

CHAPTER 4

Rethinking Revolution: Veganism, Animal Liberation, Ecology, and the Left

Unlike the corporate-state-security apparatus, the entire spectrum of the Left is oblivious to the fact that in the last few decades a new movement has emerged that is of immense ethical, political, and ecological significance.¹ That movement is the *animal liberation* movement. Because animal liberation—and the inseparably related concept and practice of veganism—challenges the anthropocentric, speciesist, and humanist dogmas entrenched in radical and progressive traditions, leftists as a whole have ignored or mocked rather than engaged these important new movements, and most environmentalists are equally antagonistic and clueless. The vital importance of veganism and animal liberation has yet to be recognized, and both deserve a prominent role in the decisive politics of the twenty-first century. This is all the more important given the incursions into the animal advocacy movement by those on the Far Right, particularly in England, France, and Italy.

Since the 1970s, animal liberation has been one of the most dynamic resistance forces on the planet. As the “new social movements,” comprised of people of color, women, students, peace and antinuclear activists, gays and lesbians—all defining their cause

and identities in opposition to a moribund labor movement and reductionist class politics—had themselves waned by the late-1970s, a novel “politics of nature” emerged with ascending environmentalism and animal advocacy. Although each had humble beginnings in England and the United States in the early-nineteenth century, by the 1970s and 1980s they had become mass social movements. While different from one another in key ways, both environmentalist and animal advocacy movements were a break not only with narrow class politics of the “old Left,” but also with the anthropocentrism and humanism of the “new Left” and “new social movements” as well. The animal liberation movement has kept radical resistance alive and is growing in numbers and influence globally—despite mass conformity, state repression, and corporate blowback, and the corporatization and co-optation of mainstream animal advocacy groups.

It is becoming increasingly clear that human, animal, and earth liberation movements are inseparably linked, such that none (humans, animals, and dynamic ecosystems) can be free until all are free—from human exploitation and interference. In the last three decades, there has been growing awareness that environmentalism cannot succeed without social justice and social justice cannot be realized without environmentalism. This insight led to new forms of alliance politics, such as launched the American environmental justice movement, Earth First! alliances with timber workers, Zapatista coalition building, and the 1999 Battle of Seattle that united workers and environmentalists.² The coalitions that have emerged to date have tended to link human rights and social justice issues with environmentalism only. Despite the many historical, ideological, and institutional modes of oppression linking human, animal, and environmental concerns, there have been no significant attempts in practice to forge an alliance of unprecedented depth, diversity, inclusivity, and power that would unite human and earth liberation struggles with vegan and animal liberation movements.

Fault lies equally on all sides; except for rare historical figures who grasped the systemic nature of oppression and occasional

writings on the topic of overlapping systems of oppression, both the Left and animal advocacy movements have ignored each other at best, or expressed intense mutual disdain and hostility.³ Similarly, despite the crucial relevance of veganism for resolving a wide range of environmental and social problems relating to diet-based diseases, resource scarcity, agribusiness domination, and expropriation of small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples from their land, no significant alliances have been organized around common concerns apart from rare efforts such as from vegan-oriented social/food justice groups. Even amidst the startling political energies that erupted during the Occupy Movement that spread throughout the United States during 2010–11, anarchists, social justice groups, environmentalists, vegans and animal rights activists failed to capitalize on the unprecedented opportunities for dialogue, interaction, and bridge building over common concerns, such as the catastrophic effects of global agribusiness. What is truly disturbing, however, is that elements within the far Right, that is, neo-Nazis and other racist organizations, have been attempting to infiltrate and hijack the animal movement—with some degree of success—to co-opt their popularity and political energy, and to serve as a platform for their own repugnant views and their political agenda based on intolerance and hate.

Human, animal, and earth liberation are interrelated projects that must be fought for as one, as we recognize that veganism is central to peaceful, healthy, ecological, and just societies. Given their symbiotic, holistic, and interlocking relationship, it is imperative that we no longer speak of human liberation, animal liberation, or earth liberation as if they were independent struggles, but rather that we talk instead of *total liberation*.

This chapter asserts the need for more expansive visions and politics as it calls for initiating new forms of dialogue, learning, and strategic alliances on all sides. Each movement has much to learn from the other, yet all weaken and marginalize themselves through narrow, dogmatic, and isolated positions. None, however, can achieve their goals apart from solidarity with the others, and it is only through

strategic alliances and total liberation politics that humanity has a chance to defeat the corporate-state-military complex that has been waging total war on all life and the planet. The similarities vastly outweigh the differences among key social movements and common objectives could become clear through a productive dialogue that has yet to commence.

Forming complex and enduring alliances with human animals from different groups with varying agendas, and shaping a resistance movement powerful enough to effect radical social transformation in the midst of advanced crisis and be able to withstand fierce repression and opposition, is clearly no easy project. Thus, one can be forgiven for being far from optimistic that humanity can find the collective will, intelligence, and courage to wage war against the war-makers, before impending social and ecological collapse brings about a different world of mass suffering, global chaos, desperate survival conditions, and authoritarian control. We are at a historical crossroads, time is running out, and our options are few.

The Left Critique of Vegan and Animal Advocacy Movements

As discussed in chapter 2, the *animal welfare* approach seeks to regulate animal suffering in systems of exploitation, the *animal rights* outlook aims to eliminate these institutions altogether, and the *animal liberation* orientation uses direct action—sometimes, but not always, in defiance of the law—to free animals from captivity and to attack exploiters through various means, including economic sabotage. Whereas welfarists never formally challenge the assumption that animals are resources and property for human use, rights advocates attack speciesism and insist on the intrinsic value and equality of *all* sentient life. Liberationists share the welfarist concern for immediate action and relief of animal suffering, and often rely on rights-based assumptions while upholding abolitionist goals; yet they adopt militant tactics and radical outlooks that are antithetical to both welfare and rights positions.

