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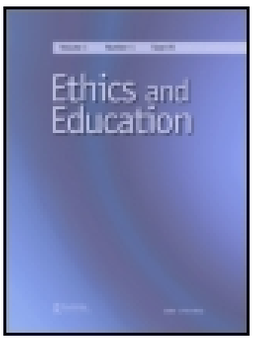

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Zero-compromise veganism

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ABSTRACT

What is to be done when parents disagree about whether to raise their children as vegans? Three positions have recently emerged. Marcus William Hunt has argued that parents should seek a compromise. I have argued that there should be no compromise on animal rights, but there may be room for compromise over some 'unusual' sources of non-vegan, but animal-rights-respecting, food. Carlo Alvaro has argued that both Hunt and I are wrong; veganism is like religion, and there should be no compromise on religion, meaning there should be no compromise on veganism. This means that even my minimal-compromise approach should be rejected. This paper critiques Alvaro's zero-compromise veganism, demonstrating that his case against Hunt's position is under-motivated, and his case against my position rests upon misunderstandings. If vegans wish to reject Hunt's pro-compromise position, they should favour a rightist approach, not Alvaro's zero-compromise approach.

KEYWORDS

Veganism; compromise; animal rights; parenting; children

Should vegan parents raise their children as vegans? In a recent paper, Marcus William Hunt (2019b) contends that there are good reasons not to raise children as vegans grounded in concerns about the impact of veganism on children's wellbeing. Carlo Alvaro (2019), in response, contends that parents should raise their children as vegans. This debate is interesting, important, and worth attending to.[1] In this paper, I want to focus on a specific and novel contribution Hunt makes concerning vegan parenting. In a separate piece, Hunt (2019a) argues that when parents disagree about whether to raise children as vegans, they should aim to reach a compromise. This is simply an example, he argues, of a wider obligation that parents have to compromise when facing disagreement. Parents, Hunt acknowledges, do not have an obligation to compromise with co-parents over *just anything*. Parents should not compromise with 'pro-murder' co-parents, commanding their child to engage in 'the occasional savage beating' (2019a, 13). Such 'extreme' commitments should not be compromised over. A commitment to not raise a child as a vegan, however, does not – he argues – fall into that camp.

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There have been two responses to Hunt's pro-compromise argument. First, I (Milburn 2020) have argued that the pro-compromise position is incompatible with animal rights. This is because animal rights are a matter of justice, not a matter of 'mere' morality. While it may be appropriate to compromise with a co-parent with whom one has a *merely* moral disagreement, it is not appropriate to compromise with a co-parent who has *unjust* commitments. This is what justifies, I suggest, non-compromise with pro-murder parents. It is not that their commitments are 'extreme', but that they are unjust. There may nonetheless, I argue, be room for compromise at the edges. While animal rights may be a matter of justice, veganism is not, *if* it can be shown that there is the possibility of non-vegan, but nonetheless animal-rights-respecting, sources of food. I thus defend the possibility of compromise over 'unusual eating' (2020, 8–9), such as the eating of non-sentient animals (unthinking, unfeeling – non-rights-bearing – animals), the consumption of the products of 'cellular agriculture' (like *in vitro* meat), and the consumption of animal products that would otherwise go to waste. While there could be *moral* reasons to oppose these, it is not clear that they violate animals' rights. They thus might be things that co-parents may compromise over, even if animals have rights. Let us call this part of my position the Unusual Eating Thesis, or UET.

The second response comes, again, from Alvaro (2020). He objects to both Hunt's pro-compromise position and my response to Hunt. Instead, he forwards what he calls a 'zero compromise' position. In this paper, I will show that the philosophical basis of Alvaro's zero-compromise position is flawed. I will do this by demonstrating that, first, Alvaro's challenge to Hunt's pro-compromise position is undermotivated, and, second, that his objection to my rightist approach and the UET does not establish that rights views or the UET should be abandoned. I thus conclude that if one seeks to reject Hunt's pro-compromise position, one should favour my approach, rather than Alvaro's.

Compromise, veganism, and religion

On the face of it, Hunt's claim that co-parents should seek a compromise when they disagree about how to raise a child has much in its favour. In some cases, parents could perhaps 'agree to disagree' and not make any (to borrow Hunt's language) 'command' in some area. Alternatively, they could command contrary things. It should go without saying that in an area like diet, neither is attractive. The other alternative is for one co-parent to force the matter, locking a co-parent out of decision-making. Hunt says this is appropriate when one co-parent wants to raise a murderer, but hopes situations in which this is appropriate will be few.

