

Herbert's Herbivore: One-Dimensional Society and the Possibility of Radical Vegetarianism


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ABSTRACT

Careful reading of Herbert Marcuse's texts, including *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, *One-Dimensional Man, An Essay on Liberation*, and *Eros and Civilization*, reveals his subtle attention to the human–animal dialectic and its role in human liberation. More specifically, animals mark the irrationality of advanced industrialized society for Marcuse, and his subtle but keen treatment of the animal question in politics provides an opening to radically rethink politics for animals and humans. Working from Marcuse's critical theory, I explore the contemporary one-dimensional animal, which I argue imbricates both animals and humans in the violence and destruction that characterizes advanced industrial society. Using Marcuse's concept of one-dimensional society and his discussion of animals as my theoretical framework, I specifically consider vegetarianism in its capacity to militate against the contemporary political economy of meat. I conclude that Marcuse's insights point to a radical vegetarianism aligned with anti-capitalist politics that offers the development of sensuous, pleasurable, life-affirming sensibilities that support true liberation for both animals and humans.

In 1964, Herbert Marcuse published the landmark book, *One-Dimensional Man*, which would forever change the trajectory for radical theorizing. In it, Marcuse posited the very real possibility that in a late capitalist society where the visible gap between the proletariat and owning classes is becoming increasingly imperceptible due to the burgeoning welfare state, Marx's hope of a working class revolution is just that, but a hope, nonetheless, which must be kept alive: "It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us."¹ one-dimensional society, according to Marcuse, is our advanced industrial society, which has created false needs, driven by profit, which have so thoroughly integrated individuals into the system of production and consumption that opposition to the system is rendered nearly impossible. Practically, what this means is that all thought and behavior is becoming so closed, so in line with "the smooth operation of the whole," that oppositional action and critical thinking is fading away.² Destruction and waste, which should appear as irrational,

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¹Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 257.

²*Ibid.*, 2.

are rationalized into the production of needs so that people identify themselves in their commodities: “The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced.”³ Those denied by the system, outside of it, are the ones who keep alive the hope of changing it, according to Marcuse. As food, clothing, entertainment, and medical specimens, animals remain outside the neoliberal capitalist system while simultaneously circulating within it as commodities to be consumed for human “needs.” However, within advanced industrial societies like the United States, the need to consume animals in these ways is irrational, unnecessary, and harmful to both human and animal lives, a point gestured to by Marcuse, and one that echoes his critique of false needs.

Marcuse has long been recognized as a beacon of radical politics for his support of the direct action tactics of the New Left during the 1960s as well as his call for critical theory to take seriously the weight of their revolutionary politics. Marcuse is less known, however, for his subtle consideration of animals. For Marcuse, animals mark the absurdity of advanced industrialized society; our ill treatment of animals, Marcuse notes in *One-Dimensional Man*, is “the work of a human society whose rationality is still the irrational.”⁴ More than simply presenting a discursive or theoretical break, animals function dialectically in Marcuse’s writings as the material memory of an antiquated ideology of violence and destruction and as signs of the hope and possibility for a liberated and peaceful society.⁵ Marcuse, in his subtle but keen treatment of the animal question in politics, provides an opening to radically rethink politics for animals *and* humans. For this reason, Marcuse’s theory offers a valuable contribution to contemporary discussions of animal liberation. Moreover, careful study of Marcuse’s work reveals his own dialectical tension with regard to animals: on one hand, Marcuse does not hesitate to call out the irrational violence of animal destruction and the necessary elimination of it for a truly liberated society, while on the other, Marcuse still situates the animal condition secondary to the human. With this in mind, this essay seeks to explore the contemporary one-dimensional animal, which I will argue imbricates both animals and humans in the violence and destruction that characterizes advanced industrial society. Using Marcuse’s concept of one-dimensional society and his discussion of animals as my theoretical framework, I will specifically consider what I call radical vegetarianism in its capacity to militate against the political economy of meat that defines our capitalist life world and as an integral part of a larger anti-capitalist politics.

Herbert’s Hippopotamus

Curiously, Marcuse kept several dozen figurines of hippopotamuses in his university office. Why? Well, in short, because Marcuse loved this particular animal for its absurdity and, in that absurdity, the possibility that it represented. This, of course, is one of the reveals of the 1996 documentary, *Herbert’s Hippopotamus*, which was produced by Danish filmmaker Paul Alexander Juutilainen and depicts Marcuse’s final years as a philosophy professor at the University of California, San Diego.⁶ Elaborating on the subject of Marcuse’s fascination with hippos, Douglas Kellner notes: “He thought the hippopotamus as a metaphor for all sorts of

³Ibid., 9.

