

The Poetics of Christian Engagement: Living Compassionately in a Sexual Politics of Meat World

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Abstract

One of the central features of Western existence is the objectification and use of other beings in creating the subjectification of human beings. My argument is for a Christian veganism that rejects the dependence of the subject on the object status of other beings. The roadblocks to recognizing the necessity for Christian veganism I call *the pedagogy of the oppressor*. I propose that one way to change the subject-object relationship is a poetics of Christian engagement. Christian veganism may seem a radical position theoretically and pragmatically, but I will offer suggestions for expanding Christian engagement with other animals and for the food and environmental justice movements of which veganism is a part.

Keywords

Christology, dairy, evil, feminism, feminist ethics of care, objectification, poetics, poetry, poets, sexual politics of meat, veganism

Introduction

I am interested in the question of Christian veganism. I see veganism as a logical, appropriate—and neither difficult nor absolutist, but delicious—response to the fact of domesticated animals' lives and deaths. It begins as a boycott; a boycott as political as the boycott of sugar from Southern States before the Civil War. But it becomes something much more: an understanding of the value of relationships and a celebration of the imagination as it creates meals from non-animal foods. It is an example and fulfillment of Christian engagement with the location and time in which we are living. My Christian veganism arises from the feminist ethics of care that emphasizes the ethical nature of relationships. We don't come into the world alone. We live lives of interdependency, moving

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between dependence and independence.¹ The emphasis in Luke 2 on who is at the manger and who arrives after Jesus' birth reminds us that we are born into relationships.

Our location is in a world constructed in part by the sexual politics of meat.

Western civilization trains us to believe our subjectification needs the object status of others. Objectification creates our experience of ourselves as subjects. We then think these identities are fixed. The methodology for awakening a Christian engagement with what is happening to the other-than-human world requires us to recognize not only the tension between Christian practice and Christian belief, but between the dominant sexual politics of meat world with objectification at its heart and a formulation of Christian theology and ethics that resists the perpetuation of objectification in relationships and decenters the human.

A poetics of Christian engagement may help with both tasks by offering a way to speak and think and feel and be alive in the world God created that involves subject to subject relationships, and also, I hope, a way to respond to the crises in that created world—crises we have created.

William Carlos Williams, an American modernist poet, wrote famously in his poem 'Asphodel, That Greeny Flower' of the difficulty getting the news from poems, though humans 'die miserably every day/for lack/of what is found there'.² What is found there is needed to liberate us from who we are—subjects who need other subjects to become objects. What is found *there* awakens us to *here*, to our location, to creation itself and to our beingness at this place and time. For it's not just humans who die miserably every day for lack of what is found there.

Williams is famous for another poem about poetry and poetics:

The Red Wheelbarrow

William Carlos Williams

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens³

Williams, like many poets, offers us a way to experience God's creation in non-objectified ways. The white chickens by the barn wall and the cows, the pigs and other domesticated animals also depend upon what is found there.

1. See Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams, *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

2. The entire poem can be found here: <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/asphodel-that-greeny-flower-2> (accessed 18 September 2016).

3. In the public domain.

The Landscape of Objectification

One of the central features of Western existence is the objectification and use of other beings. This humanocentric view is layered with misogyny.⁴ Cookbooks pronounce *Eat Like a Man*; United States-based Carl's Jr. advertisements for 'the Western X-tra Bacon Thickburger' announced 'Man Up for 2x the bacon'. The repetitive and anxious reassertion of the connection suggests the connection has been broken or at least become frayed.

Through the structure of *the absent referent*, the oppression of women and the other animals intertwines. The function of the absent referent in relationship to animals is to keep our 'meat' separated from any idea that she or he was once a living being. Once the existence of flesh is disconnected from the existence of a nonhuman who was killed to become that product, 'meat' becomes unanchored by its original referent (the nonhuman), becoming instead a free-floating image, a metaphor, unbloodied by suffering. The other animals are literally consumed and women are visually consumed. Both are represented in images as fragmented, cut into body parts for consumption. When not depicted in this way, woman, unlike men, are more likely to be shown on all fours or naked. Animals meanwhile are often represented in feminized or sexualized poses.



