DOI: 10.31009/aer.2026.v6.05

# *The Burger That Devoured the World*

## Eco-Animalist Reflections in Javier Morales's Work

**JOSÉ MANUEL CHICO**

*La Hamburguesa Que Devoró El Mundo. Un Panfleto Ecoanimalista*
Plaza y Valdés, 2025, 173 pages

*The Burger That Devoured the World: An Eco-Animalist Pamphlet*, by the writer and journalist Javier Morales, offers a work of reflection and advocacy that seeks to build bridges between ecologism and animalism—two movements that share many goals yet have often emphasized their differences more than their common ground. Conceived as a pamphlet in the classical sense, the book is deliberately addressed to a broad readership: both specialized and non-specialized audiences, including environmentally engaged readers, animal-advocacy activists, and members of the general public interested in the ecological and ethical challenges of our time. Its purpose, as the author stresses, is not only to inform but to foster a space of convergence between environmentalist and animalist sensibilities.

This eco-animalist pamphlet opens with a prologue by Ruth Toledano and closes with an epilogue by Marta Tafalla, two essential voices in contemporary eco-animalist activism. Their dual presence already signals Morales's intention to situate the debate at a crossroads between, on the one hand, the empirical analysis of the structures sustaining global ecocide, and, on the other, the need to integrate the question of nonhuman animal rights as an inescapable component of any contemporary ecosocial project. To this guiding intention we must add the internal architecture of the essay, composed of eight chapters and a final section of dialogues in which thirty-four specialists associated with environmental and

animal ethics respond to five key questions posed by the author. The result is a heterogeneous and plural space where theoretical and activist perspectives converge. This structure allows the reader to engage immediately in the central issues: the instrumentalization and exploitation of nonhuman animals, the erosion of their habitats, and the urgent need to rethink our models of production.

The choice of the pamphlet as literary form is far from accidental. Javier Morales deliberately reclaims the tradition of this genre as a tool of urgency and social mobilization—a form that, rather than constraining reflection, enables the development of a rigorous discourse grounded in scientific evidence while also being direct and accessible. In this sense, its scientific dimension allows us to read the book from a solid, well-founded base, far from mere speculation: "Despite the negative connotation the word pamphlet has acquired today—closely linked to the depoliticization of society and the fading ambition to change the world—the pamphlet is a noble genre […] It is conceived to spur society into action. It is born of urgency. And from the social crisis we are living through […] it is a matter of absolute emergency" (Morales 2025: 18). From this foundation, Morales exposes the causes and consequences of ecocide resulting from our systems of production and consumption—systems both driven and suffered by humankind—that directly impact those beings who bear no responsibility for them: nonhuman animals. These animals are not only instrumentalized and exploited but also stripped of the very ecosystems that sustain them. Here we find one of the book's core aims: to close the gap between the wide range of perspectives that shape environmentalism and animalism, demonstrating that—beyond their disagreements—they share not only many objectives but also strategies and means that could converge in more harmonious ways. As the author puts it: "It is not enough to simply stop eating animals, yet at the same time it is indispensable to do so—something that environmentalism as a whole, from its largely speciesist standpoint, still fails to assume" (20).

The very title of the work already reveals the main thematic axes structuring the essay. First, the "burger" functions as a symbol of a production and consumption system that not only epitomizes the ecocide resulting from human activity, but also embodies a deeply speciesist tradition that reduces nonhuman animals to mere objects of instrumentalization and consumption. Second, the use of the verb "devour" suggests how the mass production of meat has transformed and devastated ecosystems, accelerating the destruction of biodiversity and displacing millions of species. Finally, the "world" points to the global dimension of these practices, which are not limited to a local context but constitute a central symptom of an economic and social system alienated from the rhythms that sustain the biosphere and the beings that inhabit it. Viewed from a more holistic perspective, these symptoms affect the planet as a whole—from deforestation to the depletion of essential resources, the increase in global temperatures, and the loss of habitats.

One example Javier Morales highlights is livestock farming. Drawing on George Monbiot's *Regenesis: Feeding the World without Devouring the Planet* (2022), he recalls that since 2014, the number of people suffering from chronic hunger has risen from sixty to six hundred and ninety million, despite a notable increase in global food production. One of the causes of this paradox, he notes, lies in the central role of animal agriculture (Morales 2025: 28–29). Both extensive and intensive livestock farming generate devastating consequences. As Javier Morales reminds us, according to a 2019 Greenpeace report, more than seventy percent of all agricultural land is used to feed livestock—an alarming indicator of an unsustainable production model. In the same vein, drawing again on Monbiot, he insists that a plant-based diet could reduce by about seventy percent the total surface of land devoted to agriculture and livestock farming. The magnitude of the problem becomes even clearer in FAO data: producing one kilogram of meat requires between five thousand and twenty thousand liters of water, compared to only three hundred for vegetables, six hundred for fruits, and around four thousand for legumes. The organization also attributes roughly fifteen percent of global greenhouse gas emissions to livestock farming. Nor is the situation any better in marine ecosystems: as Morales recalls, "according to a study published in *Nature*, trawl fishing alone is responsible for the release of one billion tons of carbon dioxide—the same amount emitted by the entire aviation industry" (30). Ultimately, as the author stresses, "stopping the consumption of animals should therefore be a priority for the environmental movement. Climate concerns and the preservation of biodiversity are reason enough to do so. And yet, the primary reason should lie in the animals themselves, in their suffering" (31–32).

