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# VEGETARIANISM<sup>1</sup> AND ECOFEMINISM Toppling Patriarchy with a Fork

*Marti Kheel*

**F**or centuries, advocates for vegetarianism have sought to reform meat eaters through rational arguments. Behind this attempt lies a faith in the ability of reason to enforce a moral obligation to be vegetarian. However, the arguments for why someone should be vegetarian may have little to do with the actual factors that influence people to adopt vegetarianism. In this essay, I offer an alternative approach to the debate over meat eating. Rather than trying to develop a rational foundation in support of vegetarianism, I draw on ecofeminist theory to subject the dominant norm, meat eating, to closer scrutiny. I examine the sociocultural substructure that supports the practice of meat eating and, in particular, its foundation in patriarchal modes of thought. I focus on the Western world, since that is the area where meat eating predominates and where the connection between meat dominance and male dominance is most apparent. It is also the area where the most widespread abuse of nonhuman animals occurs, that is, on factory farms. I do not attempt to “defend” vegetarianism as a universal norm to be imposed on all people as a moral imperative; rather, I ask, what are the factors that support meat eating as a dietary norm? Moreover, what factors might invite vegetarianism as a response? By developing this invitational approach to vegetarianism, I seek to move away from the construction of universal norms and abstract principles to the deconstruction of a dominant dietary norm, namely, meat eating.

## ECOFEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Feminism and vegetarianism have been intimately intertwined both as movements and as philosophies for many years. Feminists typically have condemned forms of domination and have expressed compassion for the downtrodden. Nonhuman animals, including the animals living on farms, have often been on the receiving end of this compassion. In spite of the support for vegetarianism among many feminists, there has also been a countervailing trend. Feminism was an outgrowth of the European Enlightenment, which subscribed to the idea of a dualism between humans and the rest of nature. In the Enlightenment worldview, human beings alone are made in the image of God and endowed with reason, setting them apart from the rest of the natural world. Progress, thus, is predicated upon severing one's ties to the nonhuman world. The demand not to be treated like animals was a common rallying cry among early feminists. Underlying this idea is the notion that the exploitation of rational beings (namely humans) is morally wrong whereas the exploitation of nonhuman animals is not.

Ecofeminist philosophers have a different vision of human beings' relation to the natural world. Rather than seeking to sever human ties to the natural world, ecofeminists critique the worldview that devalues both women and nature. Ecofeminism is a loosely knit philosophical school of thought that draws connections between the domination of nature and the domination of women.<sup>2</sup> Despite variations in viewpoints, most ecofeminists are united in their critique of the dualistic worldview of patriarchal society. Ecofeminists argue that Western patriarchal society operates by means of a series of gendered dualisms. The male half of the dualism is associated with "culture," "good," the "rational," and the "spiritual," while the female half is associated with "nature," "evil," the "nonrational," and the "profane." Ecofeminists are also critical of the atomistic worldview of patriarchal society, which overvalues autonomy and the role of reason, and devalues relationships of care. In place of this atomistic worldview, ecofeminists view nature as an interconnected web of life, no part of which may be said to be superior to the other.

By and large, ecofeminists have been content to speak generally about their vision of a holistic web of life. There has been little discussion among ecofeminists about what particular practices constitute care; nor has there been much discussion about the practice of vegetarianism.<sup>3</sup> Like feminists more generally, ecofeminists have become increasingly wary of abstract norms and universal rules that purport to apply to all people without regard to gender, race, class, and culture. Since vegetarianism typically is viewed as endorsing a universal dietary norm, some ecofeminists have explicitly argued against it. But although ecofeminist philosophy may not

support the case for vegetarianism as a universal norm, it may, nonetheless, help to dislodge the conceptual substructures that support the practice of meat eating. In so doing, it can clear a space in which to plant the seeds that invite the vegetarian ideal.

## COMPULSORY MEAT EATING

Meat eating has been the dominant norm for centuries in the Western world. It is the nature of dominant norms to be accepted without question. Thus, when people become vegetarians they are typically asked to explain their dietary choice. But no one thinks to ask meat eaters why they became meat eaters. An analogy with the institution of heterosexuality helps to shed light on this phenomenon. In a well-known article the feminist author Adrienne Rich argues that in patriarchal society, heterosexuality is not simply a choice or preference, but rather a compulsory institutional norm, which is "imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force."<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this enforcement is to maintain "male right of physical, economic and emotional access" to women.

