



## Editorial

Dear EurSafe members,

It is my great pleasure to present to you the third issue of 2017 EurSafe Newsletter. Somewhat in accord with the themes of the upcoming EurSafe conference in Vienna this summer, this edition of the newsletter engages questions in the intersection between theories and practitioners. Both the short paper and the book review revolve around the fact that communication, debate, public discussions and genuinely engaging opposing views are fundamental to type of applied theory that agricultural and environmental ethics is.

In their paper *The future of hunting in the context of the public discussions over the practice*, Mateusz and Waldemar Tokarski describe the complexity of hunting as a practice reaching beyond the core act of killing. They argue for looking at and discussing hunting as a practice that involves forest management, agricultural management, improvements of ecosystems and a number of wildlife encounters beside the hunt itself. For them, hunting is 'a practice [that] embodies its own values, linked especially to the construction of multi-species communities revolving around contact with the natural environment' and the ethical dilemmas of hunting are best debated with this in mind.

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Mark Stein has reviewed Tobias Leenaert's new book, *How to Create a Vegan World: A Pragmatic Approach*. 'Pragmatic' is here to be understood less as associated with pragmatist philosophy and more in line with similar strains in Tokarskis' paper: 'What kind of arguments and information has to be communicated for a genuine debate?' Leenaert has a dual approach to this. First one must find common ground on at least some issues or statements. For example, 'some types of hunting are indeed better than factory farming'. Second, Leenaert is a proponent of what he calls 'slow opinion' in which awareness of a dilemma must involve the complexities of the social settings and the lives involved – including the difficulties of changing personal or group based cultural habits. Such slowness is exemplified in his support for the reducetarian approach. Here the aim is to reduce, perhaps even drastically so, the amount of animal products that you consume instead of quitting some types altogether as vegetarians and vegans do.

The vice-president of EurSafe, Franck Meijboom, has also contributed to the newsletter. First, he reports back from the launch of the Chinese Society for Agricultural Ethics in September this year in Nanjing. EurSafe was invited to participate in this very interesting forum. It gave an interesting glimpse in to a new and developing field in Chinese academia and there seems to be promising elements both for research and for research collaborations. Second, Meijboom reports from the executive committee. This consists mainly of praise for the current local organizing committee in Vienna and a clandestine geographical numerical hint as to the location of the 2019 EurSafe Conference.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter and please feel free to contact any of the members of the editorial board if you have questions or contributions such as papers, book reviews, conference information and similar.



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## Paper

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# The future of hunting in the context of public discussions over the practice

Mateusz Tokarski and Waldemar Tokarski

Hunting is currently undergoing a crisis of identity, which relates to the position that hunting holds within the modern society: its authority as one of the principal means for human engagement with nature is being challenged by the growing significance of ecological sciences, restoration practices, and animal advocacy groups, all of which garner growing social following. At the same time, hunting struggles with its own internal conflicts and dilemmas striving to redefine the established structures and the relationship to its own past. This crisis has been largely taking place in the public arena, where it plays out between several established positions, both supportive and dissuasive towards hunting. The aim of this, rather personal, reflection is to sketch out a vision of possible place of hunting in society, and the confrontation of this vision with the way the current discussions on hunting are most often structured. The observations and ideas presented below come mostly from the authors' experience with the Polish hunting scene and the discussions that revolve around it. However, we expect that these reflections can be of relevance for similar issues in other countries.

The subject which currently dominates public discussions over the place of hunting in the modern society is almost exclusively the question of killing animals. Among the many interest groups taking position on the subject, hunters themselves, find themselves between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, foresters and farmers commonly demand rising of hunting quotas, pointing to the damages caused by ungulates to forest plantations and crops, or the livestock losses to predators. While supportive of hunting, their support is strictly conditional upon the hunters' willingness to tackle a serious problem of damages – a task that hunters carry on in their free time, from their own money, all the while taking upon themselves the bad press that is commonly associated with killing wildlife. On the other hand, ecologists, restorations, environmentalists and animal advocacy groups are often vociferous in demanding either further limitations on hunting, or its complete cessation. Ecologists, often distrustful of hunters, would in fact prefer to see wildlife management given over to professional bodies more closely associated and directly responding to the demands of ecosystem maintenance and restoration. Similarly, animal advocacy groups would often prefer to see the necessary population control handed over to people who kill animals as part of their professional responsibility, rather than as part of a hobby – something that suggests taking questionable pleasure in killing other living creatures.

