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Autor: [s.n.]
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Vegan Cyborgs

In questioning hierarchical thought veganism offers an expanded perception of systematic oppression and new perspectives on female labor. A stance for political veganism as a part of feminist discourse.

von SP

In a rapidly evolving digital world, senses of space and time are shifting. Within the context of changing, expedited temporalities, Donna Haraway wrote her *Cyborg Manifesto*, pushing the categories of humanity, species, and feminism. By including the concept of cyborgs in her definition of feminism, Haraway does away with the essentialism of a singular definition of «woman». Feminism with a lowercase f is no longer a preaching point for identity politics, but an ontological space to rethink the imagined limitations of systematic oppression. In this feminist space, we can denormalize oppressive structures through radical thinking. It is in this space that I now question an additional binary: human and animal.

Veganism is a topic not commonly addressed within the feminist discourse, but one that deserves a seat at the table. In undoing hierarchical thought, one tackles the basis of oppression. It is important to then consider the hierarchy between animal and human. Following Haraway in her expansion of the species and of feminist inclusion, I offer an empathetic relationship between animals and feminists resulting from their shared struggle against patriarchal oppression.

Animals are subjected to specific forms of «female labor». A female cow is imprisoned, injected with hormones and forcibly impregnated. Once the cow has given birth, her child is taken from her side and the cycle continues. Once the cow is no longer able to bear children, she is thought of as useless and is slaughtered. Thus, the female cow is objectified as a producer of kin, her use determined by her ability to continuously survive imprisonment and rape in order to perform a profit.

Removing the restrictive concept of a singular self enables one to identify with the struggle against exploitative labor practices, with the struggles of this cow. Recognizing the want for meat out of mere taste as a hierarchical

thought («my life is more valuable than the animal's life»), allows me to denormalize such exploitation. I do not find it normal to imprison, rape or slaughter an animal, to use its products for my own pleasure. I do not find it normal to consider the life of the ruling worth more than the life of the ruled. To take a stance against the oppression of animals is to also take a stance against the patriarchy.

It is now that I think of Gayatri Spivak's question, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* This question is ever more literal when it refers to animals. Without language, animals are unable to find a voice. Animals' lack of language has facilitated successful exploitation by capitalist patriarchy. It helped establish a further discriminatory order within the prevailing system of exploitation and domination, divorced from criticism by normalization of the livestock industry.

Thinking in terms of the *Cyborg Manifesto* one can rethink the constructed category of «species». In this feminist space where we can imagine no binaries and where we aim to eliminate speciesism, we can identify veganism and feminism as one in the same: opposing standing power relations while inventing new forms of coexistence. The concept of cyborgs enables a certain fluidity in our perception of beings - it expands our definition of a self and allows us to empathize with others' struggles in an effort to unify against the patriarchy.

Works Mentioned

- Haraway, Donna: *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century*, in: dies.: *Simians, Cyborgs and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, London: Free Association Books 1991, 149-181.
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