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Vegetarianism and Veganism: Conflicts in Everyday Life

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Abstract

In everyday situations, the experience of being a vegetarian or a vegan occurs within a process of conflict and practices of negotiation involving decisions, refusals, consumption acts, and proximity and distance between people in their relationships, mainly including the family. Many dilemmas result from the inconsistency between theory and difficult practices to be obeyed. To understand how this phenomenon, the chapter uses the interviews with vegetarians considering different alimentary restrictions and data obtained from observation in virtual groups of vegan activists. We have conducted the research between 2015 and 2017 as part of a larger project entitled: The Social Place of Animals in Contemporaneity.

Keywords: vegetarianism, veganism, daily life, eating habits, animal rights

1. Introduction

The acts of eating and choosing the diet transcend the demand of nutrients. Though eating is a need for the living body maintenance, it is, fundamentally, a social fact that prescribes what must be eaten, and when, how much, and how.

Eating habits are cultural goods that may identify a nation, a region, a group. What ones eat translate a feeling of cultural belonging as well as communion.

In complex and fragmented societies, the identity may be related to a lifestyle, not necessarily linked to the relations of production, but related to the belonging in groups that share some elective affinity that, through consumption, communicate the corresponding worldview to others.

This chapter aims to consider about how the construction of identity based on the denial of meat consumption and on the adoption of other types of food that end up translating a lifestyle, shortly understood as a distinctive one, shared by others, and a guide to a meaningful behavior. I am specifically talking about vegetarian and vegan people and the contradictions they find in their everyday lives.

As Douglas and Isherwood [1] sustain, goods give marking services, intrusion, exclusion, and the consumption classifies and organizes the world, as part of the cultural system. According to the authors, including consumer goods, even the trivial ones, serve to this meaning, like dance and poetry. Likewise, Featherstone affirms that the consumption is fundamentally a producer of signs, despite consumer goods values of use [2].

From this perspective, I intend to comprehend the adoption of a vegetarian diet and the everyday tensions that vegetarian people, vegans and critics of this diet, despite the internal conflicts that they live at least during their basic meals on a daily basis. The thesis sustained is that this tension does not refer to only consumption

divergences, but to what consumption represents: it is about the organization and sense of the world in conflict.

The motivations of the individuals on their decisions of consumption can also be superposed. In general, studies on consumption classify three tendencies that superpose historically and we can notice in empirical studies: (1) consumption by distinction – they used to believe that consumption worked as social distinction among social classes. Lower classes used to imitate, possibly because of envy, the consumption among higher classes that used to modify their consumption so the distance remained visible. (2) hedonistic consumption – a kind of consumption in which the distinction matters less or barely nothing, since the value is the individual pleasure with no need of ostentation. (3) consumption ethically motivated – ethics above pleasure and health and, therefore, above the individual.

In this chapter, we are analyzing the motivations, conflicts and contradictions among those who adopt a vegetarian diet or a strict vegetarian one, also known as vegan. To achieve this goal, we have interviewed ten people that are self-declared vegetarian and vegan based on an open script. We have conducted most of the interviews in Cuiabá, state capital of Mato Grosso, Brazil, as well as other cities in Brazil. We have incorporated these spontaneous testimonies and informal talks to this research. We have kept the anonymity of all participants. In order to complement the analysis, we have also followed virtual group discussions. The results vouch for the existence of sociability conflicts in general, with particular reference to the family, but also reveal internal conflicts in which the individuals question their own practice, the reach of their option when it comes to animal protection or the environment and, above all, the difficulty in obtaining coherence between the theory and the practice.

2. About vegetarians

The abstinence of meat consumption and animal source foods, may it be total- or partially, is the element of some religious practices as Buddhism and Seventh-day Adventist Church [3]; there is rejection of pork by Jews and Muslims and of beef in India [4]. Others opt for a secular vegetarianism, free of religious motivations [5].

The contemporary society provided the creation, diffusion, and resignification of restrictive diets that appear regardless of a religious belonging *stricto sensu* even considering a cultural heritage that leans to the habit of eating or rejecting meat or vegetables. However, it is likely to be connected to a more wide understanding of spirituality and reconnection to nature, as seen in some new era speeches, or might as well be or not be linked to groups whose coefficient of belonging is, sometimes, subtle, as in virtual communities.

According to Whorton [5], vegetarianism has grown because of moral and social tendencies based on appropriated precepts on the mystic from the Orient, and has created a relation between the neglecting of meat consumption and the demand for peace, with a concern related to environmental crisis and the demand of body health.

As stated by Beardsworth and Keil [4], vegetarianism is sustained by the interrelation of beliefs, attitudes, and nutritional practices, and the vegetarians¹ are converted after close and critical examination of their diets until then. Therefore, their practices are the results of processes of reflection and opposition to what they have culturally received. In a similar way to the ones presented by Beardsworth and Keil, with the adoption of a specific diet, it becomes possible to see that the vegetarian diet is more related

¹ In this case, it is about people who converted themselves to vegetarianism and not those who were socialized to vegetarianism since their childhood.

to individual experiences and to wishes that have been built more reflexively from information than acceptance, either authoritative or not, from shared group codes.

Claiming to be vegetarian has a meaning that, under the risk of misinterpretation, cannot be aprioristically considered. Its meaning is given and renewed on a daily basis. Generally, vegetarianism is a staple diet that abolishes meat or the one that consists of an exclusive vegetable-based diet. Vegetarian practices are more plural and do not negatively merge in a way to avoid the consumption of specific products, but in the construction of consumption habits of other products, in the discovery and invention of new recipes that can even be inspired or imitate recipes that take meat on their preparation.

