

A collaboratively edited debate on veganism

Various Authors

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Debates among vegans

The definition of veganism

Theo: This is a response to Eisel Mazard's video on 'Veganism vs. Animal Liberation'.

So, as far as I know, Eisel has never tried to come up with precise wording for what his preferred definition of veganism would be, so at a guess from watching his videos, I can imagine it would be something along the lines of:

'A personal duty to respect the dignity of animals & a desire to build a social movement to, among other things, lobby government for a higher percentage territory of managed wildlife habitat.'

And we can guess his argument for this philosophy being contained in the word vegan is that... its the best descriptive adjective for a human-centred movement. And, that the goal is to win over enough passionate people who are dedicated enough to take on the personal principle of avoiding animal products, as a basis for finding each other and organizing to making changes to our communities and institutions.

He's critiqued people in the past for desiring to abandon the word vegan in favour of advocating the ideology of anti-speciesism, as an element of total liberation. So more like a social justice movement where anti-speciesism is one axis of oppression among other struggles like anti-racism & anti-sexism. Therefore an animal-centred movement alongside other oppressed-centred movements.

So, positives to Eisel's critique are, by solely advocating for animals through a social justice approach, you just are going to get meat eaters being turned away from caring about animals because vegans look like deluded people who view animals as citizens.

As well as vegans feeling more justified in taking violent action for animals, who they start to view as members of our society. When in reality, like I said in my earlier video, animals can't conceptualize a tactical war to achieve rights, so they can't desire it.

We aren't even able to alleviate their suffering like we could human prisoners with the optimistic notion that direct actions done in other places now, may one day lead to an end to their suffering.

Negatives are, he never acknowledges any better arguments for putting more focus on words like animal liberation.

I think we need to be fighting for incremental legal animal rights laws which make it less profitable to breed animals for food. And one philosophical and legal approach which is gaining more prominence is Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach, which we can say is about liberating animals to be able to express their capabilities in the wild.[2]

As well, I think he's wrong to claim Animal Liberation is primarily tied to Singer's views on utilitarianism. The most common association people will draw it to is the Animal Liberation Front, which people already understand that if you have activists willing to liberate animals from cages, they obviously won't also be buying animal foods.

I have nothing against veganism as a marketable word for a boycott identity, but in terms of explaining where the principle comes from, I think legal animal rights movement, says it really clearly in the name itself about how it's a political movement, rather than veganism with it's history and etymology in vegetarianism, which was simply a lifestyle society.

So in conclusion, I think as well as and even better than a vegan identity, we need to start thinking of ourselves as legal animal rights advocates also, which can encompass arguments for animal rights, liberation and/or welfare.

Firstly, because when simply explained as a behaviour, it's less easily misunderstood as a belief-ism one needs to buy into which could negatively change everything about how one currently views the world. And rather can be related to as a tool for achieving goals one has through one's own philosophy and culture already. Like the Mi'kmaq legend of how a demi-god used magic to obtain unlimited amounts of beaver meat from a single bone, reflecting a wish for abundance disconnected from the need to hunt.

Secondly, the strong commitment is clear through it being a boycott protest, which we can really easily conceptually tie to other boycotts, where someone boycotting South African products during apartheid wouldn't feel comfortable flying over their and joining the police force themselves. More so than in other definitions where you're just saying you're abstaining from using the end animal products.

And finally, I am actually fine with my definition being softer on for example subsistence hunters. I've got a video on my channel of Penan tribes people in Indonesia explaining how it would be repulsive to them to keep animals in captivity to farm, and I think this is great animal rights advocacy, so again a positive distinction.[7]

Debate on individuals taking responsibility for domestic animals

Theo: So the context to this debate is that a person called Melissa watched a video advocating 'adopt don't shop' by a popular entertainment outlet, then comments under the video and share-posts it on twitter and Instagram with her critical comments.

So, she's criticizing the people who made the video and anyone who resonates with the message.

Next, a past friend from college who has been following her on social media writes a response to her. Then, Melissa writes out this long blog post explaining her position in depth.

The Case Against Pet Ownership by Melissa

In this blog post, I share my reply to a former housemate from university who sent me Twitter comments and Instagram messages, namely:

"Melissa what the hell? This is the most extremist take I've ever heard and incredibly messed up. You were too smart to let some youtube psychobabble turn you into someone who makes these kind of comments..."

"Hmm so pigs can convey misery, suffering, and fear to humans but dogs "don't care about the human ideas of family and love"? Your arguments make no sense"

Megan, I understand this may be this is the first time you've really thought through these concepts. You have said hurtful things in your Twitter and Instagram comments to me. I have every reason to simply delete your comments and ignore you, but I'm going to take the high road and offer an explanation.

What's shown in nature documentaries is how I want animals to live. I think it is our responsibility as human beings to allocate as much of the planet's surface as is possible to be like what is shown in documentaries so that animals can live their lives in a way that is meaningful for them.

Humans are animals, but we are endowed with cognitive abilities that are superior to any other animal on earth. We have complex language, we have culture, and we have built (and destroyed) civilizations. We have the ability to reason and use that reason for good rather than evil.

Unfortunately, much of what we do to animals is evil and has become so normalized that people don't question it.

There are obviously basic similarities between the life cycles of humans and other animals: birth, childhood, adulthood, reproduction, death. Animals absolutely feel pain, fear, joy, and sorrow. However, animals have their own social lives and family structures (without interference from human interaction).

Wolves, for example, are predatory pack animals who love to hunt and fight with other wolves. Wolves compete to find mates and reproduce. Wolves raise their children, and the cycle begins again. Wolves are happy to live this way in the wild.

Think about what humans have done to wolves. The life of a dog is nothing like the life of a wolf in the wild. Humans have selectively bred wolves over generations to be tame enough, small enough, and cute enough to be playthings. We've even bred them so that their bodies are so far removed from nature that they experience serious health problems like breathing issues (Pugs), hip dysplasia and intervertebral disc disease (Beagle, Corgi, Shih Tzu, etc.), and sometimes they can't even reproduce with one another (the French Bulldog, for example, is shaped in a way that it can't even mount another Bulldog).

If a dog is able to reproduce, their mate is often chosen by another human being so that the babies are more valuable and can get sold off to humans. The dog doesn't get to raise a family of pups—the pups get separated pretty soon after birth. Most of the time, not too long after they are puppies, humans remove their reproductive organs to make them more docile and to avoid them ever being able to reproduce. (Cats, too, as I'm sure you know. I think most people in America these days don't even know what a cat in heat sounds like because they have their reproductive organs removed before they can even be "in heat.")

Wolves in the wild roll around in the grass and dirt. They smell. They often have parasites and fleas. This just doesn't fit with animals living in the homes of human beings where furniture has to be kept clean and free of fleas and dirt. We groom dogs and give them medicine to keep away parasites. They scratch at the floors and blankets on beds because that's part of the behavior of wolves: they scratch and dig... but in a human home, they aren't supposed to scratch, and they have nowhere to dig.

Wolves, like all wild animals, urinate and defecate wherever they please. This also is an issue for animals living in a human home, and they have to be trained NOT to pee or poo wherever and whenever they want to like they would in the wild. It's a struggle and anyone who has owned animals know that it oftentimes doesn't work and you end up cleaning pee and poo out of carpets. Anyone who has owned dogs or done any dog sitting knows the disgusting feeling of using a plastic baggy to pick up warm poo from the grass so that our parks and sidewalks don't get covered in dog poo.

I've owned cats and I'm personally really disgusted that I had to spend so much time cleaning up cat poo from litter boxes, cleaning up kitty litter from crevices around the house, cleaning fur out of carpets, furniture, and clothes, etc. When my cats got older, especially, I had to clean up a lot of waste around the house. It's just plain gross to have to clean up after animals, and we force them into this unnatural, uncomfortable lifestyle when all they really want to do is be outside, hunt, mate, and fight with one another.

Dogs are the obviously the most happy when they get to go to a dog park and sniff the butts of other dogs and mount other dogs. They're pack animals and want to be around other animals of their own species, but most of the time they are sitting at home, alone, waiting for their owner to come home from work so that they can go outside and pee and maybe, if they're lucky, see another dog.

This is not even mentioning the messed up reality that they don't get to hunt for their food even though they're naturally predatory animals. They're fed mushed up remains from slaughterhouses (the body parts of pigs, cows, and chickens that humans don't want to eat) on a schedule dictated by humans, their owners.

It's all horrible, and I think people will all be better off when they can just GET REAL and admit that we naturally have an aversion to living amongst animals who, naturally, in the wild, are filthy and smelly. We should let animals live out their lives with other animals in their natural habitats: in the forests, in the deserts, and in the oceans.

And that's just talking about household pets. Animal agriculture is a whole other level of human derangement, and you can watch a variety of documentaries about veganism: Cowspiracy, Earthlings, Vegucated, etc.

Theo: First obvious question, on just a pragmatic level is it not irresponsible to just be brashly turning potential converts to veganism away in this manner? I.e. even if I agreed with her philosophy on not rescuing dogs from shelters to live in our personal homes, would the importance of raising this issue in order to disambiguate animal rights from pet ownership be worth it at this stage?

For example, Eisel's talked about not helping shoppers when asked to reach for animal products from a high shelf, and just carrying on walking without even caring to explain why he won't help. For me, that's just the exact wrong image I want to impart of what veganism means, for me veganism is about building a better community social contract where no one you meet has ever taken the life of an animal arbitrarily or supported that action because it can help towards better human relationships.

So, whenever I'm critiquing someone, I always want to also be inviting a person over to my way of thinking. The circumstance in which I'd want to reserve the possibility of coming across as an asshole are wholly important conflict scenarios, like negotiating human rights with one another and where we're on the brink of collectively game-changing achievements for animal rights and the battle lines are plain, like out fox sabbing against cruel sports.

Second question, is Melissa right on the issue of pet ownership? Criticizing people self-congratulating being able to rescue a dog from a shelter to live in a house that is still a cage in comparison to what a dog's interests are in reality; to be able to roam all day, hunt, pick their own mate, like a wolf in the wild.

I think my answer to this is also no, I wouldn't go as far as to use all the failings of man keeping dogs alive without being able to satisfy all their needs as a reason to deride anyone rescuing a dog from a shelter.

The part I liked about the original video being critiqued is, in the video, they basically say; 'though it'll be sad when your rescue animal dies, that you'll have gotten to experience its whole life, and you'll likely be open to wanting to experience that again'. So whether you rescue from a kill or no-kill shelter, you on average become this carrier capacity for rescues, which in the future could mean a dramatically reduced number of dogs left on the street or in shelters. Along with a change in the culture through people meeting the dog and you, those conversations happening that wouldn't otherwise, where you're able to advocate for 'adopt don't shop', then we can potentially start to see a decline in the number of people breeding these animals.

Dogs also get people out in the countryside more, creating a demand for nature parks and in the future. A big paradigm shift might even be spurred on by an optimistic future vision of packs of sterilized feral dogs that we help be able to survive and roam on their own in managed wildlife habitats, with big

fences so they can't attack farmers sheep, regular feeding time, veterinary care, and shelter they can access from the rain, etc.

Finally, I think the article should have grappled with frequently asked questions with this issue, even if Melissa's answer is simply that 'we shouldn't own dogs', like what would her ideal solution be? Why is it better to discourage this practice of individuals rescuing dogs when it will just lead to more dogs getting killed?

An interesting comparison to bring up is video games as a way of getting across how shallow the relationship between man and dog often is. However, I still think it's useful to paint a clear picture of the kind of life a dog could find meaning with a person in rare circumstances like living somewhere isolated and rural where farm dogs often take themselves on walks at night, or where the person works a job outdoors and is able to take the dog with them. Also, I know people who have simply got their dogs' fallopian tubes tied so they can be at gatherings with other dogs, off the lead, getting into harmless scraps and fucking, without risking bringing more dogs into the world.

I do grant it's a grey area for me. I struggle with basically 'owning a slave' in that my family has rescued a dog, and then I've become its main carer. But to whatever extent the dog is a slave, I'm still glad I've saved the 'slave' from possibly having been killed by a vet, or living a shittier life in the city with only a small park to go for walks in.

It crosses my mind all the time in the small experiences I have with my dog, about how I'm in control of this dog's life and don't wish to be. Like how the dog would ideally just spend virtually all it's time outside running around a forest if I was capable of giving it that life. Or, just little things like, when I'm on a walk and trying to warn sheep of my approach so they don't scatter at the last minute and lambs get separated from their mum, I make warning noises like 'yeoooo yeooo', which the dog then greatly enjoys joining in with, in barking a ton. Although obviously in her mind, she's saying 'let me at 'em boss, let me at 'em' lol. I also sometimes longboard around the village with her at night and sometimes do this 'yeoo' call to encourage her to run faster on a section of road that we can go fast on, which I know makes her enjoy the run more for the excitement of running faster and evoking that idea of being in a chase. However, it crosses my mind every time 'is the more authentic her just jogging along at her own pace?' So, am I being a bad slave master? Anyways, just random thoughts.

Finally, I want to complete an off-road cycle tour of the UK with my rescue dog who doesn't like people, which will likely be a bit challenging lol, but I'm going to plan out stops where I can take breaks and pay people to buy lentils for me and stuff. Hopefully, I enjoy the solitude, views, beaches, and forests, and the dog will become slightly better adjusted.

hot dog water: You make lots of good points! It's always seemed slippery to me that Eisel presents his arguments — and I'm referring to "Melissa's" arguments here as Eisel's, because they are: his hand was (and still is) clearly so far up her butt that she's being used like a sock puppet — speaking "against pet ownership" so aggressively, but without even a hint of suggestion for a process by which pet ownership could be eliminated (or even discouraged). Do we just... kill all domesticated animals now? Is that more vegan? (I'm not even being hyperbolic and refusing to consider the possibility that it is more vegan, although the suggestion makes me personally uncomfortable and unhappy to consider. What I'm saying is that I'm open to the discussion, whether or not I would concur with all ideas.)

Arguing against pet ownership without bothering to address the reality of the millions of domesticated animals that exist today, whether we like it or not, just feels like more posturing and intellectual masturbation. Theoretical debate has its place, but condemning other people for disagreeing on a position with no meaningful function feels like instigating.

I'll add a few points of my own in a follow-up comment. Pet ownership seems like a subject worth discussion here because a) it was always one of Eisel's pet issues (rim shot, pun intended) within the "vegan demimonde" and b) he's claimed that no one has ever bothered to try and refute his points and/or that no one has ever effectively countered his arguments (obviously those aren't the same thing at all, but he vacillates depending on which claim is more useful or self-flattering in the moment).

Over the years, I've actually seen multiple people address his arguments against pet ownership... but if he even acknowledged them his reply was usually along the lines of "this is so stupid/evil it isn't worth my time."

So of course, the lack of engagement with his "serious" work is mostly Eisel's fault. Why even bother? Given how Eisel has historically responded, why would you take the time, all for the privilege of Eisel flouncing and kicking dirt in your face?

Honestly though: not to get too sentimental with my fellow drooling retards over here, but I've seen more good-faith discussion of Eisel's ideas in this sub in the past few months than Eisel has ever tolerated on his own accounts. More respectful disagreement, too! So here we go, dummies! Let's talk about puppies and kitties and stuff.

One big omission Eisel makes in his arguments against pet ownership regards dogs.

Eisel frequently compares domesticated dogs to wild wolves, pointing out similar proclivities and behaviors, as evidence for the inappropriateness of owning dogs as pets. No one disagrees that *Canis lupus* and *Canis familiaris* are related species, but there are crucial differences Eisel glosses over. His comparisons require him to hand-wave or ignore the 30+ thousand years of reciprocal evolutionary history shared by humans and domesticated dogs. This has led to our two species being uniquely capable of cross-species "connection", and hugely undermines Eisel's supposition that dogs cannot form "real" emotional bonds with human beings... but Eisel clunkily reduces this empathic capacity to the result of "training" and selective breeding post-domestication that forces dogs to "fake" happiness around humans. (He goes on about this for a while in the first chapter of *Veganism*.)

The whole bit strikes me as a pretty woolly assertion, and Eisel makes no attempt to demonstrate how he can reliably discern "faked" dog happiness from genuine dog happiness. Much of his anti-pet argument, in fact, seems to rely on his belief that it's impossible and "unnatural" for an animal to be happy living in a human home; an assertion he doesn't bother to "prove" in any convincing way.

It also ignores the many, many generations of parallel habitation in which packs of only semi-domesticated dogs were choosing to live in and around human nomadic groups for mutual benefit, and the development of their ability to read human facial cues that happened during that time.

