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# Beyond Animal Liberation

subversive energy

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2012

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2012



olence is a pacifist mentality. We will not bother pointing out the problems with pacifism since so many others have done so at length already.

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considering themselves part of the earth, indigenous peoples have lived without the social roles that define humans as separate from animals. This does not mean that we are advocating for the primitivist position that we return to a certain way of living — we have no interest in defining what the future should look like, nor are we trying to turn the real lived experiences of indigenous people into mere concepts. We are simply pointing out that these individuals have managed to live without the human-animal binary and this should be our goal as well. Once we begin to create relationships of our choosing, we can start to live our lives as free and wild individuals, unrestricted by the social roles currently forced upon us.

## **There is no systematic violence in the wild**

When animal liberationists claim that killing an animal is always an act of violence and domination, our objection is not with the first point, but with the second. While we agree that killing another animal is always a violent act, we reject the idea that violence is always an act of domination. In his essay *Insurgent Ferocity*, Feral Faun points out that “[v]iolence, in itself, does not perpetuate violence. The social system of rationalized violence, of which pacifism is an integral part, perpetuates itself as a system.” For example, the capitalist system forces us to work on projects not of our choosing, with the main purpose being the continuation of our need to work to survive. Absent of the social institutions that use violence to reproduce themselves, violence simply becomes momentary flare-ups between individuals. “Violence is an aspect of animal interaction... There is no systematic violence in the wild, but, instead, momentary expressions of specific passions.” (ibid) As wild individuals living according to our desires and passions, we may engage in temporary moments of violence. Since these moments are not used to maintain social control, the only reason to oppose such vi-

tion. Animal liberationists recognize this unbalance of power, but they adopt the typical liberal response of attempting to elevate animals to the status of person, changing the power dynamic within the human-animal relationship. For example, Walter Bond asks “*Would you eat the dead and broken bodies of child laborers left in the trash?*” attempting to demonstrate that one should treat animals as they do humans. (Supreme Power Vegan)

This is similar to the feminist desire to elevate woman to the level of man. Feminists recognize the power imbalance in the man-woman relationship and like animal liberationists attempt to correct this imbalance by equalizing the power within the relationship. What they fail to grasp is that so long as the social roles continue to be filled, the relationship cannot change in any meaningful way. As pointed out on the Not Yr Cister Press website, “*patriarchy can only exist so long as it is performed — that is, so long as the role of the man is fulfilled. What we want, quite simply — as for with any other determinate role imposed by and in the service of capital — is for it to be destroyed.*” Simply replace patriarchy with speciesism and man with human, and this statement shows the shortcomings of the animal liberation movement. It is not enough to attempt to alter the balance of power in the relationship. We must go beyond the social roles that have been forced upon us — beyond the role of man, of woman, even the role of human. We must subvert the human-animal relationship that is based on human dominance over animals and start creating new relationships that reflect our desires and passions. Coupled with a project of attack on the institutions that perpetuate relationships based on domination, this is part of the insurrectional project that we engage in.

We have no interest in defining how these new relationships will develop. However, it is important to recognize that the only examples of communities that have gone beyond the human-animal dichotomy are so-called ‘primitive’ societies. By

## 1. Introduction

This is a collection of writings that critique the animal liberation movement and the corresponding lifestyle choice, veganism. We have spent extensive time working within the animal liberation movement in North America and our critique is highly influenced by our personal experiences. Through study and discussion, we have developed a new understanding of domination, making this a critique not only of the animal liberation movement but also of our previous selves and the ways in which we attempted to deal with animal oppression.

## 2. Beyond Veganism

In North America, the animal liberation movement puts considerable emphasis on veganism. While it is not rare for the liberals of a movement to adopt specific consumer or lifestyle choices (buying fair trade, recycling, and so on), it is unusual for the ‘radicals’ of these movements to actively endorse these choices. Taking a quick survey of some of the individuals considered ‘radical’ animal liberationists, the North American Animal Liberation Press Officers and Advisors Camille Marino, Jerry Vlasak, Gary Yourofsky, and Peter Young to name a few, all claim that veganism is an important part of the animal liberation movement<sup>1</sup>. Apparently there is something incredibly special about veganism that distinguishes it from other consumer or lifestyle choices.

