



# How to Create a Vegan World: A Pragmatic Approach

*Tobias Leenaert*

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## How to Create a Vegan World: A Pragmatic Approach Tobias Leenaert

In this thought-provoking book, Tobias Leenaert leaves well-trodden animal advocacy paths and takes a fresh look at the strategies, objectives, and communication of the vegan and animal rights movement. He argues that, given our present situation, with entire societies dependent on using animals, we need a very pragmatic approach. *How to Create a Vegan World* contains many valuable ideas and insights for both budding advocates for animals and seasoned activists, organizational leaders, and even entrepreneurs.

## How to Create a Vegan World: A Pragmatic Approach Details

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Author : Tobias Leenaert

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## From Reader Review How to Create a Vegan World: A Pragmatic Approach for online ebook

### Magalie says

This book offers a refreshing view on veganism. It doesn't focus only on the vegan message, but mainly on how to spread this message without moralizing and keeping in mind that you are not your public. It was interesting to get an insight in the psychological explanation of possible reactions of meat-eaters to this message in order to understand them better and start a more open conversation. For me, a vegan at home, it was inspiring to find more arguments (based on data and research) for a more flexible view on veganism, so we can have a bigger impact with more people, with the main goal to arrive with a big group of likeminded people in Veganville in a few years. In order to change the world, we will have to talk and listen to each other, and that's two way traffic. Leenaert focuses for me in this way on a very important, often overlooked, part of the go vegan message.

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### Margaret Lozano says

I really enjoyed this book, and I found it especially useful as a counterbalance to Francione's Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach, which I also appreciated but found lacking in practical strategies, particularly in the realm of business (Francione has little interest in the realm of commerce, and it shows).

I also very much appreciate that "How to Create a Vegan World" looks at exactly how a tipping point for veganism can be achieved, and delves more deeply into the psychology of change. Whereas Francione's "Abolitionist Approach" is about ethical philosophy, Leenaert's "Pragmatic Approach" looks more at choice architecture and nudging people towards change.

While Abolitionist vegans are likely to sneer at Leenaert's pragmatic approach for its impurity, it's important to note that marketers do not use ethics to appeal to consumers. They use psychology. And psychology just works better.

Instead of trying to appeal (exclusively) to the public's higher nature, Leenaert provides another option: give them "wrong reasons" to do the right thing. This doesn't mean deliberate deception. It simply means surrendering control over the medium in favour of the message. Vegan advocates are old pros at telling people not only what they should think about animal rights, but why they ought to believe it. And it's not working very well. Perhaps it is time for an approach that focuses on helping people change their behaviour, without necessarily making repentance and dramatic conversion our central focus.

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### Michael Broadhead says

In Animal Allies (an organisation I volunteer with), our volunteers have 6 essential agreements, the first being: "We focus on research-based, effective activism to save the most animals possible." As a result, Tobias' work on his blog The Vegan Strategist has been of immense use to us several times. With the extra space afforded in a book format, Leenaert is able to present a macroscopic view of effective vegan activism and develop a narrative through an analogy he developed: Veganville (a town on the top of a mountain. The

result is a book that is accessible to all and very practical. It begins with a snapshot of the movement at this point in time by contextualizing where our movement is in terms of adoption and how that must affect our strategies. This highlights the pragmatic approach - while one argument/method may be morally right, it may not be effective until veganism is much more mainstream and accepted. It then explores what our call to action should be and what arguments we should be making. It finishes up with how we can support people on their journey to Veganville as well as improving retention once they are there. Creating a Vegan World excels at concisely articulating the overall approaches we should be taking to be effective at reducing harm. Leenaert logically explores arguments and counterarguments in approaches and justifying the various conclusions he makes. The result is a book that any new vegan, or any vegan organisation, can read as a general manifesto for how to become stronger advocates for animals. It is also a perfect companion to Veganomics as this book focuses on how to turn the data into action.

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### **Alise Redvi?a says**

A great book on how (and why) not to be that preachy asshole vegan that everyone hates.

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### **Milena Koles says**

This book was really easy to read and follow, but most importantly it made me realize what I was doing wrong in my day-to-day activism (although I thought that I am already effective at communicating). "Spoiler": it's about our personal perception of what our goal actually is and what's the best way to get there. I feel like a huge weight was lifted off me and I believe this book helped me to become not just a better activist, but to have a more sustainable future as an activist.

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### **Dovil? Ston? says**

Labai racionaliai ir nuosekliai parašyta knyga. Must-read kiekvienam vegetarui/veganui/reducetarui, kuriam r?pi ne tik jo asmeninis teisumas ir purizmas, bet ir tai, kaip vert?t? pristatyti bei atstovauti savo paži?ras kitiems.