In contrast to Hunt, Alvaro believes that there are 'a number of things on which one should not compromise' when raising a child (2020, 447). Veganism, he thinks, is one. Alvaro's argument against compromise on veganism is the

following: parents should not compromise on religion; veganism is relevantly akin to religion; and parents should (therefore) not compromise on veganism. This argument seems valid – its conclusion follows from its premises. For it to be sound, however, Alvaro needs to demonstrate the truth of the premises. Thus, he needs to show, first, that parents should not compromise on religion; and, second, that veganism is relevantly like religion.

Both claims are under-motivated. I will first challenge Alvaro's argument that parents should not compromise on religion. I will second challenge his argument that veganism is relevantly like religion. If either fails, his argument that parents should not compromise on veganism fails. If they both fail, the failure of his overarching argument is overdetermined.

Compromise and religion

Before we get to Alvaro's argument that parents should not compromise on religion, let us be clear what is being claimed. If religion is one of those things about which parents should not compromise with co-parents, as Alvaro says, then in a situation in which Parent A (who wishes to raise a child with religion x) and Parent B (who wishes to raise a child with religion y) disagree, they should not seek a compromise. What should they do instead? Hunt provides us with an explanation:

> If one is already a co-parent, one should not compromise. One should not respect the authority of one's co-parent and should instead force them into a settlement on the issue at hand, or otherwise ensure that the child does not heed the co-parent's commands. Doing this does not perhaps require a total dissolution of the co-parenting relationship, but it is a denial of the authority of one's co-parent over some aspect of the child's life, and therefore a significant rupture of both the relationship between oneself and one's co-parent as well as of the morally symmetrical relationship between one's child and one's co-parent. Similarly, if one is not already a co-parent with someone with an extreme commitment, then one should not become a co-parent with them since it is a wrong to enter into a relationship or agreement whose terms one reasonably foresees having to rupture. (Hunt 2019a, 13)

Alvaro is thus asking *a lot* of co-parents who have different ideas about raising a child with religious belief. This does not prove that he is wrong. But it does give us reason to approach his arguments with caution.

What, then, are his arguments? As far as I can tell, his argument for the claim that parents should not compromise over religion is the following sentence: 'A child may be taught about different religions, but it is arguably undesirable – and, in fact, impracticable – to raise a child as both a Muslim and Hindu' (Alvaro 2020, 447–448). There are two claims: one concerns *undesirability*; the other, *impracticability* (i.e., impossibility). (Let us put to one side Alvaro's claims about Muslims and Hindus. To support his claim about compromise, his argument must apply much more broadly.)

What Alvaro needs to demonstrate is not that it is impossible for a child to be raised in multiple faiths, but that that it is impossible for parents to reach a *compromise* between two religious upbringings. This is, I believe, implausible. Consider the following examples:

(1) Parent A wishes to raise Child as a Christian, Parent B wishes to raise Child as a Jew. A and B compromise, and raise Child as Christian, but following Jewish dietary law.
(2) A wishes to raise Child as a Roman Catholic, B wishes to raise Child as an Anglican. A and B compromise, attending Roman Catholic services one week, and Anglican services the next.
(3) A wishes to raise Child as a Christian, B wishes to raise a Child as part of an atheistic faith. A and B compromise, and – after brushing up on death-of-God theology – teach Child that Christianity is culturally important, but that there may be no God.
(4) A wishes to raise Child as a Christian, B wishes to raise Child as a Muslim. A and B compromise, and raise Child with a high degree of religious liberalism, perhaps as part of the Unitarian Universalist movement.
(5) A wishes to raise Child as an Anglican, B wishes to raise Child as a Roman Catholic. A and B compromise, and convert, for the sake of familial harmony, to Anglican Catholicism.

All of these seem like plausible compromises between parents who disagree about their child's religious education.[2] No doubt there are orthodox or fundamentalist believers who would find compromises of the sort above unpalatable – who, indeed, would never become romantically involved with, marry, or have a child with a member of another faith (Alvaro, personal correspondence). But such individuals do not have a monopoly on religion.

The fact that such believers lack a monopoly on religion is backed up by the statistics showing the frequency of so-called interfaith families. While they are not the norm, they are – in many sociopolitical contexts – far from the impossibility that Alvaro (personal correspondence) seems to assume. According to Pew Research Forum's report *America's Changing Religious Landscape* (2015), 28% of American adults who are either married or living with a partner have a partner with a different religion to their own. Perhaps problematically, the survey split Christians into a range of different groups, and includes the religiously non-affiliated as a separate religion. However, even if we treat Christians as a single group and separate the unaffiliated, we still see that, for example, approximately 39% of married/cohabiting Buddhists had Buddhist partners, approximately 32% unaffiliated partners, and approximately 29% religious-but-non-Buddhist partners. The equivalent stats for Jews were 65%/11%/24%; for Muslims, 79%/6%/15%; for Hindus, 91%/3%/6%. Clearly, then, substantial minorities in all of these groups (29%, 24%, 15%, and 6%, respectively) had members

