

MY FACE IS ON FIRE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2009

Misrepresentations of Veganism on the Interwebs

Every once in a while, scanning the internet goings-on during my lunch break, I'll spy something that good time management skills should lead me to ignore. Shamelessly *lacking* in good time management skills, however, I'll all-too-often spare that something a bit of my attention and every once in a while, that something will leave me feeling as if I've just been injected with a double-shot of espresso, its ridiculousness so *incredibly* jarring. Reading "[How Vegan Are You?](#)" on the *Novel Eats* blog was one such moment. The "About" section should have given it away, when the blog's writer Samantha states (with my emphasis in bold type):

"I've been 98.9% vegan for about four years. I'm not a fanatic vegan so I will eat vegetarian from time to time, but I do prefer this diet over any other I've been on in my life because I feel great and the food is still fantastic."

The thing is that in what this self-described vegan presents as an instalment in her "[Becoming Vegan](#)" series, she promotes being everything *but* vegan. Furthermore, she repeatedly mocks and/or dismisses people who are actually vegan as being akin to religious fanatics. Some quotes that reflect her confusion about veganism in general:

Every vegan has a different goal or purpose for their diet and lifestyle. They don't all put the same weight or importance on their diet or the products that they use, so it is sometimes challenging for two vegans to agree with what is really vegan. [...] For example, one vegan may continue to use honey, while the other vegan may only use agave nectar.

And then:

[O]ne may wear leather shoes, and the other may only choose to wear pleather or hemp.

And concerning her own "veganism", she writes:

I admit that I haven't gone beyond food much yet. [...] One reason for this is that many natural and vegan products, including cosmetic and cleaning supplies, are extraordinarily expensive. I do purchase products like these from time to time, however until the monetary prices come down, it will be hard for me to be willing to fork over the money for them on a consistent basis.

She ends her post with by counseling new vegans on how to go about becoming vegan:

Ask yourself if you plan on only being a dietary vegan or if you are going to let this spread to your clothes and hygiene products, too.

Then for what she calls "long-time vegans", she asks:

[H]ow far does your vegan lifestyle go? Does it stop at food and not extend into your shampoo, makeup and shoes? Or are you striving to be 100% in every aspect of your life? Additionally, do you encounter this type of situation where another vegan doesn't think you're really vegan or vice versa?

When I read her post earlier yesterday before others chimed in to point out Samantha's moral inconsistencies and sloppy misrepresentations of veganism, most of the comments seemed to have been left by fairly sympathetic and like-minded readers. It was in her response to one of these comments that her disassociation and compartmentalizing became most apparent. She wrote the following in response to something or other: "**It drives me nuts when even vegetarians say that they eat fish. Then you're not a vegetarian! It's not like they grow fish on trees.**" Uh, yeah.

So, what is veganism? Veganism isn't about sometimes choosing to exploit animals for your taste-buds, your vanity or to accommodate your budget. Veganism isn't just about "diet". If you consume animal products, you're not vegan. It's a simple definition and if you stick to it, it does not make you a "fanatic" or a nitpicker--it makes you consistent and unequivocal in your eschewing involvement in the exploitation of nonhuman animals.

Angel Flinn recently wrote an essay that beautifully and accurately describes the vegan ideal; if you're looking for inspiration, it's as good a place as any to start. If you take the interests of nonhuman animals seriously at all today, on World Vegetarian Day, please go vegan. (Just *please* don't follow *Novel Eats* blogger Samantha's lead on how to purportedly go about doing so.)

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POSTED BY MYLÈNE OUELLET AT 1:25 PM

LABELS: BLOGS, MISREPRESENTATION OF VEGANISM, VEGANISM

16 COMMENTS:

Vegan Chic said...

I've been 98.9% [against pedophilia] for about four years. I'm not a fanatic [anti-pedophilia person] so I will [have sex with children from time to time ...] I mean, I gave up kiddie porn, but it's the whole sex-with-kids thing I just can't commit to completely giving up yet. "I admit that I haven't gone beyond [giving up kiddie porn] much yet. [...] One reason for this is that finding people my own age to have sex with is extraordinarily difficult and expensive. I do make the effort to have sex with adults "from time to time, however until the monetary prices [of prostitutes and dating] come down, [or until I become more attractive] it will be hard for me to be willing to fork over the money for [this endeavor] on a consistent basis. ... Every anti-pedophilia person "has a different goal or purpose for their [sexual partner choices] and lifestyle. ... They don't all put the same weight or importance on their [choice of sexual partners] or the [type of porn they watch] ... For example, one [anti-pedophilia person] may continue to [have sex with children], while the other [anti-pedophilia person] may only [have sex with persons his own age]."