⁴Ibid., 237.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Paul Alexander Juutilainen, *Herbert’s Hippopotamus: Marcuse and Revolution in Paradise* (De Facto Fiction Films, 1996).

things. He saw it as the wonder in nature, that nature could produce something so extravagant.⁷

It is intriguing that Marcuse views an animal – a large and powerful herbivore that congregates in schools for protection against predators – as representative of radical possibility, in turn, pointing to the often unseen importance of animals in his work. To be sure, Marcuse does not dwell on the topic of hippos and one is left to speculate about the greater significance of hippos within his political imaginary. Yet, Marcuse's fascination with hippopotamuses does provide a good starting point for examining his broader discussion of animals and the importance of animals with regard to his political theory. Marcuse's understanding of the hippo as a figure of possibility, for example, noticeably contrasts with Thomas Hobbes's interpretation of the biblical behemoth, which in secular Hebrew translates to hippopotamus.⁸ For Hobbes, the hippo is a sign of evil and destruction and is, as behemoth, the title animal of his account of the turmoil of the English Civil War. Herbert Schneider notes that Hobbes largely inverts the original biblical meanings of leviathan and behemoth by casting leviathan as the symbol of a powerful being that should be respectfully feared and behemoth as an evil animal that causes destruction in its wake, a symbol of the multitude cast back to the state of nature.⁹ As C.B. Macpherson explains in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, the state of nature for Hobbes is neither, as commonly interpreted, a historical condition prior to civil society nor a hypothetical condition drawn from natural human characteristics, but "a deduction from the appetites and other faculties not of man as such but as civilized men."¹⁰ Here, Macpherson is referring to Hobbes's modern materialist and market assumptions about human beings and, thus, his embedded belief that what humans lack in the state of nature are the goods and comforts of modern civilized life.¹¹ Notably, Macpherson views English society at the time of the English Civil War as a near complete market society.¹² The state of nature in which *Behemoth* reigns, then, is one that threatens the fundamental assumptions of this possessive market society and, thus, the capitalist mode of production.

For Marcuse, nature is an object of history, so there is no use in romanticizing it or attempting to recreate a pre-technological state of nature; rather, Marcuse's focus is on nature in contemporary society, which is tightly administered and has become a mechanism of social control – arguably, the market society that Hobbes renders a priori. A truly liberated society, for Marcuse, also requires the liberation of nature and the recovery of its life-enhancing forces, *Eros*, which is denied under capitalism.¹³ As Timothy W. Luke explains in his analysis of Marcuse and radical ecology, one-dimensional society destroys nature to feed its false needs and its false sense of freedom¹⁴ Thanatos, as opposed to *Eros*, drives this relationship to nature in advanced industrialized societies, in turn, necessitating and normalizing waste,

⁷Barbarella Fokos, "The Bourgeois Marxist," *The San Diego Reader*, Calendar Highlight UCSD, available online at: <http://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2007/aug/23/bourgeois-marxist/#> (accessed August 23, 2007).

⁸Herbert W. Schneider, "The Piety of Hobbes," in Ralph Ross, Herbert W. Schneider, and Theodore Waldman (eds), *Thomas Hobbes in His Time* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), p. 85.

⁹Herbert W. Schneider, "The Piety of Hobbes," p. 86.

¹⁰C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 29.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, 66.

¹³Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 60.

¹⁴Timothy W. Luke, *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 142.

destruction, and death in everyday life. Critiquing the “state of nature” promoted by Hobbes and other liberal thinkers, Marcuse notes: “As long as this is the history of mankind, the ‘state of nature,’ no matter how refined prevails: a civilized bellum omnium contra omnes, in which the happiness of the ones must coexist with the suffering of the others.”¹⁵ Contra this aggressive state of nature, Marcuse argues that it is pleasure, not fear, that is the basis of human action and liberation, and that liberating nature and its life-enhancing forces will bring about new qualities of freedom.¹⁶ The hippopotamus, one could argue, signifies this new possibility and freedom born of a non-exploitative relationship to nature. As such, the hippo is no longer a beast to be feared, but an avatar of radical possibility. Moreover, for Marcuse, this kind of embodiment is dialectical. One only sees the hippopotamus as affirmative if it is seen through erotic eyes: “In the Orphic and Narcissistic Eros, this tendency is released: the things of nature become free to what they are. But to be what they are *depends* on the erotic attitude: they receive their *telos* only in it.”¹⁷

Steven Vogel criticizes Marcuse for his utopian stance, arguing that Marcuse still remains indebted to a kind of anamnesis, a recollection of the forms of nature, which then contradicts the social character of nature that he simultaneously provides.¹⁸ This utopian ideal, as Vogel describes, is “the ideal of human somatic happiness, a life of pleasure and instinctual satisfaction marred by as little necessary labor as possible.”¹⁹ Since nature is a historical entity, this radical transformation of society ushered in via new technology and science would also bring about a new nature as well.²⁰ For Vogel, Marcuse’s reliance on Orpheus and Narcissus in his discussion of a truly liberated society, one in which lions, lambs, and people reconcile their differences, is especially troubling.²¹ Specifically, he points to a passage in which Marcuse speaks to the objectivity of nature and animals: “In being spoken to, loved, and cared for, flowers and springs and animals appear as what they are – beautiful, not only for those who address and regard them, but for themselves, ‘objectively.’”²² For Vogel, this is an unrealistic and wildly utopian image which discounts the human action necessary for social transformation,²³ and although he is not explicit on this point, Vogel’s critique again points to Marcuse’s apparent anamnesis; for example, the vegetarian, primitive state that Plato describes in *The Republic* (and *The Statesman*) is also representative of the peaceful “orphan state” of the Golden Age of Greece – absent of property, war or social conflict – while the luxurious state is its worldly manifestation.²⁴

Yet what Vogel mutes in his critique is that in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Marcuse concedes the impossibility of Orpheus’s song: “The end of this war, the perfect peace in the animal world – this idea belongs to the Orphic myth, not to any conceivable historical reality.”²⁵ Marcuse is clear in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* that the orthodox Marxist view of nature as something to be appropriated by humans, or unconcealed to reveal its social

¹⁵Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 14.