In what appeared to be breaking news in the animal liberation movement in June 2011, Camille Marino announced what anarchists have known for years – that veganism “*does absolutely nothing to relieve animal suffering.*” (Ethical Veganism Doesn’t Help Animals) So if veganism is not an effective means of combating animal oppression, why all the fuss?

### We are more than what we consume

In the quintessential ‘veganarchist’ pamphlet *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution*, Brian Dominick explains that, “By

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<sup>1</sup>For examples please see, for Marino: [www.negotiationisover.net](http://www.negotiationisover.net); Vlasak: [arzone.ning.com](http://arzone.ning.com); Yourofsky: [www.adaptt.org](http://www.adaptt.org); and Young: [strikingattheroots.wordpress.com](http://strikingattheroots.wordpress.com)

## 4. Beyond Animal Liberation

Like feminism, animal liberation is a response to an isolated oppression and an attempt to change the power dynamic within a specific relationship. While discussions of the oppressive attitudes we exhibit can help us develop new understandings of how domination manifests in daily life, the focus on specific attitudes only serves to reinforce the social roles forced upon us.

Since animal liberation is an attempt to balance the power in the human-animal relationship, like all liberal movements, animal liberationists rely on morals to define the way this power will be equalized. In our experience, there are two dominant forms of such moralism. The first, generally expressed in the more ‘radical’ factions of the movement, is that animals should be granted the status of person and with it the inalienable rights of humans. The second is that the act of consuming an animal is inherently violent and dominating. Animal liberationists may use one or both of these arguments, but since they are separate we will deal with them as such.

### Taking a brick to the relationship

As discussed earlier, present society is made up of social roles which have been forced upon us by the various institutions of domination. The purpose of these social roles is to alienate us from ourselves, thereby preventing us from living as free individuals. The human-animal relationship is one example of these social roles. In this society, humans are seen as subjects, while animals are seen as objects, there for our consump-

## The problem with representation

Since the anarchist project is one of reclaiming our lives, it must also be one that rejects all representation. We are against anyone who attempts to speak on our behalf and we have no interest in voicing the desires of anyone but ourselves. The animal liberation movement is inherently based on representation, as animal liberationists act on behalf of animals. Best is at least explicit about this, admitting that “[w]hatever language we use to describe it, enlightened humans must speak for the animals.” (ibid) Maybe the meaning of representation confuses Best, because this is certainly not a reflection of a movement that “challenge[s] the myths of representative democracy.” (ibid) Our goal should not be to represent the needs of animals, since this will limit us to the reformist position of improving their condition within present society. We should be attempting to create new ways of relating with the world that do not require ‘enlightened’ humans speaking on behalf of anyone, animals included.

*my definition, pure vegetarianism is not veganism. Refusing to consume the products of non-human animals, while a wonderful life choice, is not in itself veganism. The vegan bases her choices on a radical understanding of what animal oppression really is, and her lifestyle choice is highly informed and politicized”.* Many animal liberationists share the perspective that veganism is more than a consumer choice but a *lifestyle choice* representing their morals.

As anarchists, our analysis of the domination of animals involves the recognition that the distinction between human and nonhuman animals must be abolished. While this involves developing a “*radical understanding of what animal oppression really is,*” we see no reason why this understanding also requires a vegan diet.

Dominick points out that a radical analysis of animal exploitation must appreciate that “*the meat industry (including dairy, vivisection, etc) is not an isolated entity. The meat industry will not be destroyed until market capitalism is destroyed.*” He also admits that the items we purchase harm more than just nonhuman animals (unlike what the ‘cruelty-free’ bunnies on ‘green’ products everywhere would have us believe), yet he clings to the term veganism and consumptive practices more generally, stating that “*there is a compromise point at which we can achieve an understanding of the effects of our actions as well as adjust and refocus our lifestyles accordingly... You are what you consume.*” Anyone with a radical understanding of capitalism recognizes that ‘ethical consumerism’ does not challenge the exploitation inherent within the system and the power imbalances it develops. Since “*there is no escape from the massive markets of late capitalism*”, Dominick’s ‘compromise point’ is irrelevant – every purchase contributes to the capitalist system we are bound by and wish to destroy. We certainly hope that our purchases aren’t an expression of our desires even if we do buy ‘fair trade’, ‘sweatshop-free’, or ‘vegan’, since any soci-

ety that has a capitalist mode of production is one we want to dismantle.

