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Stop Factory Farming for the Sake of Humanity!

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DiMauro

Stop Factory Farming for the Sake of *Humanity*!

Alex DiMauro

Abstract

The world is being destroyed. We do not care about the mistreatment of animals in factory farms because of our consumeristic taste buds, but this gluttony is even more problematic than we think. It is blinding us from an even larger factor at stake. Our factory farming methods are a leading contributor in the causes of global warming. What this means for us is that our consumption has a direct impact on our destruction. We need to think big, and act. The only way to combat this issue is through taking courses of action that will force people to open their eyes and understand the injustice. Once we get the support of the general public (there is strength in numbers), we will have the necessary tools to combat the larger system at play here which is raping our planet, namely capitalism.

Introduction

Yuval Harari, Timothy Morton, and Pope Francis, while holding radically different roles in society, and some opposing religious beliefs, share a wide range of similar ideas especially regarding the environment and the constructs of society. Harari's main idea is that virtually every function that makes up a society is an imagined reality: our money, human rights, religion, etc. Morton taps into this imagined reality as well when he talks about nature and the environment. He says people talk about nature as if it is something tangible with a specific location separate from a place like our own home; nature is all about location, location, location. But he argues against this method of thinking as he sees nature, and what he terms the *ecological thought*, unfolding into a much broader scope. According to Morton, we cannot separate nature and the

environment from anything else because nature does not stop somewhere.¹ It is quite literally within everything. We have simply made up or imagined this thing called nature.

Ironically enough, the Pope actually begins to tap into the imagined reality as well. Obviously he does not see the Catholic faith as an imagined reality like Harari, but he does critique utilitarian mindsets such as individualism, consumerism, etc. He refers to these as “myths of modernity” which blind us from the truth.² All these authors are clearly critics of capitalism where a consumerist society is not only destroying our humanity, but also the planet.

This is where environmental justice comes into play. We must remember this duty that we hold as inhabitants of planet earth. Simply because we can collaborate with each other as humans and use tools more effectively in comparison to any other species (that we know of), is not grounds for exploiting those “inferior” species. Our humanism/consumerism has given us too much pride in ourselves and has actually made us killers. We unfortunately see animals through a green lens; profit, and our methods in turn have a direct (negative) impact on the other green; the environment. We kill animals, literally and figuratively. Literally; by chopping their heads off, ripping their bones apart, and sawing up their body into several bloody pieces. Figuratively; by industrializing them, turning them into a machine and part of a conveyer belt where they are exploited and only seen as an opportunity for profit and consumption. And this profit and consumption blinds us from a far greater risk than the de-animalization which is taking place. And that is the harsh reality that our factory farming methods are a leading contributor in global warming which in turn is eradicating the planet on which all life known to humankind exists. Very soon, without radical change there will be no planet, no environment. Without a

¹ Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, And London, England: Harvard University Press, 2010).

² Pope Francis. *Laudato Si* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015).

place to live, life will cease to exist on earth. And yes, that means human life too. Is the industrialization of livestock for profit and consumption worth the destruction of the planet? We have an obligation to care for these animals simply because we *can*. As far as we know humans are the only ones who are able to imagine. Having the power to create morality goes hand in hand with the responsibility to practice it. Animals may or may not be able to see the beauty and potential in other living beings. A pet may only stay loyal to its owner because it receives treats. But *we* know better. We can see past objectification. We know that there is more than just money and a great taste behind a full-grown cow. But this morality is not even necessary to stop corporate business from its severe procedures. Even someone who throws morality out the door can think critically, and understand that for the planet and ultimately all life to survive, a societal change in practice needs to take place.