For most people, the clear divide in the animal advocacy movement is between the welfare and rights camps, and intense debates typically erupt over these opposing views. Welfarists deride the rights position as extremist, purist, and utopian—a vacuous dream of a distant future when animal exploitation might be abolished, without addressing urgent issues of suffering and failing to propose viable alternatives to reformism. Rights proponents, in turn, disdain the “meaningless” measures that lead to “bigger cages” and “humane killing” and argue that welfare campaigns benefit the exploitation industries far more than animals, while seducing the public into thinking holocaust victims are confined and killed “humanely.” Welfarists, they argue, promote more, not less suffering and killing; reinforce speciesist views that animals are resources for human use; and block the path toward abolition, especially when mainstream organizations actively collaborate with exploitation industries.

Against conventional thinking, one can see the welfare and rights approaches as variations within the same mainstream paradigm rather than as antithetical or incommensurable frameworks. Their similarities are more important than their differences, and their conflicts are more akin to a family squabble than a civil war. It can be argued that the more significant fault line in the animal advocacy movement is between the mainstream, law-abiding, pacifist, and single-issue standpoint of welfare and rights approaches on one side, and the militant, law defying and, to a lesser degree, alliance politics orientation of liberationists on the other. This is evident through a number of lines of comparison.

First, whereas both welfare and rights proponents advance their goals in strictly legal and aboveground ways, focusing on education and legislation, liberationists employ underground and high-pressure methods that include harassment campaigns, freeing captive animals, and economic sabotage. Both welfare and rights proponents uncritically rely on education approaches that can exaggerate the efficacy of rational argument and moral persuasion on human beings who are deeply irrational, self-interested, or hateful and violent to animals. In addition to education campaigns, both mainstream tendencies pursue

legislative campaigns at local, state, and federal levels, and tend to be naïve to the fact that the state (especially at the national or federal level) is a corrupt tool of capitalist interests.

Although rejecting paltry compromises and reforms without offering viable and concrete alternatives, the rights camp generally shares with welfarists a complete contempt for the “extremists” in the liberationist movement. Both thereby adopt the discourse of the corporate-state complex to demonize some of the boldest actions and most effective tactics in movement history. Because they believe the only way to effect positive change is to work within the system, rights and, especially, welfare advocates follow the law and often show an obsequious respect to exploiters and a hostile public alike. Both welfarists and rights proponents denounce the liberation and sabotage tactics of groups such as the ALF as “terrorist,” “counter-productive,” and a threat to the movement’s “credibility” (see chapter 3). Fearful that the state, media, and public will smear the entire movement with the same “extremist” brush (which could tarnish their halo of respectability and cause precipitous drops in donations), mainstream groups erect a firewall between their own “law-abiding” and “peaceful” activism and the alleged “violent and criminal” tactics of militants, which they insist have no legitimate place in a principled movement. Thus, in their editorial pages, mainstream magazines like *Animal People* regularly denounce “violent extremists” in the movement, as the Humane Society of the United States applauds FBI persecution of legal direct action campaigns and even contributes reward money for the capture of alleged saboteurs. Disturbingly evident in these examples is the deep internationalization of the Stockholm syndrome in the movement’s mainstream and pacifist sectors. Also apparent is how the rule of capitalist logic determines an organization’s main priority—to make profits, not to help animals.

Both welfarists and rights proponents accept the legitimacy of capitalist economic, political, and legal institutions, at least in practice, and unlike Left theorists, are far less inclined to possess the historical and theoretical framework required to understand the inherently exploitative and growth-oriented logic of capital and the structural

relationship between market and state. They typically lack even a rudimentary understanding of class domination and struggle, state power and repression, colonialism and imperialism, neoliberalism, and the wide spectrum of mechanisms (such as corporate media, advertising, and entertainment industries) that control populations through consent as well as force. In their single-issue focus, segments of the animal activist community are often ignorant of, and indifferent to, social justice struggles and the plight of poor, exploited, disenfranchised, and colonized peoples, and cannot draw useful comparisons and contrasts between various liberation movements. This also makes them vulnerable to the Far Right groups that allegedly promote animal welfare or rights at the expense of human rights, and that often champion misanthropic views.

Generally, animal advocates promote single-issue reforms within market societies, rather than challenge the core logic and systematic devastation of capitalist institutions. Indeed, mainstream organizations are themselves capitalist bureaucracies that accumulate coveted money and influence from the corporate-state system, and thus, are hardly subversive institutions breeding the next generation of radicals. The politics of the movement range from the Far Right and fascist to free market libertarianism to liberalism, with radical voices almost always marginalized. Predominantly middle class, overwhelmingly white and privileged, insensitive to class oppression and the lack of diversity within their movements, vegans and animal advocates typically are entombed in their elitist enclaves. As such, they hardly inspire radicals, progressives, working classes, the poor, people of color, and other oppressed groups to regard them as anything but privileged misanthropes whose moral pieties are irrelevant to immediate survival imperatives.

Those in the welfare and rights camps who seek change through the pre-approved channels of capitalism usually do so from an unshakable conviction that parliamentary or representative democracy is a just and functional system. They embrace the myth that the state is, more often than not, a fair and neutral arbiter of competing interests rather than a subservient tool to corporations, the military, and the power

elite. They thereby legitimate the myths of bourgeois democracy and obscure the determinate role of corporations, lobbyists, vested-interest groups, and money. The mainstream sectors thus proceed without a systemic analysis, holistic vision, and structural critique of global capitalism and supporting systems such as the state, mass media, schools, and military. In the contemporary animal slavery economy, where agriculture and pharmaceutical industries are major economic and political powers, vegans and animal advocates fantasize that one can end speciesism without revolutionizing capitalism itself—as if the corporate-state complex will willingly cease all operations once persuaded their mega-exploitative systems are unethical. Given that capitalism is an irrational *system* that is inherently growth-oriented and exploitative, talk of “green capitalism” or “sustainable development” within this socioeconomic context is sheer folly and the fundamental fallacy of all reformist projects and single-issue politics.