If we look closely at these demands, we can easily notice that they conceptualize hunting in a very specific way. First, the whole practice of hunting in these discussions is reduced to the question of killing. Consequently, the future of hunting is associated with the killing quotas and the acceptability of killing as such. Second, all these positions treat hunting instrumentally, as a practice directed towards the control of wildlife populations for external reasons (e.g. diminishing farming and forestry damages, maintenance of ecosystem stability). The hunters themselves, wanting to participate in these discussions, commonly fit themselves into this schematic discussion.

As a consequence of such limited scope of discussion the image of hunting in society is built precisely upon these two issues and hunting appears in popular conscious-

ness as wildlife population management whose only tool is killing. The danger that appears here is that if the future of hunting will be discussed only through the prism of these questions the practice will ultimately be reduced to this simplified form. This is an unsettling perspective, given the long history of hunting, the richness of its culture, and the potential it still harbors for contributing to the shaping of the relationship between modern society with the natural environment. To fully realize the extent of the potential loss, and to suggest the possible ways of redirecting the conversation over hunting, we have to first of all reflect on what hunting is in its full complexity.

Against the grain of the current conversations one must first question the position that killing has in the popular conceptions of hunting. This role can be visualized as a tip of a pyramid, the broad base of which consists of engagement with living animals, the hunting locations, people, and tradition.

Hunters spend the majority of their time supporting the survival of wildlife populations, which involves, among others, supplementary feeding, supplementation of diet by salt and micro-elements, construction of feeding stations, work on improvement of the ecosystems, and last but not least protection of animals from poachers. The shot and killing itself are preceded by hours spent in the hunting area and its surroundings on getting to know the place and simply waiting for the animals. When taken together, all these activities mean that hunters interact with nature more, and more directly, than virtually any other group in modern society, granting them an unprecedented amount of direct knowledge and experience of the natural environment.

Further, an important, though unfortunately diminishing, role in hunting play rituals and the community. Hunters might be currently the only social group that engages in rituals that reach back hundreds of years. Irrespective of the country – whether it is Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, or the United Kingdom – these rituals are respectfully continued and attest to the rich culture of hunting, which has been passed on from generation to generation. Of course, as with any such old tradition, some of the rituals are slowly growing meaningless, as their original cultural, social, and religious context is no longer here. It is precisely here that an engaged public discussion could bring to them new life and relevance. A conversation over how to continue these traditions and at the same time make them relevant to the modern society could reinvigorate the whole practice and restate its significance. The social potential of such traditions becomes obvious when we notice that most of these rituals are public, involving not just hunters, but also being open to their families, friends, and at least potentially to nearly anyone who is interested in joining.

Hunting also involves relationships with domesticated animals, particularly with dogs and hunting birds, the practice of which reaches all the way to the beginnings of humanity. Such relationships extend over the whole of hunters' lives, as the animals have to be tended to on a daily basis. While hunting birds are a rarity now, hunting dogs remain common and the relationship between a hunter and a hunting animal is a distinct case of a close cross-species cooperation.

Finally, the shot itself is a rare event and is itself surrounded by numerous rules and rituals. Most significantly, however, it is far from being a simply pleasant experience. As much introspective and philosophical literature on the subject confirms, killing of an animal during a hunt is commonly experienced as something ambivalent and ripe with meanings difficult to engage with. It involves a sort of dark communion with nature, in which one is confronted with death, human participation in ecological relations, and the human evolutionary continuity with the rest of the world.

The above presentation, while cursory, already paints a more complex image of hunting as a practice reaching far beyond the actual act of killing. While killing is undeniably crucial, and in some way forms the hub around which the whole practice revolves, it cannot be reduced to the question of killing. Consequently, by focusing on the killing, we are leaving out of discussion the aspects of hunting which could have relevance for the wider society. Unfortunately, without open social dialogue, these aspects continue losing their significance and there is a danger that they will eventually disappear completely from the public awareness. Finally, treating hunting instrumentally obscures the fact that as a practice it embodies its own values, linked especially to the construction of multi-species communities revolving around contact with the natural environment.

While the simplified discussions over hunting easily acquire high media profile and garner a lot of attention by provoking extreme emotions, they are not conducive to a serious discussion over the actual potential of this practice. Indeed, the discussion as it is currently being carried on only speeds up the dissolution of hunting, becoming a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy: Traditions still exist but become empty shells of no significance; without meaningful rituals the community dissolves, leaving hunting as an expensive hobby for few unattached individuals; the critique of a practice as such creates antagonisms that push the remaining hunters who might be potentially interested in discussion into defensive positions tending towards conservatism and blind attachment to the past.

