

them. Like the destroyers of ancient agrarian cultures, like lions or wolves chasing a herd, today's conscienceless factory farmers and cattlemen have no concern beyond the availability of their victims and the profit they will receive at market. When one verdant field is feed-farmed or grazed out, when one pond or aquifer is ruined, they just move on to the next. Denied cheap grazing on U.S. Federal land, they level a virgin rainforest or dispossess a poor people somewhere and soon are back in business. They take what they want from the environment and give nothing (by comparison) back. Small-scale subsistence hunting and fishing by indigenous peoples is *not* a threat to global ecology. It is the institutionalized evil of predatory agribusiness that is destroying the fertility and biodiversity of our planet. Power and technology wedded to gluttonous addiction and commerce without morality have produced this biological atom bomb of voracious livestock. Human lust and greed have created a population explosion of domesticated animals that is devouring and fouling the biosphere.

There are not too many human beings, only too many eating flesh at the top of the food chain instead of plants on the bottom of the food chain, which they were created to eat. This is exhausting the fertility of the earth. The problem is that we cannot just move on to the next planet when this one is feed-farmed and grazed out. We cannot follow our herds and flocks to a new extraterrestrial source of fresh water. We cannot feed all this unnecessary livestock and humanity too. The situation is a socio-economic, health, and ecological nightmare.

The Ascetic Angle of Vision on Our Predicament

The social and environmental disorder that human addiction to overconsumption causes can be studied the world over and throughout history. The ascetics and holy ones of many lands have understood the relationship between diet, personal, social, and environmental problems. Wise ones have observed dietary cause and effect played out in their own cultural milieu. The effect of diet on moral character, spiritual life, and society has always been an important issue in asceticism, and it suffices to say that the coming ecological crisis will not be averted until humanity faces this problem of gluttonous and unnecessary flesh consumption and solves it.

Pathological consumption means more disease and waste. Now sickened consumer societies are drowning in offal and looking for ways to get away from their various forms of excreta. Thus it is that hundreds of millions of lives are diminished and destroyed by