Photograph 1. Taken by Allison Covey on the way to the Cambridge train station on the afternoon of my plenary presentation at the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics (SSCE), 11 September 2016, where I pointed out that the ephemera of popular culture reinforces the animalizing of women and the sexualizing of animals, and that, once alerted to it, the conference attendees would notice it. Used by permission. Conference attendee Kevin Hargaden also snapped a photograph of it.

4. Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 178.

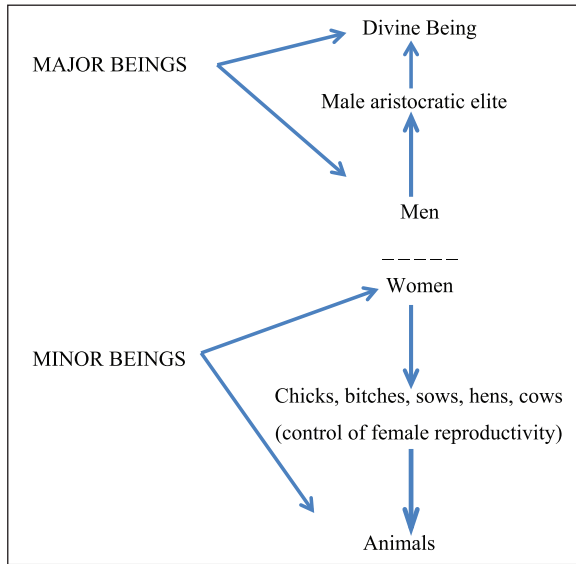


Figure 1. Sexual politics of meat cosmology chart

André Joly observes that the choice of the word ‘it’ to refer to animals ‘signifies basically that the animal is excluded from the human sphere and that no personal relationship of any kind is established with the speaker’. While ‘it’ obviates the need to identify the sex of an animal, there are times when one uses ‘he’ or ‘she’ for an animal regardless of whether the animal actually is male or female. Joly explains: ‘Now any animal, however small or big, and irrespective of its sex, may be considered as a *major power* (he) or a *minor power* (she)’.⁵

‘He’ is used when ‘whatever its size, the animal is presented as an active power and a possible danger to the speaker’ while ‘she’ signals a ‘*minor power*’. Joly identifies ‘[s]portsmen, whalers, fishermen’ as being in special relation to the animal, and they call ‘she’ any animal ‘regarded as a potential prey, a power that has to be destroyed—for sport or food—, hence a dominated power’.⁶

Despite decades of feminist education about the implications of biased metaphorical language for the divine, God is still predominantly called ‘he’, Major Power that *he* is (see Figure 1). Men’s identities moves upward toward the divine; metaphors for God arise from the male, aristocratic elite (‘King’, ‘Lord’, etc.) while women’s identification moves downward. (The gender fluidity of contemporary culture, and the attempts to dismantle the gender binary notwithstanding, these conventions and cosmologies remain.)

5. André Joly, ‘Toward a Theory of Gender in Modern English’, in André Joly and T. Fraser (eds), *Studies in English Grammar* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1975), p. 273; emphasis in original.

6. Joly, “Toward a Theory of Gender,” p. 273.

The question of engagement, of praxis, is the question, in part, of how do we unwrite our lives? Can a poetics invite learning about difficult issues in which we are complicit without evoking defensiveness? One reason I believe the answer is ‘yes’ is because the poet herself in the writing of the poem does not know where the poem is going (or ostensibly ought not to). Poet Dean Young asserts that ‘At every moment the poet must be ready to abandon any prior intention in welcome expectation of what the poem is beginning to signal’.¹¹ Like the poet writing, we readers reading don’t know where a poem is going, we have to get to the end to find out. You are going along, if you are the poet Rilke, talking about the archaic torso of Apollo, the unknowable head, the unseen eyes, the brilliance of the torso, the seeing of you that is happening, and you the reader are following the poem and suddenly find you are encountering those last words, ‘You must change your life’.¹² Who—poet or reader—knew that was coming?

Because there, at the end of the poem, *You must change your life*. It’s not until we get there, whether in the poem or in activism that we discover it ... yes, we must change our lives; if we are sleeping, we must wake up, and if we are awake, we must become even more awake.