While Morton would say think globally, Pope Francis would say act locally. Francis recommends that we start to use less water and more fuel efficient methods of transportation to soften our carbon footprint. But while these steps are all well and good, we cannot call ourselves environmentalists if this is all we do. We need to think big, and think big again and see the larger picture. Clearly there are even worse things going on in our environment – agribusiness and factory farms. None of us should loathe in luxury until everyone on earth is truly treated for their worth, humans and non-humans alike. We need to think first, critically, and then act. The situation needs to be addressed, but we cannot stop there. Action must take place. We cannot afford to remain silent. Why? Because this inequality is allowing a negative form of equity to arise – the equal opportunity of *all* life on earth to die an unequivocal death.

Information Literacy and Value Based Perspectives

For centuries, to be human for many people has to do with being the supreme ruler of the earth. Much of this humanism stems from religion, where faiths such as Christianity tell us that God created the planet and its animals for humans. Today we see an industrialization of animals. They are raised in factories for us to reap the benefits. Not only that but they are mistreated. Even if the imagined reality that we have dominion over animals were to be true, can one really justify the callous mistreatment of animals that takes place in factory farming every day?

Animals are raised to have as much life as possible *sucked* out of them, and they are left to rot in our profit and gluttony. Animals are part of our environment. So part of environmental justice should be aimed at our obligation to protect and respect the other species that inhabit the planet.

Humans do not have the right to mistreat animals, especially when it is solely for their exploitation for economic profit and fulfilment of taste buds. We are stripping the natural out of nature. We are turning animals sub-animalistic as we redefine what it means to be human. What it means to be human today has everything to do with progress, profit, and capitalism. Ironically, it seems that what it means to be human for many people is to be in some ways, inhumane. We are starting to show signs of improvement caring for other human beings, but at the same time we compensate by diminishing our compassion for those beings which are non-human. When we had back yard farms, farmers cared about their animals because they saw first-hand their nature and “beingness.” We raised animals and appreciated the food they provided us. Now we have de-animalized those same animals through factory farms, to the point where we have turned them into machines of exploitation while the rest of us live in a shroud of ignorance enjoying the bliss.

But it does not even take a care for animals in order to see the injustice here. If we are killing animals because we value human life more, then maybe in order to stop the injustice people need

to see how this process is in turn killing them. There is no question that factory farming procedures are aiding in the destruction of the environment. Fossil fuel is burned to produce fertilizers, animal feed, and transportation of products. Lands are degraded and destroyed for the implementation of the farms, and significant amounts of methane are released from animal manure and the breakdown of fertilizers.³ Methane from animal manure that is released reaches around eighteen million tonnes each year. There are often lagoons next to factory farms that maintain animal manure in liquid form, but this is part of the reason why there is such a problem with methane. “The leading role of livestock, in methane emissions, has long been a well-established fact... Livestock account for 35–40 percent of global anthropogenic emissions.”⁴ Livestock accounts for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions from the major sections which are energy, industry, waste, land use and land use change and forestry (LULUCF), and agriculture. For the LULUCF and agriculture section it accounts for 50% of all emissions while in just agriculture alone, livestock accounts for 80% of the gas emissions!⁵ As for Nitrous oxide, livestock account for 65 percent of global anthropogenic emissions. What does all this mean? We’ll global warming is real, and among other constituents, factory farming is doing a great job allowing it to take place. Our planet is heating up. Ice caps are melting. Sea levels are rising. This is forcing humans living in coastal regions to be displaced and move to areas where their homes will not be susceptible to destruction from the ocean. But the fact of the matter is that global warming already has, and will affect the entire planet, including all of its life forms. Only

³ *Livestock’s role in climate change and air pollution* (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome 2006).

⁴ *Livestock’s role in climate change and air pollution* (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome 2006).

⁵ *Livestock’s role in climate change and air pollution* (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome 2006).

time will tell before it causes an epidemic that forces people to see the chaos, as if we are not in it already. But this mass destruction is not necessarily unavoidable. It may be able to be prevented, or at least prolonged until we can find a better solution. But first action must be taken. For the sake of the animals, for the sake of the environment, and for the sake of our humanity.