of other faiths as partners (Pew 2015, chap. 2). Meanwhile, data from the UK's 2001 census 'indicate that nearly 5 per cent of the population in England and Wales were in interfaith marriages and in Scotland 10 per cent – in both cases, almost all Muslim-Christian marriages' (Gordon and Arenstein 2017, 175). A 2013 survey of 17,800 British individuals who were married, cohabiting, or in a civil partnership found that, among Christians, approximately 2.5% had religious, but non-Christian, partners. But Christianity is the British majority religion; approximately 14.2% of Muslims had religious, but non-Muslim, partners, while approximately 55.4% of Buddhists had religious, but non-Buddhist, partners (McAloney 2013, 690–691).

No doubt many of these mixed-religion pairings have (or come to have) children, and face difficult questions about how to raise said children. Indeed, we know that they do, not only because of the proliferation of advice available for raising children in interfaith households (online, in pamphlets, in books . . .), but because there has been research on these children (e.g., Sasson et al. 2017; Kurttekin 2020). These studies have not found that religious parents invariably find it impossible to compromise with co-parents of different faiths.

I conclude, then, that Alvaro is wrong to suggest that compromise between such parents is impracticable. In certain cultural contexts, interfaith pairings are more unusual than they are in others. And for some orthodox/fundamentalist believers, the idea of their child being brought up with religious beliefs other than their own is anathema. But Alvaro has decidedly not demonstrated that it is impracticable for parents to compromise on their children's religious upbringing. That some parents are unwilling to compromise is of little help in the current enquiry.[3]

What of Alvaro's other claim – that it is 'arguably undesirable' for children to be brought up with a religious compromise? No argument is offered.[4] I contend that there is nothing 'undesirable' about scenarios 1–5, but there *is* something undesirable about the scenario in which the parental relationship approaches breaking point because neither parent will, to adapt Hunt's words, respect the co-parent's authority, forcing a settlement on religion. *That* sounds more like an unhealthy environment for a child than an environment in which, say, they alternate churches.[5]

I conclude that Alvaro's argument to the conclusion that parents should not compromise on religion – a claim that forms a building block of his argument that parents should not compromise on veganism – fails. Let us now turn to the move from non-compromise on religion to non-compromise on veganism.

Religion and veganism

Alvaro writes that his conclusion about non-compromise on religion

> is an important observation in the light of Lisa Johnson's argument . . . that the definition of ethical veganism is consistent with the legal definition of religion. Also, it should be considered the recent Jordi Casamitjiana [sic] case reported in the BBC. In that case, the judge [Robin Postle] ruled that ethical veganism is a philosophical belief of the same nature as religious belief, and therefore grounds for protection in law. (Alvaro 2020, 478)

There is a problem with Alvaro's argumentative move. Let us grant the *legal* claims of Johnson and Postle that veganism is relevantly akin to religion *for the purposes of certain kinds of legal protections*. But let us note that this does *not* entail that we grant a parallel *moral* claim that veganism is relevantly akin to religion *for the purposes of questions about parental compromise*. In short, Alvaro needs to show what it is about religion that means it is not the sort of thing that should be compromised on, and show that this also applies to veganism. He does not do this.

Alvaro further motivates his comparison between religion and veganism by claiming that 'a convicted ethical vegan parent, just as a Christian parent or a Muslim parent or a Jain parent, would find it impossible to compromise over animal-based food' (Alvaro 2020, 478).[6] This claim is empirically dubious. Any number of vegan parents have made the difficult decision not to raise their child as (fully) vegan.[7] They may have made the *wrong* decision – that is the subject of this debate – but it is not true that they are incapable of compromising. Alvaro contrasts the 'convicted ethical vegan parent' with the vegan parent whose veganism is motivated by 'trivial' reasons, and with the 'flexible' vegan (2020, 478). In so doing, he drifts close to a fallacious 'no true Scotsman' argument: faced with the existence of vegan parents who do not find it 'impossible' to compromise over veganism, he can declare that they are not *full* vegans.

Indeed, it is unclear whether Alvaro is making an ethical argument; instead, he seems to be making a conceptual claim about what it means to be vegan. He assumes the existence of an unspecified number of vegans who would find it impossible to compromise over veganism, 'whose beliefs and convictions are comparable to those of a[n orthodox/fundamentalist] religious person' (2020, 478). Even if there are such people – no doubt there are – he offers no reason that his readers should embrace this position, and thus no reason to join him in adopting zero-compromise veganism.[8]

I thus conclude that Alvaro has undermotivated his move from the claim that parents should not compromise over religion to the claim that parents should not compromise over veganism. When we combine this with his failure to demonstrate that parents should not compromise over religion, we see that there are multiple ways in which Alvaro has undermotivated his zero-compromise veganism.