The Pedagogy of the Oppressor

In 1994, the first panel discussion on nonhuman animals and religion, ‘Demarginalizing Animals in Theology’, organized by the Religion and Ecology Group, took place at the American Academy of Religion. I was one of the organizers and panelists. The other panelists were Catherine Keller, Andrew Linzey, Jay McDaniel and Paul Waldau. *The Sexual Politics of Meat* had been out for four years, and I had participated in many talk radio shows. What I remember that Saturday afternoon was that the questions coming from professors of theology, ethics, Biblical studies and other fields struck me as being as unsophisticated as though from the Texas cowboys I often found myself arguing with.

One professor proposed that, ‘It was a dog eat dog world’.

To which Andrew said, ‘Isn’t that what Jesus came to change?’

And Paul pointed out that in fact, no, it was not a dog eat dog world. Dogs rarely eat other dogs.

Another audience member suggested that we panelists in trying to prevent the deaths of animals were afraid of tragedy. I suggested that we panelists were willing to look at the tragedy of what was happening to other animals, especially domesticated animals, but that most meat eaters were not.

We heard the explanation, ‘I thank the animal for its sacrifice’ hinting at the idea that this use of ‘sacrifice’ was similar—though it was not—to the Levitical references to sacrifice, or the use of the word by certain Native American nations.

11. Dean Young, *The Art of Recklessness* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2010), p. 4.

12. Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘Archaic Torso of Apollo’, in M. D. Herter Norton, *Translations from the Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1962 [1938]), p. 181.

But I thought: Didn't Jesus come to bring an end to sacrifice?

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* differentiates between *the banking way* of knowledge instruction (a pedagogy of lectures and expertise transmitted, i.e., 'Open brain, deposit knowledge') and *conscientization* that occurs through relationships, reflection, shared knowledge, and action.¹³

But what about the pedagogy of *the oppressor*? How does conscientization occur when one is safe in the pew or the lecture hall, looking forward to a Sunday roast or hamburger at lunch? When it comes to the eating of other animals and the use of animal products, we each learned their legitimacy through the banking method of knowledge—someone else deposited into our minds (and stomachs) the 'fact' of the normativeness and naturalness of the edibility of the flesh of dead animals, their milk and eggs.

The pedagogy of the oppressor is argumentative, defensive, accusatory. It fears change or doubts its possibility. Rather than a sense of humility that might arise from an understanding that if we cannot know for sure what the lives and minds of the other animals are (though many ethologists argue we *can* know more than we think and the animals know more than we have thought), over the years and to this day, I encounter Christian defenses of bad acts. Humility might say, 'If we cannot know, why continue a potential evil?' But because of bad theology, self-interest and dominant cultural attitudes, Christians resist change in terms of caring about animals because it requires changing their own habits.

They fail to acknowledge that the viewing of someone as an object and the believing that someone *is* an object are actually *different* acts that have been collapsed into one act. Most people, Christians included, do not want the absent referent restored. Bad faith and the pedagogy of the oppressor salute God the creator by their creative ways of justifying the destruction of creation.¹⁴

A God Trick

Donna Haraway coined the term 'a god trick' to describe the illusion of objectivity that can be found in science and philosophy, a disembodied, transcendent 'conquering gaze from nowhere'. The subject is separated from what is being studied, distanced, set above. Such objectivity is impossible to achieve, she argues, and that is why she calls it a god trick. We may strive for 'faithful accounts of the real world', but we must also acknowledge and make explicit our perspective and positioning within the world and that it arises from 'situated knowledges'.¹⁵

13. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1990).

14. See Lisa Kemmerer, *Eating Earth: Environmental Ethics and Dietary Choice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

15. Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (Fall 1988), pp. 579–82. I discuss Haraway's concept in 'Beastly Theology: When Epistemology Creates Ontology', in *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1995; repr. Lantern Books, 2015), pp. 190–91.

A god trick is one of the choices of the pedagogy of the oppressor, someone who wishes to be unlocatable. Decisions to eat other subjects participate in a conquering gaze from nowhere, removed from the lives and realities of those we consume. But we are not nowhere; we are all locatable, with our forks in our hands over dinner.