It is not specific institutions that maintain dominance over animals (the meat industry, the vivisection industry, the entertainment industry, etc.) but a network of institutions (including the state, the economy, religion, the family, etc.) that dominate *us all* (human and nonhuman). This network forces specific social roles upon us, the main purpose being the perpetuation of this system. One of these roles is that of consumer, and regardless of how 'ethical' the consumption appears, whenever we make a purchase we accept the consumer-product relationship. To overcome these social roles we must destroy the system that creates them and find new ways of relating to one another. In an attempt to subvert the consumer-product relationship anarchists often participate in stealing and/or 'freeganism', as both undermine the transfer of resources to the capitalist system. However, the insistence that veganism is important has animal liberationists encouraging us to engage in 'ethical' consumption, even going so far as 'Supreme Power Vegan' Walter Bond advocating against the supposed speciesist acts of dumpster diving or stealing animal products. (Supreme Power Vegan) So rather than *actually engage* in actions that subvert the capitalist system (which also happens to be part of the system that dominates animals), we are encouraged to advance the 'vegan economy'.

The limited options that capitalism offers cannot even begin to represent the many ways in which we hope to relate to one another when we break through the trappings of the current system. And if what we consume is not an expression of our desires, a person can be against speciesism without being vegan in the same way that one can be against industrial civilization while driving a car. 'Ethical consumerism' should be left for the liberals.

This critique is influenced by Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, which shows that morals and laws are identical in how they are constructed to govern our actions. Morals are values which are set in stone and then applied universally, regardless of context. The political left, including the animal liberation movement, engage in moralism, which is the act of not only living by morals but using them as tools to affect social change. Moralism restricts the individual's freedom by forcing them to live by these constructed beliefs, whether or not they apply to the unique situations we experience. We refuse to live our lives by any construct and instead live according to our real desires and passions.

Steven Best says that "*Animal liberation is the next necessary and logical development in moral evolution and political struggle.*" (Rethinking Revolution) The 'moral evolution' he refers to is the application of the moral principle that it is *always* wrong to kill and consume another living being. Although this may be a valid way to live in certain circumstances, by making it a universal principle, animal liberationists put limits on the ways we can interact with the world.

But Best shows that he is clearly not opposed to the universal application of an abstract concept when he asks "*is it any less 'totalitarian' to enforce prohibitions against killing human beings [than those against killing animals]?*" (ibid) Any universal law against killing humans or animals is *equally* totalitarian and as anarchists we reject any such prohibition. Best goes on to say that "[a]ny future society worth fighting for will be based on principles of universal democracy that forbids any form of exploitation, regardless of the species." We certainly would not bother fighting for a future society based on universal principles governing any aspect of our lives. We have no interest in defining what the future will look like – each individual and group of individuals will have to decide their path for themselves based on their lived experience.



liberation, as it has ably served the cause of all past human liberation struggles.” (Rethinking Revolution) We are very curious what liberation struggle has been aided by begging the state for rights. It seems obvious to us that any rights that have been granted by the state have been awarded only because it is in their interest – whether it directly benefits those in power or stifles revolt. Best should certainly understand this, as any concessions that have been gained in the struggle for animal liberation (larger cages, free range meat, etc.) have only helped maintain the meat industry by providing customers with ‘happy meat’. Let’s make no mistake, green capitalism is still capitalism and is in no way progress.