A similar attitude may be argued to exist in relation to meat eating in Western culture. Meat eating, like heterosexuality, is viewed as a compulsory institutional norm that is "imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force" for the purpose of ensuring male-dominated society's rightful access to nonhuman animals and to their flesh.

Individuals who defy the mandatory norm of meat eating encounter similar obstacles to those faced by people who challenge the norm of heterosexuality. Just as a woman is considered incomplete without a man, so, too, vegetarian foods are viewed as incomplete without the addition of flesh.<sup>5</sup> And just as people often wonder how a lesbian can possibly find sexual fulfillment without a man, many people wonder how vegetarians can possibly find dietary fulfillment without meat. People ask vegetarians, "What do you eat?" with the same combination of incomprehension and bewilderment that they ask lesbians, "What do you do?" In each case, people imagine the person to be deprived or incomplete, lacking a full sexual or dietary identity. A number of vegetarians report that they had more difficulty "coming out" as vegetarians than coming out as gay.<sup>6</sup>

## MEAT EATING, MANHOOD, AND THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

Meat eating is a biological activity, but it is also a practice that is steeped in culture and encoded with symbolic meanings.<sup>7</sup> Meat eating forms the cru-

cible of a network of relationships. Obtaining meat, eating meat, and sharing meat are modes of establishing particular kinds of relationships. Relationships are formed with family and friends and severed with those who are excluded from the circle of sharing (and of course with the animal who is killed). Historically, relationships with those outside the circle of sharing have been based on hierarchical divisions, particularly those based on gender, class, and status.

Meat is widely recognized as a food that is eaten predominantly by those who have greater prestige. In most countries, people with higher incomes eat proportionately greater amounts of flesh foods. Similarly, hunting reserves traditionally have belonged to the royalty who are accorded privileged access to the meat obtained from the hunt. Conferring meat on others is often seen as a status symbol, signifying one's wealth and class. Meat is also typically associated with virility, strength, aggression, as well as with sexual potency. Men are typically given a disproportionate share of meat, and men who do not eat meat are often viewed as effeminate. During warfare, it is considered especially important for men to eat meat.

An opposing phenomenon exists in the realm of spirituality. Whereas consuming flesh typically is thought to signify higher status and virility in the secular realm, abstaining from flesh has typically been thought to signify higher status in the spiritual realm.<sup>8</sup> Throughout human history eating the flesh of animals has been thought to arouse the animal passions and to therefore be unsuitable for those in holy orders. Holiness or purity, therefore, is typically established by denying oneself flesh foods. Rather than battling external nature, spiritual devotees direct their conquest against internal nature, that is, the "animal passions." The ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras, best known for his mathematical theories, is an example of this spiritual orientation. Pythagoras viewed meat eating as an impediment to the soul's ascent to its divine origins. While Pythagoras combined concern for moral purity with concern for the suffering of nonhuman animals, many spiritually oriented vegetarians viewed vegetarianism only as a means of rising above the realm of carnal desires. Many of the early church fathers exemplify this view, believing that spiritual life required renouncing both sex and flesh foods; vegetarianism was considered praiseworthy only if it was practiced with the correct intention, namely, as a spiritual discipline by which one conquered the carnal desires. The association of meat with privilege and prestige made it additionally unsuitable for those in holy orders.

The association between meat eating and class, status, and gender can be clearly seen in the oldest forms of meat eating, namely hunting and animal sacrifice. Hunting, although not an exclusively male activity, has a long history of association with masculine self-identity.<sup>9</sup> Many cultures require a young boy to hunt and kill an animal as a symbolic rite of pas-

sage into manhood. The initiation is designed to help the boy to detach from natural ties of affection, enabling him to transfer his allegiance to an external standard of manliness based on self-control and control over others.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, the young boy initiate is frequently sequestered from the world of women as well and sexual relations with women are often prohibited before and after the hunt. Hunting has also frequently been viewed as "combat training" or a sort of "war game." Aristotle argued that hunting was good preparation for war and that killing wild animals constituted a "just war."

Hunting has also often been viewed as an erotic activity, which is one of the reasons why it has historically been forbidden to those in holy orders. The ingestion of the flesh is similarly viewed as part of the erotic experience. The anthropologist Paul Shepard writes, "whereas the ecstatic consummation of love is killing, the formal consummation is eating."<sup>11</sup> Hunting in this conception has a narrative structure whose denouement requires the eating of flesh. To remove the consumption of the flesh from the hunting experience renders the narrative meaningless.