The asocial theoretical vision bears political deficits and yields seductive pseudo-solutions to deep problems. Some of the most incisive writers who grasp the profound importance of the animal standpoint (e.g., Jim Mason and Charles Patterson) still advocate ineffectual moral changes alone, rather than emphasizing the profound institutional and structural transformations necessary to stop global capitalism, the animal holocaust, and planetary breakdown. Of course, spiritual and moral changes are necessary, but to focus on inner enlightenment apart from social oppression is hopelessly naïve, utopian, and diversionary. New-Age veganism and animal spirituality perfectly serve the needs of capitalism by locating the burden of change on individuals rather than on destructive institutions, irrational social imperatives, and ultimately on the power elite waging total war on the planet. The spiritual revolution presumes to obviate or supersede the social revolution and directs people to inner contemplation rather than public confrontation and political transformation.

Lacking a sophisticated social, political, economic, and historical analysis of capitalist societies, and seeking reforms in one sector of society with the crucial purpose of alleviating or abolishing the suffering of animals, much of the animal advocacy movement well-deserves

the Left critique that it is a reformist, single issue movement. Further, its demands—which are potentially radical to the extent that animal liberation threatens an economy and society deeply rooted in animal slavery—are easily contained within a totalizing global system of exploitation, commodification, and domination. The ease with which capitalism can transform the subversive potential of veganism into more fodder for profit-making, consumerism, and political pacification is blatantly obvious with the mass marketing of veganism and the glossy magazines and apolitical discourse of prominent spokespersons for the healthy lifestyle.

As Left libertarian Takis Fotopoulos notes of the reformist tendencies dominating the animal advocacy movement, it “might be viewed as a kind of ‘popular front’ organization that seeks unity around basic values on which people from all political orientations—from apolitical, conservative, and liberal persuasions to radical anarchists—could agree. But . . . this is exactly its fundamental weakness which might make the development of an anti-systemic [i.e., a holistic critique of capitalism and related power structures] consciousness out of a philosophy of ‘rights,’ etc. almost impossible.” Fotopoulos further observes that, “Unless [such a] current develops out of the present broad movement soon, the entire movement could easily end up as a kind of ‘painless’ (for the elites) lobby that could even condemn direct action in the future, so that it could gain some ‘respectability’ among the middle classes.”⁴

Here Fotopoulos correctly emphasizes the ease with which large animal advocacy groups can be co-opted and take on regressive roles in society. But he fails to discriminate among the different aspects of “the entire movement,” to note the presences of a Far Right or fascist element, and to appreciate what the fringe “left radical” elements have in common with his revolutionary politics. On occasions at least, liberationists attack capitalist systems and challenge the myths of bourgeois democracy. They bypass the corrupt gatekeepers of the state to accept responsibility for animals under attack, to take power into their own hands, and set out to abolish exploitative conditions through direct action.

Some animal liberationists have close affinities to the anarchist tradition in ideology, temperament, and organization. Not only anarchist in political outlook, many work in small, decentralized groups and underground cultures, in much the same manner as the ALF. These decentered, anonymous resistance units are akin to anarchist affinity groups in their mutual aid, solidarity, security culture, and consciousness building. Unlike the single-issue focus that dominates the animal advocacy movement, the militant wing of the movement is more likely to advance a total liberation viewpoint—one that emphasizes human, animal, and earth liberation struggles must be interrelated in theory and practice because they stem from similar root causes and have overlapping dynamics. Liberationist subcultures oppose imperialism, fascism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and so on, all of which they link to and mediate with anti-speciesism, and they militate against the infiltration of Far Right and fascist elements into the animal movement. With varying degrees of sophistication, they are politically aware of global realities and planetary crisis and support all genuine struggles for liberation. Indeed, in many cases, animal liberationists may have the broadest systemic vision of activists across the political spectrum.

Thus, the “animal advocacy movement” is not a monolithic entity, but rather a conflicted force field of opposing tendencies, such as involve statist and non-statist, aboveground and underground, and conservative and radical dimensions. One main problem of Left/progressive critiques is that they reduce a plurality of conflicted approaches and fractious divisions to a homogenized “movement.” They therefore (1) conflate Left-radical and mainstream tendencies, (2) carelessly overlook the radical aspects of the liberationist camp and its many similarities with progressive social movements, and (3) fail to grasp the profound importance of the moral message of animal advocacy *as a whole*.

Clearly, among the plurality of approaches in the animal advocacy movement, those who engage in direct action are closest to the concerns of the Left and progressive politics. To the extent that animal activists grasp the big picture that links human, animal, and

earth liberation struggles as one, they can be viewed as a profound new political force that has *a crucial place in the planetary struggles of the twenty-first century*. In conditions where social movements and NGOs are reformist, institutionalized, collaborationist, or co-opted, animal liberationists are key forces of resistance. They defy corporate power, state domination, and capitalist ideologies; they literally *attack* institutions of domination and exploitation—not just through critiques and denunciations, but rather with bricks, sledge hammers, and Molotov cocktails. Whereas too many left radicals are blustering in cafes, pontificating in seminars, or spewing inscrutable jargon in obscure journals, animal liberationists are *taking action* against the commodification and exploitation of life. Since the 1970s, animal and earth liberationists have been among the most dramatic forces of resistance on a global scale, boldly operating in a post-9/11 epoch where the corporate-state complex and its proto-fascist police-security apparatus have pacified populations already neutralized by media/entertainment spectacles and pacifist ideologies. Animal liberationists and eco-activists thereby merit widespread support and recognition that they play an important role in empowering resistance, even if sabotage tactics are ad hoc measures and hardly substitutes for building mass resistance movements.