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 01, 2009 6:30:00 PM



Carol said...

Great blog post! :)

Brilliant comment, Vegan Chic! :)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 01, 2009 8:19:00 PM



Elizabeth Collins said...

Vegan Chic. May I PLEASE use this comment. Please oh please. I wil totally give you credit. :-)

Love this blog!

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 6:44:00 AM



LiveVegan said...

Thanks Mylene :) Thanks Vegan Chic for the comments.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 9:41:00 AM

Lorraine Haines said...

A wonderful article, Mylène, thank you!

Vegan Chic - thank you for making the point so very well! I use the same analogy in face to face conversations, and sometimes people really think about it. When I make the same point online, however, I'm often told that if I can compare child abuse with consumption of animal products, then my perception is 'way off' and any further discussion with me would be pointless.

That always upsets me...when people 'write off' the point being made and refuse to continue to converse with me. Still...not everyone 'closes off'.

Elizabeth - I love your podcast. You are an inspiration.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 9:59:00 AM



Mylène Ouellet said...

Very well stated, Vegan Chic!

Lorraine, the fact that they're unable or unwilling to hear what you're saying is mostly a sad reflection of their deeply-ingrained speciesism, isn't it? Also, when it comes to "hot button" moral issues involving humans (e.g. child abuse, rape, et al.), most people tend to react very emotionally to those topics, so it can be tricky to use them to make analogies. People just get too worked up to be able to listen.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 10:23:00 AM



Lorraine Haines said...

I suppose I should maybe hold back on that, and try different examples first...

I'm always more comfortable in face to face situations (I admire you for being able to put things so well in writing!).

As a fairly new abolitionist, I'm learning so much from others.

Thank you.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 10:39:00 AM



Practical Vegan said...

I am vegan..diet/lifestyle...the whole shabang. But think these posts (pedophilia versus animal cruelty/rights) is over the top... Does this mean that if you are a Christian and you gossip/lie/take the lord's name in vain or are jealous, envious then you aren't REALLY a Christian. (or, a really really bad one) Why not just be at peace that SOME animals have been saved...

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 10:40:00 AM



Mylène Ouellet said...

Lorraine, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. People all react differently. Several months ago, for instance, while speaking to a friend, I made an analogy using rape to try to describe to him just how vehemently opposed I am to animal exploitation and all he got out of it at the time was that I was calling him (an omni) a rapist. he understands now what I was getting at, but at the time, his strong emotional reaction to my bringing up rape made it impossible for him to listen objectively. Glad to have another abolitionist on board, by the way! It's nice to meet you.

Practical Vegan, by definition vegans don't knowingly consume animals products. Period.

Why not just be at peace that SOME animals have been saved...

Because I support the abolition of the exploitation of *all* nonhuman animals--not just those that some think are less tasty than others or those who don't make cosmetics cost less.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 11:48:00 AM

Vegan Chic said...

Elizabeth, of course you can repost - thanks! :) Thanks, Carol, LiveVegan, and Lorraine!

Danielle Savoy

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 2:51:00 PM



JohnnyZu said...

Thanks for the article! I've been vegan for about only three years, but I've found the transition to be easy: I avoid all animal products, period. It's easy because I simply cannot stomach the exploitation of animals.

I've seen people describe themselves as 'almost vegan', 'mostly vegan', '99% vegan', 'beegan' and it pisses me off to no end. When these people choose to espouse the belief that are something that they aren't, and seek my approval for it, I adamantly refuse. Further, I describe precisely what they are, based up they're own description of their behaviors, and I remain immovable and unflappable. For whatever reason, they want to be a vegan. Well, I want to be an astronaut.

I like to use that one and cannibalism, people don't get so fired up about that example and it seems so appropriate.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 02, 2009 4:16:00 PM

Rahzh said...

She locked the comments on that post. I wondered why it had stopped at 65 days ago.

She has posted a new blog post in reply (also with comments locked). Nothing shocking really. Still trying to justify things.

http://www.noveleats.com/becoming-vegan/a-sour-taste-in-our-mouths/

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 03, 2009 10:47:00 PM

Mylène Ouellet said...

I just read your tweet about it. Basically, she's describing her fear and saying that she can consume all the animals she wants and still call herself a vegan and that anyone who says otherwise is a bully and a fanatic. Oh well. To do? I've seen more logic and maturity in pre-schoolers. :-)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 03, 2009 11:03:00 PM

Luella said...

