

Feeling, thinking, acting

An intersemiotic study of empathy and compassion in vegan discourse

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This article considers the multi- and intersemiotic expression of empathy and compassion in a campaign organised by the Vegan Society. It draws upon insights from ecofeminism and the ethics of care as well as systemic functional semiotics as a way of exploring how instances of attitude (affect, judgment and appreciation) in the campaign's various texts might be negotiated and shared, creating potentials for empathetic and compassionate responses. The study finds that parts of the campaign *represent* empathy and compassion as exemplars for readers to follow, while other parts of the campaign, especially social media, provide readers with an opportunity to *enact* empathy and compassion. The study also identifies gendered and generational dimensions, and suggests that syndromes or clusters of positive and negative attitude can form the basis for empathetic and compassionate responses.

Keywords: empathy, compassion, appraisal, intersemiosis, veganism, campaign, ethics of care, animal ethics, ecofeminism

1. Introduction

Veganism is a practice that generally seeks to challenge and avoid all forms of cruelty to and exploitation of other animals for food, clothing, entertainment and other purposes. While there may be many reasons for practising veganism, including health and the environment (Radnitz, Beezhold and DiMatteo 2015; Wright 2021), the Vegan Society, a United Kingdom based charity, notes that “going vegan means being compassionate, taking action for animals, and helping them the best way possible” (Vegan Society 2022c). In this paper, I explore the concept of compassion and how it might be realised or enacted intersemiotically

in the Vegan Society's "Be AnimalKind" campaign, a campaign designed to highlight and promote positive human-nonhuman animal relations and the "sense of compassion" (Vegan Society 2022b) integral to those relations. I am particularly interested in the connections between empathy and compassion and how they might form the basis for an ethics of care often associated with veganism and vegetarianism (see, for example, Curtin 1991, 2022[2014]; Stepaniak 2000). Drawing on systemic functional work on appraisal (e.g. Martin 1999; Martin and White 2005; Economou 2009), I consider the intersemiotic construal of how we feel, think and act in relation to others, both within and across species.

I begin by briefly defining and describing veganism and presenting the Vegan Society and the "Be AnimalKind" campaign. I then discuss empathy and compassion in ecofeminist animal care ethics, and how these might be explored from a systemic functional semiotic perspective. Subsequent sections analyse selected texts from the "Be AnimalKind" campaign, highlighting their potential to represent or enact empathy and compassion. The paper concludes with some general thoughts on empathy and compassion and their ostensibly gendered and generational dimensions.

2. Veganism, the Vegan Society and the "Be AnimalKind" campaign

Veganism is a practice that excludes or seeks to avoid the use of other animals for food, clothing and other purposes. Definitions of veganism usually emphasise the need to challenge cruelty and exploitation (Vegan Society 2019), but becoming vegan may be driven by other (often overlapping) concerns such as personal or public health, the environment, and/or spiritual beliefs (Wright 2021: 3). Although veganism has a long and sometimes contested history (see Hertweck 2021 for a summary and critique of vegan and vegetarian histories), the term "vegan" (an abbreviated form of *vegetarian*) is itself relatively new, coined by a group of then-members of the Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom in 1943. A year later, in 1944, the group founded the Vegan Society. Throughout its history, the Vegan Society has advocated and campaigned for the rights and freedoms of other animals and for the support and (legal) recognition of veganism as a practice and philosophy.

One campaign recently organised by the Vegan Society is "Be AnimalKind" (Vegan Society 2022b). Started in November 2022, "Be AnimalKind" is primarily aimed at "non-vegan animal lovers" (Vegan Society 2022a), asking them to consider their feelings for and relations with companion animals such as dogs and cats and how they might be extended to other animals, especially those associated with industrialised animal agriculture such as chickens, cows, pigs and sheep.

Divided into three parts, the campaign invites readers to *reflect, connect* and *question* their relations with other animals. Short videos of between one and two minutes each and short written pieces of fewer than 500 words provide insights into how and why people choose to volunteer at animal sanctuaries or become vegan, and a series of animated questions-and-answers and a quiz suggest ways in which readers might do the same. The campaign also offers a monthly newsletter with vegan recipes and “heart-warming animal stories” (Vegan Society 2022b) as well as the chance to share and discuss material via social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) using the hashtags #beanimalkind and #loveone loveall.¹ Of particular note for this paper, the “Be AnimalKind” campaign makes explicit the importance of compassion, perhaps most notably under the campaign’s “love one, love all” tagline.

As animal lovers we have strong connections with the cats and dogs we share our homes with. We know that they are unique individuals with their own personalities and preferences.

But what about the other animals? The ones we have been taught to think of as food, clothing or entertainment.

Be AnimalKind is all about helping us to reconnect with our sense of *compassion*, and to live in alignment with our values.

No one wants to contribute to suffering, but unfortunately most of us were raised to think of certain animals as ‘something’ rather than ‘someone’.

This is a place to rediscover how amazing our relationship with animals can be – and how to create that change in our everyday lives.