The history of domesticated cats + humans is shorter, but seems to share similarities: wild cats were drawn, of their own volition, to live in and around human settlements because of the presence of food refuse and rodents. Another weird omission from Eisel's arguments is the fact that, in practice, many contemporary cat owners do not keep their cats "in captivity." Many cat owners allow their cats free access to the out-of-doors (to the massive detriment of local songbird populations), and the cats go and return as they please. Depending on the culture, this may be true for dogs as well: in some parts of the world, domesticated dogs "owned" and cared for by one family are allowed to roam freely.

Both Eisel and Melissa make a lot of statements about the way domesticated animals act that are so broad as to be both false and useless:

Dogs are the obviously the most happy when they get to go to a dog park and sniff the butts of other dogs and mount other dogs.

You only have to have observed like... 10+ dogs in your lifetime to know this is not universally true or accurate. Plenty of dogs don't want to be around other dogs at all. You might argue that the reasons for an individual dog being antisocial are the damaging results of domestication, and you might even be correct, but individual dog behavior is still varied enough that arguments like this come off as unsound and unfamiliar.

That brings me to my last point, which is the most presumptive but still something I've noticed over the years that Eisel has been banging on about this: I have never gotten the sense that Eisel's position on pet ownership is the result of much personal experience or knowledge of domesticated animals. It doesn't feel, to me, like Eisel has ever had any genuine affection for an animal. His position on pet-ownership does not feel like it exists in spite of a real appreciation for animals that he might otherwise enjoy being close to, were it not ethically inexcusable.

Eisel (himself and by way of Melissa's parroting) basically seems to regard animals as gross and smelly. He's said that dogs are inherently aggressive and love to fight with other dogs (downplaying their cooperative nature and dominance behaviors that actually seek to avoid fighting). He thinks they are flea-ridden and filthy, and that living with them should be something humans avoid. He has almost nothing fond to say about animals, and when he does attempt to claim an appreciation for their wild nature, it feels paper-thin: in his Veganism book he calls an octopus "beautiful," but he never wastes space telling us what about the wild octopus he finds interesting or compelling. This may be part of Eisel's larger struggle to say a single complementary thing about anything or anyone, ever... but in this case it feels like a weak attempt to frame his feelings about wild animals as "positive" in comparison to his disgust for domestication.

Either way, none of these observations of animal ickiness or beauty are objective (though Eisel presents them as such). They strike me as the opinions of someone who doesn't really like animals, and finds them repellent, but has repackaged this distaste as a position of moral superiority. ("I'm such a good person that I don't want any stupid fucking animals in my house!")

Kurtz:

Do we just... kill all domesticated animals now? Is that more vegan?

Yes and yes. I elaborated more in my other comment.

Even if we are talking about cows or chickens or pigs, the reality is that if we have enough impact on demand that there truly is a surplus, then the CAFOs cull their herds to cut their losses. A recent example is the ventilation shutdown (VSD) during COVID in hog farms that had surplus.

Sure, if more people become vegan, then the animal agriculture experts will revise their forecasts and breed fewer animals the following season. But we are not saving the domesticated animals that are already in existence today, i.e. whether or not I eat beef, all the cows alive today will be butchered. What we are trying to do is prevent more domesticated animals being bred in the future.

The tragedy is that every animal that is/was bred by humans is destined to be killed by humans.

Solsolico: Another thing that I would critique is just the unproven premise that wolves are happy to live how wolves live. And this would be the case for any wild animal. Based on what criteria is she making this claim? How does she know that wolves enjoy their lives more than your average house dog in the United States?

I feel like the vast majority of her argument is based around the premise that a dog wants to live like a wolf, or that wild animals are happy, or that there's something meaningful about living a life like a wild animal. And it's like, you're allowed to have those views, but you kind of just asserted them without making a case for why this is true.

Other than that, it's just like subjective experience. Like, imagine trying to convince someone that pet ownership is immoral because you personally find it disgusting to put your hand in a plastic bag and pick up dried poop in your backyard.

I don't even understand the point of adding this to her argument. It just makes her look like a baby, when morality is kind of about the opposite. In some sense, morality is voluntarily suffering. Like, if you convince someone who likes having pets that having pets is immoral, that person would have to suffer to follow through because they would be deprived of something they enjoy. So why include how much you hate having a pet in that argument?

Yeah, and I'm very ambivalent and undecided on the morality of having pets. But nothing in her perspective comes off as thought-provoking or interesting because it's just unproven premises and how much she hates having pets.

hot dog water: I found the inclusion of the poop argument especially peculiar because Melissa and Eisel are both outspokenly not antinatalists. But if you find that to be a convincing argument, what about human poop? Couldn't someone theoretically make the exact same argument about babies and children? "No one should have kids because changing diapers is disgusting."

Like... okay? Changing diapers isn't a pastime. Not enjoy the experience of cleaning shit is a sentiment most people share. But it has nothing to do with the ethics of human reproduction or pet ownership.

Kurtz: Actually, morality is, historically and culturally, tied to notions of cleanliness. Devout Jews and Muslims regard pork as unclean insofar as it is immoral for them to consume it. Likewise, a Hindu Brahmin regards beef and leather as unclean, and indeed, the purpose of the caste system was to delegate the unclean duties to the lower castes.

Thus, by cleanliness we are not discussing the scientific concept of whether or not something is sterile, which would be relevant for e.g. a surgeon about to perform an operation. Instead, cleanliness is used to distinguish what is befitting for a civilised human versus a beast.

The agriculture department will say the slaughterhouse is clean, as long as all the harmful pathogens are controlled with antiseptics. Despite this, we may recognise the pools of blood, faeces and entrails as unclean, and indeed this is the visceral reaction many (if not most) people experience when witnessing a slaughterhouse. Basically, cleanliness is being used in two different contexts hence the confusion.

So yes, the disgust people feel when they step on a cat or dog turd on the pavement is relevant because it indicates that these beasts do not have a place in advanced human civilisation. Moreover, the reproductive behaviours of these beasts (scent marking, "mounting" furniture or even their owners!) is even more uncomfortable, and, in a word, bestial.

edit: wanted to include this link. They called him Eisel-lite

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G54mEAlfHnE>

Solsolico: And I'm glad you explained your view of morality. That being said, I'm not convinced of it.

To me, morality—at least the morality that I care about and concern myself with—has to do with the suffering of sentient beings. Dumping chemical waste in a river is immoral because it destroys the clean water in the ecosystem, which has a bunch of negative effects regarding the suffering of sentient beings, including humans but also beyond humans. Really, any animal in that ecosystem that the river feeds is going to suffer because of dumping chemical waste into it.

So, while I can appreciate the perspective that cleanliness is used to distinguish what is fit for civilized human beings, I don't necessarily think that it's self-evident what is and isn't. Most humans in civilized society will feel disgust if they walk through wet mud barefoot. So whether someone feels or doesn't feel disgust about something is also about socialization, cultural norms, familiarity with an activity and sensory issues, not just biological instincts. People in the West might feel disgust to eat raw spinach or other raw vegetables. I feel disgust when I see wet paper, let alone touch it.

We live in 2025, and so I don't think feelings of disgust are really what we should be basing our sense of moral cleanliness off of. And that's because we often feel disgust about things that don't warrant disgust from a health standpoint.

Likewise, I'm not convinced that having a hyper-hygienic society is something to necessarily strive for. Sure, there has to be some standard of hygiene, but do we need HEPA air filters in every single room? Do we need to scrub our shoes clean every night? Should camping be a thing of the past? There are a lot of extreme places we can go when we talk about how hygienic a society should be, and to me, it's not self-evident that cohabiting with dogs is beyond the hygiene line. That's something you're going to have to make a case for on an individual basis.

There is also that disgust can come from just being soft or unadapted. For example, imagine you're camping and the ground is a bit damp because it's been humid outside. So when you try to sleep in your tent, the ground is a bit mushy. To feel disgust there—is that about hygiene, or is that just being soft / unadapted? That's kind of how I feel about people who can't pick up dog poop with a plastic bag. That plastic bag you have is protecting you from any pathogens that might be in the dog poop.

And it's not like human beings are inherently clean either. Most sicknesses that we get are transmitted from other human beings (like the total occurrences; the cold, the flu, covid, etc.). We wash our hands. We (now) wear masks. We vaccinate. We have systems in place to deal with the fact that we are disease-transmitting to one another. And we also have systems in place for dogs.

I should also add, where I live, the shit that most people step on is Canadian Goose shit, but that doesn't mean there is a moral imperative to eradicate them. And I think you'd also have a hard time convincing the world that walking outside barefoot is immoral as well.

I can see an argument against cats because of the toxoplasmic *Gondii* parasite that lives in them. However, someone could make the argument that the solution here is not to abandon cats, but just to put a system in place. But I don't know biomedical research, so I don't know the feasibility of that at all, and it's beyond the scope of our discussion here... morality and cleanliness

Kurtz: The reason that I do not think exclusively in terms of suffering, especially when it comes to wild animals, is because, as you point out in your first comment, what a wolf or lion experiences is beyond the realm of my human knowledge. To quote Wittgenstein, "If a lion could speak, we could not understand him".

To use your own example, suppose dumping predator-specific contraceptive in a river was deemed to reduce "suffering" (however that is quantified) within an ecosystem. Would that be moral? I am not kidding (I wish I was) but influential leaders in veganism (e.g. Vegan Gains) subscribe to this logic.

Rather, as intelligent humans, we can be honest about the scope of our knowledge and technology. Sure, we can build skyscrapers but can we build a jungle or a coral reef? We can build robots, but can we build an elephant? Natural habitat and wildlife take aeons to evolve, and all we have to do is leave it alone. Of course, there is endless suffering that occurs in the jungle, but that is, in my opinion, completely irrelevant to the question of how much jungle should we conserve.

Regarding disgust, I totally agree that it depends on social conditioning. But as a society, either implicitly or explicitly, we are conditioning each other. The example you bring up about clothing, be it shoes or a hijab, is thought provoking. Ultimately, civilisation needs to decide on some dress code, and those who do not agree (e.g. nudists) have to either change the prevailing culture or set up their own colonies.

Of course, there is nothing scientifically unclean about the human body. But a nude body has cultural connotations that could range from a libertine exhibitionist to a Jain sky clad monk! Thus, the purpose of my earlier comment is to point out what we regard clean/unclean or pure/impure are culturally derived, not explicit scientific health-related facts.

It is very rare that humans use logic to change their emotions — it is usually the reverse. E.g. people feel an emotion (be that desire or disgust) at the sight of a steak, and then use logic to rationalise their emotion. This is why "debates" between vegans and meat-eaters are so futile.

What is involved in perpetuating domestication (of any species) is horrific. Watch the standard procedure for castration and neutering. Watch the standard procedure for artificial insemination. I am claiming that in a civilised society, human beings should not touch the genitals of other species. I really do not think this is that controversial (e.g. imo a debate about nudism is more nuanced) but the reality is that people are so attached to the taste of meat or the cuddles from their dog, that they make excuses for the bestial conception of these animals.

Why is bestiality universally condemned? It is completely irrelevant if the beast involved hypothetically enjoys the act. The reason bestiality is forbidden is because we do not want to live in a society where people fuck beasts. Pure and simple: because it is disgusting.

Solsolico: I can appreciate your comment here. I haven't checked Reddit for a few days, so I wasn't ignoring you or anything like that. I don't want you to feel like your effort went unread or unappreciated.

I'm basically in agreeance with the vast majority of what you're saying here. I think the genitalia argument is probably the strongest argument there is against pet ownership. It's similar to my argument against something like eggs, where there's this inherent step in the process that seems impossible to get morally right.

Like sure, someone can make the case that backyard chickens are moral if you treat them well, but there's still the unavoidable reality that those male baby chickens are getting culled en masse because

they can't coexist. They fight each other. They kill each other. There's no economically feasible way to continue backyard chickens through generations and generations without culling males.

The only solution would be to genetically modify the sex birth ratio for chickens or to genetically modify, through artificial selection, to make the male chickens more docile. But in both cases, you're just looking at exploiting this animal. It just exists for your benefit, even if you're going to treat it really nicely. You're going through all this trouble to genetically modify it so that it fits into your existence better. It would be one thing if these genetic modifications already existed, like say with dogs, but the prospect of doing it again... I think we can see the moral problems right there because the motivation is basically just going to be some type of exploitation.

But, as you and I both stated, we don't know what it is like to be a dog. Like sure, I know for human beings, for a lot of them, not being able to have kids is super depressing for that person. We all know stories like that. Is it like that for a dog? If a dog is chemically castrated, because physical castration is fucked up, period, does this mentally affect the dog based on not being able to bear children? Are we depriving the dog of that desire it has? Because if we knew that a dog had this desire, how moral is it to deprive the dog of this?

I don't necessarily think depriving someone or something of their desire is inherently bad. A serial killer may have a desire to be free and kill again; obviously, we're not going to honor that. Of course, that's an extreme example, but a more tepid example could just be something like, you have a desire to be rich, but no one owes you that. You're a kid, and you have a desire to skip school; that doesn't mean your parents are just going to honor that.

Alright, but maybe this is more than a desire; maybe it's a psychological need. It's fucked up for a parent to deny their kid a social life. But stories like that definitely exist. Study all day type shit. So it's just like, well, yeah, I don't know what the psychological state of a dog is to have cubs. I don't know how fucked up it is. I know it would be messed up to deny a human being to have a kid, like if you were secretly chemically castrating them by putting whatever chemicals you need in their daily smoothie or weekly smoothie or however often you need to administer these hormones, that would be very fucked up.

Going back to the chicken example, I can say without a doubt that if we were at ground zero with dogs, like dogs were still wild animals, and we were debating about whether it's okay to selectively breed them to make them more docile for our needs, then I'd be like, yeah, that's really fucked up and we should not do that. If a wild dog wants to hang around and you want to feed the wild dog, I'm like, that's totally cool. But to breed them for our own benefit? To exploit them in ways that are convenient for us? Yeah, that's really messed up.

But what makes the situation we're in a little bit more messy is the fact that they're already like that. All of these different dog breeds exist already. And so it's like, who am I to say, who is anyone to say, that a "toy dog" like a poodle doesn't want to exist anymore? Because on the flip side, there's also a moral argument to be made that intentionally making a species or subspecies of an animal extinct is also fucked up. And I know Eisel's solution to this was like having a zoo for dogs. But it's like a zoo is also fucked up. Maybe you could make a zoo that's an ideal environment for dogs because, I mean, they don't really have pure freedom in most cases anyway. Especially urban dogs. Some rural dogs do have a lot of freedom.

Anyway, like where my head has been at in this debate of dogs and cats and stuff like that, pet ownership in general, it's just that no matter what we do, it seems like we're doing something immoral. **Kurtz:** Thanks for the reply. I also appreciate your comment. That's one of the things I like about Eisel, say what you want, he managed to attract an intelligent audience (even if we are too stupid to help him).

I share your sentiment about backyard hens. Another thing that is disgusting is how inbred domesticated animals are. Ultimately, "animal husbandry" is a euphemism for bestiality and incest — and we should hope to live in a society where humans are disgusted by such activities. It is one thing if an

animal engages in incest on its own volition (this is quite rare in the wild) — but for humans to force animals to mate with their parents/children, siblings, etc. is vile.

“Purebred” is a manmade concept, that has aristocratic/caste origins. Without ongoing human intervention, dogs readily mate with different breeds. So why should we, as humans, be committed to preserving the categories of “poodle” or “beagle” which are meaningless to dogs themselves? These are human desires, and originate from an aristocratic morality where mongrels are considered dirty.

I completely agree with you that desires need not be fulfilled. Indeed, I am questioning (and hoping to destroy) the human desire for pets. The biggest obstacle is the emotional blackmail used by the pet industry: “adopt” this puppy/kitten or we will kill it!

In another comment, I explained how the language “adoption” is very misleading and inappropriate. Adopting an orphan means being a good parent. Thus, truly adopting a dog would mean acting as the dog’s own parents would have: teaching it how to hunt, how to defend itself and, when the time comes, having the detachment to let the dog leave and forge its own life. That is absolutely not the relationship humans have with pets: it is more analogous to how eunuchs were kept for company!

It is also very insidious how the moral and financial burden of caring for abandoned pets is transferred to vegans. The solution, IMO, is to heavily tax pet breeders and owners, and use these funds to buy swathes of rural land for abandoned pets and let them turn feral. It only takes a few generations, and thereafter, our relationship with cats and dogs would be essentially the same as it is with squirrels and crows.