But Best claims that “*the concept of rights continues to inflame rebellion and the political imagination, [and] continues to provide a critical leverage and internal critique against capitalist exploitation.*” (ibid) Well, this is hardly radical and certainly not anarchist. The concept of rights does nothing but quench the fire of rebellion and pushes people towards reforming the current social order rather than destroying it. Best even goes as far to say that “[i]n a non-statist society, rights can ‘wither away’.” (ibid) But why would rights that were presumably seen as victories simply ‘wither away’? Does it not seem more plausible that a movement struggling for rights would fight to keep those rights, eventually solidifying them into laws and moral absolutes? A project of liberation cannot use or advocate for state-approved methods of revolt because doing so only strengthens the state’s power.

## Supreme vegan moralism

As anarchists, we are not only against all laws but also against any construct which limits our individual freedom. As such, we are opposed to the leftist view that a future society must be developed around universal principles and morals.

## Why a diet can’t abolish ‘Violence in Everyday Life’

Dominick attempts to describe veganism as more than a mere consumer choice when he implies that it is part of the process of “*challenging the false wisdom and values we’ve been indoctrinated with.*” Dominick responds to the “*abuse of animals – whether directly, as is the case regarding the mistreatment of pets, or indirectly, as through the process of meat eating [which] correlates to social violence*”, by advocating the “*conscious abstinence from actions which contribute directly or indirectly, to the suffering of sentient beings.*” But this fails to acknowledge that we are forced into the role of consumer, a role we cannot fully withdraw from (except by removing ourselves from industrial civilization completely – an act that is becoming increasingly difficult). This makes participating in indirect forms of violence impossible to avoid. Since capitalism is an inherently exploitative system, whenever we engage in the role of consumer, whether we are buying meat, vegetables, or shoes, we are participating in social violence. Refusing to purchase certain products from the capitalist market does not wipe one’s hands clean of social violence. Of course we should attempt to develop non-hierarchical relationships with the animals we are in direct contact with, but the only way to avoid the indirect social violence we are complicit in is to destroy the system that forces the consumer-product relationship upon us.

Dominick even attempts to convince us that participating in the indirect violence of purchasing and consuming animal products will increase the likelihood of engaging in direct abusive behaviour. “[T]his cause-effect dynamic works both ways. It has been shown that those who are violent towards animals – again, directly or indirectly – are also more likely to be violent towards other humans. People fed a vegetarian diet, for instance, are typically less violent than those who eat meat. People who

*abuse their pets are unlikely to stop there – their children and partners are often next*". While various researchers have demonstrated that a link exists between domestic violence and animal abuse<sup>2</sup>, we found no research showing that vegetarianism is even linked to 'less violent' behaviour, let alone demonstrates a cause-effect relationship. It is absurd to think that the traits fostered by the direct abuser are also developed within us when we are forced to engage in the role of consumer.

## The revolution starts... in the kitchen?

When Dominick states that, "*the role of the revolutionist is simple: make your life into a miniature model of the alternative, revolutionary society you envision*", he attempts to make the (naïve) case that changing ourselves will change the world. "*It is we who are the enemy; overthrowing the oppressors in our heads will be the revolution.*" Although personal transformation is important, referring to ourselves as the enemy misdirects the rage we should be unleashing on the elites and institutions of domination.

It is obvious to (almost) everyone that refusing to buy factory-farmed meat will not create a world without factory farms. While challenging the oppressive ideas we have been taught and creating new ways of relating to one another are both important tasks, they are not the only tasks of the revolutionary. As put by sasha k, "*anarchists must attack, for waiting is defeat.*" (Some Notes on Insurrectionary Anarchism) Even Dominick admits that "*the simple act of changing one's lifestyle, even when joined by millions of others, cannot change the world, the social structures of which were handcrafted by elites to serve their own interests*". The role of the revolutionary is not so simple – it is essential we engage in daily acts of resistance and attack the institutions that dominate us all.

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<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Frank R. Ascione & Phil Arkow, Child Abuse, Domestic

*end we desire.*" (Animal Liberation and Social Revolution) As anarchists, we do not bother with the activist obsession with effectiveness, as this often causes paralysis, over-analysis of the action, and an attempt to find the 'perfect' action. Instead, we suggest attacking institutions of domination with the "*playful ferocity*" referred to by Feral Faun in *Insurgent Ferocity*. Although this can be done tactically, we will not allow effectiveness to channel our revolt against the forces of domination. We are not sure what perfect ending Dominick seems to desire, but "*wanton destruction and violence*" can certainly be a part of our projects.