(Vegan Society 2022b, emphasis added)

3. Empathy, compassion and the ethics of care

In the field of animal ethics – i.e. the normative study of human-nonhuman animal relations – Gruen (2012, 2013, 2014; see also 2007[2004]) proposes an ethics of care based on *entangled empathy*. Gruen’s approach (and others like it, e.g. Donovan 1990, 1996; Curtin 1991) takes an (eco-)feminist perspective and is often contrasted with and presented as an alternative or supplement to rights-based and welfarist animal ethics that stress sentience, similarity, inherent value and equal consideration as the rational bases for our treatment of and relations

1. The amount of material in this campaign is too large to allow for a thorough analysis of all these different texts and text-types. I have therefore chosen to examine in most detail a written introductory text, an introductory video, a series of short videos and written texts, and part of the campaign’s social media.

with other animals (cf. Singer 1977[1975]; Regan 2004[1983]). For Gruen, human lives are intimately entwined with other lives, from the microbes of our own bodies to the companions in our homes, the food on our plates, the clothes on our backs, the medicines that heal or sustain us, and the lives that comprise and support our ecosystems. Our relations with these and other animals need to be guided by an understanding and response to their needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes and perspectives. This, for Gruen, is an iterative process that begins with an empathetic reaction – a first response to the other’s condition – which helps us imagine ourselves in the position of the other and gives us a basis for understanding how the other thinks or feels (“what the world seems, feels, smells, and looks like from their situated position”, Gruen 2014: 42) and the needs they might have. Such a process requires that the empathiser cycle or shunt between their own and the other’s perspectives, constantly (re)evaluating their reactive attitudes and understandings. Entangled empathy, understood here as a recursive process of caring that focuses on another’s wellbeing, a form of “empathetic engagement”, involves both affect and cognition (or feeling and thinking/ knowing) as well as a need to act (Gruen 2012: 228–229).

Curtin (2022[2014]:76) sees this process, or the potential result of this process, as *compassion*: the “place where how we feel, how we think, and how we act come together”. For Curtin (2022[2014]:78), the main distinction between empathy and compassion is that, while empathy is “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes”, compassion is “a practice in which one engages deliberately and reflectively, through which one becomes skillful in identifying the true causes of suffering in others and in ourselves”.² While there is a close link, then, between empathy and compassion, with the one seemingly acting as the basis for the other, there may sometimes be a need to separate them.³ Curtin (2022[2014]:75–76) argues that this separation parallels the distinction between emotions and feelings, where emotions are more closely tied to immediate, bodily reactions, and feelings (or “feelings of emotion”) are composite perceptions that evolve or are developed over time. Separating empathy and compassion may also be useful in avoiding what Curtin (2022[2014]:80–82) calls “empathy fatigue”, a situation in which empathetic reactions may be so overwhelming as to hinder or impede potential acts of compassion.

2. As Gruen (2014: 42) reminds us, however, “other animals don’t wear shoes!” and this kind of (anthropomorphic) thinking might negatively impact on our judgments and practices.

3. Gruen’s entangled empathy seems to subsume Curtin’s descriptions of empathy and compassion. Gruen (2013: 227) uses the term “helping action” in a way that resembles compassion.

4. Appraisal: Emotion, ethics, aesthetics

In order to explore how empathy and compassion are realised or enacted, I draw upon the appraisal framework and its development and application to various semiotic systems (e.g. White 1998, 2003, 2012; Martin 1999; Martin and White 2005; Martin and Rose 2007; Economou 2009; Ariztimuño, Dreyfus and Moore 2022). Appraisal deals with evaluative meanings and is typically described in terms of attitude, graduation and engagement. “Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things”; graduation concerns the force and focus of those feelings; and engagement deals with the sourcing of attitudes and the interplay of different voices in the discourse (Martin and White 2005: 35). A system network showing the paradigmatic relations between ATTITUDE, GRADUATION and ENGAGEMENT, as well as more delicate choices within those systems, is provided in Figure 1.

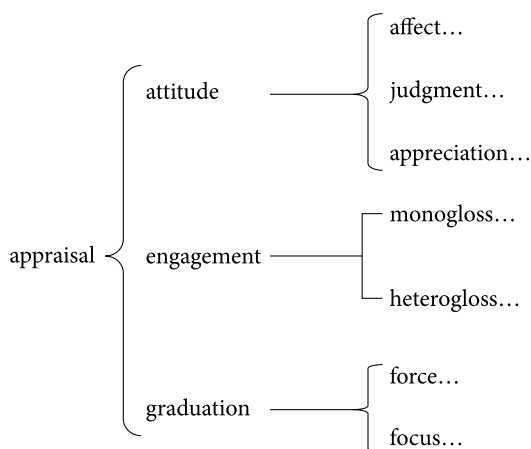


Figure 1. System network for APPRAISAL, adapted from Martin and Rose (2007: 59)

With regard to attitude, the three semantic subsystems of affect, judgment and appreciation – glossed above as the expression of feelings, the evaluation of behaviour and the evaluation of things – are often equated with the categories of emotion, ethics and aesthetics, respectively (Martin 2004a: 324; 2004b: 273; Martin and White 2005: 42). From the perspective of community, shared affect can help us connect around empathy and emotions, shared judgement can help us connect around principles and ethics, and shared appreciation can help us connect around preferences and aesthetics (Martin 2004a: 329; Stenglin 2004: 403; Martin and White 2005: 42). Seen in this way, the interplay of affect and judgment may be key to a feminist animal ethics that centres empathy and

compassion, and emotionality more generally. Moreover, the distinction between judgment and appreciation here is likely to be an important one in the way we instantiate and negotiate our relations with other animals: are we appraising *someone* or *something*?