Compromise and unusual eating

In addition to criticising Hunt's pro-compromise position, Alvaro criticises my minimal-compromise position (as defended in Milburn 2020). Recall that I am generally opposed to compromise over veganism on animal-rights grounds. But recall too that I am open to compromise in those unusual cases in which animal rights and veganism come apart: it is legitimate to compromise over feeding children the bodies of non-sentient animals, the products of cellular agriculture, and non-vegan food that would otherwise go to waste. We called this the unusual-eating thesis, or UET.

Alvaro attacks my position on three fronts. First, he challenges the UET directly. Second, he implicitly challenges my move from the rights view of Tom Regan – which I adopted as it was explored by Hunt – to the UET. Third, Alvaro challenges the rights view directly. We shall consider each in turn.

Challenging the UET

For Alvaro, the topic of the debate between him, Hunt, and I is 'children's wellbeing, and ultimately about figuring out a strategy to raise a moral and healthy family' (2020, 482). On this basis, Alvaro rejects the UET, writing that he 'can't imagine parents concerned about the wellbeing of their children who – due to their opposite view over diet – resort to feeding their children' as the UET allows (2020, 482). Specifically, he cannot imagine parents feeding their children 'roadkill or thing [sic] in the bin behind a slaughterhouse or leftover sandwiches after a department meeting' (2020, 482). This, I suggest, represents a failure of imagination on Alvaro's part. Let us take each of these potential foodstuffs in turn.

First, consider roadkill. We are here talking about 'the collection and consumption of large, intact, fresh, and unspoiled animals such as deer, moose, and elk' (Bruckner 2015, 33), or else the consumption of meat collected in such a way by others. (Thus, we are not talking about rotted, crushed, or otherwise spoiled carcasses.) Though unsavoury to Alvaro, roadkill is utilised as a source of food by many. Indeed, the 'explicit and celebratory appropriation of roadkill as food' is a significant 'sub-cultural phenomenon' (Michael 2004, 285) – especially in the United States – with restaurants, recipes, cookbooks, websites, and more devoted to roadkill. In Alaska, roadkill belongs to the state, and is redistributed to those in need (Abbate 2019, 170). No doubt parents take part in this roadkill subculture, or lean on the Alaskan support, and there is no reason to believe that said parents are therefore unconcerned about the wellbeing of their children.

Something similar is true of the 'freegan' and 'dumpster diver' culture.[9] Granted, we might not believe that parents who dig in a slaughterhouse bin

for scraps of meat (in non-emergency situations) are sufficiently concerned about their children's wellbeing. But this is not what real-world dumpster-divers do. Instead, they raid bins behind supermarkets, aiming for packaged food that is perfectly edible, but deemed (for some reason) unsellable: food just past its 'sell-by' date, packaging with cosmetic damage, surplus stock, etc. Alvaro's dumpster-diver is a straw man.

And freegan practice does not need to take the form of dumpster diving or roadkill collection. Businesses are often happy to be rid of excess products, and happy that they are not going to landfill. Charitable groups, *ad hoc* collectives, and for-profit enterprises can and do ensure that such edible food stays on plates. Sometimes, this food might be given to children. Children might be present at soup kitchen using food that would otherwise be wasted, like those run by Food Not Bombs. Children might live with a parent who is a member of a social media group dedicated to reducing food waste. Or children might pick up some snacks from the impromptu semi-permanent food banks that spring up in urban environments.[10] In none of these cases, I suggest, should we believe that parents are not sufficiently concerned about children's wellbeing.

I think Alvaro's last suggestion – that parents who feed their children sandwiches left over after a university department meeting do not care for their children's wellbeing – borders on the absurd. Many academics will be familiar with emails like this one,[11] which I found by searching my inbox using the keyword *sandwiches*:

> Dear All,
>
> There are some sandwiches left over from the MA Graduation Reception in the 2nd floor kitchen, in the fridge and on the worksurface.
>
> Please help yourselves!
>
> Thanks,
>
> [Colleague]

The point, of course, is that these perfectly edible sandwiches have been moved to the second-floor kitchen *rather than* being cleared away and binned. I contend that there would be nothing wrong (leaving the issue of veganism aside for a second) with a parent allowing her child to eat a few of these sandwiches (if the child was in the department), or wrapping a few to take home. The colleague who went to the trouble of moving these sandwiches to the second-floor kitchen might even be thrilled to know that they have found an appreciative home!