¹⁶Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, pp. 60–61.

¹⁷Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 166.

¹⁸Steven Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), p. 135.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 102.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 134.

²¹*Ibid.*, 137.

²²Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 166.

²³Vogel, *Against Nature*, p. 137.

²⁴Pierre Vidal-Naquet, “Plato’s Myth of the Statesman, the Ambiguities of the Golden Age and History,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 98 (1978), p. 132.

²⁵Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, p. 68.

production as Vogel claims, remains plagued with arrogance: “Marx’s notion of a human appropriation of nature retains something of the *hubris* of domination. ‘Appropriation,’ no matter how human, remains appropriation of a (living) object by a subject.”²⁶ One could argue that it is precisely Marcuse’s allegiance to the ontological autonomy of nature that provides a buffer from it being once again consumed by well-intended green ideologies, even those with a Marxist sensibility.

Marcuse’s dialectical orientation is especially prescient with regard to animals. In *One-Dimensional Man* and *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Marcuse directly points to the unnecessary cruelty that animals suffer in a late capitalist society and their dialectical importance in constructing a revolutionary politics. And while Marcuse chooses hippopotamuses as particular totems of radical possibility in everyday life, one could argue that his work points toward the reality that animals, as a class *which is not one*,²⁷ embody the violence and destruction of advanced industrialized society. A passage from *Counterrevolution and Revolt* is illustrative of this point:

Can the human appropriation of nature ever achieve the elimination of violence, cruelty, and brutality in the daily sacrifice of animal life for the physical reproduction of the human race? To treat nature “for its own sake” sounds good, but it is certainly not for the sake of the animal to be eaten, nor probably for the sake of the plant. (...) In the face of the suffering inflicted by man on man, it seems terribly “premature” to campaign for universal vegetarianism or synthetic foodstuffs; as the world is, priority must be on *human* solidarity among human beings. And yet, no free society is imaginable which does not, under its “regulative idea of reason,” make the concerted effort to reduce consistently the suffering which man imposes on the animal world.²⁸

Here, Marcuse points to the unnecessary destruction of animals for the physical reproduction of the human species, calling to mind Marx’s observation in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* that human beings, alienated in their labor, feel themselves in their animal functions²⁹ – specifically, eating and drinking, but one could also add predation and killing – and also in *One-Dimensional Man*, where he points to an irrational existence in advanced industrial society, in which suffering, violence, and destruction define nature and human reality, and in which the continued ill-treatment of animals serves as the embodiment of its irrationality.³⁰ Likewise, in *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse points to our sub-rational existence in advanced industrial society, in which suffering, violence, and destruction defines nature and human reality, with animals serving as the embodiment of its irrationality.³¹ And while Marcuse appears to support animal liberation and vegetarianism, he believes that they are untimely goals given the current state of human affairs. In this sense, Marcuse again presents a dialectical turn in which animals are secondary not by nature or dominion, but – if we read across Marcuse’s texts – because the industrial working class remains the

²⁶Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, pp. 68–69.

²⁷Here I am referring to Luce Irigaray’s text, *This Sex Which Is Not One*. See Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Trans.) (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

²⁸Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, p. 68.

²⁹Here Marx notes that alienated labor under capitalism renders humans to be freely active only in their animal functions such as eating and drinking, procreating, or in his home or dressing up: “What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.” Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” in Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition (New York, NY: WW Norton, 1978), p. 74.

³⁰Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, p. 237.

³¹*Ibid.*, 237.

revolutionary class in itself, but not *for* itself; that is, it is thoroughly integrated into and rewarded by the system.³²

Naturally, animals do not make up a class in the traditional Marxist sense because they do not possess the ability to develop a collective consciousness – at least not one that can be communicated by animals in and *for* themselves. Yet they do possess a common experience as commodities in relation to the means of production; this, of course, includes animals used for foodstuffs and experimentation, but also companion, zoo, and even wild animals. As Bob Torres explains in *Making a Killing*, it is animals' status as private property under the law that leads to a common experience of exploitation for animals that is "woven into our economy, our society, and our laws."³³ And, as Torres also discerns, as does David Nibert in *Animal Rights/Human Rights*, this animal exploitation is directly linked to human exploitation.³⁴ Animals and humans are inextricably linked in advanced industrial society so that the One-Dimensional Man is at once the one-dimensional animal. This calls for the speculation of whether the key to social transformation, to developing revolutionary consciousness in and for itself, is the explication of the ways in which the political economy of meat shapes one-dimensional society and, in turn, the one-dimensional animal that inhabits it.

