

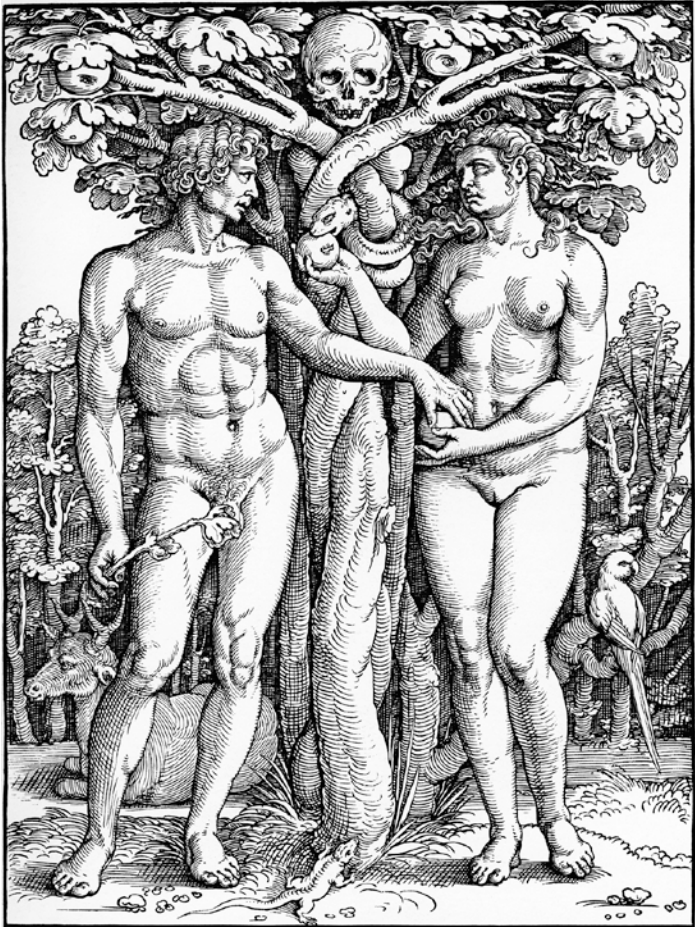
RADICAL VEGETARIANISM

A Dialectic of Diet and Ethic



Mark Mathew Braunstein

“A remarkably intelligent book.” —*The Washington Post*



PREFACE

DESPITE OUR TWO EYES, we see in only one direction. Where we do not look, we do not see. Our intellect, too, ponders only where we direct it. Now a vegetarian, you previously may have been a carnivore. Before converting, you possibly never suspected your future. If some evangelist nutritionist or animal rights activist espoused a reason for closing your mouth to flesh foods, who believed it? Now that you do believe it, your conviction does not entitle you to close your eyes.

Are your shoes made of leather? During famine, carnivores have resorted to cooking and eating their shoes. Cowhide is presently a by-product of hamburger. But if cows were killed just for their skins, their flesh would be no more morally edible just because you did not wear leather.

Do you perceive the veal floating invisibly inside every glass of milk? A dairy cow is not killed outright, but condemning her to cruel conditions might be worse than saving her skin. Meanwhile her calf, briefly confined, is killed. The dairy barn adjoins the veal crate. Dairy Queen is merged in disincorporate partnership with Burger King. Every cup of milk is appetizer to a meal of veal. If your lips are white with milk, your hands are red with blood.

Do you feel the chicken heart beating silently in every egg? The heart is the hen's, not her chick's. A hen never once sees the sun, never once has any husband to peck, and forever counts her chickens before they hatch.

Why buy corn from Colonel Sanders or potatoes from Wendy or fries from Ronald McDonald if you would not buy wieners from Oscar Meyer or wings from Frank Perdue? Dining on the salad bar in a charcoal charnel steakhouse, you eat lettuce and tomatoes yet smell flesh and bones. Where everyone else busily buries in their stomachs the dead bodies on their plates, that is not a meal, it is a funeral. You try to be sociable but, out of respect for the dead, you keep your silence.

Keep your peas, but why your peace? From canned food and TV dinners in microwaves to canned laughter on TV airwaves, and from politicians' platitudes to physicians' placebos, our sick society denies nature's truths, a blind donkey ignoring an organic carrot.

Proving the superfluity of protein from eggs or minerals from milk or fats from fish, we vegans thrive our long lives upon plain plants. This is the vegetarian dialectic of diet and ethic: not coincidentally, but absolutely essentially, those foods that deprive the fewest lives from others contribute to the longest lives for ourselves.

Thus this polemic aims to persuade ethical vegetarians of the moral necessity of health, and to convince those concerned about nutrition to consider also the unhealthy consequences of perdition.

Between the many questions of philosophies and the few answers of recipes, between the religious and the delicious, we slice our fruits and vegetables along the sharp edge between life and death. Indeed these are vegetarianism's subjects: not just fruits and vegetables, but life and death.

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