Like hunting, animal sacrifice is an activity that is intimately tied to meat eating and masculine self-identity. Sacrifice and meat eating were widely practiced in the ancient world, and inextricably intertwined. The ancient temples were more akin to abattoirs and butcher shops than our modern conception of holy places. In ancient Greece sacrifice was part of the state religion, and the flesh of the sacrificed animal was eaten at all public festivals. Animal sacrifice was performed for a variety of reasons, but the underlying theme entailed the idea that the sacrifice of the animal helped to mediate between the material and transcendent realms. In this conception, the consumption of the animal's flesh cements the bond between the two spheres. The mediating role of flesh can be seen in the Hebrew tradition, where the priest consumed part of the sacrificed animal, reserving the rest for God. In partaking of the same flesh that is eaten by God, the sacrificers engaged in a kind of metaphorical "intercourse" with God. The Hebrew God's anger at those who sacrificed to other gods (or idols) was an expression of anger over a metaphorical infidelity of the flesh. The idea of a metaphorical intercourse with God can still be found in the Christian religion where the congregation symbolically eats the body and "blood of Christ."

According to the anthropologist Nancy Jay, men perform sacrifice in an effort to achieve the sense of continuity across the generations that women are endowed with by nature.<sup>12</sup> The logic of the sacrificers, who are ordinarily male, is governed by the urge to replicate the birthing process on a purportedly more spiritual plane. The sacrificers perform a role analogous to mothers, initiating the participants into a transcendent male order that connects men with one another across the generations. Birth from a

woman condemns one to death, but "rebirth" through sacrifice integrates men into a transcendent order that transcends mortality and death.

## WOMEN, NONHUMAN ANIMALS, AND THE "OTHER"

Women have also been viewed as symbols that mediate a relationship with a transcendent order. According to Simone de Beauvoir, due to the contingencies of women's biology, that is, pregnancy, menstruation, and childbirth, women have historically been viewed as mired in the realm of nature.<sup>13</sup> Men, by contrast, are perceived as free to transcend the natural world. Historically, she argues, men have achieved this transcendence by means of the subordination of women and the natural world. In the process of pursuing transcendence, men establish their identities as distinct and opposed to nature. Women, thus, become the "other" against which masculine self-identity is established. Significantly, she argues that the prototypical acts of transcendence over the natural world are hunting, fishing, and warfare.

The idea that masculine self-identity entails separation from women and the natural world can also be found in the psychological school of object relations theory.<sup>14</sup> According to this theory, both boys and girls begin life with a sense of oneness with the mother figure. Unlike girls, however, boys go through a two-staged process of maturation. They must not only disengage from the mother figure, but they must deny all that is female within themselves as well as their ties to the female world. The mother thus becomes an object in relation to which the boy must develop his identity as "not female."

The conception of women and animals as objects or the "other" can also be found in the Western religious and philosophical tradition.<sup>15</sup> As previously mentioned, ecofeminist philosophers point out that in the Western tradition, women and nature are associated with a series of dualisms. They are viewed as "evil," "nonrational," and as "matter," in contrast to that which is "good," "rational," and "divine." Both Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy contributed to the conception of nature as mindless matter. Perhaps, most harmful in its effects, however, has been the Aristotelian and Stoic legacy, which postulates that the nonrational functioned for the benefit of the rational. Thus according to Aristotle, plants functioned to give subsistence to animals and animals to give subsistence to "Man." Although nonhuman animals have their own individual telos or ends, the final result of this world ordering functions to free "Man" for the highest good, namely rational contemplation. Significantly, women, slaves, and foreigners are viewed as part of the inferior, nonrational world that exists to serve "rational" Man.

Judaism and Christianity have given further support to the idea that

women and nature exist to serve men's needs. Since Adam was God's first creation and God is typically imaged as male, it is men in particular who have been associated with the divine. The Genesis accounts of creation underline the view of the subservient status of women and animals. In the priestly account of Creation, "Man," is assigned "dominion" over the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26). And in the Yahwist account, nonhumans are created to be helpers or companions for Adam, and when they were seen as unfit, Eve was created to fulfill this role (Genesis 2:22). Once again, women and nonhuman animals function to serve the needs of others.

## ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The association between meat eating and masculine self-identity can readily be seen in the examples of hunting and animal sacrifice. But it can also be discerned in the practice of "animal husbandry." The term "animal husbandry" suggests the association between ownership of women and nonhuman animals. Just as a husband is assumed to possess a wife, so, too, the producers of animal flesh are thought to own the animals on their farms. And just as a marriage ceremony symbolically obliterates the identity of a woman by uniting "man" and "wife" as "one in flesh," (namely, the man's), so, too, the consumption of animal flesh entails the literal obliteration of animals.

The view of women and animals as flesh is accompanied by their image as property or "chattel," a word that significantly derives from the same root word as "cattle." Women are owned by male husbands, just as cattle are owned by men who perform "animal husbandry." Animals are kept on "farms," just as women are kept in "families." Significantly, the word "family" derives from the Roman word "famulus," meaning "slave," and refers to a husband's legal ownership of his wife and children.

Animal husbandry is based upon the control of the reproductive process of nonhuman animals. Factory farms require the continued reproduction of animals, as well as the "products" of female animals' reproductive cycles, such as milk and eggs. The animals that do not conform to the design of this institutional complex are literally discarded as trash or sent off to slaughter. Thus, male baby chicks that are born to egg-laying chickens are regularly gassed or thrown in trash cans to die slow, agonizing deaths because they serve no function in the egg industry. Artificial insemination, which maximizes male control of female reproduction, has become the norm on most factory farms. As soon as the reproductive capacity of factory-farm animals begins to wane, they are sent off to be slaughtered, since they are no longer of use.

Women, like nonhuman animals, are also exploited for their reproduc-

tive capacity. A woman's ability to bear children is considered one of the major assets that she brings to a marriage, and women who are infertile are made to feel inadequate, which often leads them to jeopardize their own health in an effort to overcome their infertility. Women's fertility is also increasingly being exploited by the male-dominated medical establishment, which now routinely "harvests" women's eggs. The underlying idea behind both operations is the same—women's bodies and animals' bodies belong first and foremost to men.

Along with the notion of ownership of women and animals, the modern production of flesh promotes the notion of women and animals as objects to be consumed. Men consume women's bodies in sex shows, houses of prostitution, and pornographic magazines. Their sexual "appetites" are aroused by women's bodies in the same way that their taste buds are aroused by animal flesh. Although women are not literally consumed, many women describe their experience of sexual objectification as one in which they are treated like a piece of meat. Women's body parts are also fetishized in our culture, as are animal body parts. Women's identities are also consumed by men. Symbolically, the woman is transferred in the wedding ceremony, like a commodity, from the property of the father to that of the husband. The loss of a woman's self-identity is reinforced by the loss of her name. Marriage is also thought to be consummated by the husband's sexual access to his wife's flesh.

## CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL CRITIQUES

The above analysis does not make the case directly for why someone should become a vegetarian. Yet, it invites vegetarianism as a response. If people are opposed to the domination of women, they may be more inclined to empathize with the plight of nonhuman animals once they understand the connections between the domination of women and of nonhuman animals. It is empathy, not abstract norms, that provides the motivation for vegetarianism in this invitational approach. Vegetarianism thus becomes part of a larger resistance to violence and domination. Renouncing meat becomes an affirmation of one's connection to nonhuman animals and to the earth.

A number of ecofeminist and other philosophers have charged vegetarians in the West with trying to impose a white, middle-class norm on other cultures where people eat meat out of necessity or due to their own cultural norms. They advocate a "contextual" approach to vegetarianism in recognition of the particular situation that exists within each cultural context.<sup>16</sup> Inviting vegetarianism as an ethical ideal, however, is not the same as seeking to impose one's beliefs on other people and other cultures. The

invitational approach to vegetarianism recognizes that the subject of meat eating differs across the boundaries of culture, race, gender, and class. It acknowledges that there may be limiting factors, such as geography and climate, which preclude the possibility of eating a vegetarian diet for some people. Vegetarianism, conceived as an ideal, however, may be viewed as an invitation; and invitations cannot always be honored and may be declined. Recognition of cultural context should also not preclude a critical examination of the practice of meat eating and the factors that prevent vegetarianism as a choice. The sensitivity to racial and cultural differences that has emerged among feminists and other theorists in recent years is extremely valuable, but it should not be used to try to suppress the expression of the vegetarian ideal, which in and of itself is not oppressive.