Engagement is concerned with the background and interplay of different voices in the discourse, and how the textual voice manages them. As can be seen from Figure 1, the basic distinction is between heterogloss (different/other voiced) and monogloss (single voiced). In the case of heterogloss, the textual voice expands or contracts the dialogic space for alternative propositions and positions, typically using the resources of modality, concession and projection. In the case of monogloss, the textual voice chooses not to recognise or invoke those alternatives, through bare assertions or representations that express “the textual voice’s single, autonomous and isolated subjecthood” (White 2003: 263). The heterogloss and monogloss in a text variously act to align and/or disalign the reader, construing for the text different shared and conflicting positions – potential alliances and antagonisms (Lemke 1988) – between the textual voice, the putative reader and other voices invoked in the text. Seen through the lens of animal ethics, engagement plays an important role in how we connect, or disconnect, with the situations and lives of others (see Gruen 2009 and 2012 on “empathetic engagement”). Engagement is also an important resource in texts like those of the “Be AnimalKind” campaign as they attempt to align readers with a particular set of values.

5. Attitude and engagement in the “Be AnimalKind” campaign

5.1 Written introductory text

Applying the appraisal framework to the written campaign text introduced above, we can see some of the interpersonal meanings at stake and how the textual voice attempts to align the reader. Inscribed attitude includes positive appreciation and positive judgment of cats and dogs (see (1) below), and the text asks if those same feelings might be extended to other animals, i.e. those used for food, clothing and entertainment (see (2) below). The attitudinal shift here, and throughout the campaign, is from considering certain animal-others as *something* to be appreciated to *someone* to be judged or admired (see (3) below). One of the implications of this, of course, is that we can empathise with and be compassionate towards *someone* but not generally towards *something*.

- (1) As animal lovers we have strong connections with the cats and dogs we share our homes with. We know that they are unique individuals with their own personalities and preferences.
- (2) But what about the other animals? The ones we have been taught to think of as food, clothing or entertainment.
- (3) No one wants to contribute to suffering, but unfortunately most of us were raised to think of certain animals as ‘something’ rather than ‘someone’.

As noted above, the campaign is aimed primarily at “*non-vegan* animal lovers” (Vegan Society 2022a, emphasis added), so the textual voice, presumably a “*vegan* animal lover”, needs to shape the dialogic space in such a way as to align the reader around a particular set of values, some of which might not initially be shared with or acted upon by the reader. The uses of inclusive *we* and *our* are perhaps the most salient examples of how the textual voice addresses and positions itself with respect to the reader (note how the reader here is never addressed as *you*), but there are other ways in which this sense of alignment might be encoded. In terms of engagement, concur (*We know...*) pairs with counter (*But what about...*; see (1) and (2)) to establish and acknowledge a shared position before challenging or questioning the implications of that position (Martin and White 2005: 124–126). Similarly, while denial (*no one*) and counter (*but unfortunately*) might threaten writer-reader solidarity (see (3)), especially if the reader is resistant to positions proffered by the text, the potential for disalignment is elsewhere mediated by invoking some previous time or state when the reader presumably held such positions (*reconnect, rediscover*; see (4) and (5) below). The interpersonal stakes here are high, however, and the risk of disalignment is considerable. Readers might not appreciate being told that they have forgotten something or that they have lost their sense of compassion, even if the textual voice suggests, through an implied attribution, that *we have been taught* [by others] or *raised* [by others] to think and behave in particular ways towards other animals (see (2) and (3)).

- (4) Be AnimalKind is all about helping us to reconnect with our sense of compassion, and to live in alignment with our values.
- (5) This is a place to rediscover how amazing our relationship with animals can be – and how to create that change in our everyday lives.

5.2 Introductory video

We broaden our analysis of the campaign here in order to see how attitude and writer-reader alignment play out, not only verbally but also audio-visually. On the campaign website, readers are invited to watch an introductory video. Generically,

this video comprises three main narrative stages: an orientation that asks viewers to recall their childhood and the kinds of relations they had with other animals; a conflict or complication that asks how or why those relations might have changed; and a resolution or coda that invites viewers to rethink those relations. A full transcript and selected stills from the video can be found in the Appendix.

Briefly, the first stage of the video comprises several soft-focus, warm/pale-coloured, slowly evolving close-ups of young people playing or otherwise interacting with other animals. The narrator asks a series of questions that are prefaced with *Do you remember* (see Hasan 1989; 2002: 544) and that include instances of positive affect (*reeling, made your heart melt*) and positive appreciation (*the fur so soft*). The voice of the narrator is lax, soft and relatively low, and the music (piano and strings) is measured, slow and connected (andante and legato), and relatively quiet (van Leeuwen 1999). The orientation stage closes with a transitional phase in which there is a change of represented participant (and process) and a change of contact (a close-up of a dog looking directly at the viewer). The questions, although still prefaced in the spoken narration (*Do you remember...*), are represented visually as unprefaced, appraising ones (*What happened? What changed?*). The end of the stage is indicated by a short fade to black and a pause in the music.