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### **Foppe says**

Frustrating and problematic book, in that the "world" the author wants to work towards will only be "vegan" (i.e., free of animal use) to the extent readers don't go along with his suggestion that they shouldn't argue for an end to *all* animal use. Leenaert is a long-time supposed vegan,\* whose main interest is in 'growing the vegan movement' -- i.e., on getting more people to self-identify as 'vegan', because of the consequences he thinks that will have for animal use -- and who argues for a redefinition of veganism to allow people to call themselves vegan so long as they "mostly" (whatever that means) avoid using animals and animal products. While this is partly understandable -- lack of exposure is veganism's Achilles' heel -- it is also both morally problematic -- veganism isn't primarily about ego considerations such as group membership / 'being allowed to call yourself X', but about the choice not to treat animals as things/property -- and unnecessary, given that veganism is now (finally) entering the mainstream. As such, I find the popularity and spread of these ideas

(both via this book, and the workshops he organizes with Melanie Joy) quite worrisome and frustrating.

That said, because the bar is basically lying on the ground when it comes to this category of book, a lot of the practical suggestions Leenaert makes about how to behave will probably be helpful to most vegans. And a lot of the points he makes about problematic advocacy are good, even if he refuses to point out that the main parties encouraging such behavior are the (proto-)corporate charities, ranging from PETA to dXe to "Anonymous for the Voiceless" who (for the same reason) engage in useless single issue and welfare reform campaigns (which form a great business model, because they won't stop animal use: see Francione and Charlton's *Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach* as to why).

\* I say supposed because he frequently intimates that he doesn't consider consistency a requirement for 'being' a vegan, who isn't clear whether he himself consistently refuses to use animal products, and who encourages readers who *do* consistently eschew animal use, to hate themselves for doing so, by repeatedly suggesting that their actions are "ineffective" and/or "bad for animals", by suggesting that such "rigidity" will "turn away" non-vegans, as though those are relevant considerations when it comes to morality. (Analogous to telling off human slavery abolitionists for refusing to us humans as slaves out of a worry that slave owners will find their behavior obnoxious; which only makes sense if you believe that avoiding that people dislike your actions is more important than not treating others as your property.)

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### **Katja says**

Although I have been a vegetarian and semi-vegetarian since 1987, veganism is new to me and the activism that goes with it too. I must admit that I had no idea how dogmatic it presumably can be. I don't like dogmatics (of any kind) that much...

Which is exactly why I find this a great book and a very interesting read. It's ofcourse strategic and pragmatic, but it is also about opening up to other viewpoints (startingpoints that is, because there IS a set goal: Veganville). And about listening instead of preaching. I really hope this will bring people closer to eachother AND reduce / end animal use. (In other words: make the world a better place ?).

(One thing that distracted me a little was that environmental reasons for veganism were presented as non-moral most times they were mentioned. Since that is my primary reason for going on the vegantrail, I am ofcourse biased, but 'Nature' and 'Humanity' are just as morally loaded as 'Animals'. They just not represent the exact same set of moral principles).

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### **Martin Rowe says**

I'm the publisher of this book, so I thought I'd say a few words about why I decided to publish it. I'm a vegan of more than two decades and my publishing company, Lantern Books, reflects many different approaches to nonviolence—including that of treating animals well and no longer consuming them. Given that vegans remain a very small percentage of the U.S. population, it's clear that veganism is either undesirable, too

difficult, or impossible to imagine for the vast majority of folks, no matter how much they may wish (or say they wish) to not harm animals. So, as a vegan, a reader, and a publisher, I'm always open to new approaches.

Tobias' book is a very refreshing and, to my mind, convincing case for vegans to climb down from our lofty perches and start being very hard-headed about how change happens and how people can be moved in the direction of veganism. His fundamental message is that we need to stop harping on identity and emphasize actions; we need to stop setting impossible goals and move toward practical, achievable steps; and we need to recognize that encouraging people to change will take a great deal of support, flexibility, and creativity, and less judgmentalism, rigidity, and absolutism. It's a challenging message for many vegans to hear, and I don't agree with everything Tobias says. But I'm very, very glad he said it; and I'm delighted to be his publisher.

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### **Nick Cooney says**

The animal rights movement has been waiting for a book like this. I cannot recommend it enough.

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### **Leen Pauwels says**

For me personally, the chapter about the Superlocavore was an eye-opener. This has made me more understanding of omnivores.

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### **Bernard Jan says**

Like no other (recent) book on veganism, *How to Create a Vegan World: A Pragmatic Approach* by Tobias Leenaert will without a doubt spark many discussions and debates. Lots of us (vegans and animal rights advocates) will find ourselves challenged to question our way of thinking, living, and acting.

