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Gilles Dauvé

Letter on Animal Liberation

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kept and fulfilled, possibly without the “house” and “book” forms as we’re used to them. All we know is, another way of life that we now call communism would do without quite a few past and present horrors, because people would no longer want/need to perpetrate them. Let’s not ask for other guarantees: there won’t or couldn’t be any.

PS: There are a few more points we would have liked to deal with. One is some anglo- or anglosaxon-centrism present in *Beasts of Burden*. For example, in England, hunting is a privilege of the upper class. In France, it is a (bourgeois) revolutionary conquest: after 1789, the peasants took over the right to shoot game which until then belonged to aristocrats. The elitist function of hunting is historical, i.e. relative. Only in the 2nd century BC, Roman rulers got into the habit of hunting for fun and prestige, partly to imitate Middle East kings. Today, a decaying rural hierarchic England supports hunting in a lost battle against modern waged classes who dream of a pacified equalized society.

Another point we left out is your belief that Animal Lib is positive if and when it goes against the Law and confronts the cops. But lots of strikes, demos and riots led by leftists, CPs or reactionary unions have fought the police, even sometimes reached the point of armed struggle, and resulted in nothing but violent conservatism.

The age-old debate between carnivorism and vegetarianism contributes more to an understanding of “human nature”, than it helps us to know what to eat. There is no such thing as a “good” or natural diet (too much vodka and chips is bad, though).

Communism reconciles man and man, man and woman, adult and child, man and himself, human animals and non-human animals, humans and the rest of nature. . . but not in the sense that it puts an end to confrontation. It is impossible to foresee in what form violence would persist in a communist world. What we know is that humans would neither regard and treat themselves as beasts to be tamed, nor as possible angels. No inborn guilt feeling. No innocents either.

One day, humans will stop treating animals the way animals have been treated for millennia. But men and women won’t be acting against themselves and for the animals’ sake, out of compassion. Humans won’t sacrifice their food tastes, give up meat although they may love it, because they want to put an end to the suffering of animals. They will transform their attitude to the animal world for themselves as well as for the animals, because their overall attitude to the cosmos will change. Likewise, people won’t stop working on Volkswagen assembly lines because, although they might like cars, they’d go against their personal preference and give priority to ecology. They’ll stop because they’ll invent a different life, hence new means of transportation. To take a further example, if rape is unlikely to happen, it won’t be because men will refrain from it for the common good or decide not to cause women’s pain, but because they won’t feel the need for it.

We live between two dreams or nightmares. The “Everything is possible” technological fiction, which “natural disasters”, terrible as they can be, fortunately shatter from time to time. And the Mother Earth myth, usually more palatable, but often equally absurd: there’s no going back (where, by the way?).

Nature is not non-violent. Neither is humankind. No life would be sweet enough to eliminate all possibility of aggression. Fortunately. We can say as little about violence to animals in a future world as about violence between humans. No doubt the evolution of the latter would affect the former: a society where men and women would stop caging themselves would no longer cage other beings as it has done so far. Can we say any more? Everything would be subverted, from living in a house to reading a book. Equally, there probably is something deeply human in houses and books, something that would still be

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future corpses may well cut down our lust for life. Reflecting on the rise and fall of civilizations may disturb our great historical expectations.

Communism will alter man's relation to man and to everything, animals included, and therefore the terms, not the existence of the contradiction. In the year 3000, humankind could be down to 5.000.000 people, who would all be vegans. Perhaps. . . though a single diet seems as likely as love-making reduced to one position and housing to one kind of habitat. Still, after all, why not! The trouble is, nobody knows. Anthropological data would rather suggest the infinite variety and unpredictability of ways and means.

Empathy with living creatures "naturally" extends to every form of existence, even beyond "life". We've all felt shame and anger when some barren hill has been ripped open or erased to make way for motor cars. (But it's significant we don't feel sorry for the same type of hill that has been turned into what we regard as an imaginative park where we meet and have fun.)

From a holistic or cosmic point of view, we can share emotions with the rose that shivers when it feels it is about to be plucked. Some people have a unusual liking for plants. A friend once tried to "rescue" a small tree from a moped somebody had thrown on top of its fragile branches. Wild flower lovers can be more distressed at the sight of cut flowers than when they hear about a slaughterhouse. "Have you no sensibility?" they ask. A common answer is: "Plants don't have a nervous system." This is precisely where the problem lies: where shall we draw the line? On what criterion? To a vegetal lover, it's the plant that's silent and innocent, not the lamb that eats it. Shall we call him a pervert?! Horror against slaughterhouse divides beings between animals and vegetals. Then what about Africans making a feast of ants or termites? Most likely a thousand new classifications would blossom in communism.