Beyond their obliviousness to important affinities that radical cultures share with animal (and earth) liberationists, and their abhorrence of the Far Right “animal rights” imposters, leftists and progressives fail to grasp the more subtle point that *all* aspects of the animal movement have contributed to the deep sea change in human thought and culture. This awareness needs to spread far wider and deeper on a global scale if humanity is to survive the ultimate challenge it currently faces. For over 2,500 years, beginning with ancient Eastern cultures that profoundly shaped the best elements of Western societies from the Greeks to the present, enlightened prophets, visionaries, philosophers, poets, writers, artists, and statesmen have advocated kindness, decency, and even equal treatment to animals, and these teachings have had crucial civilizing influences in a universally barbaric human civilization. The animal protectionist

movement that began in England and the United States nearly two centuries ago, and all compassionate animal advocacy figures and groups since, have furthered this moral progress in various ways (see chapter 6). Similarly, the ancient teachings of vegetarianism and more recent advocacy of veganism are immensely important for the general enlightenment and education of humanity, to improving both moral and physical health, and to building sustainable societies and overcoming a myriad of environmental problems including climate change. Given the profound relation between the human domination of animals and the crisis—social, ethical, and environmental—in the human world and its relation to the natural world, animal and earth activists are in a unique position to articulate the importance of new relations between human and human, human and animal, and human and nature.

Speciesism and the Paleoleft

Moral advance today involves sending human supremacy to the same refuse bin into which society earlier began to discard male supremacy and white supremacy. The gross inconsistency of progressives who champion democracy and equality while supporting a system that enslaves billions of other sentient and intelligent life forms far surpasses the hypocrisy of Americans protesting British tyranny while enslaving millions of Africans. Animal (and earth) liberation requires that people transcend the complacent boundaries of humanism to make a qualitative leap in ethical consideration, thereby moving the moral bar from reason and language to sentience and subjectivity. As the recent confrontation with ecology infinitely deepened and enriched leftist theory and politics, so too can an encounter with veganism and animal liberation.

Animal liberation demands radical transformations in the mindset and practices of human beings as it also entails a fundamental restructuring of all social institutions that define animals as human property, commodities, resources, and objects, with the aim to end animals' slave status and exploitation in all forms. The philosophy of

animal liberation deconstructs the identities and worldviews that portray humans as conquering Lords and Masters of nature, and necessitates radically new ways of relating to animals and the earth. Animal liberation is a frontal assault on the supremacy that human beings have claimed over animals since they began hunting them to extinction tens of thousands of years ago.

Animal rights is not an alien idea to modern societies, but rather builds on the most progressive ethical and political values Westerners have devised in the last two hundred years—those of rights, equality, democracy, autonomy, and nonviolence—as it carries them to their logical conclusions. Whereas humanists argue that rights are “cheapened” when extended to animals, in fact, they are redeemed from an artificial and prejudicial limitation of their meaning and application to those having human linguistic and rational capacities. The next great step in Western moral evolution is to abolish the last acceptable form of discrimination and slavery that subjugates the vast majority of species on this planet to the violent whims of one.

The discriminatory, hierarchical, and domineering ideology of speciesism infects social and environmental movements as much as it poisons mass consciousness. This atavistic ignorance necessarily calls into question the “radical,” “enlightened,” or “progressive” nature of left politics. While championing democracy, equality, justice, rights, respect, and peace for all, the Left/progressive traditions have ignored—often defended—the most severe forms of exploitation and violence on the planet today, as they remain oblivious to the catastrophic consequences of speciesism. Although priding themselves on being critical, rational, moral, just, egalitarian, and defenders of the weak, leftists impale themselves on the hypocrisy of speciesism and dramatize the shallowness of humanist values. Champions of “dialectics,” holistic theorizing, and systemic analysis, they completely miss the most portentous connections of our time—the hideous chains linking animal exploitation to human exploitation and environmental catastrophe. They excoriate exploitation, denounce domination, preach peace, and vie for the vulnerable, while consuming the diseased and dismembered bodies of the most oppressed beings on the

planet. They rail against profit fetishism, growth imperatives, total commodification, exploitation, slavery, and corporate domination, yet the animal products they consume daily are mass-produced for the enrichment and expansion of transnational market systems that further cannibalize the earth's resources. Those with an ecological sensibility prattle on about the "unsustainable" nature of capitalism and decry its ruinous effects on environments and peoples, while remaining oblivious to the fact that agribusiness is the leading cause of environmental destruction today.

The arrogance and incoherence of humanism is obvious when victims of violence and oppression wail that they were "treated like animals," as if exploitation, torture, and murder are perfectly acceptable so long as inflicted on nonhuman animals. The problem with humanism—however extensive, inclusive, and universal the scope of democracy, autonomy, and rights—is that its bigotry toward the millions of other animal species with whom we share this planet, nullifies its liberatory potential and brands it as just another dominant culture that cannot possibly bring peace, justice, and sustainable societies. Just as anarchists saw the Marxist workers' state and Leninist vanguard party as bureaucratic domination under a new name, so animal liberationists might view humanist and populist struggles of any kind as pseudo-revolutions that preach democracy and peace, but practice domination and perpetuate a holocaust for animals.

From the animal standpoint, leftists have been regressive and reactionary forces. In the *Communist Manifesto*, for instance, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels dismissed animal protectionists as mere petit-bourgeois reformers.⁵ They failed to see that the animal welfare movement in countries like the United States was vital to women whose opposition to animal cruelty was inseparable from their struggle against male violence and the exploitation of children. Similarly, in his work, *On the History of Early Christianity*, Engels belittled vegetarians and anti-vivisectionists, with no understanding of the importance of these issues for reducing human cruelty to both human and nonhuman animals, and for moral progress generally.⁶

Establishing the model for generations of leftists down to the present, Marx and Engels developed a naturalistic theory of human evolution inspired by Darwin, but jettisoned Darwin's emphasis that humans are different from animals only in degree and not kind. In works such as *1844 Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx posited a sharp dualism between human and nonhuman animals, arguing that only human beings have consciousness, free will, and a complex psychological life and social world. Marx claimed that whereas animals have an immediate and merely instinctual relation to productive activity, human labor is mediated by imagination and intelligence. In Marx's narrative that links social progress to the domination of nature, animals exist merely as natural resources to exploit in the goal to "humanize" and master the physical world.