I notice in her post responding to criticisms, she doesn't even bother to cite what others have said, but briefly summarizes and continuously refers to "vegan fundamentalism."

Well, evidently she is not a "vegan fundamentalist," but rather a "vegetarian fundamentalist" since she absolutely doesn't consider people who eat meat to be vegetarian.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 04, 2009 7:02:00 PM

Luis Tovar said...

A 1951 letter titled "Veganism Defined" by Leslie Egan, then Vice President of The Vegan Society in England:

"Recently the Vegan Society adopted revised and extended rules which among other things clarify the goal towards which the movement aspires.

The Society's object and meaning of the word "veganism", have until now been matters of inference and personal predilection, are now defined as follows:

The object of the Society shall be to end the exploitation of animals by man; and The word veganism shall mean the doctrine that man should live without exploiting animals."

The Society pledges itself 'in pursuance of its object' to 'seek to end the use of animals by man for food, commodities, work, hunting, vivisection and all other uses involving exploitation of animal life by man.

Membership its the Society was available to all who wished to see the object achieved and who undertake to live as closely to the ideal as personal circumstances permit. An Associate makes no promise as to behaviour but declares himself in agreement with the object. The door is thus widely opened, and the Society welcomes all who feel able to support it. Direction and management of the Society's work, however, rest with the members.

The effect of this development is to make veganism unique among movements concerned with animal welfare. For it has crystallised as a whole and not, as are all other such movements, as an abstraction. Where every other movement deals with a segment - and therefore deals directly with practices rather than with principles - veganism is itself a principle, from which certain practices logically flow.

If, for example, the vegan principle is applied to diet, it can at once be seen why it must be vegetarian in the strictest sense and why it cannot contain any foods derived from animals. One may become a vegetarian for a variety of reasons - humanitarian, health, or mere preference for such a diet; The principle is a smatter of personal feeling, and varies accordingly. Veganism, however, is a principle - that man has no right to exploit the creatures for his own ends - and no variation occurs. Vegan diet is therefore derived entirely from "fruits, nuts, vegetables, grains and other wholesome non-animal products," and excludes "flesh, fish, fowl, eggs, honey and animal milk and its derivatives."

In a vegan world the creatures would be reintegrated within the balance and sanity of nature as she is in herself. A great and historic wrong, whose effect upon the course of evolution must have been stupendous, would be righted. The idea that his fellow creatures might be used by man for self-interested purposes would be so alien to human thought as to be almost unthinkable. In this light, veganism is not so much welfare as liberation, for the creatures and for the mind and heart of man; not so much an effort to snake the present relationship bearable, as an uncompromising recognition that because it is in the main one of master and slave, it has to be abolished before something better and finer can be built.

Veganism is in truth an affirmation that where love is exploitation vanishes. It possesses historical continuity with the movement that set free the human slaves. Were it put into effect, every basic wrong done to animals by man would automatically disappear. At its heart is the healing power of compassion, the highest expression of love of which man is capable. For it is a giving without hope of a getting. And yet, because he would free himself from many of the demands made by his own lower nature, the benefit to man himself would be incalculable."

http://www.ivu.org/history/world-forum/1951vegan.html

MONDAY, OCTOBER 05, 2009 10:45:00 AM

Mylène Ouellet said...

Thank you for that quote and reference, Luis. I think that I may use it to put together another post on veganism this week. There's so much misunderstanding concerning it.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 05, 2009 10:49:00 AM

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QUI SUIS-JE?



MYLÈNE OUELLET
CANADA

I am an abolitionist vegan who writes mostly about things pertaining to the ethics of consumerism. This means that I'm interested in what we eat or use, how we grow or produce it, and what all of this entails in terms of human / non-human animal suffering and environmental destruction. I also like to poke around and see how much of these issues are (mis)represented in mainstream media.

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FAQ (WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID)

What's the History of Veganism?
So, What Is Veganism?
What Is Wrong with Vegetarianism? Vegan, Veggie or Veg'n?
The Problems Inherent in Animal Welfareism

How Is PETA Damaging to Animal Rights?
But Cage-Free Chickens Are "Happy", Aren't They?
"Free-Range" Vs. Battery Eggs -- Is There a Difference? (pamphlet)

Fish Feel Pain
The So-Called "Plants Feel Pain" Argument
Where Can I Read More about the Abolitionist Approach?

1 buffaloes
0 camels
16 cattle
2,765 chickens
148 ducks
22 goats
0 horses
76 pigs
31 sheep
35 turkeys

Number of animals killed in the world by the meat, dairy and egg industries, since you opened this webpage. This does not include the billions of fish and other aquatic animals killed annually.