It is interesting to note that "contextual" approaches to meat eating often fail to examine the cultural associations that exist between meat eating and gender, status, and class. Typically, the contextual approach focuses on the importance of understanding and respecting meat eating within the overall context of particular cultures, without examining the subcultural contexts that exist within the larger culture. While it is important to try to understand, and where appropriate, respect the practices of other cultures, this should not preclude a deeper analysis of the cultural associations that may underlie those practices, and in particular the cultural associations between masculine self-identity and meat eating. Understanding the meanings that attach to behaviors of other cultures is fraught with difficulties. But this should not preclude the attempt to understand them.

The charge of cultural insensitivity and cultural imperialism tends to be made selectively against Western advocates for vegetarianism. The example of indigenous cultures is typically used to advance the argument that vegetarianism is disrespectful of those cultures where meat is obtained in respectful ways, as evidenced by the prayers of forgiveness that are said before the killing of an animal.<sup>17</sup> Little if any mention is made of the vegetarian traditions in Eastern cultures, where vegetarianism is sometimes the norm. Jains and some Buddhists make strong statements in favor of vegetarianism, and yet they are not charged with cultural insensitivity. Thich Nat Hanh, for example, has endorsed vegetarianism as an embodiment of the ideal of nonviolence, but no one to my knowledge argues that he is guilty of cultural imperialism.<sup>18</sup> Vegetarianism is not simply a lifestyle of white, middle-class people, but a cherished ideal of many cultures throughout the world, which a growing number of people in the Western world embrace.

Vegetarians are also often charged with having an anti-ecological awareness. By trying to extend moral consideration to nonhuman animals, Val Plumwood, for example, argues that vegetarians inadvertently establish a neo-Cartesian view, which extends moral consideration to human and

nonhuman animals, thereby excluding plants.<sup>19</sup> But Plumwood presumes that the avoidance of flesh foods is based on an abstract philosophical viewpoint. While some advocates for vegetarianism may invoke abstract philosophical arguments in support of their vegetarianism, many people are motivated by a visceral repugnance to the idea of the suffering and death of nonhuman animals, hardly a disembodied Cartesian response. Often, it is the ability to put oneself into the bodies of other animals, rather than abstract philosophical thought, that motivates people to become vegetarian. The ability to feel empathy for the suffering of other animals is no more anti-ecological than is our repugnance for other forms of violence, including the killing of human beings.<sup>20</sup>

It is also often argued that vegetarians fail to accept that predation is a natural part of the life cycle and that eating flesh is an affirmation of human participation in the web of life.<sup>21</sup> But predators represent only 20 percent of the animals in the natural world; and apart from animals slaughtered by humans, only 5 percent of all animals are killed by other animals.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the capture and domestication of other animals in order to breed them for their flesh and the products that they produce is without parallel in the natural world.

## ECOFEMINISM AND AN ETHIC OF CARE

The philosophical underpinnings of the modern animal advocacy movement typically draw on the philosophy of justice and rights. To the extent that nonhuman animals share morally significant qualities in common with humans, it is argued, they must be accorded rights. The idea of rights is conceived as an impartial ethic that transcends feelings of care.<sup>23</sup> A growing number of feminists, however, have sought to move away from an emphasis on universal norms and abstract rules to a focus on the importance of care in ethical decision making.<sup>24</sup> Feminists argue that the emphasis on the superiority of the universal norms of justice and rights over an ethic of care is a masculinist orientation, which overvalues the role of reason and autonomy in ethical decision making and undervalues the importance of interdependence and care. The notion of moral conduct as an activity that is performed by an isolated and autonomous decision maker fails to take into account the contingencies, both external and internal, which limit our choices; they also overvalue the role of conscious choice in moral decision making.

The emphasis on the importance of an ethic of care is a welcome insight; nonetheless, much of the discussion of an ethic of care has often sought to use the same conceptual tools used by traditional moral theories.