In the second stage, there is a visual shift: shorter clips, faster-paced panning and zooming, a more heavily saturated colour palette, as well as a change in the types of processes and participants represented (e.g. dancing cartoon pigs, people drinking milk or being splashed with milk, human faces lit by TV or phone screens). The narrator asks a pair of open-ended, specifying questions (*What was it they told us? What was it they said?*) and then continues by quoting in response several well-known dairy, egg and meat advertising slogans from the United Kingdom (*Gotta Lotta Bottle, Go to Work on an Egg* and *Wot No Meat*, respectively) before highlighting the ubiquity of these messages (*out on the streets, on our phones, on TV [...] it's all we can see*). These visual and verbal changes are accompanied by changes in voice quality and music: the narrator's voice is quicker paced, higher pitched, relatively clipped and breathier, and the music (piano and strings) increases in volume and tempo and becomes more staccato. The end or transition phase of this stage is marked by a change in tempo and pitch as the narrator states, somewhat wistfully, *we've come so far from where we used to be*. The stage ends with another fade to black and a pause in the music.

The third and final stage of the video returns to the slower clip-editing techniques of the opening stage. However, there are important representational, interpersonal and compositional choices that distinguish this stage from the previous ones. Verbally, the questions of the first two stages are largely replaced with commands or directives, e.g. *come back home, think again*, and so on, and evaluative meanings centre around feelings and expressions of love. While some scenes

show interactions between different animals, presented as offers, most of the shots in this stage portray single participants (human and nonhuman animals) in close up looking directly at the viewer. There is also higher visual modality; the soft focus and the oversaturated colours of the previous stages are replaced with more “naturalistic” choices of representation, contextualisation, colour differentiation and illumination (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 160–163). While the voice of the narrator exhibits many of the same qualities as in the first stage (lax, soft and relatively low), there are some differences, including intonation patterns associated with a change in speech function (invitational imperatives, tones 2 and 3; Halliday and Greaves 2008: 209; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 169) as well as heightened pitch, volume and precision of articulation on certain evaluative wordings such as *love* and *feel it [the love]* (cf. affective vocal profiles in Ariztimuño, Dreyfus and Moore 2022). Musically, the tempo remains more or less unchanged from the previous stage, but there is more sustain and connectedness on the piano. The music at the beginning of the stage has reduced volume but increases as the stage progresses. The video ends with a pink screen upon which the words *BE KIND*, in white, are transformed into *BE ANIMALKIND* (see van Leeuwen and Djonov 2015 on the meaning potential of kinetic typography, especially its emotive potential). The hashtag #loveonloveall appears followed by *Visit BeAnimalKind.com* and the closing credits, including the Vegan Society logo and acknowledgments.

The video expresses a range of emotions across its three main generic stages. In the first, affect is largely happiness (love, affection) and positive inclination (yearning); there is also positive appreciation of human-nonhuman relations (+reaction) and positive judgment of human and nonhuman individuals (admiration). A transitional phase suggests sadness or melancholy (unhappiness: –disposition; appreciation: –reaction) as we move into the complication stage. Here, visual, verbal and audio resources combine to express negative affect (disquiet, unhappiness) and negative appreciation (–reaction) and negative judgment (–propriety) of our relations with and behaviours towards other animals; embodied attitude in this stage also suggests an exaggerated (ironised) positive affect. In the final stage, attitudinal meanings include positive affect (happiness, love, affection), negative affect (concern) and positive judgment (+propriety). The overall attitudinal profile, then, as the text unfolds is from positive attitude to negative attitude, and back again.

The textual voice of the video, much like that of the written text discussed above, attempts to align the reader with some or all (or many) of these evaluative meanings. In the orientation, the reader is invited to share a sense of positive affect – love, affection and possibly nostalgia. Important engagement resources here include first- and second-person referents (*we*, *you*; cf. written introductory text) and prefaced questions (*do you remember*) as well as marked visual expres-