As For a World Without a Moral Order tried to explain, this would not mean that crossing the line would be easy and straightforward. If anything was possible and painless at any given time, it would only prove that everything had become the same, undifferentiated, neutral, worthless. Nothing is at stake when nothing is at risk. Who wants a slumberland where the reward for valuing and doing nothing is never getting hurt? Who'd like to live in a TV commercial world turned real? Likes suppose dislikes, and our preferences go along with disgusts. A major difference between communism and present times, however, is that people would not pretend their rules and habits and diets to be universal in time or space.

Every period reinterprets available data according to prevailing historical perspectives. Man is nature and artifice.

Humanocentrism (man is superior to other species) and “naturalism” (man is to reintegrate the rest of nature) both forget that human nature is to look for human nature. Man is the being who never quite knows what he is. Systems try to reassure him. When he is best reassured, as in totalitarian society (and the capitalist megamachine is an all embracing totality), he is most destructive.

Whatever made mankind human also enables it to fall and wander. There is something impossible in humanity, and nothing will brush aside this impossibility. If we were chimps, cats or so-called social insects, we would have never known either the apple pie or the aircraft-carrier — nor this discussion.

7. It Would Be as Pointless to Hope for a Peaceful Coexistence Between Our Species and Others, as to Expect a Non-Violent Human Community

Although very few of us have been shown the inside of a pig farm, even a kid has a rough idea of how a pig turned into the bacon he’s eating. Nobody tries to deny the connection. Every civilization deals with it in its own way. Hunter societies totemized wild animals. Traditional country life had the children play with the family pig whose killing was a time of festivities. (An unedited film of such killing + merriment would horrify TV viewers more than watching thousands of starving Africans. No society has ever been as extreme as ours in its combination of mass slaughter and hypocrisy. Animals are treated like men — not the other way round — only a lot worse.)

The pessimist will reply that nothing can be done about it. The vegetarian will try and promote the coming of a world where humans do not domesticate, use and eat animals. Both miss a contradiction that animal life ignores too (the cat does not wonder if it’s right or wrong to kill the mouse). Contrary to pessimistic or cynical recommendations, we can’t just dismiss the fate of animals. Contrary to vegetarian wishes, we can’t treat animals the way we treat a fellow human: we can only pretend to do so. And we can’t forget about it. Man is an animal unlike all others, forced to be aware of it and to cope with it. Human existence is based upon such contradictions. Thinking about us as

This is a letter sent by French readers to the authors of *Beasts of Burden* (Antagonism Press, 1999, c/o BM Mahkno, London WC1N 3XX (<http://www.geocities.com/CapitalHill/Lobby/3909>)).

This pamphlet has the merit of addressing a vital question: If communism is to transform the whole of daily life, it can’t leave out our relation to animals and the way we eat. *Beasts of Burden* forces to rethink the whole “primitivist” debate. We hope to tackle this some day.

As neither of us is PC, “man” here means man + woman, and “mankind” means humankind.

Since our letter was written, *Beasts of Burden* has been reviewed in *Undercurrent*, n.8 (Brighton & Hove Unemployed Workers’ Centre, 4 Crestway Parade, Hollingdean, Brighton BN1 7BL, UK).

1. There Is No Such Thing As a Wrong Turning in History

It is impossible to determine when and how history went wrong. Primitivism selects those facts that are supposed to prove its point, and rejects one aspect of science (traditional history) in the name of others which also belong to capitalist knowledge (anthropology). Instead of breaking with “marxist” determinism, you shift the emphasis from economy to man/animal contradictions. Whether written by Rousseau, you or me, any “discours des origines” usually tells more about its writer than about the past.

History provides us with facts and events that contributed to turn man into what he now is. Not all that many examples, but enough for anyone to pick and elaborate on.

Why would the hunter be the prime villain? You write agriculture led to accumulation, hence to classes, etc.. What about gathering: why couldn’t someone accumulate what others collected?

It would be just as logical to start from any similar fact (the wheel, for example) and reconstruct 10.000 years on it.