This is not to say that no fault lays with the hunters themselves. As was mentioned in the beginning there is a serious internal crisis of hunting, but our point here is to suggest that such crisis can be engaged with productively, as long as the discussion moves beyond the simplified picture of hunting and addresses the full complexity of the practice. The alternative is that hunting will become its own caricature, stripped of anything that made it into a distinct practice. Given the potential we have sketched above, this is a truly disconcerting possibility.

### **Suggestions for further reading**

Dahles, Heidi (1993). Game killing and killing games: An anthropologist looking at hunting in a modern society. In: *Society & Animals* 1 (3): 169-184.

Dizard, Jan E. Mortal Stakes (2003). *Hunters and Hunting in Contemporary America*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press.

Kowalsky, Nathan, ed (2010). *Hunting-Philosophy for Everyone. In Search of the Wild Life*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ortega Y Gasset, Jose (1986). *Meditations on Hunting*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Peterson, M. Nils, Hans Peter Hansen, Markus J. Peterson, and Tarla R. Peterson (2010). How hunting strengthens social awareness of coupled human-natural systems. In: *Wildlife Biology in Practice* 6 (3): 127.



## Book review

Paperback 214 pp.

July 2017

Lantern Books

ISBN: 978-1-59056-570-4

Price: £ 15.45/\$ 20/€ 17.91

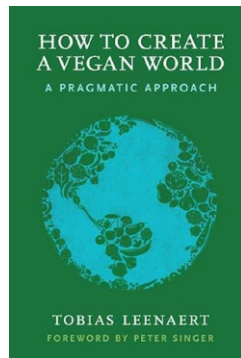
Review by

Mark Stein (PhD)

Salford University

# How to Create a Vegan World: A Pragmatic Approach

Tobias Leenaert



This is an excellent book. I found it an inspiring read.

Tobias Leenaert is a co-founder of the Belgian organization EVA (Ethical Vegetarian Alternative): <http://www.evavzw.be>. Under his leadership, EVA launched a successful campaign that resulted with the city of Ghent becoming one of the first cities to officially support a weekly vegetarian day (Leenaert 2012). Leenaert lives in Ghent and blogs at [www.veganstrategist.org](http://www.veganstrategist.org).

Leenaert delivers training for the Center of Effective Vegan Advocacy (CEVA): [www.veganadvocacy.org](http://www.veganadvocacy.org). He is also a co-founder of ProVeg, an international pro-vegan organization aiming to reduce the global consumption of animals by fifty percent by the year 2040: <https://proveg.com>.

For Leenaert ending the killing and suffering of animals at human hands is one of the greatest challenges ever undertaken by a group of people (p.1). His ultimate goal is Veganville – a world where the killing and suffering is drastically reduced. He believes that this can only be achieved through a long and patient campaign.

'I suggest that we're pragmatic as follows:

- Rather than only using a 'Go vegan!' message, we also spend significant resources on encouraging the public to reduce their consumption of animal products. We'll be able to reach the tipping point faster with a mass of reducers than with a small number of vegans.
- We allow people to change for whatever reason they choose, not just because they are persuaded by the moral case for not eating animals. People often change their attitude after and not before they alter their behavior.
- We foster an environment that facilitates change, mainly by making the alternatives to animal products better, cheaper, and even more available.
- We develop a more relaxed concept of veganism.' (p.2)

Leenaert is a proponent of 'slow opinion', developing awareness of the complexities of life, people, and modern society, and refusing to form an opinion before you have thought things through and become informed about them. He stresses that there is a need to evaluate different strategies and approaches to the problem and see what evidence there is showing the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of different strategies (p.4). Leenaert also argues for stronger animal welfare regulations – such as requiring livestock to have more space. These will make production more costly, the final product more expensive and thereby reduce consumption. He criticises absolutist animal rightists for not seeing the importance of supporting better animal welfare regulations. Such reforms are likely to attract public support, even from some carnivores (p.79).

Leenaert leaves no stone unturned in trying to divide the opposition. If he were to find himself talking to somebody who delights in going out with a rifle to hunt deer, his response would be: '*I'm not going to say hunting is good. But it is nowhere near as bad as factory farming.*' Many animal advocates would consider this a mistake because it appears to condone hunting. Nonetheless, we would be telling the truth: hunting is less bad than factory farming. Framing the conversation in this manner means you shift the conversation to factory farming. When both parties can agree on a topic, you have found a starting point for discussion (p.129).