sion (soft focus, warm colours) and visual intimacy (close-ups). The sentiments expressed here are unlikely to disalign the reader, creating a potential for empathetic response; the reader can connect through a sense of recollection and/or through a more general positive appreciation of the human-nonhuman animal relations portrayed in the video. In the complication, the reader is encouraged to share the textual voice's negative attitude – disquiet, discomfort and possibly disgust. Here, engagement and related resources include first-, second- and third-person references (*we, you, they*) and a series of questions and commands (e.g. *what was it they told us, go to work on an egg*) connected and attributed to the *they* of the meat, dairy and egg industries. There is also marked visual expression and ideation (heavily saturated colours, fast-moving editing techniques), giving a possible sense of detachment or estrangement. The risk of disalignment is much greater here than in the previous stage since the attitudes expressed might conflict with a non-vegan animal lover's practices or beliefs (e.g. eating certain animal-others). Like the written text discussed earlier, however, this threat to writer-reader solidarity is tempered by the inclusion of an additional source or voice, namely the meat, dairy and egg industries and their ubiquitous advertising campaigns. This third party is positioned as being responsible for "rearranging the world" and "turning the way we see other animals on its head" (see video transcript in Appendix), thus directing any potential disalignment away from the writer-reader relation and towards something more systemic (see Martin and White 2005: 115–116, 118–119). The writer and reader are construed as allies, and potential empathetic and ethical responses centre on shared negative evaluation. In the final stage of the video, visual resources engage the reader directly: shots are close-ups (intimate), and represented participants look directly at the camera (demand). These visual resources couple with and complement a series of verbal commands or directives, e.g. *come back home, think again for me, look once more, tell me what you see*. Despite the monoglossic nature of commands and their potential for disalignment if a reader is resistant to the kind of action the command is intended to elicit, risk to writer-reader solidarity here seems low. The voice quality or tone of the narrator, for example, is likely to be understood as inviting rather than insisting or reproaching, and this is complemented by the relative calmness of the music and visuals compared with the previous stage (e.g. lower volume, more legato, slower-paced editing).

5.3 Short written texts and videos

In the campaign sections headed *reflect* and *connect*, there are a series of short written texts and videos that variously recount people's encounters and relations with other animals and the changes people made to their lives as a result of those

encounters and relations, usually by becoming vegan and/or volunteering at an animal sanctuary. In one example entitled “Sahar and the Magical Cow” (see Appendix), Sahar tells the story of her learning as a child that the “beautiful cow in the back yard” was the food on her plate. Sahar recounts the heartbreak of losing a friend and reflects on how younger people tend to be “more empathetic towards other animals” but are “socialised [...] to exploit [them]”. Throughout this short video, Sahar is framed as up close and aligned with the viewer, often looking directly at the camera; the musical motif is the same as that in the orientation stage of the introductory video discussed above (strings, piano; andante, legato). In another example entitled “How Eddie Became a Sanctuary Volunteer”, Eddie recalls his foster-care childhood, his working-class background, and the relationship he and his son have with other animals. Eddie considers his veganism to be “part of a wider perspective that every living being deserves the same quality of life and equal respect – together fighting against transphobia, homophobia, racism, speciesism”. In a highlighted quote, marked in the pink of the “Be AnimalKind” colour profile, Eddie says that “[b]eing around animals has shown me the way the world should be – having freedom and living with compassion. All sentient beings deserve to be free.” A black-and-white photograph alongside the written text shows a close up of someone, presumably Eddie, feeding a goat (see Appendix).

In these and other texts in this part of the campaign, attitude includes positive affect (happiness, love) and negative affect (sadness, displeasure), as well as positive judgment (beauty, amiability) and negative appreciation (disapproval). The targets of those emotions are generally other animals or human society at large; in the case of Eddie, there is also the expression of “joy” at seeing “[his] son interacting with animals”. The textual voice attempts to align the reader with some or all of these attitudes through a variety of engagement resources. Verbally, these include bare assertions (monogloss) and, in some instances, justifications of people’s experiences, attitudes and activities (see (6) and (7)). Disclaimers are also prominent (see (8–10)), variously challenging, rejecting or countering certain assumptions, and attributions acknowledge or distance the textual voice from different sources (e.g. (11)). There are relatively few instances of the option of verbal entertain in these texts; when or if they do occur, they tend to operate in a more private dialogic space (cf. Martin and White 2005: 109), referring to speaker contemplation rather than anticipating some potential dissenting addressee (see *I think* in (11)), although there are exceptions (see (12)).

- (6) I was working as a conveyancer in London, and I quit my job and moved to rural Ireland to open a sanctuary – Earth Healer’s Animal Rescue Farm.

- (7) It broke my heart to see that [beagles in cages] because it reminded me of how much Patty [childhood pet beagle] used to love running around and being joyful and just being a beagle.
- (8) We didn't eat the animals we looked after, but we were a working-class meat-eating family. I was brought up thinking that you had to eat meat to be healthy.
- (9) They're alive too. They don't want to die.
- (10) When they came to me their beaks were cut, they had no feathers and they couldn't stand up because they were so weak.
- (11) In Buddhism, they say the only way to find peace is to help others and I think that's what I've found.
- (12) I think then what happens is that we live in a society that dissociates you every single day with every single thing.

Visually, the texts work in different ways. The short videos are all filmed in close up, with frontal alignment and frequent eye contact (speakers look away from the camera at certain points, usually when recalling past experiences). In terms of engagement, intimacy, inclusion and contact are crucial ways of connecting with viewers, getting and holding their attention and emotional involvement (O'Toole 1994: 12). The "talking heads" style of the videos suggests another text-type, namely documentaries, lending them a certain "other-voicedness" (heterogloss) (see Economou 2009: 203), one that is grounded in the individual subjecthood of the textual voice as well as the potentially more authoritative (monoglossic) discourse of documentary film-making (see, for example, Martineau 1984; Beattie 2004: 22–23).⁴ In the written texts, quotes about what people have learned from other animals (love, feelings and emotions, freedom and compassion, and trust) are highlighted in pink and otherwise given prominence by virtue of their being placed at the top of the text in a larger font size. Accompanying images of human and nonhuman animals (and the activities they participate in) are generally represented as close ups with eye contact (with the exception of Eddie; see above), but from a relatively detached or oblique point of view (cf. frontal angle of short videos). The visual engagement here, while similar to that of the videos, places greater emphasis on the reader as outsider, as someone observing the relations of others, and the prominence of the quotes serves as a proclamation of importance and a potential narrowing of the dialogic space.

