', as well as the wild landscapes upon which they inhabit. My refusal to consume the flesh and secretions of other animals is an anti-speciesist assertion of individualist revolt against humanist conformity. Speciesism is a narrowed view of other animals guided by the authority of anthropocentric morality. To view other animals as food is to surrender one's primal instincts to the ideology of human supremacy. My egoism is a rejection of the socially constructed spooks of *human*, *humanism*, and the same 'humanity' that slaughterhouses and hunters speak of when attempting to justify their 'humane' domination.

As an individualist I recognize and respect the individuality of every animal. Each and every animal is unique, possessing a complex personality developed in relationship to a complex surrounding. But similar to the homogenizing effect of other forms of oppression, speciesist oppression limits this understanding in order to tranquilize potential empathy shared between human and non-human animals. This ultimately creates a dominant, one-sided narrative which is used to portray non-human animals as merely objects rather than individually unique, complex living beings. For example, when placed in labs under stress and tortured with human-made devices, non-human animals are viewed as mere *test subjects* instrumental to the 'greater good' of human scientific progress.

Non-human animals are not only reduced to products for dietary consumption; they have all become a categorical monolith. And in order to enforce this view and treatment of non-human animals, human supremacy must be collectively reproduced on an individual level. Just as any other socio-political doctrine of supremacist ideology, human supremacy demands nothing less than participant conformity in order to uphold its power and values.

Humanity celebrates its victorious dominion with holidays, culture, and familial traditions. Its separation from the wild resembles an insular prison built by the confines of industrial society. And within this prison - at every family gathering - the charred corpses of those deemed inferior are cut up and served for consumption. The bodies and bodily secretions of these dead animals are fortified with nutritional value to justify filtering nutrients through their consumption. Each glass of cows' milk represents a product of labor stolen from both the cow and calf for which nature intended. Due to the same regurgitated, patriarchal, and anthropocentric analysis (based largely on various historical misconceptions and domesticated interpretations of 'wildness'), pro-hunter primitivists justify their authoritarianism with claims to resurrect ideas of 'respect' and 'spiritual connectedness' toward animals. All of this serves as social conformity toward the view and treatment of non-human animals as mere objects for exploitation and consumption.

Anthropocentrism encourages humanized animals to embrace the pseudo-carnivore/omnivore mentality despite a general inability to eat flesh raw -from the bone, down to the bone, with nothing left but the bones. (Ain't flesh known to be a major contributor to choking deaths in humans? Natural carnivores and omnivores are biologically equipped to swallow large chunks of flesh whole without needing to chew). Speciesism not only serves as a socially conditioned *view* of non-human animals but also as the internal mechanism that ideologically comforts one's *choice* to consume flesh and secretions - since, without primal instinct, raw flesh and blood stimulates the gag reflex rather than salivation and hunger.

Capitalist, industrial society has successfully commodified the animal body— recognized only in terms of euphemisms used to sugarcoat the reality of systemized torture and slaughter. For example, industrial society never stops constructing new ways to psychologically distance consumers from the daily reality of violence in slaughterhouses – which are now commonly referred to as *meat processing plants*. When thousands of non-human animals are killed in quick succession without using the bodies for food, the industry word used to describe it is *depopulation* - a word that attempts to dull the reality of mass extermination. One way non-human animals are slaughtered en masse by farmers is called *ventilation shutdown*, where the air supply is cut off to packed barns, causing the heat to increase and the animals to slowly suffocate and fatally overheat.

The word *livestock* is one of the most common euphemisms used to refer to non-human animals designated as ‘food’. By categorically referring to these particular animals as *livestock*, a psychological attempt is made to create a distinction between those killed on a farm and others that exist elsewhere. This differencing classification is constructed to perpetuate the idea that it is acceptable to brutally slaughter these farmed animals with impunity.