Of course, Marx and other radicals of his time were products of Western society—from Greco-Roman and stoic cultures, to Christianity and medievalism, to modern science, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution. Despite the sharp differences among these eras, the continuities are far more profound. Whether ancient or modern, secular or religious, aristocratic or democratic, the entire trajectory of Western society, with roots in agricultural societies that emerged 10,000 years ago, has been premised on domestication of the wild, speciesism, anthropocentrism, and the subjugation of "barbaric," "savage," and "primitive" cultures—all deemed deficient and "animal-like" in their alleged lack of rationality and sophistication. Advancing these pernicious ideologies to their highest expression, modern European societies viewed white male capitalists as paragons of "civilization" and embarked on the reckless and hubristic project of "dominating" nature.

While there is lively debate over whether or not Marx had an environmental consciousness, there is no question that he internalized a dualistic speciesist paradigm that vitiates the Left and progressive traditions to this day. Leftists have tended to either ignore vegan and animal issues, or deride them in embarrassing displays of ignorance and smug hostility. Left-liberal magazines such as the *Nation*, for example, write scathing critiques of the exploitation of workers toiling

in factory farms and slaughterhouses, without even mentioning the far worse plight of animals intensively confined, mercilessly tortured, and dismembered alive. In bold contrast, Gale Eisnitz's powerful work *Slaughterhouse* documents the exploitation of animals *and* humans alike on the killing floors of slaughterhouses, showing how the sadistic violence workers inflict on animals at the workplace explodes in domestic violence as well.⁷

As symptomatic of the provincialism rampant in left traditions, consider the case of Michael Albert, a noted anarchist theorist and co-founder of *Z Magazine* and *Z Net*. In his interview with an animal rights magazine, Albert confessed:

When I talk about social movements to make the world better, animal rights does not come into my mind. I honestly don't see animal rights in anything like the way I see women's movements, Latino movements, youth movements, and so on... a large-scale discussion of animal rights and ensuing action is probably more than needed... but it just honestly doesn't strike me as being remotely as urgent as preventing war in Iraq or winning a 30-hour work week.⁸

One would not expect a human supremacist like Albert to see animal and human suffering as roughly comparable. But it is hard to fathom privileging the exploitation of workers by ten hours a week over freeing animals from nonstop, intensive confinement that ends only with a horrifying death—a hell worth suffered, of course, so that it can grace the workers' dinner plate. Albert betrays a shocking but typical anarchist insensitivity to the animal holocaust and lacks the holistic vision to grasp the profound connections between animal rights, viable nonhierarchical societies, and flourishing ecosystems.

Anarchists criticize authority, centralization, and hierarchical structures as antithetical to human freedom, and traditionally they have excoriated Marxists and hardline communists for reproducing repressive power dynamics in statist bureaucracies. Despite astute critiques of left authoritarianism, in relation to the animal question, anarchists

were as bigoted, backwards, and hierarchical in their views of animals as other radicals, and they remain so today with the exception of vegan anarchist subcultures advancing a total liberation orientation.

A paragon of anarchist speciesism is the “eco-anarchist” or “social ecologist” writer Murray Bookchin. In the early 1950s, Bookchin published pioneering critiques of industrialized farming, described emerging environmental disasters, and exposed the dangers of an increasingly chemicalized food supply. More generally, Bookchin dissected the delusional nature and disastrous consequences of Western anthropocentrism, such as culminated in the modern project to “dominate” nature. Bookchin recognized, however, that replacing antagonistic paradigms with complimentary relations to nature was impossible to realize in market-dominated societies rooted in profit and growth imperatives antithetical to human freedom and ecological balance alike. Thus, he argued, the ecological crisis is a social crisis, provoked by irrational and destructive social systems, and therefore demands a social solution—namely, abolishing capitalism and hierarchical domination generally, in favor of a federation of decentralized democracies which “remake society” in ways that allow autonomous citizens to shape rational, free, ecological societies.

As clearly as Bookchin saw the social ecology connection, he missed the profound relevance of veganism and animal liberation to a liberatory future. Bookchin condemned the mechanization of agriculture because of its effects on small-scale farming, the land, and human food supply, not because of its horrific impact of animals suffering in systems of intense confinement and ruthless production methods. Describing his concept of an ecological society, Bookchin blithely spoke of killing animals for food, hunting, and other human purposes. He thereby typifies the entire left spectrum, which is unable to escape speciesist social conditioning to grasp that human and nonhuman animals have equal interests in freedom, happiness, and life over captivity, suffering, and death. Like Marx, Bookchin embraced the Cartesian-mechanistic view of animals as dumb creatures devoid of any complex consciousness or social life (see chapter 5). In Bookchin’s terms, animals belong to the non-reflexive world of “first nature,”

along with rocks, trees, and other insensate objects, and he reserved the self-conscious and creative world of “second nature” for humans. For as social evolution phased out of biological evolution, humans alone, he claimed, made the ascent from instinct and mere sensation to self-consciousness, language, and reasoning.⁹

Consequently, Bookchin vehemently rejects the concept of animal “rights,” as he adopts conventional rationalist and social contract views that only beings who can speak, reason, and barter moral obligations can have rights. With the concept of rights arbitrarily precluded, welfarism fills the vacuum. The “enlightenment” of the entire left spectrum never surpasses the moral bankruptcy of welfarism—the obfuscating alibi used by factory farms, slaughterhouses, fur farms, and vivisectors to legitimate torture and mass slaughter under the guise of “humane” treatment. Thus, the Left is at one with mass ideology and industry propaganda, in justifying an accelerating animal holocaust and ecological entropy through a fraudulent moral discourse. The most advanced position the Left can achieve is treating the slaves “kindly,” without condemning the evil of slavery itself.