It is also worth pointing out that many actions advocated for by Best and the animal liberation movement are merely acts of civil disobedience. Although these actions challenge specific laws, their purpose is to show that certain laws protecting animal exploitation are unjust and need to be changed. In Best's speech *Veganism: The War We Cannot Lose* he states, "[s]tart breaking the law, start joining in civil disobedience. Fuck the law! When the law is wrong the right thing to do is break it! Now you think I sound radical? I'm only quoting Gandhi and Martin Luther King." Although we agree that laws should be broken, we reject the liberal suggestion that they should be broken only when they are 'wrong'. As anarchists, we reject all laws and have no interest in Gandhi and King's desire to beg the state for more 'just' laws.

## Steven Best – Animal Rightist

Perhaps it is no surprise that Best advocates for civil disobedience since he supports the law as long as it protects the rights of animals. He does acknowledge that "[r]ights, in short, are created by the capitalist elite for the capitalist elite," but then goes on to say that "*it would be a strategic error of the highest order to abandon the discourse of rights as a critical tool for animal*

specialization and expands revolt to an attack against *all* the forces that dominate us.

ALF activist Walter Bond has written essays titled *Supreme Vegan Power* and *The Crusade for Animal and Earth Liberation* – this certainly does not sound like an anarchist who is concerned with attacking the system of domination in its totality. In fact, these titles sound frighteningly similar to white supremacist and religious propaganda – maybe not entirely surprising coming from a member of a movement completely obsessed with enforcing a specific diet. Bond specifically refers to himself as, first and foremost, an animal liberation activist. He then goes on to say that if a case arose in which it was necessary to choose between animal and human needs, he would choose the ‘innocent’ animals over humans because “*our depravity, perversion, and lust for blood as a species is profound and disturbing!*” (*Supreme Power Vegan*) This misanthropic attitude certainly is not that of an anarchist, but one of a single-issue activist concerned solely with animal liberation. Bond demonstrates that the tactics do not define the individual, and although it may seem that we are using this one individual to represent the entire movement, our experience finds these to be widespread themes. Best himself is guilty of this when he states that “*I cannot fathom privileging a work reduction for humans who live relatively comfortable lives to ameliorating the obscene suffering of tens of billions of animals who are confined, tortured, and killed each year in the most unspeakable ways.*” (*Rethinking Revolution*)

It seems obvious that the animal liberation movement is not anarchist, as Best and Dominick suggest, but is in fact just a militant faction of activists. Dominick seems to think that the two are synonymous when he suggests that “[w]ithout claiming to speak for all, I will say that those I consider true anarchists and animal liberationists seek to realize our visions via any means effective. We understand, contrary to mainstream perceptions of us, that wanton destruction and violence will not bring about the

## The vegan secret to eco-harmony

Dominick tells us that “*Radicals need to realize, as vegans do* [emphasis ours], *that the only thing we can learn from animals is how to live in a sane and sound relationship with the environment*”. Dominick should be reminded that the only known examples of individuals living in a sane and sound relationship with the environment are indigenous cultures. To pretend that veganism is required to develop a holistic analysis of human-nature relationships is possibly the most embarrassing of Dominick’s mistakes. While eating meat may not be a necessary condition for living in a sane and sound relationship with the environment, we know for a certainty that one can live eco-harmoniously while consuming animals.

## Moving beyond veganism

Our critique of veganism does not mean we support speciesism, in the same way that anarchists who critique feminism do not support patriarchy. Rather, our critique is meant to demonstrate that a radical understanding of the institutions of domination means moving beyond the notion that veganism, whether defined as a consumer or lifestyle choice, is a crucial step in changing our human-animal relationships. Developing non-hierarchical relationships with animals requires thoughtful analysis, an attempt to recreate the one-on-one interactions we have with animals in our daily lives, and acts of resistance against the system that dominates us all. This obsession with ‘cruelty-free’ living allows the movement to be co-opted and diverts us from real revolutionary projects. It is completely ridiculous when Steven Best and company advocate so strongly for ‘ethical veganism’ and then complain that “[vegans] are lifestyle oriented and apolitical; we are con-

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Violence, and Animal Abuse.