At risk of labouring the point, imagine a birthday in an office workplace; if someone has brought a tray full of cupcakes to share, could anyone truly doubt the good intentions of the parent who – spotting a few left over after the office has closed – takes one for their child's dessert that evening? What children

wouldn't be thrilled with a few cupcakes, cold slices of pizza, or cookies a parent brought home from work?

Alvaro, though allowing that wasting food is bad, asks what the 'point' would be of feeding animal-based-but-rights-respecting foods to children (2020, 482; personal correspondence). Of course, he has partly answered his own question by conceding the problem with food waste. But the whole reason that we are having this conversation is that some parents *do* consider it important that their children eat animal-based foods. Indeed, we might guess that *most* parents consider it important. I am not going to attempt to summarise the reasons that parents may consider it important that their children eat animal products – the starting point of the present enquiry is that many parents do. This is not a debate about whether there are reasons to feed animal products to children; it is about how to advance when co-parents disagree about said reasons.

Alvaro has a final counter to the UET: 'To my knowledge, even meat eaters would be appalled at the mere idea of eating a deer run over by a bus or a bunch of crickets, or a piece of liver rescued from the trash bin' (2020, 482). Leaving aside the fact that Alvaro is (again) arguing against a strawman freegan, we can concede that, in certain (sub)cultural contexts, these things will indeed be considered disgusting by many meat-eaters. In others, they will not – crickets are a major food source in many parts of the world, even if they are not in (say) New York. Are most meat-eaters going to be horrified at the thought of eating the sandwiches left in the second-floor kitchen (above)? I think not. Are most meat eaters going to be appalled at the thought of eating mussels or oysters? That will depend on the cultural context – in Israel, perhaps so; in France, perhaps not.

My point is this: the freegan practices and the consumption of non-sentient invertebrates over which the UET permits compromise are not nearly as unsavoury or bizarre as Alvaro makes out. That is not to say they could not be argued against. But the intuitions to which Alvaro appeals are not as clear (or widely shared) as he suggests.

What of the final category of unusual foods nodded towards in the UET – the products of cellular agriculture? Strikingly, Alvaro undermines his own zero-compromise approach by writing that

> With regard to lab-grown meat, and other in vitro animal products, I think that in principle it could be compromised over – though there are compelling virtue-oriented reasons according to which vegan should not support or consume or feed to their children synthetic meat. (2020, 482)

If Alvaro is prepared to compromise over *in vitro* meat, it is not clear that he *does* endorse *zero*-compromise veganism. Perhaps, then, the difference between his position and the UET can be exaggerated.

Alvaro may be right about the unvirtuousness of *in vitro* meat. But this is by the by – as he here recognises, the fact that something is (deemed) unvirtuous is

not, alone, a reason to say that it could (or should) not be the subject of compromise.

Challenging the move from the rights view to the UET

Even if Alvaro's direct critiques of the UET fall flat, perhaps he would be right to claim that Regan would not support the UET. Alvaro's retelling of Regan's rights view contains at least a few suggestions that I have incorrectly interpreted the view, and that therefore my support for the UET is undermined. It is worth setting these out. Again, however, we will see that Alvaro's conclusion is undermotivated.

Alvaro's case contains a degree of conceptual slipperiness, in which he illegitimately derives general claims from specific claims. (This is thus an example of the fallacy of composition.) In particular, he makes several claims about *animals* that apply, strictly speaking, only to *subjects-of-a-life* – animals with particular capacities. It is incumbent upon Alvaro to be clear about this, as my challenge involves (in part) a focus on those beings who *are* animals but are *not* rights-bearers.[12] For example, Alvaro claims not only that (for Regan) 'animals have … the right to life' (2020, 482) but that 'all animals have a right to life' (2020, 483). He also claims that (for Regan) 'all animals have inherent value' (2020, 483). The importance of these claims is that, if right, they undermine my arguments concerning non-sentient animals. The problem is that Regan (2004) derives inherent value, and thus a right to not be killed, from the capacities associated with being a subject-of-a-life; beings who are not subjects-of-a-life do not necessarily have such value or such a right.[13] And Regan is *not* committed to the (very strong) claim that all animals are subject-of-a-life. Thus, Alvaro has not shown that I am wrong to say that *some* animals lack rights (on Regan's view), and thus may be utilised as food.