Solsolico: Yes, I agree with that. He did attract an audience that is intelligent, which is why it’s such a shame that for most of his YouTube presence, he closed comments on the videos just because some people would misunderstand him or make stupid comments. For whatever reason, he couldn’t let that fly because he didn’t have the time, desire, or energy to moderate all the comments. But anyway, that’s an aside.

Of course, you make a salient point about the adoption dynamic. When people rescue orangutans, the goal isn’t to keep the orangutans as household pets, but to rehabilitate them so they can go live in the wild. This process takes years and years. There’s actually a documentary series called Orangutan Jungle School which shows this whole process, how long it takes, how challenging it is, and things of that nature.

That being said, I don’t know if it’s fair or applicable to apply this logic to pets because, well, these pets did not evolve in the wild. The wild didn’t select their genes, human beings did. So, it’s like, what are the solutions here? We could selectively breed them again so that they could survive in the wild, but then it’s like, why would we do this when they weren’t even a part of the wild in the first place? The other solution would be something similar to what you suggested, which would be to train them to survive in the wild, and just let them loose and see which ones end up surviving. But I also think there’s kind of a moral problem with that because many would end up dying, and not dying pleasant deaths, and I don’t think that’s moral to do. I think it’s probably more moral to euthanize than to send an animal to starve, freeze, or get eaten alive by a bear. But then, what’s the morality of mass euthanizing pets (at least the ones we know wouldn’t survive)? I don’t think that’s a great thing to do. And certainly society doesn’t either. At best, you would have a phase-out type of system where live animals stay living as pets, but breeding is now a thing of the past.

I guess we could do the sanctuary/zoo idea that Eisel proposed, but of course then there needs to be a debate about whether that land should be wildlife or a dog and cat sanctuary.

But then that gets back to the unknowable question that I have, and it’s something like, why do I get to decide if a poodle wants to stay existing? Obviously, the question of life, to live, that’s not a decision that anyone makes. But at the very least we could say living as a human being is a life worth living, so, at least it can be, although there are many human beings who fall through the cracks and I guess a large percentage of us at least go through moments in our life when we’re in those cracks. Obviously, there could be a whole secondary discussion about antinatalism here and their argument about consent to life and stuff like that. But I don’t really find that to be a convincing argument, but

we're not going to get into that now of course. So then it's like, I can't make the assertion that poodles feel like their life is worth living or not. And so, to make them extinct, I also can't comment on that. And that's my main area of doubt in pet ownership. Like that stuff you said about pure breed and caste and animal husbandry being incest and all that stuff, I 100% agree with. The process to get to where we are is terrible. But the process to discover nuclear energy was also terrible. The process of building the railroads in Canada and the United States was terrible and basically slave labor. But that doesn't mean we abandon nuclear energy; that doesn't mean we abandon the railroads. They exist now, and just because the process was immoral doesn't mean there's a moral imperative to destroy the product of something that has a very immoral past. I hope that is clear.

So I think we definitely both agree on a lot. I think we agree that the history of how pets came to be is morally problematic. I think we agree that castration is morally problematic. Although we didn't discuss it, I'm sure we both agree that buying dog food or cat food that contains meat is morally problematic. And so, in that sense, if pet ownership is morally alright, it would definitely need to be on a plant-based diet. I think we both agree that there's something morally problematic about dogs basically being treated like children their whole lives. Of course, you know, your 10-year-old son or your 13-year-old daughter, they don't have the freedom that they will have when they are adults. They can't leave the house whenever they want; they don't necessarily choose what they eat all the time. There are rules they have to follow. But eventually, they do have that freedom, at least to the extent that whatever society they live in grants them those freedoms. The same can't be said about the life of a dog. Although it can be said about the life of a cat to some extent, there are moral problems with letting cats roam because they wreak havoc on ecosystems, specifically birds. I will have more to say about this freedom aspect for dogs in a following paragraph. We also agree that it is unknowable what a dog wants fundamentally, like what's going on in their psychology.

But the next step is I think where most of our disagreement is. You're willing to proceed and say that the way we treat dogs is sufficiently immoral and there isn't really a way for us to treat them sufficiently moral in the context of being a pet, so we should start working towards a way to eliminate pet ownership. What it seems to me is your ideal post-pet-ownership is something like: getting dogs to live in a way where they are able to be self-sufficient in both food gathering and breeding, and things along those lines.

My two issues with this are that (1) we don't actually know if a dog would prefer to live that type of hunter-gatherer lifestyle as opposed to being domestic, so is it moral to force it on them? And (2) is that most breeds of dogs will become extinct like this. And then the only way to avoid that without keeping them as pets is that sanctuary or zoo idea, but that goes back to my first issue, which is that: we don't know if a poodle or a chihuahua would prefer to live in that zoo environment or an urban human environment. Like we don't know how much dogs actually value and appreciate the love from a human being, like being pet, playing tug of war and playing fetch. I can't possibly know if a dog values that more than being able to freely hunt. It is not obvious.

I do think we could explore the dynamic and desires and behavior of stray dogs a bit more. I think that would be an interesting case study to learn more about the freedom dynamic and what dogs value. But I have not read enough about the behavior and dynamic of stray dogs. I do know that if someone feeds a dog that is stray, that dog tends to want to hang around that person. But of course they are variables that would have to be controlled to further understand the desires of a dog. Like we know that a stray dog is going to pick food over absolute freedom, but what if these homeless dogs were fed? What if there were dog food dispensaries around a city and all stray dogs were fed? And let's say it was like low quality food but good enough to keep them healthy. Would a dog choose to live with someone, another human being, if that person gave them things like toys, played with them at the park, pet them, and gave them more tasty food? Or would the dog pick the absolute freedom?

Anyway, I will say this, this is probably the best discussion I've ever had about pet ownership. I think that you make the right points that really make me think about my position in ways that I haven't thought before.

Kurtz:

I didn't know reddit had a word limit! We certainly agree on a lot. Regarding our original point of contention, I concede that Melissa's example of cleaning up dog faeces is not the most convincing example of the uncleanness of the pet paradigm. The examples we discussed, namely the ongoing bestiality and incest required to sustain the pet industry, are more damning and disturbing.

However, it is a bit heavy to have this type of conversation with a friend, let alone a stranger. While most people (vegan and non-vegan) will be offended, a certain kind of person will be interested because we are not merely discussing pets, but rather the meaning of civilisation, the distinction between man and beast, the limits of human knowledge, the motivations of having children, etc.

My perspective is that dog "breeds" are essentially castes — they are ultimately all the same species "Canis familiaris". Dogs from different breeds can mate with each other and produce fertile offspring. In fact, from my understanding, mongrels tend to be healthier than purebreds. The only thing stopping dogs from reproducing how they please is a manmade caste system! Would it really be so terrible if, sometime in the future, all the dogs were mongrels?

Poodles would only go "extinct" in the sense Brahmins may go "extinct". It is not real "extinction", because the descendants of today's poodles (Brahmins) will live on and mate with other breeds (castes). However, humans can be sentimental, and if preserving poodles (Brahmins) as they exist today is deemed important then the only way is to maintain a strict breeding program (arranged marriages) and deny poodles (Brahmins) reproductive freedom.

I am not denying or neglecting your point that some domesticated animals do not value/conceptualise freedom and are more than content living in refined captivity. Unfortunately (from my perspective), there are humans that fall into that category as well! My response is to think about the children — even though I may have a benevolent master, there is no guarantee his children will be benevolent. So when a human (or dog or cow) accepts to live in captivity, he is condemning his descendants to live at the mercy of an unknown almighty master.

There is something cowardly and despicable about that, in my opinion. And also, from a human perspective, I think there is something shameful about being a master, holding a leash. Freedom is being neither master nor slave. Freedom is people living by their merit with the hope that their children will surpass them. Captivity is for the weak — whether they are holding or wearing the chain.

edit: Thank you for bringing up the orangutan orphanages. I agree this is what real "adoption" would look like. I am sympathetic to efforts to prevent the extinction of species which we as humans caused by greed and stupidity. Orangutans are one example, elephants (ivory trade) are another. I am also aware this somewhat contradicts my philosophy of maintaining detachment to beasts — but it is a temporary, charitable measure. The hard work is to set aside enough jungle to release these animals, so they can live without disturbing us and vice versa.

Solsolico:

Your perspective on why poodles would only go extinct in one sense is definitely something to think about.

I understand your analogy with castes; that being said, I'm not sure if it's an apt analogy. But to be fair, I don't know enough about the Indian caste system so I deleted a lot that I wrote about it, deeming it as both irrelevant and uniformed. I will write as if the analogy given was that of different human cultures and human phenotypes blending and extincing the originals.

I guess my perspective here is backed by this value that I have. I think that genetics and phenotypes are worth something (dog breeds have this). I also think culture and language are worth something (dog's don't have this).

For example, even though there are so many people who identify as "Aboriginal Tasmanian", the reality is there are no phenotypical Tasmanians left. It's an extinct phenotype; it's an extinct population from that perspective. The same can be said about a lot of indigenous ethnicities from the eastern coasts of the Americas, such as the Pataxó, who are Afro-Indigenous, or the Kalinago from the Southern Caribbean islands, who also are Afro-Indigenous. In these cases, the indigenous language is completely

extinct, but some cultural elements exist, like attire, song, dance (I can't really speak to the extent that traditional worldviews still exist and unique cultural perspectives still exist).

The Coahuiltecan are culturally and linguistically extinct, but their genetics and phenotypes still exist. The same can be said about a lot of different Meso-American Indigenous groups.

The Charrúa are culturally and linguistically extinct, and they are also phenotypically and genetically diluted. Like the modern indigenous Tasmanians, they are mostly European.

So although both situations are tragic, I think the Charrúa situation is even more tragic; more was lost.

So I guess my perspective here is that it's not meaningless that the genetics and phenotypes of a population are diluted, or simply gone.

In the same sense that language has value, I also think genetics have value. It's not that, for example, the genetics of a modern Pataxó person are less valuable than one from pre-colonial times. It's just that you're replacing something valuable with another thing that's valuable, but that doesn't cancel it out. You still got rid of something that was valuable. The Pataxó now speak a revitalized version of their language, and that's cool; that has value. But it doesn't replace the value that was lost when the original language was lost.

It's like if you have a vase that your grandma gave you, and your wife broke it, but then your wife made you a new one. Your wife's new vase has value, but it doesn't replace the value that was lost exactly. It's a different value. It would be more valuable if you had both vases.

We can test to see if you or anyone also holds this value of phenotypical diversity with this extreme example.

Let's say that there was some way to genetically modify the phenotype of someone's fetus. Let's say we are in South Africa, and let's say that every single pregnancy was to be genetically modified such that the babies turned out to look Western European. So these Western European-looking babies would still be raised by non-white South Africans. They would have the same culture that the many non-white South African groups have. Their Western European-looking babies would speak the same language as their non-white parents, and they would have the same cultures as their non-white parents. But within a few generations, the entire culture is now phenotypically Western European. No language was lost, no culture was lost, but phenotypes were lost. That's the only thing that was lost here. And I think that that loss is a real loss; something valuable was lost. The phenotypical variation of human beings is valuable.

I have to say this because it might be misinterpreted: this is not some crazy ideology that is trying to preserve this distinction of "races". The human population is already on a continuum. There are no discrete racial groups. Go from Sri Lanka, up India, across the Middle East into the Balkans, and you get a gradual change. Go from the Arabian Peninsula into Egypt down into the Horn of Africa, and you get a gradual change. Neo-populations, like mestizos populations in the Americas, are valuable, and they increase the human phenotype diversity, which is valuable.

So if we go back to dog breeds, it's like if all dogs unified into a so-called mongrel breed, that new mongrel breed is just as valuable as a poodle or doberman. But the reality still remains that replacing something valuable with another valuable thing doesn't mean that value wasn't lost.

So I appreciate you bringing up the caste example because I really think it made me think about why I valued the existence of poodles.

Of course, when you talk about the importance of reproductive freedom for dogs... in all cases of human extinction, reproductive freedom was never on the table for that group. There was some type of external force marginalizing them, or going to war with them, or some type of disease, or some type of external hardship. I don't think there's ever been a case where a culture has bred itself out of existence, because endogamy seems to naturally be more prevalent, or at least prevalent enough that even when hybrid-cultures are forming, the original cultures still remain.. For example, you have the hybrid culture of the Red River Metis, but the Manitoba Cree and French Canadian still exist as well. It's like, what is

the best outcome: Only the Red River Metis existing and the French and Cree going extinct? All three existing? Or the Red River Metis never existing? I think the answer is: “all three existing”.

So I have to ask the question: would it be tragic if a culture, under their own volition and not subjugated or under the power of another culture, procreated themselves out of existence and ended up in an entirely new hybrid culture? I think, to some extent, of course it would be sad, but at the end of the day, it would be immoral to force them not to. And so if dogs did end up procreating in this way you imagine they would, I do think that it would be sad and I think things of value would be lost, but at the end of the day, it would be completely immoral to force them not to, and that would override the value that I ascribe.

So I think that I am probably morally okay with the idea of dogs hybridizing, but it is not without its loss of value.

The second part of your comment I’ll have to think about and ruminate on more, because how I understand it, it’s fundamentally making the claim that it is immoral for a dog to let itself be domesticated by humans. I have never heard that perspective before and I haven’t ever really considered it, so I’m not really sure what to say at this moment because it’s an interesting perspective, no doubt, but I’d have to just think about it.

Kurtz:

Thanks for articulating your points so well. I think it is fair to say that our conversation has moved beyond pet ownership and into the realms of genocide. At the fore, I apologise for the delay in replying as I had other works, and also apologise that my reply is a bit haphazard (I had written more, but edited out things that were tangential to the main point). If I haven’t addressed any of the points you made, it is because I agree with them. Due to the length of my comment, I had to split it into two parts.

Firstly, to consider the problem somewhat scientifically. Every child I have will inherit $1/2$ of my DNA. So if I have exactly one child then $1/2$ of my DNA is lost forever. In general, if I were to have n children, each of my chromosomes has probability $(1/2)^n$ of not being passed to the next generation. Thus, even if I have 2 children (i.e. replacement rate), still on average $1/4$ of my DNA is lost.

Of course, if my mate were the same ethnicity as me, then we would share some DNA, because we have some common ancestors. Thus, even if I fail to pass some of my genes to my child(ren), there is a probability they would inherit those genes from my mate. So to reduce the probability of my genes becoming extinct, I either need to: 1) have many children; or 2) choose a mate that is genetically related to me.

So on this issue, I think it is good to be moderate. I am not going to procreate like Genghis Khan or commit incest, so I have to make peace that some of my DNA is going to be lost. On the other extreme, as you point out, if enough people do not pass their genes to the next generation, it can result in extinction/genocide. The most prolific example I can think of is the “Stolen Generation policy” in Australia. The so-called “Protectors of the Aborigines” showed that successively breeding Aborigines with Europeans resulted in effectively white descendants. Such a policy enforced for sufficient time would result in Aboriginal genes becoming scarcer and eventually extinct. So this policy is clearly genocidal, even though it does not involve killing all the Aborigines outright.

The safeguard against such extinction is human mating behaviour which has evolved a certain way. On average, people tend to marry people who speak the same languages, eat similar foods, have similar beliefs, etc. This is why the Stolen Generation policy was predicated on destroying Aboriginal languages, culture and pride. But let’s say, in an alternate reality, the Aborigines and settlers were so mutually attracted to one another that they intermarried without any reservation. Even in such a romantic hypothetical, it would still eventually result in the scientific genocide of Aborigines, because their genes would become scarcer due to the genetic drift I described earlier. However, these are both extremes: extreme xenophobia and extreme xenophilia both lead to genocide (i.e. loss of genes). It is difficult to precisely specify what moderate amount of discrimination is necessary to avert genocide, but my thinking is that our innate sexual preferences (which have evolved over millions of years) should be a reasonable guide. At any rate, I am more comfortable with people choosing their own sexual partners

based on their own subjective preferences, rather than an academic eugenics program, even if the latter can theoretically be optimised to yield a more diverse human gene pool, eliminate hereditary diseases, etc. etc.

