

Animal Equality: Language and Liberation

J Dunayer (2001). Published by Ryce Publishing, 7806 Fairborn Court, Derwood, MD 20855-2227, USA; info@rycepublishing.com. 283 pp. Hardback (ISBN 0 9706475 5 7). Price \$25.00.

Joan Dunayer is a vegetarian feminist from a high school and college English-teaching background who specialises in writing on animal rights issues. Dunayer's philosophy is an amalgam of the ideas of Tom Regan and Peter Singer. She concludes that: "sentience entitles nonhuman animals to legal rights, which must protect them, as individuals, from speciesism". Dunayer's theme throughout *Animal Equality* is that "to achieve justice for all beings we must overcome speciesism's linguistic ploys".

Animal Equality expands on speciesist linguistic ploys in some 247 pages with 12 chapters: Speciesism and language; False categories (how we define us and them); Animal attributes (the verbal dichotomy); Victims mistaken for game (the language of hunting); Cruelty by deception (the language of sportfishing); Freedom denied (the language of zoos); More speciesism on display (the language of aquariums and marine parks); In the name of science (the language of vivisection); Feeding on flesh, milk, eggs and lies (the language of animal agriculture); Pronoun politics, bitches monkeys and guinea pigs (animal metaphors); and Persons of other species (toward legal redefinition). Included is a section entitled "Style guidelines" and a thesaurus of alternatives to speciesist terms.

Dunayer argues for "honesty" in language. To give one of her examples: "Flesh consumers deny nonhuman death. Avoiding direct reference to the bodies of murdered nonhumans, they say 'meat' rather than 'flesh', 'muscle', 'remains', or 'corpse portion'." On the basis of similar arguments, Dunayer develops a thesaurus of alternatives to speciesist terms. If we reflect on the logic of this argument, immediate difficulties come to mind. When one goes to a butcher's shop it is not very helpful to order a kilogram of meat. The butcher would immediately query what type and cut of meat you required. To ask for a kilogram of 'corpse portion' is hardly an advance in communication. In fact, our language differentiates many types of meat without any philosophical ulterior motive. To argue that this is dishonest is incoherent. It is simply descriptive. To talk about steam, ice or snow is not intended to, nor does it, camouflage the fact that all three are forms of water.

The issue that Dunayer could have more profitably addressed is the education of the urban population. Many city folk are unfamiliar with animal production. In a democracy, it is important that people understand ecosystem management, environmental issues and animal production. Truth would be best served by informed voting. Comprehensive education is much more likely to produce reasonable social mores than ideological revisionism of the English language.

Dunayer adds little to the animal rights arguments of Tom Regan or the animal interests utilitarian philosophy of Peter Singer. *Animal Equality* does not address the tensions between animal activism, ecosystem management and animal welfare. Readers wishing to explore these issues should look elsewhere.

Animal Equality is a must-read for animal activists wishing to develop a politically correct lexicon.

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