Being in God's Image = Power and Hegemony

The pedagogy of the oppressor interprets being in God's image as being about power and manipulation and hegemony instead of compassion and mercy and emptying unconditional love. I find Christians often asserting being in the image of God when we are lording over others and abusing power, removed from its impact on the lives of others.

The Fallacious Logic that 'Animals would not exist if we didn't eat them'

Dr. Johnson cited Hutchinson's *Moral Philosophy*: 'There is much talk of the misery which we cause to the brute creation; but they are recompensed by existence. If they were not useful to man, and therefore protected by him, they would not be nearly so numerous.'¹⁶

'We' aren't the ones who have brought new animals into the world; it is female animals who do so. Moreover, there is no state of nonexistence from which one can yearn for existence or know that one's fate, sadly, is to remain nonexistent.

Domesticated animals are the only oppressed group for whom the elimination of their oppression (being raised and killed to be consumed) appears to eliminate them (they would no longer be brought into existence). We hear this in contemporary discourse when it is asked, 'What would happen to the cows if we didn't eat them?'

Those who ask that question imply that compassion need not be a concern because existence is a more essential one. To believe that how one experiences one's existence does not matter for the one who is experiencing it is to accept the role of killer without having to do the killing.

The result of this viewpoint is that the animals' 'unbornness'—their supposed lack of existence—is seen as more of a tragedy than their present suffering or their future death. Not the subordination of their lives to ours and what this requires in terms of injury and the stifling of their lives, but that without such subordination they would lack a life. Thus the quality of that life never needs to be acknowledged.

The question, 'What would happen to the cows if we didn't eat them?' allows for the comforting belief that, God-like, we have been beneficent in granting life and so we can take it when we desire. By claiming the credit for the existence of animals, those who hold this position create a belief system that implicitly forgives themselves for what they cause nonhumans to experience. For an example, consider the life of a veal calf, wrenched from his mother fifteen minutes after birth, carried to a veal crate where he is kept until slaughter.

16. George Birkbeck Hill, *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891), p. 61.



Photograph 2. A calf, fifteen minutes after birth, being separated from his mother and taken, by a red wheelbarrow (not visible in black and white), to an area where the calves are kept, each in a separate crate. Copyright © by photojournalist Jo-Anne McArthur/We Animals. Used by permission. McArthur recorded a day at a small-scale dairy and veal farm; other photographs of this calf can be found at <http://weanimals.org/gallery.php?id=90#ph1> (accessed 18 September 2016).

The belief that existence is good in and of itself arises from a disembodied rationalized position. This position also makes a suspect epistemological claim—that despite the speaker’s role in dominating animals, they believe they can speak for what the animals experience.

Human Exceptionalism

Animals are the absent referent, but humans are the *present* referent. We are our own knowledge base; we judge what we are asked to do by its effects on us (prompting responses like ‘having to give up hamburgers’ or ‘but I like my meat’).

Animals are needed for their role in the human imaginary as instruments or objects or in their status as *less than*; their role as lowered being and even their metaphorical role. We define ourselves over against our definition of animals. We need them to catapult us into the Fall; we need them to save us from sacrifice; we need them on our plates. We can find human exceptionalism bending over the Bible searching for confirmation.

I would love to see a Christian identity that is not dependent on male-dominant identity or human-dominant identity.

Retrograde Humanism

I encountered retrograde humanism at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in 1991, though it is a very commonly-voiced opinion to this day. Learning they might be doing more, nonvegans accuse vegans of doing less. Without knowing anything about my activism, I am accused, ‘Why aren’t I helping the homeless, battered women, etc.?’

Human-centered thinkers want to provide a human-centered critique of a theory or practice that de-centers humans. They uphold the idea that humans must come first, all the while failing to recognize that incorporating animals into the dialogue and activism of social change doesn't eliminate humans from concern; it just reassembles the players by disempowering that human/animal boundary that enforces oppression.

Retrograde humanism is insistent, argumentative and angry. It is truly pedagogically oppressive. The overwhelming majority of people who believe it is impossible to be both social activists in the conventional sense and animal activists are nonvegans; they want to believe in its impossibility. Then they don't have to change.¹⁷

Epistemology of Ignorance

Fearing that we might care *too much* we create structures that enable us to *care too little*. 'Don't tell me'. Human self-definition involves being split off from acknowledging relationships in which we are the cause of nonhumans' suffering.