Vegetarianism, Animals, and the Ideology of Death

Why do humans continue to kill and eat animals? Humans, especially those in advanced industrialized societies like the United States (USA), do not need to eat animals to live or to live well, for that matter. Yet, only two percent of Americans aged 17 and over are vegetarian or vegan, while eighty-eight percent have always been meat-eaters, and ten percent are former vegetarians and vegans. Of the lapsed vegetarians and vegans, more than half went back to eating meat within a year and one-third went back within three months. Why did they fall off the wagon? In a nutshell: it was really tough to stick with it.³⁵ Even so, a recent Gallop poll found that thirty-two percent of Americans support animal rights on par with human rights, with concern for animals concentrated on their treatment in circuses, research, and competitive sports.³⁶ And despite the growing number of would-be vegetarians and animal rights supporters, a 2013 survey conducted by Responsive Management also found that seventy-nine percent of Americans approve of hunting to provide food, protect humans from harm, and control and manage wildlife populations,³⁷ pointing to a growing ideology of locavorism and gastronomic authenticity, where the small-scale, direct act of hunting appears more sustainable and authentic than industrialized meat production. It seems, then, that Americans are a bit schizophrenic when it comes to killing animals and eating meat: a

³²Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, pp. 54–55.

³³Bob Torres, *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights* (Edinburgh, UK: AK Press, 2007), p. 67.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 45. See also David Nibert, *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

³⁵Melissa Dahl, "84% of Vegetarians Go Back to Eating Meat," *New York Magazine*, available online at: <<http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2014/12/84-percent-of-vegetarians-go-back-to-eating-meat.html>> (accessed December 3, 2014).

³⁶Rebecca Rifkin, "In U.S., More Say Animals Should Have Same Rights as People," *Gallop, Social Issues*, available online at: <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/183275/say-animals-rights-people.aspx>> (accessed May 18, 2015).

³⁷Mark Damian Duda, "Public Opinion on and Attitudes Toward Hunting," *Presentation, Pathways 2014 Conference* (Estes Park, CO), available online at: <https://warnercnr.colostate.edu/docs/hdnr/hdfw/2014/Presentations/007.A4.hunting_public_support/007.A4.001.public_opinion_on_and_attitudes_toward_hunting/Public%20Opinion%20on%20Hunting%20-%20Oct.%206%202,014.pdf> (accessed October 5–9, 2014).

strong minority of Americans support animal rights, while a decent number of Americans have dabbled in vegetarianism only to give it up, and most Americans remain consummate meat-eaters and support hunting. One thing is clear, despite this ambiguity: killing and eating animals is normal and largely tolerated in American society.

Marcuse points to the everyday brutality that individuals experience under capitalism and the absolute need to end that violence for social transformation to occur, including ending our violence against animals: “The elimination of violence, and the reduction in suppression to the extent required for protecting man and animals from cruelty and aggression are preconditions for the creation of a humane society.”³⁸ Such a society does not yet exist according to Marcuse. Rather, capitalist accumulation dictates that destruction and violence be tolerated and normalized as good for contemporary society. Of course, Marcuse is writing in America during the 1960s and within the context of the Vietnam War, but his insights are perhaps even more relevant within the “comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom” of contemporary neoliberal society.³⁹

A quick glance at the political economy of meat, focusing on meat production and consumption in the USA, for example, reveals its structural magnitude and the depths of violence against animals: in 2012, total meat production in the USA was 92.9 billion pounds (in terms of animal killed, this included 8.6 billion chickens, 113.2 million hogs, 32.1 million cattle, 250 million turkeys, and 2.2 million sheep and lambs) and the USA exported 1.5 billion metric tons of beef and beef variety meat, totaling \$631 billion in exports. In 2009, total meat and poultry sales in the USA totaled \$154.8 billion; and in 2010, 487,600 workers were employed in meat packing and processing industries, earning a total of \$19 billion in wages. Overall, the economic ripple effect of the meat and poultry industries is \$864.2 billion annually to the USA economy, or six percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). And, by way of its production and distribution connections, it impacts firms in every sector of the USA economy, and in every state and every congressional district.⁴⁰

The political economy of meat is ubiquitous and it is not limited to large-scale operations. Local, small-scale animal farms, although less profitable, supply the growing demand of foodies in search of organic, sustainable, and locally sourced farm-to-table products; for example, in 2009, small farms in the Pioneer Valley area of Massachusetts sold nine million dollars worth of agricultural products to consumers, which was double the amount sold in 2002.⁴¹ One of only a handful of local slaughterhouses in the state, Adams Farm Slaughterhouse, employs forty-one people and annually kills and processes about twenty-six thousand animals, which are brought in from four hundred and fifty New England farmers.⁴² While the violence of local meat production and consumption is on a smaller scale, the bourgeois demand for local meat sustains a niche market that ideologically functions to naturalize the destruction and violence that Marcuse criticizes. Furthermore, it proliferates a jargon of gastronomic authenticity, which assumes that, ultimately, one’s choices in the market produce wide-scale political results, and which feeds the Happy Consciousness with

³⁸Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” in Paul Connerton (ed.), *Critical Sociology* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 301.