On these grounds, Javier Morales offers an exhaustive examination of our contemporary ecosocial condition—particularly the ways in which human and nonhuman animals relate—and at the same time advocates for the creation of shared spaces where the struggles of both movements can converge. Beef, the symbol embodied in the burger, concentrates disproportionate impacts: it accounts for roughly one third of global methane emissions—a gas with a warming potential up to eighty times greater than $CO_2$—and contributes significantly to deforestation, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss. The image Javier Morales evokes is especially striking: of all mammals living on Earth, one third are humans, two thirds are livestock raised for human consumption, and less than 4% are wild (Greenspoon et al. 2023). This stark portrait reveals that food is not merely a personal act but one of the key components that articulates relations among animal species, ecosystems, and human societies. In this sense, the author emphasizes that reducing animal consumption is not only an ethical gesture but also an act of environmental and social justice.

The pamphlet does not merely expose the magnitude of the problem—it also proposes a path toward convergence and mutual understanding between these

movements. Javier Morales argues that if we truly wish to protect nonhuman animals, we must also protect their habitats, recognizing their right to live freely within the ecosystems they inhabit. Likewise, environmental movements, particularly the more conservationist ones, should recognize that a vegan diet is not only an ethical choice but also an effective conservation strategy capable of reducing pressure on land, water, and biodiversity. Conversely, animalist movements could adopt a more ecological perspective, acknowledging that justice for animals cannot be separated from the planet's health. As the author reminds us, "neither environmentalism nor animalism are monolithic blocks" (97). Hence, the notion of "ecoanimalism"—borrowed from philosopher Marta Tafalla's *Ecoanimal: Una Estética Plurisensorial, Ecologista y Animalista* (2019)—emerges as a path of understanding between these perspectives: an approach that recognizes both the individuality of animals and their belonging to interconnected ecosystems, reconciling the collective goals of environmentalism with the rights of sentient individuals.

One of the pamphlet's strengths lies in its deliberate shift of focus toward nonhuman animals and their habitats, accompanied by a marked distancing from the author's personal "I". Unlike previous works such as *El Día Que Dejé De Comer Animales* (2017), in which Javier Morales intertwined personal experience, literary narrative, and eco-ethical reflection, *The Burger That Devoured the World* places emphasis on external reality: the ecological catastrophe threatening the biosphere and the lives of the species that depend on it. The author's voice becomes a transparent vehicle through which to reveal this reality and to invite readers to act, without relying on identification with autobiographical experience. Javier Morales further enriches this approach through dialogue, manifested both in the inclusion of interviews and in the implicit conversation with authors and references associated with both movements. He poses five central questions regarding the relationship between environmentalism and animalism (98):

1. Do you consider yourself an environmentalist? Why?
2. Do you consider yourself an animalist? Why?
3. Do you think there are conflicts between the environmentalist and animalist worlds?
4. If your answer is yes, why do you think this is the case? Do you believe points of convergence are possible?
5. Are you a member of any organization?

Among the wide range of voices from different fields of knowledge, we find figures such as Núria Almirón, Leonardo Anselmi, Joaquín Araújo, Coral García Bayón, Óscar Horta, Cristina Ibáñez García, Alicia Puleo, and Jorge Riechmann, among others. This plurality of perspectives exposes both common ground and

tensions within the movements, showing that despite their divergent approaches, shared goals and principles can be harmonized toward joint action.

One of the most frequently cited issues by interviewees is the critique of anthropocentrism and the urgent need to embrace antispeciesist frameworks—ethical positions that reject any hierarchy subordinating some species to others. Yet tensions also arise: debates around so-called "invasive species" or the role of extensive livestock farming (viewed by some environmentalists as a sustainable alternative but deemed unacceptable from an antispeciesist ethic) reveal how deeply these differences shape understandings of interspecies coexistence. One of the most illuminating voices capturing the spirit of these dialogues is that of Alicia Puleo, who, from an ecofeminist perspective, offers a particularly lucid lens for understanding the rift between environmentalism and animalism while also pointing toward possible convergence. As she explains, the differences between both movements stem from theoretical as well as psychosocial factors. Whereas animalism is grounded in a sensocentric ethics that extends moral consideration to all beings capable of suffering, environmentalism often relies on ecocentric or holistic ethics that privilege the balance of ecosystems over the well-being of individuals. As Puleo writes, "In this type of holistic ethics, individuals do not matter; only the balance of the ecosystem does" (Morales 2025: 141). She warns that ecocentrism's indifference to animal suffering reproduces patriarchal and anthropocentric biases, insofar as it dismisses demands for compassion and justice toward nonhuman animals as "childish" or "sentimental". In contrast, from an ecofeminist standpoint, Puleo argues for an integration of both sensibilities—the respect for individual life and the care for planetary equilibrium. As she concludes, "the meeting points between animalism and environmentalism may begin with a basic realization: all animals, human and nonhuman alike, need a healthy ecosystem in which to live, and none of us want to suffer" (Morales 2025: 142). This notion of interdependence also resonates with Jorge Riechmann, who calls for mutual dialogue between the two visions. He maintains that environmentalists should embrace the anti-speciesist critique put forward by animalists, while animalists should adopt the systemic and holistic perspective of environmentalism. Only then, he contends, can both movements move toward "a more inclusive conception of the world" (Morales 2025: 148).

Taken together, these perspectives offer a panoramic view of the diversity and complexity that exist within both movements, from which we can discern shared conclusions as well as persistent divergences. *The Burger That Devoured the World* thus stands as both a concise and forceful response to the global ecological crisis afflicting our planet and a robust defense of nonhuman animal rights from an explicitly antispeciesist standpoint that rejects all traces of anthropocentrism. At the same time, it is also a dialogue—an invitation to continue building, as readers and as responsible individuals, a shared horizon.