4. This potential monogloss ("naturalistic congruent visual representations of material reality", Economou 2009: 203) is tempered somewhat by the visual decontextualisation and reduced modality of represented participants against backgrounds with low articulation and modulation (see Appendix and Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 161).

What we see then are a series of texts that might challenge (non-vegan) readers' beliefs or values and potentially lead to disalignment. This is especially the case verbally when certain dialogically contractive resources are deployed, e.g. deny + counter pairings like those in (8) above, potentially narrowing the dialogic space for alternative propositions and positions. However, other resources, especially visual and audio ones, are likely to mitigate this effect. Rather than reproaching the reader, the texts' representations of care (for other animals, human and nonhuman) and relative calm (largely instantiated through speech and music in the videos) might be interpreted as an invitation to share and possibly act on the feelings expressed by the texts.

5.4 Social media

The social media part of the "Be AnimalKind" campaign includes two main hashtags: #beanimalkind and #loveoneloveall. The campaign website links to three platforms: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. While there are some differences in the affordances of these platforms, "Be AnimalKind"-related posts generally share and respond to quotes, images and videos from the campaign website. There is also some social-media-only material produced and shared by the Vegan Society, most notably a series of short videos in which people talk about their relations with individual animals and the histories of neglect and rescue those animals have experienced. Speakers in those videos refer to individual animals by name (e.g. Pickles, Primrose and Duncan) and are filmed alongside cats and dogs. The names, however, refer to hens, cows and pigs, rather than cats and dogs, and the videos shift perspective to reveal this. These videos and other material are shared and responded to in a variety of multisemiotic ways, as examples (13)–(18) show.

- (13) True! ALL animals!! Thank you ❤️ [Facebook user]
- (14) Love this ❤️ Absolutely amazing X [Facebook user]
- (15) Absolutely brilliant. Hopefully it will make people really think about the way they view some animals differently to others. [Instagram user]
- (16) 🙏🙏 [Instagram user]
- (17) So beautiful. If only every human could understand, value and protect every precious, sacred life and show love, kindness and compassion to our fellow living beings. [Twitter user]
- (18) ❤️❤️ [Twitter user]

People also share their own images and related stories using the #beanimalkind and #loveoneloveall hashtags. Both hashtags are commands or directives, and

both refer to positive affect (kindness and love). The first, #beanimalkind, references another campaign (#bekind) targeting issues around the impact of social media on mental health. The second, #loveonloveall, is used elsewhere in a variety of ways, including other animal rights-based campaigns and as an expression of support for LGBTQ+ rights and freedoms and a celebration of Pride. In both cases, the use of these hashtags in the “Be AnimalKind” campaign encourages readers to extend their kindness and love to certain marginalised or excluded others (“animals”, “all”) who may not typically be the targets of such positive attitude.

In the examples above, we see instances of positive affect and positive and negative judgment and appreciation, as well as a variety of engagement and graduation resources. In (13), for example, a Facebook user endorses the #loveonloveall message, emphasises the focus and countering effect of *all*, and expresses positive affect (gratitude and love). Similarly, in (17), a Twitter user expresses positive appreciation (+reaction) of a “Be AnimalKind” video and invoked negative judgment (–capacity, –propriety) of certain humans.

6. Representing, enacting and encouraging empathy and compassion

The “Be AnimalKind” campaign seems to provide plenty of potential for sharing emotions, ethics and aesthetics around human-nonhuman animal relations. In terms of affect, texts variously express happiness, fondness and love, as well as disquiet, anger, sadness and melancholy. The targets of these and related feelings are typically other thinking-and-feeling beings: for human appraisees, judgments tend to be negative propriety/capacity or positive propriety depending, for example, on whether someone is construed as contributing to or alleviating suffering; for other-than-human appraisees, judgments are typically positive tenacity or positive propriety. Otherwise, sanctuaries are positively evaluated (appreciation: +valuation), while other institutions such as animal agriculture (especially egg, dairy and meat industries) and parts of society more generally are negatively appraised (appreciation: –valuation, –reaction). Non-vegan and vegan animal lovers (Vegan Society 2022a) can connect or bond around couplings such as [ideation: ‘all animals’ / attitude: +affect, +judgment] or [ideation: ‘animal agriculture’ / attitude: appreciation: –valuation], sharing emotional responses and ethical standpoints (cf. Martin 2004a: 329; *inter alia*).