³⁹Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, p. 1.

⁴⁰American Meat Institute, “The United States Meat Industry at a Glance,” available online at: <<http://www.meatami.com/ht/d/sp/i/47465/pid/47465>> (accessed March 2011).

⁴¹Kate Royals, “From Farm Animal to Filet Mignon: The Path from Farm to Plate of Local Meat in Western Massachusetts,” *MassLive*, available online at: <http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2014/04/farm_animal_to_filet_mignon_th.html> (accessed April 17, 2014).

⁴²*Ibid.*

its conviction that local farmers bear a more authentic and less violent relationship to animals.⁴³ The Happy Consciousness, which stifles revolutionary consciousness, absorbs animals' contradictory existence as life and death in the commodity form of meat in both the small-scale *and* industrial contexts. The former deems humanely slaughtered, cruelty-free meat – with its sustainable footprint, which can be traced directly back to the animal – as a morally just, healthy, and rational choice; while the latter distances the consumer from animals to the point of unrecognizability, rendering animals *absent referents* in the form of cheap and satisfying meat products.⁴⁴ Both, nonetheless, fetishize meat and naturalize meat-eating as a biological and/or ecological necessity, which then rationalizes the irrationality of meat consumption in an advanced industrial society in which it is no longer necessary, except to serve profit.⁴⁵

In short, One-Dimensional Man is also the Nietzschean higher man, who is also the self-loading ass⁴⁶ and, in turn, the one-dimensional animal. His life is identical to its life-activities; this is the reality for both animals and humans under capitalism.⁴⁷ In his analysis of Marx and animals, Bradley J. Macdonald demonstrates in a careful study of several of Marx's key texts that the dehumanizing and alienated context of capitalism that Marx describes in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* demonstrates that both animals and humans become equally exchangeable signifiers of exploitation (and by extension, death) that are forever linked in the capitalist production processes. Animals and humans are reduced to deformed commodity forms that deny their true potentialities.⁴⁸ Marcuse's political theory, via its Marxian heterodoxy, allows us to militate against this dialectical fatalism by calling

⁴³For a more detailed discussion of the jargon of gastronomic authenticity, see Katherine E. Young, "Adorno, Gastronomic Authenticity, and the Politics of Eating Well," *New Political Science: A Journal of Politics & Culture* (September 2014), pp. 387–405.

⁴⁴Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2000). In her analysis of meat-eating in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Adams notes that animals are objectified and fragmented through media, language and cultural images, rendering them unrecognizable and easily consumed as meat.

⁴⁵While environmentalists condemn large-scale meat operations for their environmental impact, both in terms of environmental degradation and resource consumption, the belief that sustainably produced meat is naturally beneficial to humans often goes unquestioned. For example, a recent book excerpt featured in *Scientific American* noted: "Meat consumption is a part of our evolutionary heritage; meat production has been a major component of modern food systems; carnivory should remain, within limits, an important component of a civilization that finally must learn how to maintain the integrity of its only biosphere." Vaclav Smil, "Should Humans Eat Meat? [Excerpt]," Energy and Sustainability News, *Scientific American*, available online at: <<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/should-humans-eat-meat-excerpt/>> (accessed July 19, 2013). Likewise, Michael Pollan points to the environmental problems of industrialized food production but also to the evolutionary and historical importance of meat eating in *Omnivore's Dilemma*, ultimately advocating humane treatment and swift death for animals. See Michael Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2006), pp. 314, 328. While meat consumption is part of human history, there is anthropological evidence to support that it is fairly recent and not a biological necessity; humans' teeth, intestines, lack of claws, and general sickness from the cholesterol and saturated fat in meat, some prominent nutritional and anthropological scientists argue, demonstrate that we are actually natural herbivores. See Kathy Freston, "Shattering the Meat Myth: Humans are Natural Vegetarians," The Blog, *Huffington Post*, available online at: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kathy-freston/shattering-the-meat-myth_b_214390.html> (accessed November 17, 2011). Whether carnivorism or vegetarianism is natural is perhaps a moot point from a Marcusean perspective, because the real issue is that irrespective of our "primitive" carnivorous past, current knowledge, technology, and resources demonstrate that meat is no longer a necessary foodstuff and, in fact, causes harm to bodies (animal and human) and the planet.

⁴⁶See Gilles Deleuze's characterization of Nietzsche's discussion of the ass in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, Hugh Tomlinson (Trans.) (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 180–182.

⁴⁷Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," p. 76.

⁴⁸Bradley J. Macdonald, "Marx and the Human/Animal Dialectic," in J. Grant and V. Jungkunz (eds.), *Political Theory and the Animal/Human Relationship* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2016). Note that while Macdonald offers a very brief interjection of Marcuse's work in his conclusion, pointing to the same passage in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* discussed above, Marcuse remains a contemporary but remote firebrand whose political imaginary is largely left unexplored.

into question the centrality of the proletariat as the vehicle of radical social change in advanced industrial society and by countering Marx's understanding of capitalist stagnation and crisis with a theory of capitalist expansion and stabilization that concedes the increased cooperation and integration of the working class.⁴⁹ This forces the realization that the working class is no longer a class *for itself*, but has been seamlessly integrated into the administered life that defines one-dimensional society.⁵⁰ A voluntary servitude, as Marcuse observes in *An Essay on Liberation*, which reaches to the depths of our biology within the context of late capitalism by transforming false needs into vital needs, and the will to difference to the will to domination:

The so-called consumer economy and the politics of corporate capitalism have created a second nature of man which ties him libidinally and aggressively to the commodity form. The need for possessing, consuming, handling and constantly renewing the gadgets, devices, instruments, engines, offered to and imposed upon the people, for using these wares even at the danger of one's own destruction, has become a "biological" need in the sense just defined.