The point has been to show that the traditionally female imaged ethic of care can, in fact, break out of its traditional role in the domestic sphere and "make it" in the public realm of justice and rights. But what if we refrain from the urge to make an ethic of care emulate the purported rigor of a theory of justice and rights? What if we ask the more important questions: What is it that nourishes care and connection and what causes it to fail? And how are caring relationships forged? Since traditional moral theories have tended to presume the predisposition toward aggressive conduct, they have overlooked the underlying reasons why such tendencies may exist. As Alison Jaggar has argued, "Because we expect humans to be aggressive, we find the idea of cooperation puzzling. If, instead of focusing on antagonistic interactions, we focused on cooperative interaction, we would find the idea of competition puzzling."<sup>25</sup>

An ethic of care, while useful, has particular limitations with respect to the nonhuman world. Caring for and about nonhuman animals must be distinguished from caretaking or stewardship. The tradition of stewardship has been interpreted as a human obligation to manage the rest of nature. The stewardship model of caretaking has been an underlying idea behind both animal farming as well as the conservation movement. This form of caretaking focuses on the functioning of the whole of nature, not the well-being of individual beings, who may be "sacrificed" for the whole.

A number of feminist philosophers have focused on the act of attention as an alternative to the emphasis on abstract rules and universal norms. Iris Murdoch has argued that when one devotes a "patient, loving regard" upon a "person, a thing, a situation," the will is presented not as "unimpeded movement" but as "something very much more like obedience."<sup>26</sup> In this alternative vision of ethics, empathy and imagination are more critically important than conscious reasoning and choice. With respect to nonhuman animals, the question that can then be posed is why has this patient, loving regard been so singularly absent in human treatment of nonhuman animals, including the ones whom people eat?

The act of attention functions not only to forge bonds of relationships; it also functions to maintain oppressive structures. Sarah Hoagland argues that values flow from the choices that we make and the things that we choose to focus upon.<sup>27</sup> Using the Wittgensteinian notion of an axis that is held in place by what surrounds it, Hoagland shows the ways in which patriarchal thought is held in place by a system of dominance and subordination. Justice under this system is designed to sort out competing claims within an axis of domination and subordination. Hoagland does not attempt to disprove patriarchal values, but rather to transform perceptions "so that existing values cease to make sense."<sup>28</sup> Her strategy is to make existing perceptions inconceivable. In the new paradigm that she calls for, "rape, pogroms, slavery, lynching, and colonialism" are inconceivable.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, one can ask the question, what are the factors that support meat eating, and what would it take to create a world in which the human consumption of other animals was inconceivable?

## CONCLUSION

In the foregoing analysis, I have sought to offer an invitational approach to vegetarianism. I have suggested that the focus on developing compelling arguments for why it is morally correct to become vegetarian may be missing the mark. The more important question, I suggest, is: what are the factors that support the practice of meat eating and that give meat eating its compelling force? A major factor that buttresses meat eating in the Western world, I have argued, is its intimate ties to masculine self-identity. Meat eating is both an expression of a patriarchal worldview as well as one of its central supports. It is a symbol of dominance over the natural world that has been intimately tied to the domination of women.

Ecofeminist philosophy provides an important lens through which to examine the practice of meat eating. By bringing meat eating into critical scrutiny, and examining the nature of the relationships that surround meat eating, ecofeminism can help to challenge the conceptual force that holds meat eating in place. Ecofeminist philosophy can thus open up a space in which to plant the seeds of a new relationship to food. In this new dietary paradigm, meat eating is not renounced due to the compelling force of an abstract norm; nor is it renounced as an expression of asceticism. Instead, people are drawn to vegetarian food by its positive allure. The appeal of vegetarian foods flows at once from an urge to resist patriarchal forms of dominance and control, and from positive feelings of empathy and care for the other animals with whom we share the earth. It is an invitation that many cannot refuse.

## NOTES

1. Although I use the more familiar word “vegetarian” throughout this essay, it would often be more accurate to use the word “vegan,” since I use “vegetarian” to signify a diet that excludes animal products as well as animal flesh.

2. On ecofeminist philosophy, see, for example, Greta Gaard, ed., *Ecofeminism, Women, Animals, Nature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1993), and Karen J. Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

3. Two notable ecofeminist anthologies that do focus on the importance of nonhuman animals and vegetarianism are Gaard, *Ecofeminism, Women, Animal,*

*Nature*, and Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams, eds., *Animals and Women: Theoretical Explorations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

4. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1979): 631–90.

5. This analogy is drawn by Carol Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (New York: Continuum, 1990), pp. 33–34.

6. For example, a college student recently told me that some of his classmates, although vegan, had not yet "come out of the pantry." Private communication, Francisco Rodriguez, January 22, 2003.