When the issue is framed so that it appears the only option for farmed animals is existence to please human appetites or nonexistence, persons who establish such an either/or framework for a debate about meat eating situate themselves as unlocatable in relationship to the suffering of nonhumans. But again humans are locatable. They are the ones who support the meat, dairy and egg industry through their purchases.

Love this

Gretchen Primack

If you permit this evil, what is the good
of the good of your life?
—Stanley Kunitz

The body floods with chemicals saying, *Love this*,
and she does, and births it; it is a boy
she begins to clean and nose, but he is dragged
away by his back feet. She will never touch him
again, though she hears him howl and calls back
for days.

Her breast milk is banked for others. Her son
is pulled away to lie in his box.
He will be packed for slaughter. How ingenious
we are! To make product from byproduct:
make use of the child,
kill and pack and truck him to plates.

17. See Carol J. Adams, 'What Came before *The Sexual Politics of Meat: The Activist Roots of a Critical Theory*', in *The Carol J. Adams Reader* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 53–60.

And when the gallons slow, we start over,
and her body says, *Love this!* And she does,
though in a moment she will never touch
him again. His milk is not for him.

And when the milk slows too slow,
she will join him on the line, pounds
of ground. And how we will dine!
And talk of our glossy dogs! Her body
will break up on our forks, as mothers
beg us for the grain we stuffed her with,
and children beg us for the water
scouring her blood from the factory walls.

And when her wastes and gases and panic
heat our air so hot our world stops
breathing—then will we stop?
Then will we grow kind,
let the air cool and mothers breathe?¹⁸

Today's cows used in the dairy industry produce 61 percent more milk than cows from only 25 years ago, due to genetic engineering, feed rations and growth hormones. Their udders must carry an extra 58 pounds of milk; sometimes these bloated udders may force the cow's hind legs apart, causing lameness. During the first seven months of a cow's pregnancy, machines continue to take her milk from her. A cow in the dairy industry is 'producing' ten times more milk than her calf would ever need. The physical demands on her body of both lactation and pregnancy have been compared to jogging six hours a day.¹⁹

The Sweet Jesus Problem

One final tactic is 'The Sweet Jesus' problem. While he was at Union Theological Seminary, my spouse, Bruce, a Presbyterian minister, studied Church Missions with Hans Hoekendijk. Hans had been a part of the Dutch resistance in World War 2. While he was at his first church, Bruce dreamt that Hans appeared to him and warned him 'Beware the Sweet Jesus'. Bruce interpreted this as *don't offer or promise or preach the Sweet Jesus*, the Jesus who lets people off the hook, the Jesus who only confirms what people already believe. When it comes to the other animals, a majority of Christians accept the Sweet Jesus. Something is imperiled by learning of the cruelty we enable. The sense of ourselves as good persons is threatened when we learn what we are complicit with. The Sweet Jesus promises, 'You don't have to know; you don't have to change'. Is 'The Sweet Jesus' poetic equivalent missing the point of a poem or not being willing to encounter a poem in the first place?

18. Gretchen Primack, *Kind: Poems* (Woodstock, NY: Post Traumatic Press, 2012), p. 12. An audio version of the poem is available at www.caroljadams.com. Used with permission.

19. Élise Desaulniers, *Cash Cow: Ten Myths about the Dairy Industry* (New York: Lantern Books, 2016), p. 79.

The Pasture

Robert Frost

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too.²⁰

First published in 1914 as the introductory poem for his second collection of poetry, *North of Boston*, starting in 1923 with his *Selected Poems*, and thereafter with his collected and complete editions, 'The Pasture' begins each volume. It is seen as an invitation to readers to join the poet. Yet that poem is describing something that is wrenching and truly awful: The mother with her licking tongue, taking care of her calf, must be transformed into a milk-producing animal. The narrator heads to the pasture to snatch a child from his mother—a child so young that he still totters as he stands next to her, as she licks him. Robert Frost suggested the poem might be two poems.²¹ One is about joining; one is about rupture. Did Frost carry the calf away from his mother, or did he too have a red wheelbarrow?