Like nearly all leftists, Bookchin failed to mediate analysis of the ecological crisis with the exploitation of animals in factory farms. This is a major problem as agribusiness is the primary cause of global warming, the main source of water pollution, and a key contributor to other crises such as rainforest destruction and species extinction.¹⁰ The global meat culture also aggravates inequality and poverty among the world’s peoples, as ranching interests and agribusiness displace peasants and farmers from their land and raze rainforests for cattle grazing. Power, profit, and resources flow from impoverished southern nations to the United States and Europe, industrialized societies plagued by an array of diseases and health care crises due to a heavy consumption of animal protein and fat.

Despite his understanding that scarcity is socially created and not a natural occurrence, Bookchin also occluded the connection between meat consumption and world hunger, specifically, that animal agriculture is a hugely inefficient use of resources. Bookchin’s view of an inexhaustibly “fecund” earth that could feed over ten billion people,

if rationally and democratically managed, proved to be another modernist fantasy discredited in the twenty-first-century world of climate change, depleted resources, and degraded ecosystems—strained further by burgeoning human population growth and Western consumer cultures. Moreover, as the most rapidly modernizing giants, China and India, have begun to switch from a traditional plant-based to Western animal-centered diet, while demanding Western levels of income, consumption, and comfort, the problems of resource scarcity, pollution, and climate change have worsened dramatically. Thus, in this era of real, not artificial, scarcity, intense “resource wars” are erupting throughout the globe.¹¹ Bookchin’s dangerous cornucopian fantasies aside, today’s population of over seven billion people consuming more than two hundred billion land and sea animals every year is completely unsustainable, and no anarchist world federation could resolve this crisis without urging a global shift toward a vegan diet. Hence, in June 2010, the United Nations published a report emphasizing that in the current world, marked by growing populations and escalating meat consumption, the only globally sustainable diet is veganism.¹²

Although since the 1970s, the Left began to seriously address the “nature question,” radicals and progressives have universally failed to engage the “animal question” that lies at the core of key social and ecological crises. Calls for a “re-harmonization” (Bookchin) of society with ecology, and emphases on a “new sensibility” that focus on the environment apart from the millions of animal species which play critical roles in ecological diversity and maintenance are speciesist and tragically inadequate. As with most environmentalists, the overriding concern of the Left is with fisheries, not fish; with forests, not its nonhuman inhabitants; with “resources” for human use, not animals with inherent value. Ecological concerns stem not from a “biocentric” respect for the intrinsic value of all life and the earth, but rather from the Left’s oxymoronic concept of “enlightened anthropocentrism” that reduces animals and the natural world to mere means to human ends and is incapable of advancing a new planetary ethic to inform a truly sustainable mode of life.

In the last two decades, Green parties have emphasized progressive social concerns in conjunction with environmental values. However, Greens have not endorsed animal rights or veganism, and they are as speciesist as leftists and progressives, even if they do not share the same virulent form of humanism. Green parties, mainstream environmental groups like the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund, controversial (but still co-opted and corporatized) organizations such as Greenpeace, and noted environmentalists such as Dave Foreman and Bill McKibben all adopt speciesist positions that support hunting and meat-eating, oblivious to how factory farming and copious global meat consumption contradicts their ecological values. In 2007, Greenpeace called a press conference on the connection between meat production and global warming, emphasizing how methane gas from cattle is a major ozone destroying gas. But instead of advocating veganism, they called for consuming non-ruminant animals such as kangaroos, as they do not produce greenhouse gases and in addition are “pests” that should be eliminated!¹³ It is far easier to “respect nature” through innocuous but relatively meaningless reforms—for example by recycling, eating local and organic meat, or driving hybrid cars—than it is to make the profound conceptual shift and conversion to becoming vegan and committing to being an animal/earth liberation advocate. These philosophies and lifeway are changes that are far more decisive for a sustainable future; they are the most important actions one can take in one’s personal life.

Amidst the violence, racism, war, and social turbulence of the 1960s, Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned a future “worldhouse.” In this cosmopolitan utopia, all peoples around the globe would live in peace and harmony, such that religion fulfills their spiritual needs and capitalism satisfies their material needs. Yet even if this sentiment were realizable within an economic system that breeds violence, war, destitution, extinction, and ecocide, until humanity stops exploiting and killing animals, King’s worldhouse is still a bloody *slaughterhouse*. King’s “dream” for the human species is a *nightmare* for the billions of animals butchered each year for food, clothing, “science,” and other exploitative purposes. Just as “capitalist democracy” is a contradiction

in terms, so a worldhouse built on values of peace, respect, equality, and nonviolence for humans only is a farce. The humanist hallucination will always haunt the social world itself, as it remains plagued by social and environmental problems that stem from animal exploitation and dominator paradigms. Humanist “revolutions” are superficial by definition. Humanist “democracy” is speciesist hypocrisy. Humanism is tribalism writ large—the “Us” of *Homo sapiens* vs. the “Them” of all other animals, a conceptual dualism that underpins the vicious and violent system of *species apartheid*.