Alvaro presents a more fundamental challenge by claiming that, for Regan, no animal may be utilised for food. (This would rule out the eating of non-sentient animals, freeganism, and the consumption of *in vitro* meat.[14]) However, Alvaro's claim relies on dubious reasoning:

> Animals are sentient creatures, endowed with memory, emotions, desires, identity over time, and other important mental characteristics that are relevantly similar to those possessed by humans. Consequently, Regan believes that animals that possess such capacities are subjects-of-a-life. And since subjects-of-a-life can be harmed or benefited, it follows that animals can be harmed or benefited. Using them for food can harm them. Therefore, we should not use them for food or other practices that can harm them. (Alvaro 2020, 483)

Regan does hold (as Alvaro says) that certain animals are subjects-of-a-life, and holds that subjects-of-a-life can be harmed and benefitted. It does, as Alvaro claims, follow from this that animals can be harmed and benefited, as *some*

animals (those who are subjects-of-a-life) can be harmed and benefitted. But it does not follow that *all* animals can harmed and benefitted, as some animals are *not* subjects-of-a-life. Further, Alvaro is right to say that using animals for food can harm them. But to conclude, as he does, that therefore animals should not be used for food is to engage in fallacious reasoning. Even if we assume (incorrectly[15]) that it is always impermissible to harm animals, the fact that *some* animals *are* (sometimes) harmed when subject to x is a poor argument to the conclusion that *no* animals *may ever* be subject to x.

The conclusion to which Alvaro is entitled is that subjects-of-a-life should not be used for food in ways that harm them. But that is a conclusion consistent with the UET, which is concerned with those ways that one could source animal-based foods *without* harm.

I conclude that Alvaro's presentation of the rights view is flawed, and that therefore his suggestion that the rights view is not compatible with the UET – deliberately introduced or otherwise – should be rejected.

Challenging the rights view

We are thus left with the third prong of Alvaro's challenge: that the rights view should be rejected.

Alvaro is concerned that Regan's rights view is problematic as it focuses on the possession of certain capacities, such as sentience (2020, 482, 485). This is not the place for a full-fledged defence of capacity-focussed views. But let us look to the reason that Alvaro is worried about this focus:

> I do not deny that the notion of sentience and that of rights are important factors to consider when discussing our moral obligations toward animals. However, it seems that all too often a consideration of rights and of sentience casts a shadow over other factors, such as aesthetic and virtue-based values, which are the fundamental principles of veganism, to which I shall turn next. (2020, 485)

Alvaro then goes on to consider 'aesthetic' and 'gustatory' arguments for veganism. In his conclusion, he returns to the problems with the rights view, writing that one of its faults 'is that it stops the moral conversation over veganism' (2020, 495).

Alvaro misunderstands both the role of the rights view as a theory of *justice* and of my use of it concerning parental compromise. Justice is indeed one moral value among many, and not the only value to bring to bear on the ethics of eating. However, it is a moral value that has a particular role. In the present conversation, it has pertinence as a kind of moral value that should not be compromised over.

In saying that animal rights are a matter of justice, one is *not* saying that there are no other moral values relevant to veganism. One could consistently affirm *both* that feeding children x is consistent with justice *and* the claim that it would

be immoral to feed x to children. Indeed, one could consistently affirm the UET *and* Alvaro's aesthetic/gustatory arguments for veganism. The point is this: The fact that one takes it to be *merely* immoral (that is: immoral, but not unjust) to raise a child in such-and-such a way does *not* mean that one should not seek compromise. While negotiating with one's co-parent about the appropriate way to raise one's child, one should feel free to present the arguments that a given course of action would be immoral. But a parent needs a *particular* kind of reason to not enter negotiation at all – a particular kind of reason to rule out compromise. Justice provides such a reason. The values undergirding the aesthetic and gustatory arguments, as far as I can see, do not.

To put it another way: rights-based views look to rights to answer certain questions about justice. But they do not entail that one should not look to other moral values to answer other questions. Humans have rights, and there would thus be injustice in my kidnapping, torturing, or murdering neighbours. But there are moral questions about my relationship with neighbours that have little to do with justice or rights. If I am puzzling over whether to send my neighbours Christmas presents, I am unlikely to reflect upon human rights. Similar is true in the present case. There are many moral questions about eating that are not matters of justice, and so in which rights will play little part. To suggest that rights theory cuts off non-rights-based considerations, therefore, is to misunderstand what rights theory is *for*.

Concluding remarks

Hunt argues that when parents disagree about whether to raise a child as a vegan, they should compromise. Alvaro challenges this, arguing that veganism is not the sort of thing that should be compromised over, because it is akin to religion. However, his arguments are undermotivated, and should be rejected for that reason.

There is another argument that challenges the pro-compromise position. This one, my own, argues that (on an animal-rights view) veganism is largely a matter of justice, and justice should not be compromised over. There may, however, be room for compromise at the margins. Alvaro challenges this position, too, but these challenges *also* fail. They rest upon some questionable intuitions and empirical observations, a too-loose reading of Regan, and a misunderstanding of the aims and purposes of rights theory. Thus, resistance to Hunt's pro-compromise position is possible – but it is far better grounded in the minimal-compromise veganism of rights theory than Alvaro's zero-compromise veganism.