Here, Marcuse does not advocate a sort of romantic naturalism with regard to human nature, but instead recognizes it as a historically produced condition that reifies established norms of social behavior in such a way as to control that behavior to produce the one-dimensional animal, the voluntary servant, and the man of resentment that is ultimately the higher man. Or, conversely, which can be transformed by radical political action and the life-affirming technologies of a new *gay science* that work in opposition to the death instinct that drives contemporary society, and introduce a new sensibility rooted in Eros, thus fostering the creation of an esthetic ethos of peace, beauty, and solidarity.⁵¹ As Andrew Feenberg discerns, Marcuse's idea of the "two-dimensional nature of experience" is the root of new political sensibilities, which function in place of Marxian class consciousness as the source of radical possibilities.⁵² Contra this alternative possibility is the violent context of the ideology of death:

No domination is complete without the threat of death and the recognized right to dispense with death – death by legal verdict, in war, by starvation. And no domination is complete unless death, thus institutionalized, is recognized as more than natural necessity and brute fact, namely, as justified and as justification.⁵³

Nowhere is the ideology of death more apparent than in the "choice" to eat meat. Human beings, and especially those in advanced industrial societies, do not need to eat meat to be healthy. In fact, vegetarians are at lower risk of heart disease, certain types of cancers, hypertension, obesity, and diabetes. Yet in America, despite our confused concern for animals, we are still a largely meat-eating society. The average American eats 270.7 lbs. of meat per year,⁵⁴ or three-quarters of a pound of meat per day – the equivalent of more than half a cow or seventy-five chickens a year, post-slaughter, cut and wrapped. In the case of animal agriculture, and also hunting, death is an institution and a value. The promotion of animal death

⁴⁹Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, pp. 269–270.

⁵⁰Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, p. 41; Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, p.16.

⁵¹Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, p. 19; Timothy W. Luke, *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture*, pp. 142, 146.

⁵²Andrew Feenberg, "Afterword: The Liberation of Nature," in Andrew Biro (ed.), *Critical Ecologies: The Frankfurt School and Contemporary Environmental Crises* (Toronto, CAN: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 350.

⁵³Herbert Marcuse, "The Ideology of Death," in Douglass Kellner and Clayton Pierce (eds), *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume Five: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and Emancipation* (London, UK: Routledge, 2011), p. 128.

⁵⁴Eliza Barclay, "A Nation of Meat-Eaters: See How It All Adds Up," Morning Edition, *NPR*, available online at: <<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2012/06/27/155527365/visualizing-a-nation-of-meat-eaters>> (accessed June 27, 2012).

for human life is sustained by a fear that if we do not eat animals, we will die, or at the very least, wither away as a species.

In this sense, humans are seen naturally as carnivores, or at the very least critical omnivores who eat the right animals, especially in the case of the gastronomically authentic consumer. The key line of separation of animal and human with regard to the ideology of death is the view that animals do not perceive their deaths in the same way that humans do. Thus, all things being equal, if the choice is human or animal, the animal dies because it does not have a sense of future in the same way that a human does. This ideology of death, in which humans interpret death as a distinguishing feature of human existence, is the justification for institutionalized violence: "A brute biological fact, permeated with pain, horror, and despair, is transformed into an existential privilege."⁵⁵ For humans, as Marcuse further points out, this ideology justifies the "glorified acceptance of death" and suffering at the hands of and in the name of the state.⁵⁶ Death, in turn, becomes transformed from a technical limit of human freedom to a sociopolitical concept that "transforms nasty empirical facts into an ideology."⁵⁷

For animals, this ideology justifies their death and our consumption of their bodies, transformed into the magical commodity of meat and served as a palliative to quell the human fear of death. Animals function sacrificially and ideologically within this context.

Here, the ideology of death functions in two ways: by accepting compliance with a higher power that judges the righteousness of death; and compliance with and forgiveness of those who dole out death.⁵⁸ Invoking Nietzsche, Marcuse concludes that resentment also applies to the ideology of death: "The slaves revolt – and win – not by liberating themselves but by proclaiming their weakness as the crown of humanity."⁵⁹ Carnivorism, as death incarnate, becomes the defining characteristic of the human species: for the plebian meat-eater, it is nature and the state who remains judge, jury, and executioner of this power, while for the virtuous foodie this power of deceit lies in him or herself. Both, however, resign themselves to the fetishistic consumption and acceptance of structuralized violence and death in the commodity form of meat, which promises life in an otherwise lifeless world.