No single thing accounts for everything. Value does not explain all capital. One cannot choose one form of (inevitably alienated) life and turn it into the cause of all others. Gathering as opposed to animal domestication. Agriculture

versus hunting. Village v. town. Sedentarism v. nomadism. Individual v. society. Community v. individuality. Free hunting and fishing v. farming. Elite v. the people. Central v. local power. Women's condition. Children's submission. Technique and machines. Not forgetting war! A lot changed when "ritualized" warfare expanded and prisoners were put to what later became "work". Most likely, much happened at the same time, i.e. over a few thousand years. Agriculture did not result in classes and political power. There was "primitive communism", then there was agriculture + classes + politics.

Marxist determinism (sometimes present in our writings) explained history by the appearance of a "surplus" that was grabbed by a minority. Freddy Perlman replaces this with an hydraulical determination. But he does not say why local communities split and gave birth to "classes" and "the State". Couldn't they collectively build and manage dykes and canals by themselves, instead of relying on "organizers"? There was nothing fatal in this technical evolution. Otherwise we have to admit mankind will always enslave itself wherever it uses large scale irrigation. There is evidence of hunting or fishing or agricultural societies which did not become oppressive of human beings. Why? Nobody knows. There is no more explanation of why things turned bad, than there exists a guarantee of how they'll turn (and stay) good in some future time.

We can't take up something we (usually most rightly) dislike and make it into a universal cause. Why not choose cave painting? It is related to language, therefore to symbolic power whereby humans entrap themselves, as Zerzan argues. This is equally valid and irrelevant: it makes one aspect of society into the cause of it all.

If we mistake the part for the whole, (pre)history can be called upon to prove anything. Militant vegetarianism can easily trace social evils to meat-eating, and contrast them with the seemingly better life of vegetal-eating apes. Yet the opposite option is just as well documented. Carnivorism has been seen as the origin of an essential part of humanity: sociality. Like many predators, dolphins have some form of cooperation, hierarchy, codes, etc. Just as you regard hunting as a major source of oppression, others treat it as the origin of society. Intelligence means being able to face new situations and adapt to constantly emerging factors. Animals that kill usually have far more social relationships than those they prey upon. Now, where does that lead us? On a more physiological level, it has been argued that the rise of animal proteins

6. Vegetarianism Negates and Yet Proves Man's Radical Difference

Nobody asks the lion not to kill antelopes. People take it for granted that nature must have its way. The call of the wild. . . Man alone is asked to behave differently. Vegetarianism defines him as the animal who has the choice, who can decide not to harm fellow creatures — and therefore must choose not to harm them. In other words, man is requested to act in the name of the same superior status that he is denied. He is said to belong to nature, to know it, and because he knows it he is supposed not to take advantage of it. We're not pointing out an inconsistency in order to refute vegetarianism. What is indeed refuted is the possibility either to prove or disprove it. This logical contradiction is but another way of defining "human nature", or rather of showing how "humanity" evades definition.

"The only thing one really knows about human nature is that it changes. Change is the only quality we can predict of it. The systems that fail are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development."

— Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*

"Man is the only being that kills for pleasure", we hear people say, which implies that killing can't or shouldn't be enjoyable. We fully agree, but asserting this only opens the fateful door onto the weird boundless realm of pleasure. Who or what will set limits to it? Reason? The sake of the common good? The understanding that my own pleasure depends on expanding the pleasure of others, not crushing it? How simple. . . how naïve! Sade knew better. So did Fourier. Nothing will ever completely neutralize the anti-social and negative side of humanity.

Man is not physiologically fit or unfit to bite into flesh. In fact, he wasn't "made for" anything. It is futile to defend homosex on the grounds that it occurs in some animal species: that is true, but tells us little apart from the (already known) existence of homosex. Man is part of nature and distinct from the rest of nature. How much does this have to do with his standing erect position and panoramic vision? How much comes from social factors?

People can be vegan and communist. They can be vegan and non- or anti-communist.

If punk rockers are likely to play a larger part in social upheavals than opera goers, this has nothing to do with an alleged superiority of the Sex Pistols over Monteverdi, and rather with the fact that punk audiences are more lower class than Covent Garden. Punks won't be revolutionaries as punks.

Veganism deals with the social and symbolic power of meat. No vegan thinks he's aiming a real blow at the animal industry: he acts against an image. Then why not refuse to drive? (Which is of course easier if you can afford to live downtown than in a remote suburb with inadequate public transport.) Why not abstain from parenthood? But if the criterion is being antagonistic to society (as in ancient Greece, when refusing to eat meat was an offense to gods/men/animals relationships, hence a critique of social order), then in a Catholic country in 1700 or even 1900, it was subversive to eat meat on a Friday (as indeed some militant atheists used to). It is impossible to make one particular behaviour or gesture into a norm or anti-norm.