Bringing the discussion back to other animals, much like humans, beasts have complex mating behaviours and preferences. Take, for example, water buffalo. The bulls rut and cows choose the victors. However, wild water buffalo are now endangered, primarily because feral domesticated water buffalo are interbreeding with the wild populations. Who am I to deny a feral bull who won his rut an opportunity to mate? There are multiple tragedies at play. Yes, the extinction of “pure” wild water buffalo is a loss to biodiversity. But it would also be a tragedy to keep domesticated buffalo in perpetual captivity. Even more tragic would be exterminating the domesticated buffalo, when their ancestors ploughed the paddy fields that kept our ancestors fed. So I say, the best option is to let the beasts sort it out themselves — and may the best buffalo prevail! To be crude, for beasts, I really am advocating for “survival of the fittest”; for “Nature red in tooth and claw” to take its course in the wilderness, since this is an experiment beyond the scope of civilisation, which makes the wilderness genuinely valuable, unique and interesting.

This may be a key point of disagreement between us: when there is a competition between feral and native species, I do not think humans have any responsibility to intervene on behalf of the natives. I understand the analogy that the white man was a feral species in Australia and North America, that outbred and decimated the native populations to the point of extinction. So looking back with hindsight, it sure would have been nice if someone helped the indigenous peoples when it would have mattered — not centuries later once the dust has settled on genocide. It is a persuasive argument in favour of intervention to protect diversity.

While I support “survival of the fittest” for beasts, when it comes to humans within the confines of human civilisation, I support a meritocracy. In some sense, this is also a “survival of the fittest” but of intellectual and moral qualities rather than the brutish ones rewarded in the wild. And on this point, I think the settler colonialists behaved with such savagery that they absolutely undermined Western civilisation, the very thing they thought they were furthering! I’ll be honest, I don’t know much about pre-colonial indigenous cultures, but I am sure they had some unique wisdom to contribute to the future of civilisation. Of course, there are aspects (e.g. meat eating, genital mutilation, etc.) that would put me in conflict with indigenous cultures, just as it puts me in conflict with much of Western culture.

However, these conflicts need not be resolved by violence, wars or reproductive coercion. Fortunately, as humans, we can affect each others behaviour through dialogue and creative pursuits. Whereas, when it comes to our relationship with other animals, the only way we can change the behaviour of beasts is with violence (e.g. the bullet or the whip) and reproductive coercion (e.g. castration or selective breeding).

Basically, intervening in a human genocide does not require us to morally compromise ourselves to the point of exterminating or enslaving the feral/invasive party. Whereas, intervening in conflicts among beasts can only make us bestial. The best thing we can do for the beasts (be they feral or wild), is provide them as much habitat as possible, and let them have at it.

Solsolico: Thanks for the reply. I can appreciate your distinction between a xenophobic genocide and a xenophiliac genocide. If all dogs went out and bred with each other, of course they would have a xenophiliac genocide. And, of course, it’s hard to make the case that that is immoral. On the other hand, a xenophobic genocide is obviously immoral.

Feral animals and ecosystems

I was unaware of the water buffalo situation that you mentioned. That is quite interesting. I also agree with you that it’s best to just let the water buffalo figure themselves out. As you said, and I agree with, there are multiple tragedies at play there. But if you have to weigh the options, which is the least immoral? That one is probably letting the water buffalo do what they do on their own without human intervention, knowing that there’s going to be a loss of biodiversity as a result.

But I find it a little more challenging, or it's more uncertain, when it's a species that was brought from a completely different part of the world and now outcompetes the native species. Like, am I correct to assume that the domesticated water buffalo are descendants of the local wild water buffalo?

For example, wild hogs. Wild hogs can outcompete most species, but humans also brought them to a place. So, with the water buffalo example, it's like they were already here, but humans kind of messed with their genetics a bit. But it's like the wild hog example: I believe that pigs in Canada, both the wild ones and the domestic ones, are from Europe. And humans brought them over. And so if this animal that humans brought to a specific place outcompetes other species in that place to extinction, or potentially to extinction, isn't it, in some sense, our responsibility as humans to prevent it? Because in some sense, it's like, well, we are the ones who brought this problem to these animals. And in that sense, it is a human problem now. If we caused the problem, then we are responsible for the outcomes.

Of course, that question might be getting a little out in the weeds here, because it might not really be relevant to the discussion about pet ownership but rather something like the morality of maintaining the ecosystems the way they were and to be as unaffected by humans as possible. And then, of course, to grapple with this issue, one also needs to talk about whether reducing wild animals' suffering is a moral imperative or not.

For what it's worth, I am now solidly okay with the loss of diversity if it happens through xenophilia because I agree that freedom is more important than diversity. If maintaining diversity comes at the cost of limiting freedoms, then it's not worth the price.

All right, so where does that leave us? So, I am fine with dogs converging genetically if it's on their own accord, and it would be because, as we both know, humans are the ones that really enforce that phenotypic diversity among dogs, but I'm still stuck on just not knowing if that's how dogs would want to live or not. Like, castration is super immoral, but it's also immoral, in my perspective, to force a species to try and adapt to an environment that it did not evolve to adapt in, knowing that most of them, if not all of them, will die. And then we have to get into the issue of whether that's even ecologically responsible to do, because, much like the wild boar examples in Canada, introducing a new species into an ecosystem is human intervention, and in my opinion, that does make it a human issue forever. Even though your perspective is that already existing feral animals aren't a human concern, that is still different than introducing a new feral (non-local) animal.

What goes on between seals and whales and polar bears has nothing to do with human beings at all. But wild pigs in Canada? It totally does. And a new convergent species of dogs that are now wild in the entire world? It also totally does.

Sorting things out and a hypothetical question for you

- I agree that it is more moral to release dogs into the wild than to make them extinct if we had the a priori knowledge that they wouldn't outcompete other species into extinction or hunt them into extinction
- I also think that it is more moral to maintain dogs as pets than to make them extinct.

But that leads me to an interesting question that I'd like to hear your perspective on. If the only option were between extinction and maintaining them as pets, what's the more moral option? And hypothetically, it might be the only option because dogs wouldn't survive on their own (I know this is unrealistic because wild dogs do exist already, though maybe we're talking about the Sonoran desert and they wouldn't be able to survive on their own out there) or because there is a consensus that it is immoral to introduce them as a species into the wild because they would cause the extinction of another species. I think it would be an interesting way to understand your perspective a little bit better.

What still holds me back: can't know if dogs prefer a domesticated life or wild life

I think we will find agreement on most aspects of pet ownership, but the fact that I can't know if a dog would prefer to live a wild life or a domesticated life makes it hard for me to get on the "pet ownership is 100% immoral" boat. It seems to me that it is possible for domesticated dogs to be happy

and live happy lives. Of course, it comes at a cost (freedom, genital mutation) but also comes with benefits (healthcare, stability, resources).

Still, what you said a few weeks ago was still very interesting to ponder, “the fact that your master might be kind but the master of your offspring might not be”. And I have pondered it. My brain came up with this:

“That is true, however, nature isn’t always kind either. Sometimes a baby’s mom gets eaten by a wolf or a lion. Sometimes you’re born into a period of boom (yay!), and other times into a period of bust (no!) (boom-bust population dynamics: when a species’ population grows too much for the environment to support, it crashes, then grows again when resources recover, rinse and repeat). Sometimes you’re born with a disability and get infanticided. Sometimes you’re born in a drought, or in extreme cold. Sometimes you’re born and a flood or fire destroys your ecosystem. Sometimes you’re born and you contract a parasite very early on. Life is a gamble for the parents either way, it seems.”

Kurtz: My interpretation of Eisel’s philosophy is that it is “speciesist” to treat a cat/dog differently to a rat. The attachment people have towards cats and dogs versus rats is not based on any immutable characteristic of the species in question (rats, if castrated, groomed, etc. can make equally satisfying pets as cats or dogs). Nevertheless, we (vegan or not) recognise that if our city is infested with rats, then the solution is extermination. Nobody seriously proposes catching all the feral rats, castrating/neutering them, grooming and vaccinating them, and then “adopting” them. Practically, what would this mean? Even with “population control” (deadly) measures, there are estimated over 3 million feral rats in New York. If people think a vegan diet is a sacrifice (it is not) then imagine what kind of sacrifice it would entail adopting millions of feral animals that society is too insensitive to kill.

The entire discourse reminds me of a topic that Vegan Gains et al. bring up called “wild animal suffering”. To me it is so surreal, yet the proponents are steadfast. I think this stems from a “utilitarian” ethic, i.e. that pleasure is axiomatically meaningful and the ideal life is free of suffering. But this does not address the question of what happens when someone (e.g. lion) derives pleasure (or eases their own suffering) by causing suffering to another (e.g. zebra). Equally, the lack of suffering of the zebra results in material suffering (hunger) for the lion. So ultimately, we are left at the Buddhist truth that life is suffering, and to deny this is to live in a delusion, like young Siddhartha roaming his palace.

A sewer rat does not live in a delusion. From an early age, its elders have taught it to be weary of Man, who slayed their brothers and sisters. The rat learns how to evade the traps laid out before it, and it uses its undeniable intelligence to procure continued freedom for its descendants, not to perform cheap tricks or keep company with a fiend who forcibly took away its ability to ever have children. You see, in this way, a sewer rat actually has more dignity in life and death than a house cat or dog can ever hope for.

Theo: I agree that it’s easier to perceive a simple dignity in wild and feral animals in contrast to the shit we put domesticated animals through. Does this justify trying to throw scorn at people advocating adopt don’t shop though? On both the pragmatic and principled level, this just seems counter-productive.

Also, with you arguing we should just kill domesticated animals now, does this mean I should just go tell my vet I want my dog put down by telling them she’s too violent for human society, plus in my head doing it to save the environment the few resources I take from it in the form of vegan dog food? Considering dogs have interests to run round mountains which I can provide this dog, is not cutting short those interests more cruel and a step away from the kind of world vegan social contract we’d like to develop?

Kurtz:

Does this justify trying to throw scorn at people advocating adopt don’t shop though?

Is the word “adopt” being honest — or is it a euphemism? If I legally obtained an orphan, castrated him, and kept him as my lifelong companion, is that what we really mean by adoption? Adoption means being a good parent to an orphan. It is easy to imagine what this looks like with humans.

When it comes to e.g. dogs, being a good dog parent, means treating the dog as it own mother and father would have. Teaching it how to hunt, teaching it how to fight and defend itself, and when the time comes, letting go and allowing it to reproduce. The fundamental problem is that humans do not have the capacity or time to truly be a dog parent, and even if they did it would mean denigrating themselves to behaving like dogs.

People keep pets for their own egotistical (in the Stirnerian sense) reasons. Invoking adoption is phony altruism.

Incidentally, I think that adopting animals can be meaningful. On YouTube, you can watch orangutan orphanages, where human caregivers teach orphaned orangutans (whose mothers were killed by deforestation) what fruits to eat, how to open coconuts, how to run away from snakes. This is meaningful in the sense that the purpose is not for the orangutans to become attached to the caretaker or keep humans company. Rather, the point is that these orangutans may hopefully live a free life.

Also, with you arguing we should just kill domesticated animals now, does this mean I should just go tell my vet I want my dog put down by telling them she's too violent for human society, plus in my head doing it to save the environment the few resources I take from it in the form of vegan dog food?

My point is that the excuses (yes, "adopt don't shop" is an excuse) pet owners make ultimately perpetuates the pet owning paradigm, and prevents the social status of cats/dogs being elevated (from my perspective, demoted from yours) to the status of sewer rats.

From your writing, I understand you are deeply attached to your dog. Thus, I would not recommend you to now abandon your dog, not because I think your dog is currently living a meaningful life, but rather because such an act of betrayal would psychologically devastate you. Nevertheless, for both of your sakes, I hope you outlive your dog. And then, with some more detachment, perhaps you can appreciate my criticism of the pet industry.

Theo: Ok, but just for clarity, hypothetically if you knew it wouldn't affect my life in the least, and we lived in a society where you could just ask for your dog to be put down without any questions asked, you would advocate that I kill my dog? This would be robbing her of the chance to live a long life for a dog, fulfilling some of the interests she has to express her capabilities towards achieving some amount of happy flourishing.

I share many of your critiques of domestication, I just don't see the utility in advocating that no one personally take responsibility for domestic animals. Plus, advocating that everyone who's currently responsible for a domestic animal kill them sooner rather than later.

For people like me who have helped give dogs who were languishing in shelters a better life, we're ambassadors against people breeding dogs. I meet friends of friends, and they say things like 'I'd like to get a brood of puppies out of my dog at some point', then I argue 'there are already so many dogs languishing in shelters which people should take responsibility for if they want a dog in their life', then I'm taken more seriously because I'm already taking responsibility for a dog, and not just arguing from a position of not-invested snobbish moral superiority who hasn't put any effort into helping animals myself.

Kurtz: I'll be honest: I find the betrayal involved for a dog owner to kill his dog disturbing, just like I find it disturbing that livestock farmers betray their animals by using their trust to lead them to the slaughterhouse. Having clarified this, I also find it disturbing for pets owners to abandon their pets at shelters.

There is a fundamental difference between shooting/poisoning a feral pest species versus catching animals, removing their reproductive organs, and keeping them in cages to tug on the heartstrings of compassionate people who take pity on their plight.

That is why I am criticising the shelter/"adoption" industry. It is an emotional blackmail. And by the time someone "adopts" a cat/dog it is already too late. He has taken responsibility for that animal, and developed a psychological attachment, which is a weakness not a strength.

And what exactly is achieved by this compromise? From a strictly pragmatic view, I think this subsidises (both economically and morally) pet breeding, which we are both against. Why? Where do you think the money spent on pet insurance, vet bills, pet food, pet grooming, etc. is being invested? The companies in those industries have a vested interest in sustaining the pet industry. Sure, they decry puppy mills, but in the same breath laud “responsible/sustainable breeding practices”. The used car market does not threaten the manufacture of new cars — they are part of the same economy.

Even worse, as I alluded to, the fact that there are vegans who advocate “adopt don’t shop” is a relief for those who buy pets, and even eases their guilt if they abandon their pet at a shelter. “Hopefully, a kind vegan will take care of this dog I no longer want.”

My message is mainly directed at people being lured in by the “adopt don’t shop” propaganda. Don’t fall for it! Don’t let your strength (respect for animals) be turned into a weakness. The only hope for cats and dogs is when we, as humans, can regard them with the same detachment as we regard rats and cockroaches.

P.S. I forgot to reply to this:

I argue ‘there are already so many dogs languishing in shelters which people should take responsibility for if they want a dog in their life’, then I’m taken more seriously because I’m already taking responsibility for a dog, and not just arguing from a position of not-invested snobbish moral superiority who hasn’t put any effort into helping animals myself.

I agree, if someone **wants** a dog, then getting from a shelter is better than a breeder. Likewise, if someone **wants** a steak, getting it from a roadkill is better than a butcher.

But I am questioning the desire itself. I am saying we should foster a society where people neither desire pet dogs nor beefsteaks.

Theo: I appreciate the long responses. I created a table of authors for a kind of wiki page I wrote recently unrelated to veganism, on where various authors stand on the nature/nurture divide, whether humans have a more rigid human nature, or a more flexible human nature. Another interesting spectrum is whether people think our nature is more rigidly noble, rigidly ambiguous, more rigidly savage, or more equally flexible between all three.

I wonder how all your talk of strength, weakness and dignity could be mapped out against other pro-domestic-animal-extinctionists (of which I am one), but where extinctionists like me still desire to ideally look out for some highly sentient animals until they die of old age.

I think you do damage to the campaign to boycott animal products because you tie people’s perception of vegans and veganism to reasoning that isn’t cogent.

If a person wants a dog in their life that was stuck in a shelter because they empathize with the dog, I think that compassion should be celebrated. If an unintended side effect of a single person taking a dog from a shelter were India launching nukes at Pakistan, then for sure, we should discourage the action of taking dogs from shelters, however I haven’t seen any reason to believe there’s a huge downside to vegans taking responsibility for dogs from shelters. I do have anecdotal evidence to believe it can be good advocacy against dog breeding.

Similarly, if a dad wants to skin a roadkill deer to show his kid a bushcrafting skill of learning how to turn animal skin into moccasins he can go wild for all I care. There exists actions people can take which at first glance may feel morally dubious, but if examined closer for their hyper-specific circumstances are ethically fine in my book. For example, some of those actions that have no bearing on the goal of wanting to build a global social contract in which no one purposefully kills animals for food when they could have just acquired free or cheap vegan food. Some actions like bloodsports that don’t happen to have anything to do with boycotting animal products, still boo. Sometimes using roadkill and taking care of dogs can have positive outcomes however:

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Kurtz: Thanks for your replies too. Just to clarify, I don’t walk up to pet owners and troll them to kill their pets. Likewise, I don’t go and tell dairy farmers to kill all their cows. I am just telling people

who are thinking of getting a pet to seriously consider the moral compromise involved, which will last for decades depending on the species. The anti-pet arguments that Eisel made are novel and interesting (even if they may be offensive to pet owners) — we live in a culture where having pets is seen as a virtue.