Other words used to alleviate emotional discomfort and normalize animal slaughter and consumption are: *dairy* instead of bodily secretions, *meat* instead of flesh, *pork* instead of pig flesh, *beef* instead of cow flesh, and *veal* instead of baby cow flesh. These, among many others, help detach a humanized individual from their senses about those whose bodies are being mutilated and purchased. By psychologically converting non-human animals into objects, classifying them differently and using different words to describe them when living and when dead, humans are allowed to avoid the discomfort caused by acknowledging their oppression.

Stemming from the same human supremacist mentality, some individuals retrieve and consume animal flesh and byproducts from dumpsters. Often justified as an attempt to not let their corpses “go to waste”, the continued view of these dead animals as food products illustrates the depth of a capitalistic and anthropocentric mindset. This activity still enables the same speciesist *social relationship* as that present in purchasing animal flesh and secretions from the market.

Even in death, speciesism dulls feelings of grief. Rather than receiving the same death-departure rituals and burial practices common between humans, the rotting corpses of deer and other non-human animals killed by automobiles are often ignored and left on highways and roadsides to be flattened into putrid disintegration.

It would be logically inconsistent to declare a war against leviathan that didn’t include a personal revolt against speciesism. I refuse to allow the human supremacist propaganda of capitalist, industrial society to influence and alter my perception of other animals. I maintain hostility toward any and all past or present cultural values and traditions soaked with the blood of non-human animal exploitation, consumption, or sacrifice. Devotion to the spook of socially constructed identity - whether it be race, gender, or species- often leads people to feel a special sense of entitlement to the bodies of others. So one can observe the overlap with those who position culture or tradition above thinking and acting independently, and the preservation of human supremacist values that disregard for the individual autonomy of non-human animals.

Just as my egoism constitutes a celebration of my ownership over my body, I respect the same for each and every other animal. Just as I assert my will and desire to be free from social control and domination, I recognize every other animals’ entitlement to a life free from the arbitrary authoritarianism of human supremacy.

For me, egoism implies veganism the same way that it implies anarchism, nihilism, and individualism. But without *action* these are mere phantoms – hollow concepts of self-assigned categorization. As labels they only have the power to describe anti-authoritarian relationships. These labels become more unnecessary when transformed into lived experience – a lifestyle of eco-revolt where actions define individuals more precisely than philosophy. As an anti-speciesist anarchist I have a *vegan* relationship with all animals; I acknowledge the hypocrisy in the idea of advocating for their liberation while fulfilling the humanist role of actively consuming them.

Some may consider me a lunatic loner whose egoism will discourage the world from seeing veganism in a positive light. Perhaps some will interpret my passion as too abrasive, confrontational – even puritanical. But as I have mentioned before in other writing, I am not motivated by the group, ‘the masses’, a revolutionary cause or popular movement. I am motivated by the present reality which at full volume informs my senses of an on-going war against the wild – a war that includes the normalized practice of relating to other animals as mere products and resources to be exploited, tortured, and consumed.

If I am thoroughly an egoist, then I recognize the ego of others and the desire of that ego to not be controlled or dominated. I own nobody, and nobody owns me. This social relationship does not constitute a form of politics. Politics implies social governance guided by an external authority. My lifestyle is an anti-politics - rejecting all anthropocentric power and authority constructed to govern my social interactions with other animals. My refusal to view non-human animals as “food” for consumption can easily be understood as a primal expression of this anti-authoritarian lifestyle.

My vegan egoism is not a liberal political program to be recognized and watered-down by mass society; it is best understood as an anti-social lifestyle that actively negates the moralist social order of human identity and supremacy. My vegan egoism is without foolish optimism and utopian expectations; there is no vegan (or even anarchist or communist for that matter) cause or movement capable of bringing down capitalist-industrial society. Rather, there are only egoist vegans – savage individualities - who declare animal liberation through confrontation, fighting hopelessly within the abyss of permanent conflict with leviathan.

I am vegan as I am an animal, an egoist, a nihilist, and an anarchist. As an animal, I see my liberation intertwined with the liberation of other animals –a union of egoists that meet and disperse with informality within the warzone of animal liberation.

To those who pledge allegiance to the social doctrine of human supremacy and have decided me an enemy, I say to them, let the hunt begin!

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