On the other hand, those who think mankind once took the wrong turn are logically bound to fight for a world organized specifically against the return to this original mistake, and for example to advocate a special diet.

Therefore this discussion has one more merit. It reminds us that the world does not revolve around one single big cause or sin. Carnivorism is not the root of all evils. But neither was money, for example, the origin of everything that goes wrong. Humankind is not suffering from a disease which communism would cure. There is no medicine. We are doubters, not doctors. We're not defending sanity against disease. Communism is not production or life organized differently, without rulers, for instance, or without exchange for value. It can only be defined as activity, as community. People will not look for ways of circulating goods without using money. They will live and make things differently, and this difference will include the absence of money: there will be no need to calculate the average labour time necessary to produce something. As long as people keep thinking they have first and foremost to "suppress" money, or separate political power, or any present evil, it's proof of them not imagining and doing what can be done to live without those evils.

eating small nations (ancient Greece, England, Japan) showed the superiority of carnivorism. Again, what does that mean? "Nature" provides us with so much evidence that it proves any argument and becomes useless.

Isn't it because men were treated like things that animals and trees were reified too?

The car industry is not objectionable because it derives from the slaughterhouse. Our critique of capitalism is precisely that value production turns everything, whether meat or poetry, into commodity, and that it's no use asking for more love poems and less hamburgers. As long as both products are profitable, factories will keep on churning them out. It could be a factory of anything. It's the conveyor belt society that has to be understood and revolutionized, no matter if it's manufacturing packed beef, wholemeal bread, or fridges.

2. Dealing With Any Issue (Here: Carnivorism/ Vegetarianism, Or Animal Condition) Presupposes Asking Where The Question Comes From

Why is it that the average young urban Western European of the early 21st century hates the sight of khaki dressed men set out to shoot rabbits or ducks?

Nature awareness, ecological worries and reactions to animal abuse are not signs of mankind at last getting conscious of its impact on the rest of the planet, but of the necessity for capital to think globally, and to take all past and present into account, from Maya temples to whales and genes. Everything it dominates has to be controlled and classified in order to be managed. What is marketable must be protected. Capital owns the world and no owner can afford to be too careless about his possessions.

In the early 19th century, the bourgeoisie wasted the life and labour power of millions of proles. Thanks partly to workers' action, this changed into less destructive and more profitable exploitation. Now capital can't go on squandering millions of monkeys or trees.

It's no coincidence that an acute sensibility to the condition of animals comes up at the same time as industrialized food and concentration camp style farming. Humanism and modern State power rose together. The industrialization of everything (man, animal, as well as human and animal food) goes with the protest against the wrongs done to everything. For the last 30 years, vegetarianism has developed at the same pace as agro-business, and our feelings too: we eat plastic wrapped ham sandwiches but refuse to wear mink. Modern man wants meat without blood, tobacco without nicotine, commodities without sweat stains, war without corpses, police without truncheons, truncheons without bruises, money without speculation.

In this respect, the most modern forms of exploitation help understand the most backward ones.

What is happening to animals is a degraded product of "class struggle", of the evolution of capital-labour relationships after the rebellions of the 60's and 70's on the shopfloor. Managers try to make the workplace safer and less destructive (= more productive) of a precious capital: labour. Animal exploitation duplicates this process. It tends to experiment less on animals in order to get more from them, painfully if it must, painlessly if it can: "reduction in the number of animals sacrificed, refinement of techniques that cause suffering and replacement of live animals with simulation or cell cultures" (Newsweek, January 16, 1989).

Protests against animal abuse parallel the general demand for a multi-cultural, more open, non-aggressive society.

The question itself has to be questioned. The emphasis on "cruelty" implies that a "fair" treatment would be acceptable. The insistence on "abject" labour conditions calls for tolerable work. The fight against excesses logically supports moderation. Let us suppose these atrocious (and often plain silly) experiments could be truly painless, and even enjoyable for the animals involved. You and I would still object to "stress" studies and make-up tests, just as we'd regard "happy" Ford workers as even more alienated.

vote out of revolutionary principles. I don't have to force myself. I genuinely believe Callaghan is no better than Thatcher. And (contrary to the left-winger who votes Labour as a lesser evil), I am well aware that my attitude has no immediate impact whatsoever. (At the very best, its effect is to help keep alive some community between those few people who don't vote for reasons similar to mine.)