Like I said, it is worth analysing what are the psychological motivations for wanting a cat or a dog. With respect, I think it is your attachment to your dog that leads you to perceive my argument as not cogent. Otherwise, you would not value dogs differently than sewer rats, which we do not subject to castration and lifelong captivity.

The strongest rebuttal I have encountered is from one of my pet-keeping non-vegan friends, that humans have a greater duty of care towards cats/dogs versus rats/cockroaches because humans bred the former and not the latter. Firstly, this is an insidious argument that seeks to “socialise” the guilt/wrongdoing of pet breeders and shoppers onto the wider population.

What I am advocating for is best described as “detachment”, although I can see how this can be misconstrued as “betrayal”. We cannot betray sewer rats, because we are not attached to them, nor they to us. Thus, the only way to stop the betrayal of cats/dogs is to encourage and advocate for detachment. Detachment is not betrayal — it is the opposite.

The concept of detachment can also be applied to culture. In your example, the father showing his son how to make leather shoes, I think the father also has a responsibility to explain to his son why rubber and fabrics are superior to leather, even if it is to simply point out billions of humans need shoes and there is not that much roadkill. Without this level of detachment, the moccasins become more than a shoe — they become a symbol, and the son may feel he is “betraying” his ancestors/culture by wearing non-leather shoes.

Theo: I agree that being freegan and/or being responsible for domestic animals comes with the responsibility to not leave people with the impression that breeding animals for leather or pets is good. Again my personal experience is that the novel use of roadkill or novel story of having taken responsibility for an animal from a shelter helps with advocating an animal liberation philosophy through it being a launching off point for a topic of conversation.

The negative topic of conversation that people like Eisel or Melissa create by not being cogent on freeganism or domestic animals however means that I am forced to mock them mercilessly.

Kurtz: One of the reasons why Eisel’s arguments resonate with me is because I am from a Buddhist culture, where detachment is viewed as a virtue. In this sense, vegetarianism (and by extension veganism) is associated with asceticism, which is very different to the West, where veganism is associated with sentimentality about animals.

Non-vegans assume they can have a peaceful and cordial conversation with their vegan friend about their affection for cats and dogs. I understand that it is an olive branch, so yes, I agree with you that, in such a context, there is no need to be rude or dismissive.

Theo: ‘Meat-eating pet lovers’ are particularly annoying. I keep remembering this story, so I’ll just tell it to you here.

I used to do a lot of hitchhiking and I enjoyed giving my family dogs a good life on these squatted land projects, where people grew their own food and the dogs could wander around the forest as happy as Larry.

One day when I was hitchhiking off somewhere with one of the dogs, I got picked up by two people who told me almost as soon as I got in the car that they only picked me up because they thought my dog might be cold. The dog was a mix of water-spaniel and cocker-spaniel, so it had tons of fur on it and wasn’t cold at all. So, I explained this to them, then said ‘do you guys care a lot about animal rights issues then? Do you try to eat vegan?’ And there was just a long cold silence lol. They basically just talked among themselves after that.

So, I’ve definitely been accidentally rude in the past, but yeah, maybe if I could go back and have that convo over I’d just talk about where I’d just come from, the nice life the dog had been living with me, plus hope veganism comes up later in like talking about food not bombs stuff I’d done or something.

Kurtz: Thanks for sharing that story. I agree it is easy to accidentally offend people.

It could also be the case that those two people were not offended by your question — perhaps they (for whatever reason) had such a low opinion of vegans that they thought it would be less offensive to you for them to abort the conversation rather than giving their honest appraisal of veganism.

I think it goes back to the example in your original post about how Eisel said that he would silently walk past someone struggling to reach an animal product in the supermarket. I think his calculation is that in such a situation, the other person simply wants the animal product, not a discussion about veganism. Thus, engaging with him would be counterproductive for both parties and the least offensive option is to just be silent.

Is Freeganism a Positive Form of Advocacy for Legal Animal Rights?

Debate Proposition

Theo: I'm taking the view that "using rescued animal products at food not bomb stalls has been a positive form of advocacy towards the goal of attempting to end all unjustified captivity" and Stacy took the opposition.

My Opening Statement

Theo: So the main thing I'm going to be arguing is that when discussing ethical grey areas to veganism I think it's important not to look like dogmatists, so I'm going to try and ground the discussion around using rescued animal material in the real world of food not bomb stalls.

And, we might descend into an abolitionist vs. welfarist debate, where I defend harm reduction, but I'm also going to argue that abolition can coincide with welfare reform, such that food not bomb stalls should be viewed as the revolutionary vanguard of the abolitionist movement for creating radical grassroots communities that are principled, serve the needs of people worst off and so, can rival carnist culture.

Finally, it's going to be a niche philosophy debate, but hopefully it will give people the tools to defend rescuing animal material and so, to stay open to lots of strategies for bringing about a vegan world.

My Main Arguments

Theo: Firstly it can be great animal rights advocacy in rare circumstances like so; by setting up a Food not Bombs stall in the town centre and putting up a vegan sign in front of a big pan of vegan stew and a freegan sign in front of rescued bread. The vegan sign can provoke lots of interesting conversations about the ethics of breeding and killing animals. While the freegan sign can get people talking about a further layer of if it is true that harming animals for their meat, milk and eggs was necessary to feed the population, how come so very much meat, milk and eggs ended up rotting in supermarket skips instead? Which can provoke further conversation about the evils of producing such an energy intensive product like meat to just become food waste, while people are starving around the world.

Secondly non-human animals we farm don't experience a worse quality of life worrying about whether they're going to be eaten by other humans after they're dead, humans do as a species norm.

Thirdly there exists healthy human cultures in which humans being eaten by non-human animals after they're dead is seen as a positive, for example in Tibet, having your energy transferred into that of a bird is seen as a beautiful thing or green burials where your body can more easily become nutrients

for both animals and plants. So then, healthy human cultures in which non-human animals are eaten by humans is also likely possible.

And finally, even if it'll be a better world when everyone is vegan and we're all disgusted by animal products (in the same way as if no one ever felt pressured by sexist beauty standards to shave their legs again), that doesn't mean that it's not morally permissible to consume some of those animal products at the moment i.e. it's not comparable to cannibalism where you're causing worse quality of life in other humans by normalizing it or normalizing the standard that women should have their genitals mutilated as neither the choice to shave your legs or eat thrown out animal products necessitates violating anyone's rights or causing harm to anyone.

My Opening Summary

Theo: So, to go back to the food not bombs stall example that we're debating. Here's a bunch of topics that come up on a lot of food not bombs stalls which make it a positive form of animal rights advocacy:

We cooked vegan soup, so no profits needed to go to an industry which breeds and kills animals.

Here's some freegan bread with milk powder in it which was rescued, so no harm to animals and it's carbon negative.

Isn't it amazing they kept those cows captive and milked them only for it to go in the trash. So that's one sign farming animals isn't necessary to feed the population, if so very much meat, milk and eggs end up rotting in supermarket skips instead.

Isn't it sad that politicians subsidize such an energy intensive product like meat to just become food waste, while people are starving around the world.

Choice of terms

Stacy: So, firstly I have a problem with the term freegan and that would be because it so closely relates itself to the word vegan and I don't think they have anything to do with each other. There's other words for example like frugivore, why does it have to be freegan? Because if you say that to somebody it sounds like it's similar to veganism in that if it's free, it's okay, and still vegan. And I would say in most situations it wouldn't be. Veganism is a moral philosophy.

Theo: I actually think it's really positive to promote freeganism as a term for helping explain veganism because if we go by the colloquial definition of veganism meaning 'an animal products boycott', it does include freeganism. And it gets back to the historically accurate reason for why the vegan society came about. It would also have broader appeal for other liberation causes like anti-racism and anti-sexism to see it as a strategy of action which is useful for their struggles also.

What is the Effectiveness of Advocating Animal Rights at Food Not Bombs Stalls

Stacy: I've worked next to food not bombs people, I've worked at feeding the homeless and I happen to know that the majority of people that come there are indeed homeless, but there are some people that just come there because it's free food. And some of those people, if not most, don't really care what it is, so having these moral discussions with them, I'm not really sure how far you're going to get with that.

Theo: Well, I would just counter that if done well, it can be a real community building exercise. You can get people joining learning to cook and put time into rescuing all this amazing food. People

have time to read political material you put out while they're eating their food. And I just have had lots of great conversations and made positive connections.

By showing slaughterhouse footage, we're making people sad, even though we wish we didn't have to. So, by doing food not bombs stalls as well, it's this really important counter balance of showing the positive side to what you can gain from this community.

Treating animals as a commodity

Stacy: You say 'look at all this waste, why did they breed these animals for it to go to waste?' I think you're only going to reinforce the idea in their head of how they need to be feeding animals to humans. 'It's not going to waste', as you said, 'if you are feeding it to humans, it's okay.'

Theo: Well, that's an environmental point, but I think it does tie in positively to both human and animal rights, in that I'm talking about the evils of producing such an energy intensive product like meat to just become food waste, while people are starving around the world and while wildlife habitat like the rainforest is getting torn down to produce these products, when we could just eat plants for less land use, so, protect and rewild habitat for more animals to be able to express their capabilities in.

So, yeah I just disagree with the idea that trying to get people to believe 'it's always wrong to feed animals to humans' will help us get to a vegan world faster.

You have to explain why you think it would be against ours or animals' best interests.

Cannibalism comparison

Stacy: Vegan footsoldier made this analogy comparing freeganism to cannibalism about how these cannibals were killing these children and eating them. And some human rights activists caught up with them, but when they didn't get to one of the children quickly enough and the child died from their injuries he went home with his leg and ate this child's leg so they wouldn't go to waste.

And then you came back with an analogy that had to do with human rights activists and female genital mutilation, I'm not really sure if I followed because they didn't leave with a body part at the end, so I would think that would make more sense for a freegan analogy.

Theo: Yeah Footsoldier made the same point, about how he thought the story should end with the human rights activists performing genital mutilation on their own child to be a fair comparison.

But, if I had ended the story like that it would have just been the same story almost word for word with the same effect of implicitly shaming people for actions which could mistakenly be attributed to furthering a harmful culture. So, for his story analogy, carnism/speciesism & freeganism, but in mine sexism & girls pressured into shaving their legs.

With the video I made I wanted to make explicit that you can have all the same intense disgust reactions to an evil action done without people's consent like killing children to eat them, and similarly with genital mutilation. But that the comparison to eating rescued human meat doesn't follow for all rescued animal products because you can have healthy human cultures rescuing animal products in which no one is suffering a worse quality of life worrying about their interests being disrespected after their death. In the same way as you can have people choosing to shave their legs without harming anyone regardless of if there exists a harmful patriarchal culture which pressures some people to do it, like with forced genital mutilation.

So you can imagine that the parents getting FGM performed on their daughter is one trajectory the parents could have gone down if you like, but my story diverges into a tale about how instead they simply had to deal with their daughter asking to be able to shave thier legs, and how it's different in the same degree to genital mutilation as freeganism is to cannibalism.

Stacy: Well, I think the way a culture of cannibalism differs from freeganism is because eating animal products is still the norm, and I think in all these instances it is a decision by a human being whether it be upon another human being or another animal it's still humans making these decisions,

it's never the other animal making this decision in any of those cases and therefore I think this is a human-centric view.

Theo: Right, but the sexist culture of women being emotionally pressured into shaving their legs is also the norm and yet women can still choose to do it for reasons that don't have to do with being emotionally pressured into it. So, in that way being a freegan in a carnist culture is more similar to choosing to shave your legs in a sexist culture, than it is to cannibalism.

And again there is no mental capability for animals to make a choice about how they would desire other humans or other animals treat them after they're dead, so there can be no issue of fairness or justice either way. Animals do make the decision to eat human flesh. And we even encourage it in Tibetan culture. So, that's a sign that we're not necessarily promoting a culture of devaluing animals by eating animal material when there exists cultures valorising animals eating us. We are when we kill them because there is a clear going against their interests, but there are no interests to go against in the case of what they would desire other people or animals do with them after they're dead.

Do animals worry about events past their death?

Stacy: You made a point about how you think 'animals aren't worrying about events past their death, they aren't suffering a worse quality of life imagining they'll be eaten by humans after they're dead'. Well, actually I think that non-human animals do worry about being killed all the time, they have an instinct to fear being preyed upon and far more so than humans do.

Also, we don't worry about humans eating us after our death, I know I don't sit around worrying about my death or what's going to happen to my body after I die, so would that be reasonable grounds for somebody to kill me?

Theo: So, definitely animals worry about being killed, for instance, if you were cutting into a deer corpse and eating the raw meat in front of another deer, then I'm sure it would provoke a fear response in the deer.

I'm not talking about it being ok to unjustifiably kill or keep animals captive and I'm not arguing that every single situation involving eating rescued animal material is ethical, the same way you can be buying plant material and still be doing something unethical in specific situations.

The reason for me to never eat human meat is because someone in the world could experience anguish on a long-term basis worrying that would happen to them after they're dead, even if it's irrational. For instance, say a friend had to have their arm amputated and I asked for the severed arm to cook it up because I thought it was a funny thing. If I did that in a hypothetical vacuum I think that would be fine, but I wouldn't do that because I understand that we live in social contracts and other humans could experience anguish that I would treat a human like that and then worry what might happen to them.

I don't think animals are experiencing worry on that level, they worry that they're going to be killed, they might experience fear if somebody was eating another animal right in front of them, but I don't think they're experiencing this worse quality of life worrying about what's going to happen after the dead.

Even if it's just one person in 7 billion. It would be against my interest to possibly cause that one person harm, but the fact that it just can't happen in animals means that it's not an ethical issue for me, as long as I'm it's virtuous in that it's carbon negative, like less land needs to be taken up for growing edible material, and if I'm accounting for all these externalities like being strong willed enough not to fall down a slippery slope of habits.

Stacy: Again, I just think probably animals are more concerned about what happens to their body than humans, just from the way that we treat our own bodies, you know we smoke cigarettes, do drugs, we do all these extreme sports that can cause bodily injury, we live like there's no tomorrow, especially when we're young.

These animals live in constant fear for their safety, especially the animals that are preyed upon and it's instinctual for them. I think we can't possibly know what they are thinking, so to assume that it's okay to use their bodies after they die, I don't really think that's an argument because like I said I don't care what happens in my body after I die but I can make that decision I have that autonomy and I don't think it's fair for us to make that decision for them.

Theo: Ok, so there's a scientific experiment called 'the false belief test' where they've discovered only recently that great apes can have theory of mind, in that they can anticipate complex thoughts another animal is having in rare circumstances.

They originally did this test on toddlers to see what age we start to individuate. It's hard to explain in text, so I'll just link a short 2 minute video on the experiment:

Anyway, this is only something that chimpanzees can do and a few other great apes, it's called theory of mind. Where you understand what other people's intentions will be other than your own & they're only thinking about this in rare circumstances. And we aren't relying on theory of mind for most of our physical interactions throughout the day, so it is this rare development. We do much more predicting what other people are going to do based on stereotypes of patterns we've observed or what we would do when presented with similar situations.

So, all this is to say that we plan for after our death, we have gravestones and we do all these things because we know how we want to be remembered, we're planning for our legacy and how we want to be respected and how we want to plan for that to happen, but animals just aren't doing this on that level.

They fear for how they might die, so we're definitely right to be vegan and not unjustified kill animals and not unjustifiably keep them captive which hurts their well-being, but we just don't need be concerned about their non-interests, unless we're talking about our own interests, and whether it's for our own dignity whether it's self-harm for us.

We don't need to be worried about something which animals are literally incapable of doing in terms of worrying about other people's intentions after they're dead.

So that's what I think the science says.

More ethical uses for the rescued animal material

Stacy: Why not feed rescued animal material to wildlife or stray animals that have no moral agency? Or put it on the compost?

Theo: That is one option, but what about having moral agency should stop us from eating rescued animal material, why is it morally wrong?

Also for some items like bread which you might eat anyway, you're getting more pleasure out of the material specifically designed for humans, than an animal would. And you'd be saving the environment more by putting that energy to good use in consuming it yourself and using a compost loo, than just putting it straight on the compost.

Slippery Slope

Stacy: I had a goddaughter who used to dumpster dive and eat roadkill with her boyfriend. They both considered themselves vegans and I said it was a slippery slope, it was going to lead them back to thinking it's okay to eat flesh and sure enough the next thing you know they're eating from fast food restaurants. So, I think it's the same with food not bombs stalls.