I might not fully agree with the author about everything said in this provoking and insightful book, but I do agree that we need to spread the circle of our compassion to everyone, both animals and humans alike. Not only because it is the right thing to do but also because it is the fastest way to the liberation and freedom for all of us.

Being a pragmatic idealist might therefore be the most effective way to a kinder, more compassionate and just world we all wish to see and live in.

BJ  
[www.bernardjan.com](http://www.bernardjan.com)  
Bernard Jan

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## **Liisa says**

Second read, 12.2018, 5/5

I enjoyed *How to Create a Vegan World* a lot earlier this year, but kept thinking that it could be even more beneficial if read and discussed with fellow vegan activists. That's why I decided to host a book club in the animal rights organization I volunteer at, which was a brilliant idea! I did indeed get much more out of it, we came up with new ideas next year, were able to share our experiences and simply have marvelous discussions. This was also my first time hosting a book club and I think it went really well. Something I definitely want to do more of in the future!

First read, 5.2018, 4/5

*How to Create a Vegan World* is helpful and informative guide to any vegan advocate. I felt like many of the ideas were already known to me, but I've never thought about them pragmatically. And pragmatically this book indeed is, as the title promises. It also has illustrative graphics and examples, plus the whole metaphor about 'Veganville' is excellent. Tobias Leenaert gave me inspiration to do more. And to do better.

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## **Stephanie Jane (Literary Flits) says**

See more of my book reviews on my blog, [Literary Flits](#)

I spotted *How To Create A Vegan World* on Goodreads when author Bernard Jan shared an update about the book. Being in the middle of my Veganuary challenge at the time I felt that this was wonderfully serendipitous and I was interested to read a European viewpoint on veganism as many of the other nonfiction books I have considered are American-authored. The root ideas are usually similar, but things like product availability and political interpretation can be very different.

Leenaert's ideas are certainly controversial and I liked reading the full range of Goodreads reviews before I got to the book itself. Vegans generally can have a reputation for single-mindedness and intransigence regarding animal welfare. In interviews and blogs their simple message can often be stridently put across with no negotiation on offer. I can understand why this is the case, but I always felt somewhat intimidated by this approach. I personally didn't feel I could live up to such absolutism. Leenaert instead advocates leniency. In his opinion, many people making strides towards veganism is actually better at the present time than a only few hardcore vegans. He actively supports initiatives such as Meatfree Mondays and Veganuary arguing that, so long as people don't then overcompensate for their reduced meat consumption, these challenges may well save many more animals.

Having come to veganism through adopting both Meatfree Mondays and Veganuary, I was delighted to see Leenaert validating such a journey. I now feel reassured whereas previously I had wondered whether, by not embracing the traditional vegan stance, I was maybe letting the side down or not making a proper contribution. His metaphor of placing the utopian Veganville at the top of a mountain is perfect. A plant-based diet isn't an easy lifestyle change to make immediately and I agree that many people making smaller changes have a far greater effect on commercial demand for products. Indeed just last month Piers Morgan inadvertently helped to send sales of the Greggs vegan sausage roll rocketing with his sneering tweet about the product. But Greggs wouldn't have even thought about launching a vegan sausage roll had they not anticipated the volume of Veganuary signups and therefore already been confident of customer demand.

I can understand why some are upset by Leenaert's putting pragmatism over absolutes, but like him at this stage of the global journey I feel getting plant-based diets to be seen as normal (instead of an extreme act) will create the most impact.

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### **Pablo Moleman says**

How to Create a Vegan World is the best, most comprehensive and immediately practiceable book I have read on the topic of vegan advocacy so far.

Tobias Leenaert recognizes that creating a vegan world is a momentous task, different from anything else undertaken before by social movements, and that achieving it amounts to much more than the combined effort of convincing 7.6 billion individuals to go vegan. The good news he brings is that it may actually require much LESS effort, if and only if we get our movement to be more strategic. The roadmap he sketches to achieve vegan critical mass, enlightened by the helpful metaphor of climbing mount vegan, is clear and can inspire many novel ways of campaigning, as well as ways to improve the effectiveness of current campaigns.

I especially liked the chapter on Environments. It shows the many great opportunities that are still waiting to be realized when we change focus from getting individuals to adopt the vegan identity to making gradual changes on a societal and institutional level towards a more vegan world.

Tobias' writings have for years been an inspiration for the vegan advocacy work of Viva Las Vega's in The Netherlands. Reading this book has reinvigorated my commitment to being as effective and strategic an activist as possible. I am very happy that this book will now be available to vegan activists around the globe to read and cannot wait to share it with my colleagues.

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