Abstention from the world does not prevent it from going on. If I don't want to take part in anyone's exploitation, the best is never to buy shares, and to do without a bank account, so either spend all my money as I get it, or keep it in cash at home. Why not? At the end of his life, Jean Genet had hardly any belongings, lived in hotels, and insisted on being paid in cash, so he could use and circulate it the way he wished. He was doing not the best, but his best to handle money in a money world. Shall we ask ourselves to do the same? Shall we ask our friends?

Like Genet's attitude, veganism is personal. Some attitudes may be definitely "bad", yet none is superior to others. It is pointless to wonder what is closer to communism. Genet's income came from being part of the literary world. Where does soya grow? Who grows it? For what pay?

The least uncommunist attitude might be not to choose a way of life. To live with a minimum of fads, to remain as open as possible: sleeping in an igloo in Greenland, a wigwam in North America, a council estate flat in Rome, driving a lorry in Kenya and teaching English in South Korea, shopping at Tesco's in Battersea with the local proles and fishing with the villagers of a South Pacific Island. Adjusting to many food and sex habits without tying oneself to any. This would be as different from the "resister" who insulates himself from the world at large, as from the alternative milieu person who shelters himself in a micro-world.

Such an (imaginary) "citizen of the world" or "traveller of mankind" would not set himself as a model. No doubt he would bump into unpleasant aspects of this planet: the Kenyan lorry might help disrupt local life, some Battersea pub mate might dislike the Blacks, etc. We're not presenting a new "On the Road" ideal. This unlikely character just helps us understand that communism would open up every category to every other.

Perhaps the main flaw in veganism (as in any world vision based on a specific diet) is the notion that man is what he eats. He is what he does, which includes what he eats, and whatever he does is always done with others.

Still, the exploitation of McDonald's employees has more historical relevance than that of the cows. Not because humans would suffer more, or the suffering of cows would matter less. But because only humans can put an end to McDonald's.

Animals do not work. It is misleading to call "work" what a horse or a silkworm has been trained and is forced to do. Because then the word is given a totally different meaning from the many variants of work as we know it (slave or serf work, wage labour, housework, homework). Work is organized by the master, boss, manager. . . but the worker always has to play his part in this organization, and can interchange his position with whoever organizes him, and question the organization. Animal "activity" is neither the opposite of, or the same as alienated labour: it is something else.

The communist movement does not react to the fate of victims — whether humans or animals.

How this world could change depends on what it is based upon.

Camatte, Fredy Perlman, primitivists, and to a large extent "autonomists" start from the fact that there's a domination over everything: they view this society as based upon the control (of which production is only one part) of every life form. Therefore the common element between man and animal matters more than the difference.

We maintain that capitalism rules, and that capital is based on value-producing labour. Putting humans to work is the key to mastering everything.

All the examples given in the text (slavery, enclosures, clearances, the assembly line) point to a social (= human to human) relationship, whereby animals indeed suffer, but the motive of this suffering was to put men to work (sheep don't shear sheep). One work organization replaced another which was less productive. The animal industry did not create a proletariat: the creation of a proletariat was one of the conditions for animal industry.

5. No Lifestyle Is Subversive

Arthur Cravan claimed to be a deserter of 17 countries. We are deserters. But not because defecting from the world would change it. Simply, we don't belong. If I abstain from voting, it's not because deep down in my heart I'd rather have Callaghan than Thatcher as a prime minister, but forbid myself to

3. Human and Animal Conditions Are Only Getting Worse in the Sense That Everything Is Getting Capitalized. Therefore the Most Visible Horrors Done to Humans and Animals are Becoming Less Visibly Horrible.

Your pamphlet starts with the assumption that not only the masses are suffering from increased exploitation and growing impoverishment, but animals are getting butchered and tortured more than before.

Life is worse, but not quite the way you say. There are no more famines or mass killings of humans than in 1900 or 1945. Foodwise, the average Western worker's diet is certainly richer and more balanced than in Marx's time: he's getting as much industrialized food as industrialized entertainment or travel. Life expectancy is still rising: if it's going down in Russia, it's because Russia is suffering from backward capitalism. Sweatshops are not the future of capital, nor are social benefits and dole money the main source of income among the proles. We'd be mistaken if we described as hell a place nobody regards as heaven.

What is worse than 1848, 1917 or 1945, is that never before have so many living beings and unliving things been turned into money and money-producing processes. Never have humans been more dependent upon something above themselves and. . . until now, unable or unwilling to change the situation.

