



A Critique of the Moral Defense of Vegetarianism

Andrew F. Smith

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Over the past ten years, increasing philosophical attention has been paid to the food industry and the varieties of eating in twenty-first century society. With that increased attention, vegetarianism and veganism have experienced rapid adoption. In addition to the health oriented rationales for these eating lifestyles, there is also a strong philosophical dimension to the phenomenon of increased vegetarianism.

This book offers up a profound critique of the non-omnivore's view of the world and the place of the human within it. Andrew F. Smith, himself a longtime vegetarian, asserts that the conceptual framework that philosophers—and most people—draw on to defend vegetarianism does not hold up to significant scrutiny. Drawing on the research in plant science, systems ecology, environmental philosophy, and cultural anthropology, he concludes that the purported distinctions between omnivores and vegetarianism are arbitrary. According to Smith, these distinctions are representative of a benighted view of humankind as somehow outside the web of life. He outlines the implications that these manufactured distinctions have for how we view food and ourselves as eaters. If our species is to survive and thrive, Smith asserts, we must adopt a new worldview that does not rely on such arbitrary and hollow divisions.

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