How Poetics Intervenes against the Pedagogy of the Oppressor

The Bible begins poetically. The King James Version says,

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

John Wesley's notes to Gen. 1:2 observe that 'The Spirit of God was the first Mover; He moved upon the face of the waters. He moved upon the face of the deep, as the hen gathereth her chicken under her wings, and hovers over them, to warm and cherish them, Mt 23:37 as the eagle stirs up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, ('tis the same word that is here used) Deut 32:11'.²² In 'Why Look at Animals', John Berger says 'the first metaphor was animal'.²³ And here it is, in the beginning, the metaphor, God on the nest, bringing the world into being.

20. Robert Frost, 'The Pasture'. In the public domain.

21. Tim Kendall, *The Art of Robert Frost* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 48.

22. Quoted in Carol J. Adams, 'What about Dominion in Genesis?' in Andy Alexis-Baker and Tripp York (eds), *A Faith Embracing All Creatures* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), p. 11.

23. John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 5.

With the beginning of Genesis, we are located and locatable, in creation, we can feel, touch, see it because we are in the midst of creation and are a part of the creation. We use all our senses. Our embodiedness connects us to all creation.

The poet creates a poem that invites us into the process of creation. Poetry takes us to the Garden of Eden where creation—the rest of nature—is not objectified. Poetry locates us, names what it sees, is particular and precise in its language, encounters the world as it is and reports to us what is found there. A poetics teaches attention instead of objectification.

Attention is a form of compassion. Simone Weil said that the art of being a good neighbor is the ability to ask ‘what are you going through?’ and to be able to be attentive to the answer. The question, Weil says, ‘is a recognition that the sufferer exists, not only as a unit in a collection’, but as an individual.²⁴

Attention to suffering makes us ethically responsible. Only those who are ‘above’ can deny the ethical implications of suffering for those who are ‘down’. To be able to ask of nonhumans, ‘What are you going through?’ requires a sense of the self that is related and interdependent, involved with others, and willing to hear the answer.

What are you going through, chicken? What are you going through, pig? What are you going through, calf? What are you going through, cow? A poetics offers us the gift of imagination over dogma. A poetics opposes the banking method of pedagogy while showing the legitimacy and importance of these questions, questions to our non-human neighbors. To give ourselves over to another’s world and be brought into that world may help us reclaim the absent referent. Such imagination is needed for us to relate to victims, especially if they have disappeared. Poet and critic Kathryn Kirkpatrick proposes an *animal poetics* which addresses ‘the abyss between human and nonhuman animal lives, such that neither radical differences between species nor empathetic multi-species engagements are denied’.²⁵

We could use *our* bodies to evaluate *their* experience. It hurts when I stub my toe, because appendages are often tender. How then does a pig feel after a tail docking, or a chicken after debeaking? In extreme situations, when for a limited time I can’t move (say an airplane, grounded because of weather) it is uncomfortable.

Imagination is one of the gifts of creation. Why do we trust the immanent sense of God, but not the immanent sense of the animal in front of us? Or who might be in front of us?

One aspect of Christian engagement is the poetics of loss, the poetics of grief. We learn how to carry the knowledge of what is happening to the other animals and not be broken by it. We know that cows mourn and have unique moos for each calf. A vet tells the story of a cow who gave birth in the field, and the farmer discovered it. Like Robert Frost’s narrator, the farmer came and took the calf away. The farmer noticed that the

24. Simone Weil, *Waiting on God* (London: Fontana Books, 1971 [1951]), p. 75.

25. Kathryn Kirkpatrick, ‘When Animals Speak: Towards an Animal Poetics’, paper first given at ‘Dwellings of Enchantment: Writing and Reenchanting the Earth’, International Ecopoetics Conference, 22-25 June 2016, Université de Perpignan, France. See also Josephine Donovan, *The Aesthetics of Care* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

cow was often gone for long periods over by the far end of the pasture, in a wooded area. One day he followed her. He discovered that she had actually given birth to two calves and she had hidden this second one from him. He took that calf away, too, to become someone's dinner. What must she have felt?