The most effective way to start to put an end to this injustice is direct action. There are plenty examples of people who have pursued animal liberation and used direct action as their means. We will dive in (no pun intended) to one of those organizations in detail: Sea Shepherds. Protest is good at voicing concerns and opinions, but a lot of times it stops there, or people become demotivated. Direct action is powerful. It comes from the heart putting global issues above personal concerns. Putting your body on the line is sometimes the only way to get attention and see change. Its methods may not always be in one's own personal best interest, but *maybe* there is something larger than our own personal life that we must take a stand for.

Critical Thinking and Interdisciplinary Approaches

Critical thinking is an art. Thoughts arise in our head all the time, but we do not have to own them. We must recognize which thoughts are ours and which thoughts are junk. We must cultivate ourselves and our minds. We need to ask ourselves why these thoughts ring true to us and why others don't. We also need to challenge ourselves. If we are not able to listen to the other side of an argument or belief, then maybe we need to restructure our lifestyle. We see this oftentimes in religion when people believe their religion is absolute truth, and refuse to hear other beliefs or scientific data that counters their ideas. But the only way to progress (within yourself and also within society) is through questioning the established order. The established order within us is our belief system. Be careful in the comfortableness with a belief, as it may make you ignorant and shield you from other ideas, experiences, and possibilities. This does not

mean we cannot hold firm beliefs. But what this does mean is that we must remain open. It is the only way to cultivate our minds. A flower will never grow in a vacuum. It must live out in the wilderness, open to the water and sunlight which are the endless opportunities of development that make up our lives. Sure, this also makes us more susceptible to the dangers of the wilderness like giant gusts of wind and evil foragers. But if we are a smart flower we will know how to protect ourselves from the dangers and unhealthy healthy beliefs, by putting ourselves in the right environment and maybe even biting back at toxic foragers try to pull our roots. We must classify these foragers though; as not all seek to consume us. There may be some that seek to pull our roots to help relocate these roots to healthier soils that will allow us to become more powerful than we could possibly imagine. And that imagination is precisely what we need to develop. Imagination is the key to thinking critically. Possibilities are endless with our imagination, but if we don't know how to ripen it, then it will never bear fruit.

We need each other to help discover ourselves, just as much as we need art, music, religion, science, and literature. Without these pieces of society, we would not know how to make sense of the world. And we desperately need to make sense of the world. We are in a state of ecological emergency. Global warming is real, and we are contributing to it. We must think ecologically in order to save our environment. Thinking ecologically is thinking critically. The ecological thought is not only about what you think, but "how you think."⁶ If we follow hard data, science, we learn to un-think certain previous proclamations about truth. With art and music we expand our minds and teach them to think *differently*. If we imagine and propose alternatives to the systems in place which are destroying our nation - namely capitalism, we can

⁶ Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, And London, England: Harvard University Press, 2010), 4.

create religions to help restore peace to our environment. Only through inner cultivation and critical thinking, will we be able to save the world from ecological destruction.

Ethical Reasoning and Direct Action

What can be done in times of injustice? Silence is not the answer. When animals are turned into machines and factory farms are the leading cause of global warming, society must not sit still. Unfortunately, those who are comfortable with their benefits and lives will more often than not remain silent. But those who have made conscious efforts to peel away the shroud of ignorance and are willing to put general life before personal life *will* rise to the occasion. And it is these people who hold the weight of attempting to inspire the removal of others' ignorance. One of the most effective tactics to get people to care about an issue is by shoving it in their face. If people are ignorant of the evils connected to factory farming, then someone needs to reveal them. Direct action performs this function. It is a tactical method people use to stand up against injustice. There are countless examples of direct action taken toward the farming industry.