What does this mean in practice? Or, to ask a bolder question, what does this mean for the raising and education of children? Here, we can only gesture towards the complete answer.

The idea that animals matter is not an alien one for many children. In the words of Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, children already live in 'an interspecies social world'. Children come to see the world in a different way through 'intense social and ideological conditioning, camouflaged as "growing up", "facing the facts of life", and learning that the use and consumption of animals is "normal, natural and necessary"' (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2018, 284). Children are 'educated' to see animals the 'correct' way through a wide range of formal and informal techniques (Cole and Stewart 2014).

These practices of 'rupturing, whether gradually or brutally, the interspecies lived experience and worldview of children' raise a host of ethical questions (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2018, 286). Donaldson and Kymlicka note several: Might the unnecessary rupture of a child's worldview be harmful, all else equal? Might this specific rupture – 'indoctrination' of children to accept acts of 'normal' animal exploitation – be harmful, much as the exposure of children to acts of 'abnormal' animal cruelty (such as the torture of animal companions) is? Might pushback against the rights of animals have spill-over effects on ideas of *human* rights and *human* equality? And, we might add, is there a wrong in raising children with a warped moral compass? From an animal-rights perspective, this is precisely what we do when we inculcate the belief that inflicting suffering upon, and killing, animals for comparatively trivial reasons (taste, convenience, cultural conformity . . .) is acceptable.

In contrast to a 'conventional' education, a vegan education – an education in which the rights of animals are respected and affirmed – does not necessitate these ruptures, and so does not raise these questions. Perhaps, in the zoopolis (Donaldson and Kymlicka's animal-rights-respecting state), formal and informal education will be better for animals *and* for children.

Today, too, children can have a vegan upbringing and a vegan education. They do not need to 'unlearn' their initial understanding of society as interspecies. They do not need to 'overcome' their initial horror when they discover that meat is made from dead animals. They can flourish without the need for dead animals on their plates, and they can orient their moral compasses with notions of interspecies respect, rather than with notions of human superiority. Though we should not downplay the challenges faced by vegan children (and, indeed, adults) in negotiating a non-vegan world, there may be every reason to think that a vegan education and a vegan upbringing is not only respectful of animals' rights, but something to be aspired towards for children's own sakes. As Donaldson and Kymlicka say of the 'conventional' education they criticise, 'if children or animals had a say on the matter, it is unlikely that this is what they would vote for' (2018, 287).

But let us return to our central question. This article has focussed on how vegan parents should respond when faced with a co-parent who does not wish to raise a child as vegan. It has argued that we should not compromise over matters of justice, such as animal rights, but that there may be ways that we can

eat unusually – ways we can source animal products without violating animal rights. *These* might be a legitimate area of compromise.

For some parents, a compromise over unusual eating will be feasible. In 10 (20? 50?) years, the products of cellular agriculture may be widely available, meaning that such a compromise would be easy. At the time of writing, such products are emerging. Restaurants serving *in vitro* meat can be found in Israel and Singapore. Ice cream made with real milk proteins that were never inside a cow can be purchased in the United States. No doubt more products will launch in the months and years to follow. Perhaps this conclusion is the most straightforward practical consequence of the present arguments: even if vegan parents should not be prepared to compromise on meat-eating *as it is generally understood today*, they should be prepared to compromise on cellular agriculture. Let us not forget that even Alvaro – a self-professed advocate of zero-compromise veganism – allows for such compromise. This is a compromise likely unavailable right now. But it will be available soon: in decades to follow, perhaps, many children will be vegan *but for* the products of cellular agriculture.

In the present, and for some parents, concessions on (say) dumpster diving or shellfish will not be enough, and disputes between pro-vegan and anti-vegan parents will remain. In those cases, less desirable options are available (Milburn 2020, 10–11). One is what Hunt calls a 'grand compromise' (2019a, 18). Vegan parents might be able to convince non-vegan co-parents to raise a child as vegan by giving up on some other matter. The child, say, is raised with the vegan parent's veganism, but in the non-vegan parent's church. (This outcome is regrettable, as it has forced compromise over injustice – even if, in non-ideal circumstances, such compromise is the best way to minimise injustice.) But perhaps the clearer take-home is that would-be vegan parents should be very cautious about co-parenting with non-vegans, or at least with parents who are not prepared to raise children as vegans. It is incumbent upon would-be vegan parents to be clear from the start that they are not prepared to raise non-vegan children, as (near) veganism is, for them, a matter of justice.

What this means, of course, is that the best thing to do about disputes between a parent who wishes to raise a child vegan and a co-parent who does not is to take steps to avoid such disputes altogether. These steps might mean that some parents do not have the children they may have wanted, or that some would-be parental relationships break down before a child comes to be. But perhaps this is for the best.