Knowledge about violence against domesticated animals requires people to change. How do we help people change? Christians are perfectly happy eating vegan food as long as they don't know that is what they are doing. How, then, to help them be happy eating vegan *when* they know that is what they are doing? Here are some suggestions.

Education

Sunday school classes could use curricula such as *Compassionate Eating as Care of Creation*²⁶ and/or show the DVD *Peaceable Kingdom*.²⁷ Study groups could read David Clough's *On Animals: Volume 1—Systematic Theology* and *On Animals: Volume II—Theological Ethics*. Essays about theology, ethics and animals could be submitted for the church newspaper, the seminary newspaper and the local newspaper. Churches, seminaries and Christian meetings could offer panel discussions on farmed animals and Christianity. Vegan cooking classes could be a regular program. Virtual reality headsets that show the conditions of farmed animals could be brought to churches, seminaries, and academic and church-related meetings.²⁸ Students could educate seminary professors. Everyone could write letters to editors concerning these topics.

Activism/Advocacy for Food and Environmental Justice

Encourage churches and seminaries to take the CreatureKind Commitment.²⁹ Other actions include: creating or supporting local community gardens; working against food deserts; creating environmental alliances and work against environmental racism; identifying factory farming's role in environmental degradation; educating congregations and seminaries about the health aspects of veganism. Finally, groups could organize or participate in walks for farm animals or Tofurky Trots.³⁰

26. A downloadable PDF can be found at http://www.humanesociety.org/about/departments/faith/compassionate_eating_as_care_.html?referrer=https://www.google.com (accessed 19 September 2016). It can also be ordered in bulk from HSUS (Humane Society of the United States) at this website.

27. The film follows the path of three farmers who begin to question their assumptions about the other animals. It can be rented or purchased at <http://www.peaceablekingdomfilm.org> (accessed 19 September 2016).

28. Last Chance for Animals has begun this project. <http://www.vice.com/read/virtual-reality-is-the-new-frontier-in-animal-activism-511> (accessed 19 September 2016).

29. The CreatureKind Commitment can be found at <http://becreaturekind.org/creaturekind-commitment> (accessed 19 September 2016).

30. <http://www.walkforfarmanimals.org> and <http://trot.tofurky.com> (accessed 19 September 2016).

Worship

Offer a Blessing of the Animals in October. Create litanies that are animal inclusive for Sunday services. Be aware of ‘Lamb of God’ references that normalize the eating of lambs.³¹ Help congregants grieve the death of a nonhuman animal companion. Create prayers that include praying for suffering animals.

Mission

Adopt a local animal shelter, collect supplies, and help to publicize adoptable animals. Visit a local animal sanctuary. Provide vegan food to a homeless kitchen, or if health laws prevent, donate money for a vegan meal. Develop and distribute vegan recipes.

Yearly, before Christmas, educate against the Heifer Project and other animal gifting charities. Such gifting may harm the recipients while misleading the donors.³²

‘Come and Eat’: Hospitality and Demystifying Veganism

If you don’t know how to cook, learn so that you can create delicious vegan meals and share them. Bring vegan foods to potlucks (always bring extra because these dishes are often the first to go). Think of bringing a vegan dessert, too. Participate in HSUS’s ‘Tofurky Sunday’. Ensure the availability of vegan options at church-related potlucks.

Reframe hospitality to include considering who, against their will, is *on* the table.

Conclusion

As well as nonviolence, Jesus taught that similarity is not an ethical standard.

What would Jesus, who turned five loaves into 5,000, think of reducing food availability the way meat and dairy production does? Jesus healed the lame and sick; we cause domesticated animals to be lame and sick. Jesus teaches us to welcome the stranger in our midst. Does welcoming strangers include sheltering animals as a hen would gather her chicks? I propose a Christology of veganism: no more crucifixions are necessary.

31. See Carol J. Adams and Marjorie Procter-Smith, ‘Taking Life or “Taking on Life”? Table Talk and Animals’, in Carol J. Adams (ed.), *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 1993), pp. 295–310.

32. Read the arguments against ‘animal gifting’ at <http://awfw.org/no-animal-gifts> (accessed 19 September 2016).