One of the challenges in an analysis such as this is how we might determine when or whether a reader feels empathy and/or acts compassionately. These emotional responses and reactions are lexicalised in some of the texts – words like empathy, compassion, care and kindness are used throughout the campaign – but

for the most part we are identifying potentials. The “Be AnimalKind” campaign encodes these potentials in different ways. Texts on the campaign website generally provide *representations* of empathy and compassion that might be considered exemplars for the reader. The talking heads videos and short written texts discussed earlier describe emotional responses to suffering and subsequent choices to act that resemble the processes of empathy and compassion described by ecofeminists like Gruen and Curtin. Social media, on the other hand, can provide spaces to *enact* empathy and compassion, or to represent that enacting. Responses to shared posts on social media include verbal expressions of joy and sadness as well as a variety of emojis, e.g. hearts and sad/tearful faces, that enact emotional responses that appear to resonate with the lived experiences of those represented in videos and other campaign texts. In addition to liking posts on social media, users can share them, which might in some cases be considered an act of endorsement in response to an empathetic reaction. For the “Be AnimalKind” campaign, though, acts of compassion are largely represented as becoming vegan and/or volunteering at animal sanctuaries. A desire to do this, especially the latter, is expressed by some on social media, e.g. *the dream*  [Instagram] and *It's my dream too* [Facebook], both in response to the same story about someone quitting their job and starting an animal sanctuary. For the most part, however, any compassionate acts by readers go largely unseen.

7. Gendered and generational dimensions of empathy and compassion

The analyses presented herein point towards certain gendered and generational dimensions of empathy and compassion. In the introductory video, all the human represented participants in stages 1 and 3 appear to be girls and women, respectively. We see them playing with or hugging other animals, and we see them looking at the camera asking us to reconsider our relations with other animals.⁵ The idea that caring for other animals is “womanish” (Spinoza, quoted in Adams and Gruen 2022[2014]: 7) or that women are more emotional or sentimental than men is well-established despite arguments to the contrary from (eco)feminists (Gruen 2014; Adams and Gruen 2022[2014]).⁶ It appears that this gendered aspect of empathy and compassion (and care more generally) is emphasised in the “Be AnimalKind” introductory video. However, in other parts of the campaign, this is less apparent. The short videos and short written texts, seen as a whole, do not

5. The narrator for this video also seems to be a woman.

6. See Nussbaum (1995) for a presentation and discussion of the relations between emotions, rationality and reason, and gender from a variety of philosophical traditions.

appear to be gendered in the same way as the introductory video, and although posts on social media seem to feature a predominance of women, there are some that also feature men.

With regard to the generational dimension of empathy and compassion, several of the texts in the “Be AnimalKind” campaign suggest that children are more empathetic or compassionate than adults. This is, of course, the premise for the introductory video, which asks viewers to recall a time when their relations with other animals were different from what they are today. The point is also made in “Sahar and the Magical Cow”, when Sahar comments on how young people are more empathetic towards other animals but are socialised into exploiting them. This process of socialisation is discussed at length in Luke (1995) and summarised in Donovan (2022[2014]:63–64) as an ongoing process of ideological conditioning that involves the rationalisation and legitimisation of largescale abuse and exploitation. Curtin (2022[2014]) suggests that compassion is something we learn and refine through experience over time, but, as the texts here imply, compassion and empathy may also be something we *unlearn* over time.

8. Empathy and compassion: Some concluding thoughts

Given the descriptions of entangled empathy and compassion in ecofeminist thought and practice (see Gruen and Curtin, among others), one might be tempted to treat the two as more or less overlapping concepts. There are, however, some interesting differences that seem to be revealed in the analyses herein. Most notably, potentials for empathetic reaction can be formed around positive or negative affect, but compassion seems to be a response to negative feelings or experiences only. This raises interesting questions as to the relations between the two. For Curtin, this might be part of the argument for separating emotions from feelings, and empathy from compassion, as part of avoiding what Curtin (2022[2014]:80–82) describes as empathy fatigue. In the example of medical doctors treating patients, Curtin argues that doctors cannot always empathise with their patients for risk of empathetic burnout, which might hinder them in giving appropriate treatment. This empathising, however, seems to be purely emotional. Gruen’s entangled empathy includes a cognitive element, so that, in this example, doctors may need to *know* what their patients feel but not necessarily *feel* what their patients feel in order to act compassionately. Likewise, in the case of “Be AnimalKind”, readers can act compassionately by becoming vegan or volunteering at a sanctuary without necessarily feeling the pain or suffering of other animals, even though an awareness of that suffering might be an important reason for their actions. In Curtin’s model of compassion in animal ethics, there is

a need to understand the causes of suffering, including the systems and dynamics of oppression, as well as the lives and conditions of individual animals in order to act compassionately.

From a systemic functional perspective, it might be possible to explain this apparent mismatch between empathy and compassion in terms of clustering, i.e. syndromes of features that, in this case, include both shared positive and negative attitudes and that subsequently lead to “helping action” (Gruen 2013: 227) or compassion. In “Be AnimalKind”, a reader might experience shared positive affect with the textual voice when watching the opening of the introductory video. The same reader might also experience shared negative judgment of the animal agriculture industry as well as a shared sense of pain or suffering for the animals in those industries. The cluster here includes shared positive and negative attitudes that, in combination, might be the driving force for watching more videos, reading more articles, taking quizzes, signing up for a newsletter, sharing material on social media, volunteering at animal sanctuaries, and, ultimately, becoming vegan.