Theo: So, yeah definitely in the psychology of habits that can happen, but it can also go the other way, for instance, if someone is really into cheese because cheese has monosodium glutamate crystals, which is like opium, so if someone wanted to become vegan, and they have no aversion to eating rescued cheese, then it could be a helping hand in encouraging them to stay strong in their decision to go vegan, by just slowly tapering it off. I know I was completely stripped of the value of baked goods, like croissants and doughnuts when they existed as this mountain in the kitchen of a squat I lived in.

Knowing it was this sugar crash I could have whenever I wanted, I stopped seeing it as such a hot option. Like some people on diets have a set time where they can eat one treat a day that they can look forward to, whereas before they would eat sweets whenever they wanted.

Stacy: But, what if you go from thinking it's okay to eat it from a food not bomb stall to eating some birthday cake at friends' party because otherwise it might get thrown in the bin, I mean when does it stop? I wouldn't because it's a moral philosophy I've got to stick with.

Theo: But, what is the principle behind the reason never to eat animal products, just that it's a slippery slope?

The principle argument for why I'm an animal rights advocate is if the wonder that we experience in viewing wild animals is not 'how similar to us they are', but their 'real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value' and one sufficient reason we grant this freedom at least to a basic extent to humans is they have a desire to achieve what they find valuable then; the fact non-human animals experience this desire too means we ought extend these freedoms to animals.

So, a holistic world-view of not wanting to reduce both the quality and quantity of positive experiences humans can have with animals, as well as animals with other animals for low-order pleasures such as taste/texture.

So, just because I might use rescued animal products as a form of advocacy for animal rights, doesn't mean I can't also get my friends to respect the principle reason I'm an animal rights advocate by not buying more cake on the pretense that I'll not want to see it wasted. The same way just because I showed an interest in horses, I would still be capable of making sure to let my friends know not to book any horse riding holidays, and even if they did like with the birthday cake, it's just a rare situation of friends getting confused and an opportunity to help them get a deeper understanding where they didn't have one before.

Devaluing the homeless by offering them less valuable options

Stacy: You're kind of treating homeless people as scavengers, like they'll take what they can get and perhaps that is true, but is it really fair to put them in that situation? I've actually met some homeless people that did not like the fact that they couldn't choose to be vegan, so I think that does hurt human dignity in that sense to not just give them the vegan food.

Theo: Well, I see the meaning behind veganism is that it's an animal products boycott. I think people can go further in being animal rights advocates. But, so I wouldn't be able to relate to why a homeless person desired not to even eat, for instance, rescued bread with whey in it. So, it would be like meeting a homeless Hare Krishna who didn't want to eat garlic or onions. If it's that rare, and I would feel comfortable eating it myself, I wouldn't feel the need to cook food with those rare people in mind. Even if that trace amount of whey was unhealthy for me, it would be to the same extent I'd desire to eat dark chocolate.

Stacy: But, hospitals are not looking to get you better, because they want to keep you as a customer. People get stuck in these systems of being ill all the time, keep going to the hospital, then they owe everything that they earn to hospitals and pharmacies and it keeps them poor and that cycle gets pushed on to the next generation and over and over again. Now, if we're pushing unhealthy animal products onto homeless people is that fair?

Theo: But, it's just such a minute amount in that bread, it's a binding agent.

Stacy: But, where's the line we draw? It's a minute amount in that bread, but what if you found a quiche, you're gonna tell me it's okay to throw away a quiche, but it's not okay to throw away the bread?

Theo: The line is it would be against my interests to eat that quiche because it's unhealthy, so I wouldn't offer it to other people. The same way there's one line with plant products, in that I encourage people to boycott animal products because it's one easy way people can avoid profiting an evil industry,

but there will be 1000s of other lines it would be good to draw also around plant foods like an Israeli boycott and just avoiding luxury foods, so that you can spend your money better elsewhere.

And it's one way of helping the environment by being carbon negative and freeing up more land for wildlife habitat.

Grey areas and not coming off as dogmatic

Theo: I think it's really important to be open about grey areas where we have exceptions to the rule. Like I know people who have gone out to Syria to fight ISIS and this is a really extreme grey area where they're vegan and they tried not to eat any animal material out there and they wanted to go out there to help fight ISIS and free people and from that tyranny, to save people from being harmed in that way and they've had to resort to eating animal material because the militia hasn't rationed enough plant products, so they've had to eat like spam out of a tin.

So, that was a way of achieving more well-being in the world by fighting other other liberation causes in this extreme situations, so I think it's good to acknowledge these things.

Stacy: Well, I don't blame the people in the andes that were in the plane crash for eating people that died.

But, when we take something that came from someone who was murdered, I think that that's wrong, if we are able to make another choice, I think that it's the wrong choice to take a product of murder.

Theo: What about roadkill then? Would it be ethically wrong to do that?

Stacy: If you don't have to you shouldn't. If you were stranded and there's nothing around, I wouldn't be mad at you for eating roadkill.

Theo: But, so whether the animal was killed unjustifiably isn't relevant then.

I just think it's important to admit grey areas, as it helps show what ideal situation we're working towards.

I think people come off looking insane when they bite the bullet on some grey areas like for instance when some vegans say they would rather accept a 30-year lifespan if the vegan diet was really harmful to them.

Stacy: I say that and I would stick by that, but that's for me, I'm not saying that I would judge somebody else if they were in a survival situation.

Theo: But, if you want to be the change you want to see in the world, and people are looking to you to understand where is that intuition coming from, why is that a desirable thing for you to take that stance?

Stacy: It's my own moral choice for myself, it would be a spiritual choice I guess.

Theo: Okay, well I mean the way I advocate that people become animal rights advocates, is that they can join this community and political movement which seeks to gain collective legal rights for animals to have a refuge in dense wildlife habitat where they aren't subject to human cruelty. But, I'm fine with my definition being softer on for example subsistence hunters. I've got a video on my channel of Penan tribes people in Indonesia explaining how it would be repulsive to them to keep animals in captivity to farm, and I think this is great animal rights advocacy.

So, I just think we should be working towards this world where we're able to preserve and rewild more habitat for wild animals to express their capabilities in and live full lives. And it's good that we're moving towards a situation where we can design diets and live really healthy lives with less land use, but the reason hunting would be against my interests is it would be a form of self-harm for me to kill an animal when I know that I can eat plant foods, but if veganism only gave me a 30-year lifespan, that would be more self-harm to me to not hunt animals, so long as they're living long life in the wild. So, I just don't see how this intuition is compatible with the ideal vision that it's useful to advocate other people invest in.

Stacy: Actually, I'm more of a misanthrope, so I would say just get rid of the humans.

Theo: Well, yeah that's all I'd say, when you're taking these stances against rescued animal products and being willing to die at 30 if the vegan diet was that harmful, I just don't think that's appealing to people in terms of advocating veganism and animal rights, so that's why these grey areas are important I think.

Stacy: That's because humans have human interests or self-interests.

Theo: But, I don't think that's a bad thing.

Stacy: My philosophy is more altruistic in that I'd rather the human race die out and let the animals live their lives.

Theo: But, we could ideally be good caretakers, like rescuing and releasing wildlife who were injured. So, we can play this really positive role in the world for our own self-interest and for other animals' interests by staying alive and working towards this vision of looking after ourselves and also providing wildlife habitat for animals, which can include using rescued animal material in our animal rights advocacy. Anyway, I'll end it there.

Appendix #1 – The Animal citizens Critique of Freeganism

I found this cool paper critiquing freeganism after the discussion called The freegan challenge to veganism.

My response would be I understand the basic intuition that you wouldn't like to be gaining sustenance or pleasure from a domesticated animals remains where you would have liked to consider that animal a kind of citizen of your community who you would like to give funerary rights to. But, I think it's more respectful to think of them like their wild ancestors, where it would be normal for other animals to eat them after they're dead.

Any legal rights we fight to afford domesticated animals should be shaped by a long-term vision of letting them go extinct in habitat where they can best express their capabilities, choose their social relationships and are protected from predators because we were the cause of their hereditary deformities that make them more vulnerable to predators.

To this end, if a person desired to eat rescued non-human animal flesh and it was healthy for them to do so, then it would be a positive character virtue on their part to do so because if it had gotten eaten by less intelligent animals like maggots which can survive on any food like rotting vegetables or even just composted, then:

1. It would be much less dignity than you could show the animal by putting that energy to use in the value of the happy flourishing you could achieve yourself and in how you would be setting an example for others. And...
2. It would be treating the animals' final remains more similar to the way the animals' wild ancestors would have been treated after death. So, with more dignity than the way we bred infantile traits into them and with more dignity than the toxic relationship we would be perpetuating by anthropomorphically infantilising them as infant humans who could have grown up to be people who could suffer a worse quality of life worrying about how other people might intend to treat their body after their death.

Appendix #2 – Formal Arguments

Here's my formulation of an anti-freegan argument which is IMO unsound:

A1) Kant's Indirect Principle Against Advocating For Freeganism

P1) If I accept Kant's axioms then I accept the indirect principle established in the groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals

P2) If I accept the indirect principle established in the groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals then I would agree that treating non human animals without dignity would harm myself

P3) If I accept the indirect principle established in the groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals then I have a moral duty to not harm myself

P4) If I agree that treating non human animals without dignity would harm myself and that I have a moral duty to not harm myself then I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity

P5) If I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity then I should reject consuming animal products (as it is the antithesis of treating animals with dignity)

P6) If I should reject consuming animal products then I shouldn't promote freeganism (as to do so would constitute promoting self-harm)

P7) I accept Kant's axioms

C) Therefore I should be against freeganism

—

Through most virtue ethics & consequentialist frameworks it's easy to come to the conclusion that the ethical issue with eating animal bodies is when you fund the industry which breeds and kills these animals, cutting short their interests to express their capabilities to their full in the wild. And that if non-human animals aren't experiencing worse quality of life worrying about whether they're going to be eaten by other humans after they're dead, then there's no ethical issue to freeganism.

Through some deontological frameworks however, you might think you should reject consuming all animal products on principle as you feel it is the antithesis of treating animals with dignity.

So the arguments I'd suggest you use on such a person is firstly you could use a simple comparison to argue the way the person is applying dignity is a category error, like I do in the story analogy by saying:

It probably will be a better world when everyone is vegan and we're all disgusted by thrown out animal products. And it would be great if no one ever felt pressured by sexist beauty standards to shave their legs again!

But at the end of the day, it's not like cannibalism, where you'd be causing worse quality of life in other humans by foretelling a gruesome ending. And the same goes for normalizing the standard that women should have their genitals mutilated. Both ideas are barbaric, and rightly rejected.

Neither the choice to shave your legs or eat thrown out animal products necessitates violating anyone's rights, so I don't really see why people ought not to do it.

And in formal logic terms:

A2) Rejecting the utility of culturally specific disgust reactions

P1) Non-human animals don't experience a worse quality of life worrying about whether they're going to be eaten by other humans after they're dead, humans do.

P2) IF there exists healthy human cultures in which humans being eaten by non-human animals after they're dead is seen as a positive (for example in Tibet, having your energy transferred into that of a bird is seen as a beautiful thing or green burials where your body can more easily become nutrients for both animals and plants) THEN healthy human cultures in which non-human animals are eaten by humans is also likely possible

P3) There exists healthy human cultures in which humans being eaten by non-human animals after they're dead is seen as a positive

P4) If non-human animals don't experience a worse quality of life worrying about whether they're going to be eaten by other humans after they're dead, humans do AND healthy human cultures in which non-human animals are eaten by humans is likely possible THEN even if it'll be a better world when everyone is vegan and we're all disgusted by animal products (in the same way as if no one ever felt pressured by sexist beauty standards to shave their legs again), that doesn't mean that it's not morally permissible to consume some of those animal products at the moment (i.e. it's not comparable to cannibalism where you're causing worse quality of life in other humans by normalizing it or normalizing the standard that women should have their genitals mutilated as neither the choice to shave your legs or eat thrown out animal products necessitates violating anyone's rights)

P5) IF (even if it'll be a better world when everyone is vegan and we're all disgusted by animals products, that doesn't mean that it's not morally permissible to consume some of those animal products at the moment) THEN (IF I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity THEN I should not reject consuming animal products [as it is not the antithesis of treating animals with dignity])

P6) I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity

C) I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity, and I should not reject consuming animal products (as it is not the antithesis of treating animals with dignity)

—
Or secondly without even challenging their gut disgust reaction to thinking it would be treating the animal without dignity you could try something close to a consequentialist argument:

A3) Refutation of P5 of A1 using Tom Regan's worse-off principle

P1) If I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity then I should promote freeganism on rare occasions where it's an effective advocacy tool at encouraging people to stop buying animal products because the principle that I should avoid very minor self-harm in the disgust it brings to mind when advocating shouldn't override the principle that it's immoral to pass up easy opportunities to encourage people to stop buying animal products (which leads to the breeding and killing of animals) because I wouldn't want to live in a world in which everyone passed up on those opportunities, so I should act according to that maxim by which I can at the same time will that it should become a universal law

P2) I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity

P3) P1 entails if I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity then I should not reject consuming animal products (as it is not the antithesis of treating animals with dignity)

C) I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity, and I should not reject consuming animal products (as it is not the antithesis of treating animals with dignity)

—
Or thirdly you could try challenging the necessity of the disgust reaction:

A4) Kant's Indirect Principle For Advocating For Freeganism

P1) If I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity THEN I should promote freeganism on rare occasions where it's an effective advocacy tool at encouraging people to stop buying animal products because although killing an animal isn't treating the animal with dignity, eating an animal to prevent waste is, because you're eating food that would otherwise have been thrown out, so less food needs to be produced, causing less harm to the environment AND if it had gone to the landfill it might have gotten eaten by maggots which can survive on any food like rotting vegetables, but it would be much less dignity than you could show the animal by putting that energy to use in achieving happy flourishing yourself and setting an example for others.

P2) I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity

P3) P1 entails if I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity then I should not reject consuming animal products (as it is not the antithesis of treating animals with dignity)

C) I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity, and I should not reject consuming animal products (as it is not the antithesis of treating animals with dignity)

—
Or finally you could try nudging them away from deontology with a kind of virtue ethics argument a la W.D. Ross:

A5) Refutation of P5 of A1 using W.D.Ross's principle of prima facie duties

P1) If I accept W.D.Ross's theory of prima facie duties THEN I accept any felt obligation is a prima facie duty, though it can be overridden depending on the circumstances by another one, that doesn't mean that the original obligation disappears, it simply means that it's defeasible and it usually continues to operate in the background.

P2) If I accept any felt obligation is a prima facie duty, though it can be overridden depending on the circumstances by another one, that doesn't mean that the original obligation disappears, it simply

means that it's defeasible and it usually continues to operate in the background THEN I accept when I have a felt obligation that talking positively about the consumption of animal products is disgusting and would be an act of self-harm to myself AND I learn about people using freeganism as an effective advocacy tool in turning people vegan who wouldn't otherwise have considered it, such that I now feel a stronger felt obligation to do the same that the duty to do the latter is overriding, but I'm going to work extra hard to advocate for veganism such that I can know I've contributed to a future world in which no one needs to talk about the positive effects of consuming animal products, because the initial obligation still operates in the background even though it was overridden.

P3) I accept W.D.Ross's theory of prima facie duties

P4) P2 entails if I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity then I should not reject consuming animal products (as it is not the antithesis of treating animals with dignity)

P5) I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity

C) I should live in a way which treats animals with dignity, and I should not reject consuming animal products (as it is not the antithesis of treating animals with dignity)

References

Re; 'Freeganism Is Evil' – A Pro-Freegan Story Analogy

The idea for the analogy came from this great video called Thoughts On Freeganism by Catherine Klein:

"I understand that shaving my legs and my armpits and everything is a sexist double standard, why are women expected to be completely hairless in order to be seen as attractive? It doesn't make sense and I think it's totally badass when women break this norm and go all natural. It does make me question my choices like I probably should be like fuck the patriarchy and stop shaving, just like I probably should be horrified by my leather boots and throw them out because one could argue that shaving your legs is an example of internalized oppression, but at the end of the day, neither of my choices here are causing direct harm to anyone, so I don't really see changing my ways as a moral necessity."

Freeganism article

Freeganism video catalogue

Vegan debates with some anti-vegans

A loaded question assuming the risk of changing diet

Scuds: People don't know if they will get sick eating only plants, until they get sick, so why should we have to make ourselves sick rather than just not restricting ourselves from beneficial sources of food?