Notes

1. Though not directly related, it has echoes of a philosophical dispute stretching back decades; Kathryn Paxton George (e.g., 1990, 1994, 2000) has challenged vegetarian and vegan ideals by pointing out that vegetarianism and veganism are less accessible to many individuals, including children. Her critics have defended vegetarian and vegan

ideals, and criticised her empirical claims (e.g., Lucas 2005). And the philosophical literature on this question is not limited to these two conversations; Anna Sherratt (2007) has offered an article-length defence of raising children as vegetarians (shelving the question of veganism), while Peter Singer and Jim Mason offer an exploration of the ethics of raising children as vegans in their popular book *The Way We Eat* (2006, chap. 15).

2. Indeed, some of these scenarios are inspired by the experiences of people known personally to the author.
3. That is, the empirical claim that some parents refuse to compromise has no clear bearing on the moral claim that such parents should compromise. On the other hand, the – I have argued, incorrect – claim that they *could not* compromise might well have bearing, if ought implies can. It cannot be the case that parents ought to compromise if they cannot.
4. Alvaro accepts this. He offered no argument 'because it is self evident that no committed religious individual would desire to live in a household where a religion opposite to his is practiced' (private correspondence). I contend that this is far from self-evident, and again point to the statistics I have offered about interfaith romantic pairings. Some religious individuals may not wish to cohabit or parent with members of other faiths. Meanwhile, some vegans may not wish to cohabit or parent with non-vegans. But the reason that we are having this conversation in the first place is that many vegans *do* end up parenting with non-vegans – or, at least, many vegans who wish to raise their children as vegans end up parenting with individuals who do not wish to raise said children as vegans.
5. To be clear, I do not here want to dismiss social-scientific research suggesting that mixed-faith households can be challenging places. This is a paper about the ethics of veganism, and not the sociology of religion. My point is simply that, on the face of it, a compromise is far less challenging than near-collapse of the parenting relationship.
6. Alvaro's use of the word *convicted* is unusual. He means something like *committed* or *convinced* – a *convicted* person is someone *with conviction*.
7. This is, regrettably, a claim based mostly on anecdotal evidence. I have not been able to locate any statistics about how many vegan parents raise non-vegan children. Online, it is not too hard to find vegans discussing the diets of their non-vegan children, the challenges of negotiating parenting with a non-vegan partner, and practical dilemmas faced by parents of vegan children, like children being invited to non-vegan birthday parties.
8. Alvaro (private correspondence) responds that he does not offer an argument, as he speaks to vegan readers: 'if they are vegans, as I am, they know that they would not compromise. I don't think I need to offer more, since a committed vegan is one who has certain moral principles that cannot be bargain with.' Again, this sounds like a no true Scotsman fallacy: vegans will/could not compromise, and if any vegan reading this believes that they would/could compromise, they are not truly vegans.
9. Dumpster diving, also called skipping, is the practice of taking edible food (among other products) from bins, typically in response to the ostensibly wasteful practices of shops that throw out large amounts of perfectly edible food. Freeganism – a portmanteau of *free* and *veganism* – is, at the extreme, an attempt to boycott purchasing food or other goods altogether, but less extreme variants will just show openness or preference for reducing (food) waste by consuming or using things that would otherwise go to waste. Freeganism is an interesting subject from the perspective of animal ethics insofar as it opens the door to a meat-containing diet that is no more harmful (perhaps even *less* harmful) than conventional vegan diets.

10. One such bank is set up a few streets away from the author's house. It regularly has bags of bread, boxes of ready meals, and the like that have been put there for anyone to take because they would otherwise be going in the bin. And, to be clear, my neighbours *do* take them. And, no doubt, some of this food ends up in the mouths of children.
11. I add that many *non*-academics will be, too. The author's partner (when not working from home in response to global pandemics) works in a paradigmatic office job, and was very familiar with emails like the one I quote – cakes brought in for birthdays, leftover pizza after a staff incentive event, Friday 'bake off' competitions, and so on. A search of her inbox revealed many such emails – one of which ended, tellingly, with 'they need eating'.
12. I focus only on *non-sentient* animals. If one wants to remain closely wedded to Regan's rights view, one could focus on both non-sentient and sentient-but-not-subject-of-a-life animals – if animals in the latter group actually exist. Let us leave the details of this tricky subject to one side.
13. It is conceivable, for Regan, that beings who are not subject-of-a-life may still have inherent value. However, an independent argument for this would have to be supplied.
14. Could *in vitro* meat perhaps one day be produced without the needing to 'use' animals? This depends not only on possible technological advancements, but on a particular understanding of what it means for animals to be 'used'.
15. Both as an interpretation of Regan and as such. Animals may be permissibly harmed in self-defence, for example.

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