To the extent that empathetic or compassionate responses are negotiated, it seems that, in the case of “Be AnimalKind”, different semiotic systems contribute in different ways to creating or attempting to create potentials for shared response. In the campaign, it is notable that music and speech quality play particularly important roles in this regard, tempering the potentially greater interpersonal risk of verbal and visual resources in isolation. This is of course an important argument for taking a multi- and intersemiotic approach not only to empathy and compassion, but to meaning-making more generally.

Finally, the gendered and generational dimensions of empathy and compassion highlighted above present us with some interesting challenges. Although the texts analysed herein give only limited insight into the potential relations and interrelations of these dimensions, it would be interesting to explore them further from a systemic functional perspective in other campaigns and in other discourses.

Funding

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Appendix

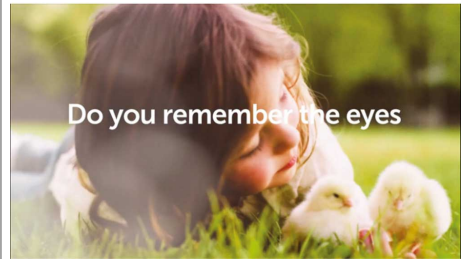
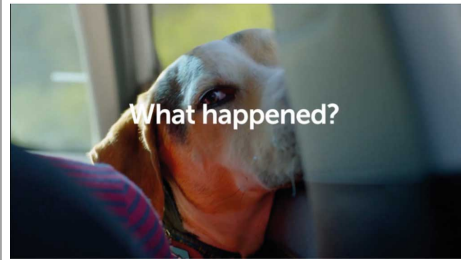
Transcript of spoken and written video narration

Double slashes (//) mark divisions between tone units (Halliday and Greaves 2008); italics indicate spoken text only; bold indicates written only; capitalisation and punctuation follows original.

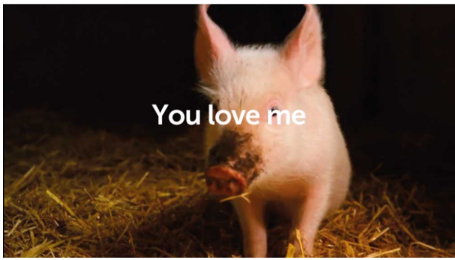
Do you remember that feeling // that left you reeling //
 the connection you felt // that made your heart melt //
 Do you remember the eyes // the beat of the heart //
 the fur so soft // how we could never part //
do you remember What happened? do you remember What
changed?
when our take on the world was rearranged
when the way you see me // was turned on its head //
what was it they told us // what was it they said //
EAT MORE MEAT / DRINK MORE MILK
GOTTA LOTTA BOTTLE // go to Work on an Egg // WOT NO
MEAT //
getting stuck in our heads
out On the streets // on our Phones // on TV //
 Wherever we look // It’s all we can see //
we’ve come so far // from where we used to be //
 Come back home // Think again for me //
 Look once more // and tell me what you see //
 Do you remember the love // Don’t you feel it from me? //
 So, nation of animal lovers // Think back to then //
 And look into my eyes // And tell me again //
 You love me //

Selected stills from introductory video⁷

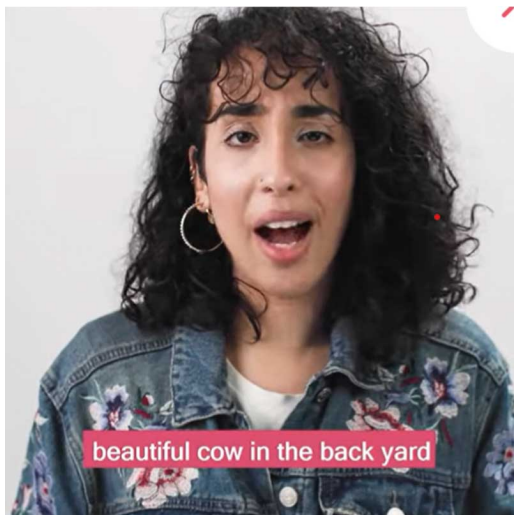
Stills are organised by generic stage and include relevant written and/or spoken excerpts (see transcript) and approximate timings.

Generic stage	Timing(s), written/spoken text
Orientation (1)	00:00–00:30
	00:11 <i>do you remember the eyes</i>
	00:24 <i>what happened</i>
Complication (2)	00:31–00:58
	00:35 <i>drink more milk</i>
	00:40 <i>go to work on an egg</i>

7. The images in this Appendix are reproduced with kind permission of the Vegan Society.

Generic stage	Timing(s), written/spoken text
	00:53 <i>we've come so far from where we used to be</i>
Resolution (3) 	00:59–01:33 01:03 <i>think again for me</i>
	01:23 <i>you love me</i>

Selected images from short videos and written texts



Video still from "Sahar and the Magical Cow"



Photograph from "How Eddie Became a Sanctuary Volunteer"

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Publication history

Date received: 4 December 2023

Date accepted: 16 February 2024