7. On the symbolic role of meat eating in culture, see Nick Fiddes, *Meat: A Natural Symbol* (New York: Routledge, 1991), and Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.

8. On vegetarianism in religious traditions, see, for example, Rynn Berry, *Food for the Gods: Vegetarianism and the World's Religions: Essays and Conversations* (New York: Pythagorean, 1998), and Steve Rosen, *Diet for Transcendence: Vegetarianism and the World Religions* (Badger, CA.: Torchlight Publishing, 1997).

9. On the connection between hunting and masculine self-identity, see, for example, David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), and Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature Through History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

10. See Marilyn French, *Beyond Power: On Women, Men, and Morals* (New York: Summit Books, 1985).

11. Paul Shepard, *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (New York: Scribner's, 1973), p. 173.

12. Nancy Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

13. See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

14. Object relations theory has been criticized by a number of feminists on a number of accounts, including the charge that it contains universal, monocausal claims about men's and women's essential identities. While some of these claims are well founded, I find the central insight of object relations theory into the oppositional nature of the construction of masculine self-identity to be, nevertheless, instructive. On object relations theory, see, for example, Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), and Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangement and Human Malaise* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

15. The following analysis of the images of women and nonhuman animals in the Western philosophical and religious traditions focuses on the predominant historical view and is not intended to overlook minority traditions in the West that have recognized the idea of kinship with nonhuman animals, as well as compassion.

16. See, for example, Val Plumwood, "Integrating Ethical Frameworks for Animals, Humans, and Nature: A Critical Feminist Eco-Socialist Analysis," *Ethics and the Environment* 5, no. 2 (2000): 285–322, and Deanne Curtin, "Toward an Ecolog-

ical Ethic of Care," in *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), pp. 66–81.

17. The significance of the prayers and rituals that are directed toward non-human animals among indigenous people is the subject of controversy. While many people view them as evidence of respect, other commentators have suggested that they are based on fears about retribution from the animals, or pragmatic concerns about ensuring a continued supply of animals for future hunts. Indigenous cultures are often treated as a monolithic block, overlooking the differences that exist among particular tribes. For challenges to the romantic contention that all indigenous cultures treated animals with reverence and respect, see, for example, Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relations and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Clifford D. Presnall, "Wildlife Conservation as Affected by American Indian and Caucasian Concepts," *Journal of Mammalogy* 24, no. 4 (1943): 458–64; Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); and Tom Regan, "Environmental Ethics and the Ambiguity of the Native American's Relationship with Nature," in *All That Dwell Therein: Essays on Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 206–39.

18. Thich Nat Hahn, "Cultivating Compassion, Responding to Violence" (lecture presented at the Berkeley Community Theater, Berkeley, CA, September 13, 2001). Audio and videotape copies are available from the Deer Park Monastery, attn: AV Team, Escondido, CA, or via e-mail, [dpavideo@earthlink.net](mailto:dpavideo@earthlink.net), or fax: 760-291-1010.

19. Plumwood, "Integrating Ethical Frameworks."

20. Plumwood recognizes this visceral response in the natural repugnance that humans have for eating other humans. As she states, "Many animals do not eat their own kind for what appear to be ethical bonding and species life reasons. . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 319). She fails to appreciate that this visceral response to eating one's kind need not be restricted to only humankind; it is equally repugnant for some people to eat other (nonhuman) animals. The aversion to eating the flesh of other animals does not exclude a consideration for the well-being of plants. Many vegetarians find comfort in the fact that far fewer plants need to be killed in order to sustain a vegetarian diet.

21. See, for example, Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

22. Stephan Lackner, *An Optimistic View of Life on Earth* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 12.

23. For a feminist critique of the idea of rights with respect to nonhuman animals, see the essays in Josephine Donovan and Carol Adams, eds., *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1996). For Tom Regan's response to feminist critics, see "The Case for Animal Rights: A Decade's Passing," in *Defending Animal Rights* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

24. There is a large body of feminist literature on an ethic of care. See, for example, Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), and Victoria Ward and Jill

McLean Taylor, with Betty Bardige, eds., *Mapping the Moral Domain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

25. Alison Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), p. 41.

26. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 40.

27. Sarah Lucia Hoagland, *Lesbian Ethics: Toward New Value* (Palo Alto, CA: Institute of Lesbian Studies, 1989).

28. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 73.