Herbert's Herbivore: Toward a Radical Vegetarianism

Political radicalism thus implies moral radicalism: the emergence of a morality which might precondition man for freedom. This radicalism activates the elementary, organic foundation of morality in the human being. Prior to all ethical behavior in accordance with specific social standards, prior to all ideological expression, morality is a "disposition" of the organism, perhaps rooted in the erotic drive to counter aggressiveness, to create and preserve "ever greater unities" of life. We would then have, this side of all "values," an instinctual foundation for solidarity among human beings – a solidarity which has been effectively repressed in line with the requirements of class society but which now appears as a precondition for liberation.⁶⁰

⁵⁵Herbert Marcuse, "The Ideology of Death," p. 124.

⁵⁶Ibid., 125.

⁵⁷Ibid., 126.

⁵⁸Ibid., 130.

⁵⁹Ibid., 131.

⁶⁰Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, p. 10.

In *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse ties political radicalism to the activation of Eros and a new aesthetic rationality and dimension. As the above passage explains, *values are created* in the Nietzschean sense. Political radicalism implies the promotion of an ethical dimension that actively desires and struggles to create the conditions for all life to flourish. Animals and humans are tied together in an epic play of forces between the reactive nihilism of death and the active struggle for life. Again, Marcuse is most explicit on this point in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, where he suggests that animals are unnecessarily destroyed for the physical reproduction of the human species.⁶¹ Against administered society and in line with Marx's vision in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, non-repressive society would be the "free play of human faculties *outside* the realm of alienated labor;"⁶² against these animal functions (including and especially, as noted earlier, predation), which are the essence of alienated and administered life, life-qua-death, under capitalism.

Advanced industrialized civilization tolerates violence, including and especially violence against animals, because it serves the system; it represents the interests of those in power; and because the media indoctrinate us to believe that it is acceptable, even preferable. In this sense, as Marcuse explains in "Repressive Tolerance," tolerance functions not to ensure free speech and dissent, but uniformity and control through a distorted sense of equality: "Within the affluent society, the affluent discussion prevails and, within the established framework, it is tolerant to a large extent. All points of view can be heard."⁶³ Every view is treated equally, no matter how false, uninformed, irrational, or unintelligent it may be. And because the people have neither the information nor critical thinking to distinguish between good and bad (which are inverted in the Nietzschean sense), they tolerate the aggressive and violent policies of the Establishment.⁶⁴ And, as Marcuse observes, while other views can be expressed, they are constantly evaluated in relation to the public language of the conservative majority, thus determining in advance their reception.⁶⁵

Vegetarianism has the potential to manifest the kind of refusal that Marcuse advocates, but is only tolerated by society as long as it falls into categories of ethical, lifestyle, or consumer vegetarianism, which fit neatly in the framework of choice-based liberal politics and the culture industry. Within this kind of reformist context, vegetarians do not threaten or negate the established order, but instead fall into the categories of "freaks or types of the same life,"⁶⁶ and of beats, existentialists, or spiritualists whose modes of protest "are quickly digested by the status quo as part of a healthy diet."⁶⁷ Vegetarianism can be easily coopted and coerced by established systems of domination and tolerated so long as it functions properly and profitably within the political economy of meat. For Marcuse, again, the abolition of cruelty against animals and humans is a prerequisite for a liberated society, within which, meat-eating is practically unimaginable; but he is clear that a cruelty-free society does not yet exist and skeptical of whether it ever will, at least with regard to universal vegetarianism.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, p. 68.

⁶² Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, p. 178; Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 156.

⁶³ Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," p. 309.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 310; Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, pp. 281–284.

⁶⁵ Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," p. 311.

⁶⁶ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, p. 59.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁸ Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," p. 301; Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, p. 68.

Marcuse finds universal vegetarianism to be premature given the violence that humans inflict on each other, let alone animals; and, implicit in Marcuse's analysis is that universal vegetarianism would be a product of the revolution not a precursor of it. Certainly this could be a limitation of Marcuse's humanism, but it may just be that Marcuse is limited by his own historical context. Much like Marx, who could not imagine the stupefying realities of contemporary capitalism, Marcuse could not imagine the dramatic rise in meat production and consumption that would occur in the years after his death. For example, in the 1960s, Americans consumed 161.7 lb of meat each year, while in 2000 they consumed 195.2 lb.⁶⁹ As noted earlier, today Americans consume on average 270.7 lb of meat per year, which is a sixty-seven percent increase from the time at which Marcuse was writing. Nor could Marcuse imagine the dramatic shift, in terms of the proliferation of a mass meat culture, that would result from the changes in wholesale and retail meat production and distribution that were taking hold in the 1960s, including the development of large, decentralized slaughter plants, the decline in grocery stores, and the rise in retail food and restaurant chains and supermarkets.⁷⁰ One also has to consider the rise in the animal rights movement since the mid-1970s. Peter Singer's promotion of ethical vegetarianism in *Animal Liberation* and Carol Adam's advocacy of vegetarianism as a form of resistance to patriarchal society in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* – both of which rest on the individual choice of vegetarianism as a precursor for change – undoubtedly introduced universal vegetarianism as a potential form of opposition.⁷¹