Theo: To be a fair question without any loaded assumptions this should read:

'When considering the options of staying on the same diet or changing to a vegan diet, people don't know which one will lead to worse health consequences until after they get sick. So why would a person restrict themselves from beneficial sources of nutrition they usually use, and instead experiment with often a wider diversity of beneficial sources of nutrition than they otherwise would have when we're not sure which one entails more overall risk of becoming sick?'

And my answer is simply because a person can remain agnostic about which option entails more risk overall and still desire to go vegan for other reasons like compassion for the animals.

Scuds: It's common sense that going vegan will lead to worse health consequences. Would you stay agnostic about putting your hand in the fire because there's no scientific consensus on it causing pain?

Theo: For every common-sense opinion that coincides with a correct material reality, there is a scientific basis, like extreme heat causing burns and pain. No correct common sense reality exists or scientific consensus on the overall risk of changing diet.

I disagree that there's some clear line in the sand where, for instance, not eating one food you usually eat has no negative health consequences, but not eating all the animal products you usually eat and eating new foods you don't usually eat entails more risk.

Arguing against a gray area ethical position as if it's the core ethical principle

Theo: My core ethical principle is this; breeding animals into captivity to kill and eat them before they've even reached half the average lifespan their common wild ancestor species would have had is against my preferences, along with the burden on land use that could have been freed up for wildlife habitat and their lack of ability to express their capabilities as their common ancestor species have in the wild.

Scuds: IF you can't give me a reason as to why guide dogs are fine, but breeding backyard chickens to eat their eggs isn't, THEN you can't give me a reason as to why we should stop farming animals.

Theo: That's dumb, you're essentially saying; IF you can't give me a reason as to why X morally grey area action (which only weakly relates to the ethical principle) is ok, but Y morally grey area action isn't, THEN you can't give me a reason as to why we should stop doing Z morally black and white action (which strongly relates to the ethical principle).

Here's a logical comparison to reveal the absurdity of the argument:

Ethical principle: Purposefully disregarding a persons consent when engaging in sexual contact is unethical.

Counter argument: IF you can't give me a reason as to why flicking women in the arm jokingly is ok (which only weakly relates to the ethical principle) is ok, but accidentally flicking them in the arm

too much isn't ok, THEN you can't give me a reason as to why people shouldn't rape women (which strongly relates to the ethical principle).

Incorrectly claiming an argument is invalid

You accept this is the logical conclusion of your defense of buying meat, correct?

"Human farming is ethical"

Sure, I Accept that

So, you know that most of the world would find your defense insane, correct?

Yep

So, you know that as vegans we don't need to be concerned with your defense for buying meat then?

I cannot argue with that

So, vegans have given you a reductio ad absurdum argument and we're not concerned with your defense!

Not an argument

Assassin: Do you have a reason why I should restrict myself from objectively beneficial sources and our biological diet?

Theo: The likelihood that we can absorb all our nutrients from non-animal sources and be healthy whilst pursuing the character virtue of being compassionate to sentient beings where we don't need to kill them, cutting short their desires.

Would you prefer not to kill a human for food if you could easily access and eat plant food?

Would you prefer not to kill a non-human animal for food if you could easily access and eat plant food?

If you answered that you're not ok with killing humans for food and you are ok with killing non-human animals for food, what trait is true of the animal that would let you feel justified in killing animals? And, if that became true of humans, would you then feel justified in killing humans if you could easily eat and had access to plant food in either scenario?

Assassin: Ridiculous hypothetical but I'd try human

Theo: Cool so you were presented an argument and had the formal validity explained to you earlier and you were proved absurd in relationship to most peoples preferences. I'll move on to the majority of people who don't have batshit insane preferences like you where you don't even care about human rights because you're not convincing anyone to follow your preferences. And just seek to lock you up if you ever farm humans.

Assassin: Not an argument.

Theo: Here's a comparison to how a similar dialogue tree could play out in different circumstances:

Psychopath: Hypothetically do you have a reason why I should restrict myself from sources of fun — which myself and a number of other psychopaths are biologically predisposed to enjoy objectively — by killing homeless people and getting away with it scot free?

You can compare it to elements of killing productive people, but I'll just bite the bullet on that absurdity too.

Assassin: I don't care.

Psychopath: Cool, not an argument.

Reasonable person: If your objectively biological psychopathy is a disability which has hindered your developmental psychology, then you're missing out on meaningful happiness you could be persuing, please talk to a councilor.

Psychopath: Not an argument.

Reasonable person: That was objectively an if-then logical argument, to the extent I have concerns you will actually hurt people I will try to get you locked up, but I'll move onto helping more reasonable people now.

Theo: The comparison is obvious, a violent psychopath could claim not to have been given an argument because they remain unconvinced why they shouldn't be a violent psychopath, it doesn't make them right, and repeatedly pretending they haven't been given an argument is just dumb.

So when you claim you haven't heard a good answer that convinces you it's completely meaningless, as a psychopath could also not hear a good answer that convinces them. With some tiny minority of people, it's fine to not care about their beliefs.

Assassin: Do you know it's a small number of people that would try human farmed meat for sure?

Theo: Laughable that I even have to explain to you that people have expressed a preference to move past the kind of chattel slavery that would be necessary for human farming, but yes, the social science history of societies fighting to exercise their preferences to first be free of chattel slavery, then feudal serfdom.

Blinkers: Appeal to history.

Theo: Encase you're not joking, yes historical case studies are useful, they're reflections on people's present values, how we've arrived here, and the likelihood people will desire to repeat the mistakes of history.

Vegans should focus on harm reduction otherwise they're complicit in harm

Forrest: Why do you not provide me with animal crop death purchase details?

I wish to be superior to you by eating some of the animals that are killed in crop deaths.

You refuse to give me contact details so you are a bystander to my diet.

Theo: Why do you not provide me with animal crop purchase details?

I wish to be superior to you by eating some of the perfectly edible and nutritious crops fed to animals that are the nearest to me, to reduce my land use and carbon footprint

You refuse to give me contact details to buy locally so you are a bystander to my diet.

The farmland around me is all just sheep fields and turnips for said sheep.

Your question is flawed because it wouldn't make you superior trying to reduce deaths at any age, I just advocate boycotting animal products at the point of distribution because I don't like domesticated animals being bred into captivity to be killed at a very young age by humans who could be doing something more meaningful with their lives.

Once we have enough people no longer desiring to support the breeding into captivity of animals just to end the desires of animals for taste/texture pleasure reasons, then we can get to see farmers taking extreme measures to reduce crop deaths and potentially form a boycott campaign around products without a symbol on the product saying they reduce crop deaths:

Anti-vegan identification of the main problem with our food production: Pesticide use, large monocrops & factory farming

Solution: Eat local free range.

Vegan identification of the main problem with our food production today: Domesticated animals being bred into captivity to be killed at a very young age by humans who could be doing something more meaningful with their lives.

Solution: Boycott animal products, so eating a diet that requires less land use, so maximizing the number of animals that get to seek fulfillment in wild habitat.

Vegan identification of the main problem in the future: Farmers shooting wild boar and killing baby birds in field nests with the harvester.

Solution: Subsidize and mandate some combination of these remedies and more to reduce the amount of crop deaths; 7 ft. high electric fences, moats, earth walls, thick hedges and artificial predator poo smell. And mandate tranquilizing, not shooting large mammals that are a pest problem.

Vegan identification of the main problem really far in the future: Pesticide use & large monocrops.

Solution: Eat local and ethically sourced as many low-impact vegans already do which you can find out through joining almost any food not bombs chapter or veg box scheme and noticing the high number of vegans.

Forrest: I do not see contact detail @Theo. I wish to receive contact detail for vegan murder business.

Theo: I don't see animal crop purchase details. I wish to ride on the coat tails of the on average bad animal agriculture industry as if I'm making an interesting point.

Forrest: No. I wish to purchase vegan animal murder.

Theo: No. I wish to purchase animal crops.

Forrest: What?

Theo: I wish to purchase animal crops that are fed to animal locally so that I can reduce my carbon footprint and be superior to the average meat eater, so that I can imagine I'm making an interesting point.

Forrest: OK. You ask farmer for this and purchase low grade crop. I still wish to purchase vegan animal murder.

Theo: I don't see contact details.

Forrest: What is your zip code. I will find you local farm.

Theo: HS1 2AA

Forrest: I will make Google search.

Theo: Much appreciated, it's a very interesting point I'm making, I appreciate you following through.

[10 minutes later after serious googling on Forrest's part]

The real point is I care that people boycott animal products, if you purchase meat you're not boycotting the sale of animal products, you're treating animal deaths as a commodity which you can put a price on to profit from, which is a character vice.

I'd be happy to help hook you up with forums of people who go out dumpster diving and cook up roadkill deer.

I don't desire to help you commit a character vice just because it's less bad than the meat you currently buy, you can go vegan and then not be treating animals as commodities and even grow all your own food in a greenhouse to be really ethical.

Skye: Unless it's prepared for them and sold from a proper shop that has ways of checking meat isn't tainted, people won't care for it

Theo: The main purpose of advocating people go vegan is just to find people willing to live by solid principles who will be motivated to campaign to make things like fur farms illegal, so I don't see the merit in spending my time advocating people do something which is just less harmful.

Hypothetically if I asked you; can you tell me your address so I can come punch you in the face, if you don't I'll just try to kill you, do you think I've done a good thing by asking you for help, or do you think a good thing would just be not punching or killing you?

My preference would be no one sells the bodies of animals, human or non-human, why would I go out of my way to help you promote a social norm I don't like?

Forrest: Then you are complicit with my factory farming purchases.

Theo: Then you are complicit with me hypothetically killing you rather than just punching you.

I advocate the best solutions, and take less good remedies as a runner up prize.

Morality is just survival

Ranjul: Morality is made by humans for survival.

Theo: The average person holds preferences to uphold complex duties to each other and be a certain caliber of person with character virtues that have gone way past just being good to each other for our own survival. But either way it's irrelevant, how good a person you are is precisely what you'd do when no one is looking, so hypothetically if you could hurt another person and get away with it, as in it wouldn't impact on your survival at all, and you would, I would still judge you as being an awful person.

Here are five examples of ways someone could adopt the principle that got them to take on the action of boycotting animal products and what branch of philosophy it may be related to:

Hedonistic Utilitarianism: The principle of not breeding sentient life into the world where you know you will cause more suffering on a global calculus than happiness. Examples: climate change, stress and pain in slaughterhouse than longer happy life in wild with low rates of predation, stress to slaughterhouse workers who are more likely to abuse their family).

Preference Consequentialism: The principle of not breeding sentient life into the world to kill when you know they will have interests to go on living longer than would be profitable. Examples: They have habits for things they'd like to do each day and they show you by their desire not to be loaded onto scary trucks and to a slaughterhouse with screams and smells of death.

Virtue Ethics: The principle of not breeding a sentient life into captivity when you know you could leave room for other animals to enjoy happy flourishing being able to express all their capabilities in wild habitat. Not wanting to parasitically take away life with meaning for low-order pleasure in our hierarchy of needs which we can find elsewhere.

Deontology: The principle of everyone should only act in such a way that it would still be acceptable to them if it were to become universal law. So not breeding sentient life into existence, only to keep them confined, tear families apart and kill them later, as you wouldn't want it to happen to you.

Existential Ethics: The principle that you should be wary of in-authentically acting in a way you don't believe due to outside social pressures, like that acting un-caringly is necessary to what it means to be a man. So testing out values you were brought up with against new ones as you go and coming to the conclusion that you prefer a society where most have the value of seeing animals flourishing in nature and not in captivity/pain.

Vegan debates with some primitivists

Would you still use domesticated animals in a peaceful world?

Theo: There are obviously people who are pro & anti animal domestication on either side of the technology question, so I'm curious to get a range of opinions for how anti-tech philosophy interacts with animal rights issues.

Most vegans are against breeding domesticated animals like cows, pigs, sheep and chickens because we think we should be freeing up space for those wild animals with a close common ancestor such as bison, wild boar, mouflon and jungle fowl, which are better able to express their capabilities in the wild. That way those domesticated animals with numerous health problems like chickens who get egg bound or break their legs easily for carrying so much meat can be allowed to simply not be bred into existence anymore.

Many anti-civ people extend this critique of domestication to the way they say humans have allowed ourselves to become unthinkingly subordinate to the way of life in cities. And some even go as far as to say this process started when we began using fire.

Finally, there are many anti-tech people who see it as necessary to practice animal farming and hunting for surviving the collapse, which I don't see as likely, but I do think that that would be justified if true.

A hypothetical question I'm curious about though, to test people's principles is... if you lived in a world where everyone was vegan and there was no war, where everyone grew food forests, so even if you desired to move, you could always help someone else with their food forest, and you knew you could meet all your nutritional needs living this life, and you knew there wasn't going to be warfare, and you knew you could maintain the skills of hunting if you needed to go back to that, would you hypothetically choose not to hunt animals? Just living a life where you're communicating with them through seeing otters in the wild, but just choosing not to hunt, do you think that would be an ethical responsibility? What do you think if you knew that you could survive perfectly fine with low labor hours?

Zerzan: That sounds rather nice, yeah I wouldn't argue against it, I mean if it's conceivable and I think you know hunter-gatherer life was more gathering than hunting, but still, maybe that would be more ideal. If you're trying to learn anything from the record, it's a bit hard to imagine that in terms of our evolution, but it sounds nice, yeah.

Theo: Yeah it's a nice dream. I just often come up against people who are really invested in like eating meat because it's their culture and eating these horrible factory farmed animals, so I think it's interesting, like I use the argument of we have all these glass greenhouses now, we have thousands of vegetables we can grow all year round to eat a varied diet, but even if we went back to primitivist life and we could still meet all our nutritional needs, I think there would be some ethical responsibility there too, just to embody this more compassionate lifestyle.

Zerzan: Right, I salute your values, I think that's very worthwhile to think about.

Jorge: Veganism is unnatural and detrimental to human health. Of course a civilized child may have emotions when simply facing death, but living creatures die, and they must die for others to be fed. The vegan dogma is one of the worst aspects to develop from of civilized life, and I hope every vegan gets free of it before it does them serious bodily damage.

Our species of human is 200K years old, and you can be sure people were eating anything they could tolerate. Suddenly refusing to process foods which forever enabled human survival is not going to be

without negative consequences. Humans are genetically most alike chimps and bonobos, and neither are vegetarian. What do you imagine would be the consequences to the health of these apes if they were to be limited to a vegan diet? (This dietary restriction would have to be imposed on them because they would never fall victim to the ideology that it is wrong to kill/eat grubs, fish, insects, and small mammals.)

Veganism is unnatural and detrimental to human health. Of course a civilized child may have emotions when simply facing death, but living creatures die, and they must die for others to be fed. The vegan dogma is one of the worst aspects to develop from of civilized life, and I hope every vegan gets free of it before it does them serious bodily damage.

Theo:

Veganism is unnatural ... The vegan dogma is one of the worst aspects to develop from of civilized life

Our nature is simply that of being highly intelligent animals who can choose to struggle against our natural drives if we decide intellectually that we desire to. E.g. Biologically really liking sugar because it's not common in the wild, but deciding not to binge on it anyway, even when we have easy access to it in cities.

Humans are genetically most alike chimps and bonobos ... This dietary restriction would have to be imposed on them because they would never fall victim to the ideology that it is wrong to kill/eat grubs, fish, insects, and small mammals.

The reason I think hunting and paying for the killing of animals is a character vice for myself and many others is because I'm intelligent enough to empathize with other animals and know I can be happy and healthy eating a vegan diet. So, I don't hold the position you're tarring all vegans with, but we likely agree my position is not one other animals could ever come to, along with severely mentally disabled people and psychopaths.

detrimental to human health. ... Our species of human is 200K years old, and you can be sure people were eating anything they could tolerate. Suddenly refusing to process foods which forever enabled human survival is not going to be without negative consequences

If the only way we'd been able to achieve optimal health for 200K years was eating large quantities of soil I would still happily abandon it if I knew the trade-off was just knowing how to grow enough duck-weed year round, or brewing yeast in glass jars, just like we do beer or penicillin.