In short, the broad spectrum of modern radical and progressive traditions stands in continuity with the entire Western heritage of anthropocentrism, speciesism, hierarchy, violence, domination, power, and instrumentalism. Thus, from the animal standpoint, leftism is far from a liberating philosophy or revolutionary politics; it is, rather, part of the ancient and reactionary thinking that spawned millennia of dominator cultures. *It is Stalinism and Nazism toward animals.*

Talkin' About a (Total) Revolution

Since the fates of all species on this planet are intricately interrelated, the exploitation of animals cannot but have a major impact on the human world—psychologically, socially, physically, and ecologically. When humans hunt animals, they disrupt natural selection and degrade ecosystems necessary for their own lives. When they butcher animals by the tens of billions every year in factory farm systems, they poison the air and water, degrade aquatic ecosystems, squander scarce resources, ravage rainforests, turn grasslands into deserts, and spew greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Intensive confinement of pigs and birds spread deadly viruses that jump to human populations, causing outbreaks of diseases such as Bird Flu (H5N1) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that raise the specter of catastrophic contagion that could kill billions of people. Heavy use of antibiotics (80 percent in the United States are given to animals not people) to promote rapid growth and control disease in agribusiness has weakened the ability of these former “miracle drugs” and

ushered in a post-antibiotic era rife with deadly strains of drug-resistant bacteria. There are crucial links between meat consumption, the displacement of farmers and peoples, and world hunger due to global agribusiness and its insatiable need for land and resources. Animal experimentation not only kills over one hundred million animals annually, it kills thousands of people as well, being driven by huge pharmaceutical companies whose goal is to make profits, not to cure disease. Animal research is inherently unscientific and misleading data is routinely manipulated to secure government approval for marketing drugs ultimately tested on humans. People who are violent to animals tend to turn violence against humans, as dramatically evident in the biographies of serial killers. The connections go far deeper, as speciesism was arguably the first hierarchical system and contributed to the emergence of patriarchy, state power, slavery, racism, militarism, colonialism, genocide, fascism, ableism and domination of all kinds (see chapter 1).

In countless ways, the exploitation of animals rebounds to create crises within the human world itself. The vicious circle of violence and destruction can end only when humans learn to form harmonious and complementary, rather than hierarchical and antagonistic, relations with other animal species and the natural world. Understanding the relationship between human and animal oppression blocks the tired objection used to berate every animal advocate: “But what about human suffering?” This question assumes a zero-sum game whereby helping animals undermines humans (see chapter 6), and completely fails to grasp what Martin Luther King Jr. identified as the “garment of mutual entanglement.” Whether they realize it or not, activists who promote veganism and animal rights are *ipso facto* engaging a vast complex of problems in the social and natural worlds.

Thus, animal liberation is best pursued not through reformist single-issue approaches, misanthropic myopia, or compromises and collaboration with corporations and politicians. It cannot be achieved without connecting speciesism with class domination, global capitalism, state power, and hierarchical rule in all forms. One cannot change violent, exploitative, and destructive dynamics without transforming the

economic, political, and legal institutions that produce and reproduce them. The abolition of speciesism cannot advance without eradicating market systems and their imperatives of growth, commodification, exploitation, and consumption. Corporate destruction of nature and nonhuman animals is financed and controlled by hierarchical social relations, whereby capitalists and power elites commandeer the political, legal, security, and military system in the service of exploiting every available “resource,” be it a worker in a factory, an animal in a cage, or a grassland rich in oil.

Any viable solution to the animal holocaust and to global ecological destruction must promote the democratization of society. Allocations of power and resources must not be dominated by an elite minority who act solely for their own benefit, in complete disregard of the needs of the biocommunity, but rather would be managed collectively by autonomous communities. So long as corporations, banks, politicians, and bureaucrats monopolize economic and political power and decision-making over weak and passive citizens of authoritarian societies, animals and the environment will suffer too, as rational, sane, and peaceful modes of existing are precluded to advance the interests of predatory narcissists and sociopaths.

As has been argued, the human/animal/earth liberation movements have much to learn from one another, and none can achieve their goals apart from the others. Veganism and animal liberation could gain new critical perspectives by engaging radical social discourse and histories of oppression and struggle. Left progressives can help temper the apolitical, ahistorical, elitist, misanthropic, and other problematic ideologies rife throughout the vegan and animal advocacy movements, such as creeping proto-fascism, by advancing awareness about capital logic, systemic power, social oppression, the plight of peoples, and the need for inclusiveness and diversity within social movements. Conversely, in dialogue with vegans and animal activists, those in social and environmental movements could overcome the blatant hypocrisies of only condemning oppressive and anti-ecological ideologies and practices when these are not associated with, or result from, animal exploitation. From the vegan and animal

standpoints, they could gain new insights into the dynamics of hierarchy, domination, and environmental destruction and develop more effective politics and tactics. All parties would benefit through acquiring new perspectives and potentially more effective politics; certainly, all would grow wiser and become stronger in numbers, diversity, and power in alliance with one another and other progressive social movements. Imagine, for instance, the powerful opposition that could be mobilized against agribusiness if vegans, animal activists, social radicals, and environmentalists joined ranks, along with small farmers associations, indigenous peoples, and health care advocates.

It is not understood by the Left or the animal rights/liberation movement, for example, that despite the amorphous political pluralism of animal advocacy, and absurd claims from some extremists on the Far Right to the contrary, the animal rights/liberation movement is fundamentally leftist in origins and values. The concerns for equality, rights, democracy, peace, justice, community, inclusiveness, nonviolence, and autonomy define both human and animal rights movements equally. The animal rights movement drank deep from the well of progressive modernism that also spawned radical social movements, but hardly in a derivative and uncreative way that did not expand these values to their full meaning and potential.

Any analysis of left politics with respect to its relationship to the animal rights and liberation movements would be incomplete without a discussion of ongoing incursions into the animal movement by elements of the political Far Right. Recently, there has been much debate on social media over the attempted infiltration into the animal movement by far-right extremists and their racist and fascist ideologies. Essentially, there currently exist two opposing camps: one which maintains that animal rights is a social justice cause of the Left, and as such, encompasses and embraces humanist concerns, such as issues of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and so forth. The other argues that the cause of animal rights should be strictly single-issue and exist entirely independent of all other movements. Therefore, if, for instance, individuals who are proponents of animal rights also held and espoused bigoted or proto-fascist—or even neo-Nazi—positions,

a minority hold the “big tent” view that they should still be part of the animal movement, as “all that matters is the animals.”