Yet, a Marcusean analysis offers a deep structural critique of capitalism and a dialectical study of the political economy of meat that is, arguably, somewhat absent in earlier discussions of vegetarianism. Radical vegetarianism aligned with critical rationality in the Marcusean sense demands a dialectical understanding of the ideological function of meat as a fetishized sign that is at once the expression of real suffering and its protest against it, functioning similar to the opiate quality of religion that Marx describes in "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction."⁷² Meat is the sigh of the oppressed creature; that is, the one-dimensional animal that is at once the dead commodity and the living commodity that consumes it. Yet meat also ideologically functions to make people feel good in an otherwise hopeless world. For the majority of Americans, eating meat supplies quick, cheap nourishment and comfort. For the privileged foodies who consume local and sustainably produced meats, it feeds the belly and soul with illusions of virtue and authenticity. For both the worker and the foodie, meat-eating is reduced to a biological and/or ecological necessity for life. Meat is also, simultaneously, the materialization of death. It is the bodies of killed animals and the dead labor of workers joined in the dual nature of the one-dimensional animal.

Working from Marcuse's position, radical vegetarianism entails not only refusing the practice of meat-eating and developing a new life-affirming sensibility with regard to animals, but also refusing the pull of the reactive and moralistic forces that work to regulate contemporary society. The morality that Marcuse promotes resonates with a Nietzschean tone in

⁶⁹United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Communications, *Agriculture Fact Book 2001–2002*, March 2003, p. 15, available online at: <<http://www.usda.gov/factbook/chapter2.pdf>>.

⁷⁰J. Richard Conner, Raymond A. Dietrich, and Gary W. Williams, "The U.S. Cattle and Beef Industry and the Environment," TAMRC Commodity Market Research Report, No. CM 1–00, *World Wildlife Fund* (March 2000), pp. 8–9.

⁷¹See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2009); Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2000).

⁷²Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," in Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition (New York, NY: WW Norton, 1978), p. 54.

the sense that it is a morality that says yes to life-affirming instincts and questions the value of our values, albeit from a heterodox Marxist perspective.⁷³ By refusing and shattering the meat-fetish by not consuming flesh, radical vegetarians say yes to life while simultaneously saying no to systemic violence; at the same time, however, they must be careful not to slip into a reactive moral stance that alienates them from the oppressed in society or from the Left generally, or that falls into the trappings of hyper-individualism. Radical vegetarianism must recognize the structural conditions that drive people to compulsively and pathologically eat meat, and consequently, the radical moralism it promotes must not be dogmatic or righteous, but anti-capitalist:

The causes [of domination] are economic-political, but since they have shaped the very instincts and needs of men, no economic and political changes will bring this historical continuum to a stop unless they are carried through by men who are physiologically and psychologically able to experience things, and each other, outside the context of violence and exploitation. The new sensibility has become, by this very token praxis: it emerges in the struggle against violence and exploitation where this struggle is waged for essentially new ways and forms of life...⁷⁴

Living a life of abolition is a not as simple a project as Torres asserts in *Making A Killing*.⁷⁵ In reality, practicing veganism or vegetarianism is neither simple nor easy, is limited by structural conditions, and is certainly not affordable for many people. In light of Marcuse's comments on animal cruelty and vegetarianism in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, one could argue that Marcuse's work cumulatively gestures toward a radical vegetarianism: a herbivorous and libidinal sensibility that multiplies possibilities for life, and in doing so, for the radical transformation of society. To do this, however, vegetarianism cannot remain at the level of the individual. In other words, it cannot simply be an individual choice, which may be pleasurable and/or glorified, but may also reinforce the existing repressive society. Eros needs a continuum of sociable and affectionate interpersonal relationships, play, and creative work to flourish.⁷⁶ Likewise, radical vegetarianism needs the same. As much as vegetarians should commit themselves to a broad spectrum of political projects that overcome their private interests in order to become radicalized and politicized, the Left needs to embrace vegetarianism and actively struggle for micro- and macro-social conditions that foster vegetarian sensibilities.

To do this, the Left must take seriously the gross violence inflicted against animals in contemporary society – animals whose contradictory existence as both life and death, when exposed, shocks the one-dimensionality of administered life. Eating animals feeds the death drive that, as Marcuse notes, animates the one-dimensional society. Thus, the task of radical vegetarianism aligned with societal transformation in the Marcusean sense is to expose the irrational and ideological function of this meat consumption. To do this is no doubt uncomfortable, because it reveals the human “need” to eat meat as irrational and ideological, refuses to tolerate the “choice” of eating meat, and exposes the structural violence of administered life under late capitalism that ties together animals and humans in a tangled web of oppression. Likewise, it offends the pluralist sensibilities of neoliberal capitalism. In the end, however, Marcuse's insights point to an anti-capitalist politics of a radical vegetarianism that offer the hope of full liberation and the cultivation of sensuous, pleasurable, life-affirming sensibilities that we cannot yet imagine, for both animals and humans.

⁷³Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, pp. 173, 370.

⁷⁴Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, p. 25.

⁷⁵Bob Torres, *Making a Killing*, p. 56.

⁷⁶Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, p. 184.

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