

BOOK REVIEW

Emily Ehrhart

This Is Vegan Propaganda (And Other Lies The Meat Industry Tells You)

Writer: Ed Winters

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There are some books that in an ideal world would be required reading for every consumer, decision-maker, and community participant. Ed Winters' *This Is Vegan Propaganda (And Other Lies The Meat Industry Tells You)* is one of those books. As consumers, we make choices and purchases that directly impact climate change, our health, and the welfare of animals. Winters' book discusses these profound impacts from a perspective of logic and science that reveal realities we must consider. The very least we can do as individuals who influence the world's problems and potential solutions is to inform ourselves, while the most we can do is contribute to individual and systemic changes that progress us towards resolution. Due to this reality, everybody should hear the arguments and facts that Winters presents in his book.

Ethical vegans (those who are vegan out of concern for the treatment of animals) will rejoice that Winters' primary argument for transitioning to a plant-based diet and lifestyle is that the animals we kill for food and other products are sentient and undeserving of abuse and slaughter. In various examples, Winters makes the point that the animals our societies breed, exploit, and kill have the same emotional and cognitive intelligence as our pets, and in some ways as us, in that they are capable of emotional bonds, communication, and the expression of pain and fear when faced with danger. He writes that veganism "is a social justice issue that recognizes that non-human animals deserve autonomy, moral consideration and the recognition that their lives are far more valuable than the reasons we use to justify exploiting them."

Given this acknowledgement of sentience, along with objective descriptions of the despicable abuse that so many animals endure, Winters calls on us to give compassion to all animals by going vegan. He starts his book with this point and continues to come back to it throughout his writing without this argument ever feeling overstated or exhausted.

He also offers several other reasons why we should give up our carnivore habits and transition to veganism. He provides an in-depth discussion of the environmental impact of animal agriculture, illustrating how it drives deforestation across the planet, "accounts for around a third of the world's freshwater consumption," destroys the bio-diversity of our oceans, and is identified by several studies as one of the leading greenhouse gas emitters impacting climate change. Winters makes it clear that if animal agriculture continues as is, then there will be no way to avoid the horrific outcomes of global warming.

Additionally, Winters presents research that shows how life-long consumption of meat and dairy impacts our physical health by increasing the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and various forms of cancer. He explores how the consumption of animals has related to pandemics, noting that "75 percent of new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from non-human animals." He emphasizes how our interaction with animals for exploitative purposes such as using them for food and other products may determine future outbreaks of illnesses that could be far more detrimental than previous pandemics.

Perhaps what Winters does best in his book is identified specific changes we can make to move away from our damaging system of animal agriculture. The lowest-hanging fruit in terms of behavioural

change is to go vegan of course. However, Winters goes further than this solution by explaining how current farm subsidies could be revised to support farmers in animal agriculture to transition to plant-based farming. He also suggests supporting initiatives focused on rewilding farmland, which increases carbon sequestration and reduces global climate change.

Finally, he discusses the psychology that is often behind people's aversion to veganism, including the fear of judgment, conformity to tradition, and attachment to familiarity. Winters addresses how to confront negative reactions to veganism with empathy, as well as logic.

The use of logic is Winters' strength in his writing, as it is in all of his activism. After all, he is known for confronting some of the most obvious proponents of animal agriculture and exploitative practices – dairy farmers, rodeo cowboys, and slaughterhouse workers – and sustaining a steadfast calm as he presents one logical argument after another, while his opponents often escalate and retreat to defences that lack reason. Throughout his book, Winters maintains his logical, science-based approach to encouraging veganism.

Although his logic is an asset to his message, at times Winters' book could benefit from a greater emotional presence. Perhaps this could have been achieved by Winters sharing more of himself as he writes of his fight for animal rights. He offers memories of encounters with animals, family members who misunderstood his veganism, and moments in his childhood that connected him to nature. However, he often tells these stories without revealing emotion, sensory details, dialogue, or the internal processing of these events. If Winters had explored some of these elements of narrative and inserted his internal experience more in these stories, then readers might feel a greater connection to him as person, not just as an activist. Perhaps this personal connection would benefit his efforts to proliferate veganism.

Despite sometimes lacking this personal or intimate presence in his writing, Winters manages to break down various misconceptions and fallacies that many consumers hold about the meat and dairy industries. He makes solid arguments for veganism that are backed by years of research. For this reason, any of us who eat or buy products made from animals should take the time to read this book so we are informed and educated about the impact our choices have on animals, the environment, and the health of our communities. From here we can hopefully change our consumption habits so that we protect and advocate for our planet and all of its inhabitants.

About the Reviewer

Emily Ehrhart writes creative nonfiction and literary fiction. She has been published in *Voice Catcher Literary Magazine*, as well as the online edition of *Vegan Life Magazine*, an international publication. She has written online content related to mental health, education, and wellness for various organizations and businesses. Currently, Emily is an MFA in Creative Writing Candidate at Vermont College of Fine Arts. She also holds a MA in Counseling from Webster University and a BA in English and Political Science from Saint Louis University. Emily's creative writing often merges with her activism as an animal welfare advocate and an environmentalist. She enjoys both fiction and nonfiction projects that explore systemic challenges and identify specific actions individuals can take to progress towards desired change. In addition to writing, Emily has worked as a psychotherapist and educator. She believes that her writing and activism benefit from an awareness and understanding of different perspectives and life experiences, and she is grateful that her career has provided opportunities to hear peoples' stories and understand their viewpoints.