*sumerist... we care more about our own purity, or the purity of other vegans, more than we care about the social problems and social structures.”* (Best, Veganism – The War We Cannot Lose) It is Best’s insistence on the revolutionary potential of veganism that opens the door for the ‘apolitical’ vegans he claims to hate. The ‘voice of the voiceless’ Peter Young even refuses to support non-vegetarian prisoners that have engaged in direct attacks against animal industries, demonstrating just how obscene this ‘radical’ infatuation with veganism really is.

We are not denying that there are many *subjective* reasons for being vegan, such as a personal aversion to eating meat, feeling healthier as a vegan, being fearful of contaminated animal products, or feeling that veganism strengthens your personal understanding of animal exploitation. But it should be emphasized that veganism is not a radical response to animal oppression – it can never be more than a lifestyle choice. It is time for us to abandon the idea that veganism is a revolutionary act and begin to attack the forces of domination that control us all, human and nonhuman.

## Militant activists are still activists

Best distinguishes animal liberationists from the overall animal rights movement by claiming that liberationists engage in ‘non-statist’ (and thus, anarchist) action, while animal rightists engage in ‘statist’ projects. Non-statist actions include any action that does not fall under state-sanctioned activities, such as peaceful protest, voting, and petitioning. However, his distinction seems to be completely arbitrary, as many animal liberationists also engage in ‘statist’ actions including vegan outreach and legal reform (see, for example, the government funded group ‘Animal Liberation’ or the vegan outreach and potluck group ‘Animal Liberation Action’ in North Carolina). To claim that the animal liberation movement engages in only ‘non-statist’ activity is a blatant misrepresentation of the movement.

It’s also worth pointing out that just because someone engages in ‘non-statist’ action does not mean they have gone beyond liberal ideology. Best implies that anyone willing to break the law is an anarchist when he declares that “*the [Animal Liberation Movement] challenge the myths of representative democracy, as they explore direct action and live in anarchist cultures.*” Best also claims that “*Not only are animal liberationists anarchist in their social and political outlook, they are also anarchist in their organization and tactics. The small cells [of] ALF activists... are akin to anarchist affinity groups in their mutual aid, solidarity, and consciousness building.*” (ibid) But just because a group uses anarchist tactics does not mean that they share an affinity with all anarchists in the way that they create their life project. While attacking institutions of domination is part of the insurrectional project, by issuing communiqués that demand “*animal liberation – no matter what it may take*”, the movement continues to deal with the oppression of animals as an isolated issue. The insurrectional project goes beyond this

way of thinking leads Best to suggest that “[b]uilding on the momentum, consciousness, and achievements of past abolitionists and suffragettes, the struggle of the new abolitionists might conceivably culminate in a Bill of (Animal) Rights.” (Rethinking Revolution) Since a Bill of (Human) Rights has clearly given us our freedoms, it’s no wonder that Best wants the same for animals.

Similarly, Dominick points out that “[f]eminism and veganism have much in common, and each has plenty to teach to and learn from the other.” (Animal Liberation and Social Revolution) We fully agree with Dominick – both are liberal ways of attempting to deal with a single form of exploitation in isolation. While it is imperative we attempt to minimize the ways in which we perpetuate speciesist and sexist behavior, we disagree with Dominick’s contention that feminism and the animal liberation movement (and its associated lifestyle choice ‘ethical veganism’) are radical responses to them.

Best complains that “because animal liberation challenges the anthropocentric, speciesist, and humanist dogmas that are so deeply entrenched in socialist and anarchist thinking and traditions, Leftists are more likely to mock than engage it.” (Rethinking Revolution) It seems obvious that the reason some anarchists mock the animal liberation movement is because of its attempt to deal with animal exploitation as an isolated issue, rather than confronting the entire system of domination. By referring to anarchists as part of ‘the left’, Best fails to recognize that although some anarchists choose to associate themselves with the left, many anarchists, us included, have chosen to distance themselves from the liberal ideology of the political left.