As the SI said, what matters is the critique of the wealth offered by this society, not of the poverty it inflicts on us. Because both go together. There is as much horror in the politically correct sugary animal loving image this society presents, as in the slaughters actually taking place behind high walls. It was not the Thought Police and Room 101 that made the world of 1984 an abomination, it was its all encompassing conformism. Winston's final love for Big Brother is at least as terrible as the tortures he went through.

Capital maims and humiliates humans. It kills millions of animals. True. But wherever capital develops and becomes more "purely" capitalist, it resorts far less to torture and open violence. The essence (and therefore the contradiction) of capitalism is not to be found in its extremes. Genocide and cattle slaughtering are inevitable effects of capital: they do not define it.

Just like animal exploitation, sexism and racism are necessary components of capitalism. But only when it needs them. It periodically supersedes them, replaces them by better adapted forms. Informal or institutional racism will always surface again in some capitalist country, but is nowhere essential to capital. For example, apartheid was not “the” form of wage-labour in South Africa. Fifteen years ago, friends were telling us that anti-apartheid struggles were fighting capitalism, as the South African economy was based on racism, and could never do without. It does now. And in fact business was among the driving forces that got rid of apartheid.

You’re right about McDonald’s being at the crux of many aspects of our present society. But precisely, McDonald’s cannot be portrayed solely as a concentration of horrors (bad food + degraded social relationships for the customers, bad pay + appalling work conditions for the workers, more animals killed, plus increased domination of US investment and lifestyle). All this is true but, since you argue from a qualitative point of view, you’re missing out both the appeal and impact of junk food and junk work. The concept of fast food is historically bound to the ideas of safe food (such places have at least the same standards of hygiene as most pubs or cafés we like), eat-alone-if-you-wish, non-commitment to others, minimal physical contact and speech, speed, as well as providing a casual job, mainly for the young. These ideas are more than an ideology, they express the reality of leisure and work in the TV and computer age. Exploitation indeed, but the underlying violence (to people and animals) can only be understood as the flip side of fast food. McDonald’s is as exploitative and repressive as any other company, but claims to be (and is, to some extent) consumer friendly, staff friendly, animal friendly. Having a hamburger in a fast food can be less socially involved than sitting in a pub or in Joe’s Café.

Capital takes life (in all forms, from human labour, trees and cows to fairy tales and emotions), reproduces it and gives it back to us. That’s how it differs from past exploitation systems. There lies its strength. Unlike a vampire, it sucks energy out of us but keeps us alive and has us grow, produce, buy and act. Value production and consumerism work because we’re active as well as passive. Why are computers popular? Why is sport?

Meat was indeed a symbol of upperclassness. But aren’t you putting things upside down? It’s just as likely the rulers kept for themselves what had more

nutritional value. Anyway, the Western worker (male, particularly) still believes in overeating and revels in red meat, whereas the elite has now moved into far more balanced diets. Being rich now means going to expensive health shops — often vegetarian oriented. In California, entering junk food corner shops for the lower classes, and then a large “organic food” market for the middle classes, is like visiting two different planets.

However, as we know, consumerism gradually extends to most what used to be the privilege of a few, and, at the same time, massification downgrades what it brings to every home. Technology can now make food products of any shape, texture and taste. One day, there might be Christmas turkeys, perfect with bones, flesh, skin and exact colour, made out of synthetic living organisms, as tasty as the real one, good for your health, cheap and plentiful. Slaughtering poultry would be reduced to a minimum, and only for the upper classes, in supposedly painless and stressless conditions, in old fashioned farms where hens walk around the farmyard, possibly under RSPCA supervision. Of course, the marginalized masses of the semi-industrialized world would still kill chicken in the most gruesome manner, and horrify Western reporters. Sci-Fi? No more than the non-violent, worker friendly, factory.

The relation between man and (the rest of) nature reflects the relationship between men. Capital does rely on abuse, constraint and repression. But its essence is no more violent than non-violent. It’s hard when it has to, soft whenever it becomes more profitable. Forcing 5 year olds to a 12 hour working day was necessary in 1830, but as history showed, not consubstantial to business interests. Fighting for non-violent forms contributes to shift oppressive forms from one level to another. The prospect of synthetic food now enables capital to monstrously fulfill the bio-food dream.

4. The Animal Question Can Only Be Posed As a Human Question

It would be absurd to put the class struggle before nature. The communist movement does not uphold the engineering worker against the cow. The aim is not to recompose the proletarian class, but to decompose all classes.