What is important to understand about direct action is that it is strategic. It takes different forms, and all of these different forms play a role in working toward an end to injustice. One method is peaceful protest. This past January, at a Farm Show in Harrisonburg, PA, the organization Direct Action Everywhere took a stance. As Governor Wolf made his opening remarks at the event, activists surrounded him, holding up signs and chanting things like "It's not food, it's violence." When police responded to the situation, there was no resistance from the protestors, and they were escorted peacefully.⁷

⁷ Scicchitano, Eric. *Animal rights activists disrupt opening ceremony at Farm Show* (Points of View Reference Center, Sunbury, PA. January 10, 2016).

Direct action calls for media attention. That is really the preliminary goal because the media holds all the influence in our society. If activists can get their messages to mainstream media, then maybe they will be able to persuade large groups of people to come to their senses. Thus the internet is a good medium for activism, since billions of people use the internet. This allows for organizations such as People For The Ethical Treatment Of Animals to use websites, in addition to ads and billboards, to promote the slogan "Jesus was a Vegetarian."⁸ This is a twofold approach – on the one hand the organization is using the internet to spread awareness to injustice; and on the second tear, they use provocative language that strikes the viewer's eye. This is why it doesn't matter when films such as *Cowspiracy*, *Food INC*, or *Vegucated* inflate their statistics. It doesn't matter what is said at the end of the day, it matters what is learned. The only way to learn is by listening. And for some people unfortunately, the only way they will hear something is if the language is unpleasant to their ears. Sure this can make some people susceptible to disregarding the information not seeing it as legitimate. But at least they will hear it. And maybe if they do not like what they hear they will do some research to back up their argument. And maybe in doing so they will discover something new that they never thought about. And a layer of ignorance will be unveiled.

Lastly, putting one body on the line can be another extremely effective method of communication. If an unjust system is devaluing the lives of animals, then an effective way to reverse the situation is through inserting the value of human life. "Animal rights activists chained themselves to a Laverton pig slaughterhouse's gas chamber on Monday to protest 'stunning' by carbon dioxide."⁹ A corporation wouldn't dare use its same methods of animal exploitation on a

⁸ *Animal Rights Groups more Radical, Farmers Told* (Toronto Star April 10, 2000).

⁹ Goya, Dmytryshchak. *Laverton: Animal Rights Activists Chain Themselves to Pig Slaughterhouse 'Gas Chamber'* (Maribyrnong Weekly, December 09, 2015).

human being. So by placing one's body on the line, the business has to step back and hopefully in stepping back this allows the abuser to see the unjust system in which he or she is operating under, and will eventually lead to the striving for righteousness.

These are just a few examples of direct action that has taken place. It is important to understand that a lot of the action taken is only aimed toward improving the lives of animals. But while we unequivocally need to treat animals with more dignity, that is not enough. If we keep up factory farming and simply treat the animals with a bit more care, it will not help the climate crisis, and will lead to the eventual death of everyone, quite literally. So to combat climate change we need to completely defeat or change the current system with which we live, namely capitalism – that which places monetary value over the lives of living beings and the planet. We will need to suffer collectively in order to insure the well-being of everyone and the planet!

Conclusion

Where one believes in animal rights or thinks that humans hold dominion over animals, one cannot argue for the destruction of our planet. If our planet is destroyed, the hierarchy will not matter because we will all be dead. Factory farming practices are currently holding a significantly negative impact in the environment, which in turn will have a negative impact on the future of humans and animals alike. If we wish to continue to eat meat, then at least our practices of how we go about doing that must change. We have to think critically and look at the larger picture. What is truly at the root of all this destruction is capitalism and consumerism. We value profit over the lives of individuals and the well-being of the planet. But if capitalism is the problem, then how do we go about changing the system? In a state of emergency, rules don't apply. If a woman speeding in her car but pregnant rushing to the hospital, she is likely not going

to get a ticket. When there is a tsunami occurring, people are not going to stop at stop signs. In a similar fashion we need to show the world that we are in a state of emergency, and that we can't afford to be following the guidelines of a corrupt system. Direct action is the way to show people. If we are bold and provocative, maybe people will start to care about the future of our descendants and planet. Only with publicity and support will we be able to affect destruction and change.

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