Leenaert argues the significance of reductarian initiatives. This means *'helping to create a large group of people who reduce their consumption of animal products may be the fastest approach to change the system. Such reductarian outreach does not replace but complements a go-vegan-for-the-animals strategy'* (p.140). Liking the taste of animal food is critically important for many people. *'If animal products are natural, normal, necessary, and nice, a shift away from animal products – let alone giving them up entirely – seems unnatural, abnormal, unnecessary, and unattractive'* (p.14). Dissemination of vegetarian and vegan cooking skills is a critical step forward. If people who have grown up with little knowledge of cookery learn to prepare and enjoy vegetarian and vegan food, there is likely to be a long-lasting reduction in their usage of animal products (p.141). The vegetarian day initiative such as was introduced in Ghent encourages people to enjoy the taste of vegetarian/vegan food and to learn how to cook it (p.65).

Campaigns that commit people to avoid meat during a specific time of year – such as Veganuary – can also be effective in bringing about longer term changes in behaviour (p.41). People find it easier to take smaller steps than larger ones (p.69). Leenaert draws on the insights of earlier campaigners for social change such as Saul Alinsky (Alinsky, 2010). He argues that hard-line animal rightists are mistaken in denouncing such campaigns (p.47). Animal rightists have seen commercial meat-using food producers as their archenemies. Leenaert however argues that commercial food producers can be powerful allies in promoting transformation. Producers of meat substitutes have a strong commercial motive to sponsor promotional initiatives for vegan foods. Businesses historically based on animal products may recognise the commercial advantages of investing in meat alternatives (for example German sausage manufacturer, Rügenwalder Mühle) (p.90).

He discourages campaigners from such phrases as 'Meat is murder'.

*'Maybe it's our truth and we believe it wholeheartedly. But others don't. We may try to convert them, and some people may tell us we're correct. But what we should really care about is not whether meat is murder but whether the slogan is effective. Will people be any closer to changing their minds and listening to our arguments, or just annoyed with us when we say it?'* (p. 118)

Arguments about the unhealthy nature of meat consumption may influence some people. Others may be concerned about links between meat production and environmental damage and climate change (p.17). Many people are convinced that meat needs to be part of a healthy diet and the foods making up a vegan diet need to be carefully considered to ensure that people are receiving essential nutrients such as vitamin B12 (p.165).

Leenaert highlights the danger of burnout for people engaged in this campaign. He experienced a severe case of burnout after fifteen years of leading EVA (p.166).

*"Ours is perhaps the hardest struggle ever. ...I believe we can't afford not to be patient. Impatience can burn us out, and when we burn out, the animals have lost an ally. As a movement, we're in this for the long run."* (p.185)

Overall I found it to be a wise book, written in a clear and readable style.

## References

- Alinsky, S. (2010). *Rules for radicals: A pragmatic primer for realistic radicals*. Vintage.
- Leenaert, T. (2012) Meat Moderation as a challenge for government and civil society. In: Viljoen, A. & Wiskerke, J. (eds), *Sustainable Food Planning: evolving theory and practice*. Wageningen Academic Publishers



## Report

# Launch of Chinese Society for Agricultural Ethics

23 September 2017, Nanjing, China

After some years of preparation and a first conference on agricultural ethics in Lanzhou in 2016, scholars from a variety of Chinese universities decided to officially start a society on Agricultural Ethics. The launch of this initiative was on 23 September 2017 and was hosted by the Nanjing Agriculture University. EurSafe was invited to join this celebration.



The meeting started with some preliminary steps in order to elect the new board members. Next, the newly elected president of the society prof. Wang (Nanjing Agriculture University) welcomed all participants and opened the session in which the society was officially launched. As Vice President of EurSafe, I had the honour to address the General Assembly and convey our congratulations for taking up this initiative.

A range of senior scholars emphasized the importance of a more systematic attention to ethics in the context of agriculture and food production. For instance, Prof emeritus Ren Jizhou (member of the Chinese Academy of engineering) sketched the changes in farming during the last decades, including the development of the move of many farmers to cities. Also in China this resulted in many new questions including those related to justice (e.g., problems of low income) and food safety. He claimed that next to economical ethics and medical ethics there is a clear need for agricultural ethics. According to prof. Ren this new and renewed attention to ethics may be of direct added value for the modernisation of agriculture in China. In addition, Prof. Yuan Zhanting (President of Lanzhou University) was even more clear on the importance of the role of ethics in agriculture. He argued that the real problems of agriculture are not matters of science or technology, but can only be addressed by including ethics in the picture.

In my keynote lecture that followed the official launch, I paid attention to three general points. First, the need to explicate and analyse the ethical dimensions of agri-food even though they are often presented as rather technical or science problems.





Second, I stressed the importance of looking beyond disciplinary silos and look for a more integrated approach (not only food security or only economics, but an approach that aims to integrate concerns of humans, animals and nature). This asks for a final step: cooperation, both between academics, but also between partners in the agri-food chain and government. The newly established society serves as an important platform to enhance that cooperation and improve the debate.