As much as militant direct action must constitute part of animal liberation politics, so, too, must militant anti-fascism. Espousing a cause such as animal rights, which requires a humane and compassionate sensibility, while simultaneously disregarding or dismissing other social justice issues that demand equally of our empathy and ethics, is at best a fundamental contradiction and, at worst, a perversity. Whereas the animal cause does not exist in a social vacuum, neither do other repressed societal entities or victims. Thus, it behooves both the Left and the animal advocacy movement to acknowledge and respect the social needs of all oppressed and marginalized groups, if each hopes to effectively represent its respective constituency in the sociopolitical arena, and if a progressive alliance politics is to be possible. Fortunately, those in the animal movement who uphold the tenets of total liberation were outraged at the attempts by the Far Right to penetrate the animal movement as a whole, and have again mounted a fierce resistance. As a result, they vigorously countered those forces of fascism, despite the latter’s recent surge in overall popularity, and electoral wins in France, that campaigned, in part, on a ticket that decried the horrors of “halal” butchering, a front for its real agenda: anti-immigration and racism.

Attacking the new slave economy as it does, the animal liberation movement is a significant threat to global capital. Animal liberation challenges large sectors of the capitalist economy by assailing corporate agriculture and pharmaceutical giants and their suppliers. Far from being irrelevant to social movements, animal rights can form the basis for a broad coalition of progressive social groups and drive changes that strike at the heart of capitalist exploitation of animals, people, and the earth. It is not a revolutionary force on its own, but it is hardly reducible to a petit-bourgeois parlor game. The animal advocacy movement as a whole, today, is the fruition of twenty-five hundred years of a vast cultural and learning process, spanning Eastern and Western cultures, evolving from venerable ancient times to the postmodern era. The vegan and animal standpoints bear the seeds of

a profound paradigm shift, turning away from dominator cultures, predatory violence, and pathological humanism, toward a new ethic and culture of complementarity, interconnectedness, and reverence for all life. They thereby advance possibilities for harmonizing human society with other animal species, with the biocommunity, and with itself. Despite their often feeble nature, the vegan and animal rights/liberation movements have the potential to advance rights, democratic consciousness, psychological growth, and awareness of biological interconnectedness to higher levels than previously achieved in history.

Animal liberation is by no means a *sufficient* condition for democracy and ecology, but it is for many reasons a *necessary* condition of economic, social, cultural, and psychological change. For it is not enough to democratize power, as the Left demands, if one does nothing but redistribute the authority and capacities to exploit and kill. From the animal and earth standpoints, the slogan “Power to the People!” is frightening, not enlightening; it is oppressive, not liberating. One must change the instrumentalist mindset itself, transform sensibilities that view animals as nothing but resources for human use, provoke profound changes in human identity, and promote respect for, and connectedness to, all life and the earth as a whole. Vast social, political, and economic changes by themselves are inadequate, unless accompanied by equally profound psychological transformations. This involves a *Copernican revolution* in human ethics, identities, values, and worldviews, whereby people realize that *they belong to the earth, and that the earth does not belong to them.*

In a world under relentless attack in every way from nihilistic forces and predatory powers that thrive on domination, exploitation, and violence, and which will kill and destroy until nothing is left, all who are not murderous operatives of this system share a common interest in shutting it down and building a new world altogether. It is, truly, one struggle, one fight. There is a desperate need for more expansive visions and politics on all sides of the human/animal/earth liberation equation. No movement can achieve its own immediate objectives apart from solidarity with other progressive struggles, and

alliance-building processes can begin with open and constructive dialogues and debates. Unfortunately, to date, no significant efforts have been undertaken along these lines; indifference, misunderstanding, and acrimony persist on all sides. We must replace identity politics and single-issue orientations in favor of a far broader, deeper, holistic, and more inclusive concept of total revolution. Rather than a polemic against any one structure of domination, we need a critique of hierarchy as a *systemic phenomenon*. We thereby must reject partial struggles for a broader, deeper, more complex, and more inclusive concept and politics. We must not only see the “entanglement of human/animal oppression,” but also those of human/animal liberation.¹⁴

A truly revolutionary social theory and movement will not just emancipate members of one species, but rather all species and the earth itself. A future revolutionary movement worthy of its name will grasp the ancient conceptual roots of hierarchy and domination, such as emerged in the animal husbandry practices of early agricultural societies. It will incorporate a new ethics (ecology and animal liberation) and politics of nature that overcomes instrumentalism and hierarchical thinking and institutions in every pernicious form possible. It will grasp the incompatibility of capitalism with the most profound values and goals of humanity. It will build on the achievements of democratic, socialist, and anarchist traditions. It will incorporate radical green, feminist, LGBT, and indigenous struggles. It will repudiate proto-fascist ideologies and unequivocally reject alliances or association with the Far Right. It will merge human, animal, and earth liberation in a total liberation struggle against global capitalism and domination in of all kinds.

A radical politics of the twenty-first century must dismantle all asymmetrical power relations and structures of hierarchy and begin the vital process of healing the breach among human beings and between human and nonhuman animals. It must eliminate every vicious form of prejudice and discrimination—not only racism, sexism, fascism, homophobia, and ableism, but also the scientifically false and morally repugnant lies of speciesism and humanism. It must reverse the growing power of the state, mass media, and global corporations in

order to promote decentralization and democratization at all levels of society, and only then can society possibly be reconstituted in harmony with the natural world and other species. Radical politics is impossible without the revitalization of citizenship and the repoliticization of lives, which begins with forms of education, communication, and culture that anger, awaken, inspire, and empower people toward action and change.

Articulating connections among human, animal, and earth liberation movements no doubt will be challenging, but it is a major task that needs to be undertaken from all sides. We may not succeed in this endeavor, or even come close, but the results of such failure promise to be catastrophic.