Of course a civilized child may have emotions when simply facing death,

I agree it's likely a problem for kids to fear seeing death, I'd probably take my kids out on a deer hunt if they were overpopulated and politicians in my area were continuing to drag their feet on re-introducing predators.

but living creatures die, and they must die for others to be fed

I'm with you, along with the Tibetans and Zoroastrians, I would like a sky burial were it legal, as a charitable offering to larger animals that could benefit from the meat most. However, most animals people eat today are bred to live much shorter and more dreadful lives than they would have in the wild, getting to express their wild capabilities. So, I advocate more people go vegan, so they are never bred to live these shitty lives. Also, because it takes more land to grow plants to feed to animals, to eat the animals, than just eating plants, so I'd like to free up more land for wild habitat, to increase the

net amount of wild animals on earth getting to express their capabilities. So regardless of whether your ideal is primitive food forests or solar-punk, I think advocating veganism is character virtuous.

Jorge: This reformism and vegan advocacy is seriously bogus. Removing violence from our lives is good for stabilizing and perpetuating techno-industrial civilization, but since violence is an innate part of ape life, the lack of any arena for its expression does not foster human psychological health. Instead of killing to eat, we civilized people in technological society are largely repressed from any violent action — how good can this be for us, physically and psychologically? (Again, if chimps were made to be nonviolent, what consequences would result? What would human observers think if some minority of chimps suddenly began persuading others to not eat nothing but plants and fruits, for some reason — and how would that differ from a psychosis in the animal?) Have we civilized a healthy relationship with death? I think not, and the charade of veganism’s promise to eliminate any contribution to animal deaths is not going to foster a good understanding of death & life. But vegan advocates are in luck: the TIS seems ready to impose veganism or other engineered techno-sciencey manufactured diet (perhaps crickets) upon humanity, for as long as humans are allowed and tolerated.

You think and hope you will be healthy eating a vegan diet, but you may simply be beginning a slow-burn disaster which doesn’t crescendo for 15 years. On the other hand, we know that people eating animals and their eggs and marrow, and drinking their milk or blood, have been well nurtured and made healthy for eons.

reddit.com/r/exvegans has plenty of testimonials and anecdotes of health problems befalling ardent vegans, driving them to question and leave the ideology; I wish you no harm and hope you will move to a more natural diet before health maladies arrive — and I’m sure they will, eventually. And our nature to desire sugar (or salts) should be exercised and fulfilled, when sugar is rare, regional and seasonal. When we create foods and modify the world to suit ourselves — taking control from the gods, as Daniel Quinn put it — we have to attend to ripple effects we cannot foresee or fully manage (hypertension, diabetes, obesity, population growth come to mind).

Theo: I set up r/AntiVegans a while ago as I think it’d be funny to gather anecdotes of people who used to be ideologically motivated to warn against veganism for the comedic mirror it would create. Either way, I don’t actually see the evidentiary use value in a bunch of anecdotes when we have so many either way, and so much better evidence in research papers, but if you’re curious about my personal cultural experience with vegans and the arguments, I was brought up vegetarian, went vegan at 15, and enjoy a fit life at 31 in a tiny village.

I don’t think we’re lacking for opportunities to habituate people to violence and conflict in TIS, we have much more meaningful opportunities in fact in the painful realizations about friends, frenemies and enemies we are in intellectual and physical competition with.

You keep asserting veganism is x, like veganism wants apes to be non-violent, veganism wants people to eat crickets, which just sounds like conspiracy thinking, linking news stories that aren’t connected. The way I’ve seen the crickets thing pop up is just liberal journalists covering the rise of veganism and offering an unsatisfactory middle ground as part of what they think their job is to do in covering both sides impartially and suggesting middle ground steps. But obviously vegans are against farming and killing insects, as they’re sentient animals who can have a subjective experience of capabilities they’re enjoying expressing. So to vegans it’s a character vice to breed them into the world knowing you plan to go against their interests by killing them.

Jorge: You misunderstand my remarks. The technological system pursues its needs, which may be a lower human toll upon Nature, possibly accomplished by a cricket-heavy sustenance, or petri dish lab meats, or a vegan nutritional syrup — or the eradication of (most of) humanity. Even if unintentional and unwitting, the vegan movement (along with the animal rights folks pushing cellular ‘meat’ and such) aids the technological system’s management of humanity, separated from Nature and dependent upon the social managers of the system. Crickets are championed by the non-vegan advocates of “sustainability” who want feed everyone everywhere and ‘lessen our impact’. If humans are apes, and vegans want animals not to be killed by humans, then at least some elimination of apes’ violence is being sought by

vegans, right? I don't follow your remarks about friends and enemies, but I doubt that that violence compares to raids or hunts by uncivilized tribal groups or survival by killing as required in Nature. Why do you think it is that people who do live in Nature have not adopted a vegan diet?

Theo:

vegans want animals not to be killed by humans

No, vegans simply want to do an animal products boycott, they can still be in favor of killing animals for a multitude of reasons, e.g. for pest control within settlements and farms, reducing overpopulation, eliminating invasive species, mercy killing injured animals, etc. There's many legal animal rights advocates who for example are against hunting on principle, but that was never the original goal people had in mind who came up with the term vegan and so even that is not a required principle to hold in order to adopt veganism. Here's 5 example ethical reasons someone might be vegan (and what branch of philosophy it may be related to):

Hedonistic Utilitarianism: The commitment to not use sentient life where you know you will cause more suffering on a global calculus than happiness. Examples: human caused climate change, stress and pain in a slaughterhouse than a longer happy life in the wild with low rates of predation, stress to slaughterhouse workers who are more likely to abuse their family, etc.

Preference Consequentialism: The commitment to not use sentient life in various ways because you know they will have interests to go on living longer than would be profitable. Examples: They have habits for activities they'd like to do each day and they show you by their desire not to be loaded onto scary trucks and to a slaughterhouse where they hear the screams of other animals and the smell of death.

Virtue Ethics: The pursuit of positive character virtues through not breeding a sentient life into captivity when you know you could leave room for other animals to enjoy happy flourishing by being able to express all their capabilities in wild habitat. So not wanting to parasitically take away life with meaning for low-order pleasure in our hierarchy of needs which we can find elsewhere.

Deontology: The principle of everyone should only act in such a way that it would still be acceptable to them if it were to become universal law. So not breeding sentient life into existence, only to keep them confined, tear families apart and kill them later, as you wouldn't want it to happen to you.

Existentialist Ethics: The desire to be wary of acting in-authentically, so in a way you don't believe due to outside social pressures, like that acting un-caringly is necessary to what it means to be a man. So testing out values you were brought up with against new ones as you go and coming to the conclusion that you'd prefer to live in a society where most people have the value of seeing animals flourishing in nature and not in captivity/pain.

I doubt that that violence compares to raids or hunts by uncivilized tribal groups or survival by killing as required in Nature.

It doesn't compare in terms of the quantity of opportunities to chaotically follow ones baser instincts on a whim, but it is far and away superior on the calculus of more meaningful and emotionally draining conflict that people have access to in TIS. E.g. millions of people have the ability to go volunteer to fight against Russia's attack on the Ukrainian people now, and for 5 years millions had the opportunity to fight ISIS's attack on the Yazidi people. Going to fight ISIS may have involved tying oneself emotionally to forever wanting to know on a deeply personal level that the sex slaves you freed are still doing well and potentially carrying the burden of a mistake that could have been avoided costing a friend's life, you get to experience the attempts at saving and recapturing a complex culture and people tied to a land that can trace their philosophical development back to being primitive tribes.

Why do you think it is that people who do live in Nature have not adopted a vegan diet?

Again, because like I said at the beginning, “the reason I think hunting and paying for the killing of animals is a character vice for myself and many others is because I’m intelligent enough to empathize with other animals and know I can be happy and healthy eating a vegan diet. So, I don’t hold the position you’re tarring all vegans with, but we likely agree my position is not one other animals could ever come to, along with severely mentally disabled people and psychopaths.” There’s no injustice happening to the animals that get hunted by for example uncontacted tribes people who use blow darts to pick off the slowest squirrels or whatever, helping their evolution. And there’s no bad intent or character vice on the part of the tribes person who hasn’t ever contemplated leaving the forest to eat farmed foods and allow the forest to go in a different evolutionary direction such that they could be living a more meaningful life, and the forest would be able to contain a higher quantity of animals.

Jorge: Getting crops on fewer acres than a cow roams is not some great game-winning goal. When you have a cow you have more than just “protein equivalent to X amount of soy, which uses less acreage”. With an animal, you get all sorts of parts and materials for further nourishment and for tools. Considering all that, the fewer acres needed to produce beef-equivalent calories of wheat and carrots and other veg will be acres needed to manufacture tools and clothing and shelter material and other foods to replace all that a big game kill will yield.

Supposing humanity adopts veganism, will the cows and pigs be executed? They’ll still be fed, right? So while their population is enormous, they will continue consuming crops, and we won’t have less acreage under agricultural demand for a while...

But let’s suppose that, 20 years after humanity goes vegan, the population of today’s agri-animals has greatly withered (due to breeding controls and manipulations by humans) and there actually is less land used for agriculture than in 2024. Will the land be allowed to rewild, or will it more likely (most certainly) be put to use by techno-industrial society? Any land no longer feeding livestock will be used to do something else to advance technological society (against Nature).

And when vegan humanity no longer values cows and pigs and chickens as useful, will these species remain in existence, with things civilized humans do like to eat, or will they go extinct with the creatures civilization finds useless (giraffe, starfish, frogs, rhinos, etc.)?

Anyone living in Nature is overjoyed to successfully hunt game; why do you think that is? No reason, they should just dig up some crops instead? Is it just as rewarding to successfully forage as to successfully hunt? Is eating forage the same benefit to the body as eating game?

Theo: Here’s the timeline I’m working to bring about:

Short Term

As more people reduce their animal product consumption, breeding animals will become less profitable and the number of domesticated animals on earth will decrease.

It will increase our ability to rewild that land as there will be areas of natural beauty people will want to walk through without having to worry about getting run down by cows, plus because now fewer places will be barren grass landscapes.

Long Term

Towards the end of animal agriculture there will be a burden put on animal sanctuaries to take in lots of animals and for governments to write laws to say the farmer has to turn their farm into a sanctuary to save the few remaining animals, like how there is a burden put on rescuers today with some battery farmed chickens allowed to be rescued after their egg laying numbers drop, to save the farmer the bother of transporting them to slaughter and sometimes not cutting even.

Long-Long Term

At the point where we’re just about to outlaw breeding animals for food, government and conservationist charities will fund keeping the remaining domesticated animals in a few semi-wild safaris in every country and they will allow enough to keep breeding to allow for a healthy breeding stock like zoos and safaris today. This period will likely go on for a while as there won’t be enough political will to outlaw this too because it’s such a marginally unethical use of land.

Forever outcome

Hopefully, there'll be enough direct actions to sneak birth control into the domestic animals' feed, sabotage the safari owners' property, picketing, and pressure campaigns to outlaw letting these animals breed. That way we can make room for wild habitat, for these domesticated animals closest common wild ancestors to be able to express their non-deformed physical capabilities and choose their own social relationships.

The only way the public and activist will would exist to take this final step is if at least 50% of the earth was fully wild, such that people felt sorry for these domestic animals in comparison to the flourishing many wild animals were getting to experience and so they wanted to free up the safaris land for rewilding. It couldn't be outlawed on the basis of freeing up room for more universities to be built or something, as we could build those anywhere.

A question for you; if you were forced to time travel 20,000 years ago, to a fairly peaceful area of the central African rainforest, to live out the rest of your life, would you relate to the capturing and domesticating of animals, specifically to not have to spend as much time hunting, as a character vice? Or would you feel fine imposing that suffering on an animal that would prefer to be living free or at least experience a quick death?

Jorge: I think that tracking, stalking, hunting game is good mental and physical exercise for the individual human (especially for males), and good for a small group of men to bond. It also practices for small-unit warfare, and preps men to conduct violence, which is an essential ability to be ready to deploy. (We can be peaceful but mustn't lose our ability to perpetrate violence.) As a survival activity which demonstrates a capability for independence and exercises autonomous decision-making, hunting is also fulfilling of The Power Process, and I think it is also good for the "ecosystem" and regional biodiversity. And to go on the hunt and return with food brings an appreciation from the group being fed, in a way that being fed from penned-in livestock does not.

With all that said, even hunter-gatherer people sometimes do keep a pig/peccary, or a dog, and horses are highly valued and bond well with people. And cats are thought to not have been intentionally domesticated but to have self-domesticated on the periphery of human settlements; I wouldn't want to force them out of this relationship they have developed with our species. There are abusive relationships and reciprocal, symbiotic relationships between humans and other animals.

Theo: With all that said, even hunter-gatherer people sometimes do keep a pig/peccary, or a dog, and horses are highly valued and bond well with people.

Do you really think the first hunter-gatherers to fence in wild boar weren't forcing an abusive relationship on those pigs and/or at least their progeny? Maybe they had a really good utilitarian reason initially like many adults in their tribe had died making wild game harder to acquire or something, but there's no world in which a wild boar and all its progeny are experiencing a higher quality of life on average in captivity than in the wild.

Anti-tech people and pro-tech vegans overlap for the most part on the ethics of domesticating other animals, so I find it curious how anti-tech people have a blindspot on hunter-gatherers keeping animals and your conspiracy crusade against vegans today thinking we're doing the bidding of technology. The worst you could say is some vegans are only interested in reforming the world to create large rewilding zones, but virtually all vegans are an antagonistic force being a helping hand fighting against further environmental destruction.

This is all just anti-tech people revealing themselves to be a reactionary infighting force within environmentalism, with a thin veneer of purist good-will in believing they have the one true solution to all the worlds problems in anti-tech revolution.

Jorge: Some vegans are only interested in reforming the world to create large rewilding zones, but virtually all vegans are an antagonistic force being a helping hand fighting against further environmental destruction.

If you don't want meat cells cloned so as to provide an alternative to killing animals, if you don't want to prevent humans doing human things (tracking, stalking, killing and eating wild animals), if you don't want to feed the present global population of >8B humans (which will come at the expense of

non-human biodiversity), and if you don't want to maintain high-tech high-speed globally-interactive society, then sure, you're one of the good ones.

On the other hand, vegans who advocate that everyone worldwide take up this one narrow diet, regardless of locale, and those wanting that meat replacement foods be manufactured and distributed to ease people away from meats, and those prioritizing the livestock put through slaughterhouses over the millions of non-food animals who are eliminated from existence by being dispossessed of living space (taken for use in technological society) and those who want to give every human now alive some scientifically-engineered nutritionist-approved vegan drink formula for sustenance — well, those are vegans who are not doing any service to Nature but only to expanding their cult.

Theo: Fascinating.

If you don't want meat cells cloned so as to provide an alternative to killing animals, ... then sure, you're one of the good ones... On the other hand, vegans who advocate that everyone worldwide take up this one narrow diet, ... well, those are vegans who are not doing any service to Nature but only to expanding their cult.

I think we need a ton more of that irrationally passionate defense of Nature (and hatred of Technology) such as religious people have for their gods (including tribal HGs who vigorously defended the lands where they lived with their gods).

I myself expect that the people who've lived with/in Nature and have spoken of hearing spirits are correct, and I expect I'd find the same if I didn't live in a city.

Jorge: So in an idealized scenario, if the system were to collapse ... people are going to prosper in and devolve to small localized groupings. Those small localized groupings are not going to operate on snaps and consensus I don't think ... what's going to work for that kind of small group?

... it seems like a couple of the most bonding elements or the most stabilizing elements would be some kind of shared faith in something beyond the tangible world and or some kind of leader that is always deferred to and regarded. That seems like what tribes and cults have, and they tend to work better than idealistic-motivated communes and group gatherings.

Steve: Well work better in what sense? In what sense do you mean a leader in a tribe? I mean, that's a pretty complicated issue.

Jorge: Well, I mean, like a Jim Jones would be a cult example ...

Jorge: So are you in the cult for all of wild Nature or the cult for Technology and pigs and cows and chickens?

Theo: Neither, I'm anti-cult on principle and pragmatically because they lead to very obviously demonstratable stagnancy where the membership levels off due to the obvious sharlatan/irrational nature to it all. Plus the quality of the membership becomes dogshit too.

One of your arguments in favor of cults in that podcast was 'well we don't know the CPUSA's method isn't going to work, they still exist' which is just a fucking god of the gaps fallacy, 'there's no evidence they're never going to work, so maybe we can point to the hypothetical time-period between now and forever from now when it might work'. Yeah sure, bet on that method whilst environmental destruction gets worse and worse.

People can hunt all they like to reduce invasive species, and no hunter-gatherers are being evangelized to stop hunting by vegans, veganism isn't the black-and-white absolute morality you misunderstood it as when you first rushed to view it as bad and critique it with dogshit arguments that weren't even relevant to veganism.

Jorge: OK cool, thanks.

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