Next, many scholars presented – in parallel sessions – new and ongoing projects in a two-day conference. From a Northern European perspective, it was interesting to see that - in contrast to (some) European discussions on the role and definition of ethics - it was clear from the start that agricultural ethics is defined broadly. First, discussions on food ethics are included, but also upcoming discussions on the position of animals and the impact of climate change are included. Furthermore, agricultural ethics is not excluded to the field of philosophical analysis. Also historical, social and cultural dimensions are actively included in the debate. In this sense, agricultural ethics is defined in a way that is close to 'agricultural humanities'.

The society needs to settle and grow, but there is a genuine potential. Although it is a national society, there is a clear attention to the international dimensions of agricultural and food ethics and a willingness to cooperate with other societies, which is already reflected in, for instance, the participation of prof. Li Jianjun (vice president) in APSafe conferences. In this way, the Chinese society for agricultural ethics offers EurSafe members an interesting opportunity to further exchange ideas and cooperation in a context of globalizing food production combined with attention to cultural, social, religious, historical and philosophical differences.

Franck Meijboom  
*Vice-president*

## From the Executive Committee



For this fall issue, there is only a short update from the board. The last board meeting was held on 30 October as a telephone meeting. The executive committee still follows the policy to use Skype or telephone meetings as the default in order to lower costs and increase efficiency. Once a year, mostly in the spring, a face-to-face meeting is organized.

In the last months, the executive committee has paid attention to the organization of the EurSafe 2018 conference. Due to the very effective local Organizing Committee, not much guidance or assistance was needed. In the meantime, first steps towards the next conference have been taken. This conference is scheduled for 2019 and we are happy to tell you that there is a group of enthusiastic and high-quality people how accepted our invitation to organize this 2019-version of the EurSafe conference. More details will follow in a next newsletter, but as a sneak preview I can tell you that with the coordinates 60°10 15 N 24°56 15 E you will be in the right direction.

The agenda of our next meeting contains, next to the conferences, finances, the update and role of the website, the search for new editors of EurSafe News (please contact [bernice.bovenkerk@wur.nl](mailto:bernice.bovenkerk@wur.nl) if you are interested!) and a discussion on the strategy of EurSafe for the coming years. If you have any points you consider important to be discussed by the executive committee or have any questions, please let us know.

Franck Meijboom  
*Vice-president*



## Announcements

**NOVEMBER 21 - 23**

### **ACI2017: Fourth International Conference on Animal-Computer Interaction**

Milton Keynes, UK

[www.aci2017.org](http://www.aci2017.org)

**JANUARY 17 - 24 2018**

### **Minding Animals International Conference 4**

Mexico City, Mexico

[www.mindinganimals.com](http://www.mindinganimals.com)

**APRIL 29 - 30 2018**

### **Grappling with the Futures: Insights from Philosophy, History, and Science, Technology and Society**

A Symposium Hosted in Boston by Harvard University (Department of the History of Science)

[histsci.fas.harvard.edu](http://histsci.fas.harvard.edu)

and Boston University (Department of Philosophy)

[www.bu.edu/phil](http://www.bu.edu/phil)

**MAY 10 - 12 2018**

### **3rd conference of APSafe, Taiwan**

**JUNE 13 - 16 2018**

### **14th EurSafe Conference**

Vienna, Austria

[www.eursafe.org/congress.html?id=ealigam](http://www.eursafe.org/congress.html?id=ealigam)

**JUNE 28 2018**

### **Recent advances in animal welfare science VI, UFAW Animal Welfare Conference**

Centre for Life, Newcastle, UK

[www.ufaw.org.uk/ufaw-events/recent-advances-in-animal-welfare-science-vi](http://www.ufaw.org.uk/ufaw-events/recent-advances-in-animal-welfare-science-vi)

**JULY 22 - 25 2018**

### **Summer School: Animal Ethics and Law: Creating Positive Change for Animals**

Oxford, UK

[www.oxfordanimaethics.com/what-we-do/summer-school-2018](http://www.oxfordanimaethics.com/what-we-do/summer-school-2018)

## Publications

Armstrong, Susan J. & Botzler, Richard G. (eds.) *The Animal Ethics Reader*. Routledge

Linzey, Andrew & Linzey, Clair (eds.) *Animal Ethics for Veterinarians*. University of Illinois Press

Woodhall, Andrew, Garmendia da Trindade, Gabriel (eds.) *Ethical and Political Approaches to Nonhuman Animal Issues*. Palgrave Macmillan

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