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Abolitionist Approach Commentary
NZ Vegan Podcast
On Human-Nonhuman Relations
The Vegan News (video)
Vegan Freak Radio
We Other Animals Radio

THE ETHICS OF CONSUMPTION AND OTHERWISE

350 Animal Rights Quotes
Abolitionist Animal Rights
Abolitionist Vegans
Angel Flinn's Care2 Essays
Animal Legal and Historical Web Center

Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Rights - Change.org
Animal Rights Library
Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach

Between the Species: An Online Journal for the Study of Philosophy and Animals
Bob Torres
Brockway Hall
easyVegan.info
Food for Thought Radio
Hungry Hungry Veganos
International Society for Animal Rights

John Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing
Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights
NZ Vegan Podcast
On Human-Nonhuman Relations
Planet Freak
Randy W. Sandberg
Responses to Common Objections to Animal Rights

Striking at the Roots: Animal Activism Around the World
Suicide Food
The starting point.
The Tom Regan Animal Rights Archive

The Vegan Solution
Unpopular Vegan Essays
Vegan Abolitionist
Vegan Examiner
veganarky
Veganicious
Vegatopia
We Other Animals

VEGAN COOKING AND NUTRITION

Alternative Vegan
Cake Maker to the Stars
Carrot and Potato Time
Cooking from 1000 Vegan Recipes
Disposable Aardvarks Inc.
eat'n vegan: vegan food and recipes
FatFree Vegan Kitchen
happyveganface
Harmless Foma
Kitchen Dancing
Quick and Dirty Vegan
Seitan Is My Motor
The Hummus Blog

The Papaya Chronicles
Vegan Benefits Blog
Vegan Eats and Treats
Vegan Improv
VeganMania
VeganYumYum
VeganYums (vegan blog tracker)
Vivez Végét!
Yummy Vegan Dinners

OTHER THINGS I LIKE TO READ OR WATCH

AlterNet (news)
Axis of Logic
CorpWatch - Holding Corporations Accountable
Dumb Little Man
Independent Media Center
Integrate This!
Red Star Cafe
Smite Me!
Vegatee

J Vegetarian with the "Wildman" (Steve Brill's site)

MY BLOG LIST

Planet Frank
Popo-chan (Thank you, Flickr) - Popo-chan, via Flickr - thanks
cJPanda! LMB Ji!...
5 hours ago

The Vegan Solution
Vegan 1-2-3: What Do Vegans Eat? - Image: Tempeh Teriyaki, www.GentleWorld.org What do vegans eat? It's a common concern, and a question that has become something of a joke amongst vegans, f...
1 day ago

brockway hall
Irrelevant Criterion -
3 days ago

Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach
Commentary: World Vegan Day--Nov. 1, 2009 - Dear Colleagues: Happy World Vegan Day to all of you. In this Commentary, I reflect on the state of the vegan movement. The bad news: the large welfare cor...
3 days ago

We Other Animals
Food miles: meaningful environmentalism or wacky nonsense? Wacky nonsense. - One of the hipper excuses not to go vegan these days is that veganism is somehow bad for the environment. Common sense tells us that this is wrong, but gues...
1 week ago

NZ Vegan Podcast
NZ Vegan Podcast Episode 41 - Special guest Corey Wrenn! PhD Student in Sociology at Colorado State University and also the writer for the Roanoke Vegan Examiner - This week I have a long awaited and well worth the wait interview with Corey Wrenn from the Roanoke Vegan Examiner. We talk about Professor of Philosophy ...
1 week ago

On Human-Nonhuman Relations
Poverty of Ambition in the Context of Social Change. - "Social change is happening but social change is slow." This social fact may not particularly comfort us when we think of the thousands of nonhuman individ...
1 week ago

Unpopular Vegan Essays
The Definitions of "Veganism" and "Vegan" - The Vegan Society gives us an accurate and authoritative definition of "veganism" as follows: ""The word 'veganism' denotes a philosophy and way of living ...
2 weeks ago

Abolitionist Animal Rights
In Support of Non-Violence - Since the abolitionist approach was developed in the writings of Gary Francione, it has been marginalized by those who represent what abolitionists refer to, ...
2 months ago

Vegan Freak: Being Vegan in a Non-Vegan World
Oprah Gives Away Free Chicken: We Yawn and Say We Told You So - It hurts us more than it hurts you to say it, but hell, we have to say it anyway: we were right. Last May when Oprah went on her 21-day vegan "cleanse," th...
5 months ago

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WHAT DAY IS IT?