### 3. Animal Liberation as Liberal Ideology

As individuals who attempt to live in constant struggle against the system that dominates our entire existence, we have embraced the insurrectional project of constant revolt against the forces that limit our freedom. This life project is not based on an image of a future society and we propose no ideology to define our revolt. This places us in opposition to leftist forms of struggle (including the animal liberation movement) who construct an ideology to guide their struggle and propose a future society with new ‘anti-authoritarian’ morals.

In recent years, the animal liberation movement has developed strong ties to anarchist organizations and projects. Anarchists (us included) identify with and support the willingness of individuals in the movement to engage in direct action against state and capital and some animal liberationists have embraced an anti-state/anti-capitalist analysis. This has led some animal liberationists to describe their movement as an explicitly anarchist project. While the discussion of human-animal relations has added to anarchist theory and we can find moments of affinity with animal liberationists who engage in direct action, the isolated struggle against speciesism and the movement’s intense moralism are at odds with our project of insurrection.

## Isolating issues can only lead to isolated struggles

In *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution*, Brian Dominick falls short in his description of what he calls ‘the Establishment’ – “an entity which exists solely for the perpetuation of the power of a relative minority.” Although he recognizes that the Establishment exists in order to maintain the social relationships that keep the dominant social order intact, by listing all of the oppressions that the Establishment employs (classism, racism, patriarchy, etc.) and attempting to deal with them individually, Dominick fails to confront the totality of this system.

Present society is ruled by a web of domination composed of institutions, structures, and relationships which completely dominate our lives. The state, work, the family, religion and technology are examples of institutions that combine to create the network that stops us from living as free individuals. Each of these institutions forces us into social roles not of our choosing with the primary purpose of maintaining the system of domination. Only by breaking out of these social roles and creating our lives in a way that refuses all domination can we begin to destroy this society.

To subvert the Establishment, Dominick asks us to challenge oppressive attitudes such as racism, patriarchy, and speciesism, suggesting that equalizing the power within these relationships (white-black, man-woman, human-animal) will abolish the oppression. But so long as these ways of relating with each other exist, we will never eradicate these attitudes or the Establishment. Attempting to merely change the meanings of these oppressive relationships will always limit what we can accomplish; by focusing on oppressive attitudes, we become distracted from the root of the issue – the institutions that force us to engage in these oppressive relationships. “By accepting the idea (promoted heavily by progressive education and publicity)

*that the structures of oppression are essentially mindsets inside of ourselves, we become focused on our own presumed weakness, on how crippled we supposedly are. Our time is eaten up by attempts at self-healing that never come to an end, because we become so focused on ourselves and our inability to walk that we fail to notice the chain on our leg.”* (Wolfgang Landstreicher, *Against the Logic of Submission*)

So long as we continue to merely respond to oppression from within the confines of roles not of our choosing, we will never be able to destroy the Establishment. We need to reclaim our lives as our own and in the process destroy this society which limits our freedom. Of course, the various oppressions that exist have real effects on real individuals, but the only way to break free of these oppressive relationships is to rid ourselves of the web of domination, rejecting the social roles created for us and living as free individuals. While this process will manifest differently for each individual, this is part of the insurrectional project we have chosen to undertake.

## Who wants a Bill of Animal Rights anyways?

Despite their attempts to show otherwise, the animal liberation movement is single-issue by definition. Although they connect the oppression of animals to other forms of oppressive behavior (racism, sexism, etc.), by continuing to focus on the behavior rather than the institutions that force the social roles upon us they fail to challenge domination in its totality.

To show how radical the movement is, animal liberationists draw comparisons to other social movements such as black liberation and feminism. But these comparisons serve only to demonstrate how liberal the movement truly is. For example, when Steven Best refers to the animal liberation as the ‘new abolitionism’, he limits the movement’s actions to merely demanding for change within the confines of this system. This