Beardsworth and Keil [4] classify six types of vegetarian diets according to a set of feeding practices that vary on a scale from lower to higher strictness. Down to the less strict side, there are those who may eventually have some meat and, in general, the white ones. The second type includes those who accept fish; in the third one are those who consume eggs, milk and other dairy products, followed by those who may have some dairy as long as they do not contain any derived product from the slaughter, such as rennet. Up to the strictest side are those who do not eat any animal products. Conforming to these authors, it is important to identify the types of vegetarian diets, but they highlight that their participation is not permanent in each of the categories. Individuals move along the scale both ways until abandoning the category.

Among those who we have interviewed, all self-declared vegetarians, none claims to consume any kind of meat, although there might be times when they suspend their diet. However, some of them declared they know people who claim to be vegetarian but eat fish or white meat. Some of them might accept eating dishes prepared with meat, others reject any contact with the animal origin, including their handling. One mentioned the discomfort of using cutlery that had previously been utilized with meat even though they had also been washed up.

One of the participants, besides being a vegetarian, claims to have a macrobiotic diet and another one claims to be vegan, and refuse to consume animal products of any source and not just regarding food. The others refuse to eat meat, but they accept eggs, milk, and other dairy products, and among these, some of them manifested against the leather and the animal testing industry, even though they still consume them.

The reactions of disgust or indifference towards meat and/or animal products and the decisions of what one puts or does not put on the plate and what one takes or does not take to their mouth taken at least three times a day and every day are different. Each one of them explains the reasons why they have joined the particular diet. None of them was raised in a vegetarian diet and they have decided to join it at their adult stage. Their reasons and their corresponding lifestyle are various, though not excluding, and they mix ethical impulses concerning animals as well as demand of health.

Their motivations differ on the rank of importance and on each one's life among the participants. It shows that even though they did not have an ethical impulse at first, they end up having it through the course of their lives and it becomes related to an essential aspect when having to justify their lifestyle. Considering the testimonies we have analyzed, the protection of animals appears as the top factor, even more than the demand of health, for either participation or maintenance of their diet. This fact is at least curious once health has become a highly valuable capital in the contemporary culture.

Fox and Ward [3] have studied the motivations that led youngsters to the conversion into vegetarianism mainly in The United Kingdom, Canada and The United States. They have noticed that the decision of a diet without meat, the fight against animal abuse and the worry with personal health are the main elements cited as encouraging, but they have also listed items related to disgust when eating meat, the association with patriarchy, their friends' beliefs, and family influence.

Concerning health, this motivation seems to preponderate among partial vegetarians, the ones who do not eat red meat or only fish or those who consume organic products. The vegetarians have been classified into two main types concerning their motivations: the “health vegetarians” and “the ethical vegetarians”; however, participants of both groups also practice lacto-ovo vegetarianism and end up, during this process, joining a semi-vegan diet.

I decided to stop eating meat because I wanted to be healthier. I have read some books about natural food that said meat would rot in our stomachs. I felt disgust and decided to stop eating meat so I would be healthier. At that time, I cut off everything, including white flour, white rice, white sugar, and soda. Gradually, I started eating some things, back to my old habits, but I could never eat meat again. I have not even tried, have I? I had not craved meat because it was still disgusting to me. After years, I started thinking about environmental and animal issues. Today, I politically defend vegetarianism and I want to become a vegan. Doing without cheese is still quite difficult though. (Woman 1).

For this participant, a young self-employed woman, and in other similar testimonies, when I asked which factor is the most important so they would keep in their diet, animal protection appeared more than demand of health, again for either participation or maintenance of their diet.

According to Lipovetsky [6], we live in a new phase of consumption that represents the society in which he calls hypermodern, among other things, as a time of medicalization of life and consumption. Health is a responsibility of social actors.

In the testimonies we have analyzed, the ethics regarding animal life is the biggest reason for those who keep being vegetarians. Two of them abandoned their vegetarian diets because of health issues and are, nowadays, omnivorous and critics of the vegetarianism they had adopted at a stage of their lives, which partially confirms Lipovetsky's diagnosis that the *homoconsumericus* is giving its place to the *homosanitas*. [6].

Once we clarify the heterogeneity of the diets within the vegetarian label and the motivations that reveal this multifaceted character of contemporaneity, we start discussing everyday conflicts due to the diet, even though we do not ignore the peacemaking feeling provided by food.

Changing food patterns has an effect on social relations, mainly the family ones, but also on friend's network; by converting into vegetarianism one can find sympathy and support or even criticism, confusion, and hostility, as attested by Beardsworth and Keil [4], who have realized, among their respondents, the contrast between acceptance and criticism. This last one appears to be more emphasized concerning parents' reactions given their children's conversion. Mothers seem to be more sympathetic and tolerant about the conversion.

The first conflict revealed in the respondents' speeches happened in their families. Besides the transformations observed in the contemporary family, the mom is traditionally the one responsible for her children's first socialization and it is about her role that the obligations to feed the family lie. It also carries her activities of affection and anxiety, once the mother is the one whose success of socialization depend on. Mothers feed their children according to a rule of society in terms of what, how, and how much to eat.

A disagreement related to this manifested learning when refusing appropriate food and the intake of other inappropriate food cause some family conflicts. This is precisely what we see in the relations between a vegetarian and a non-vegetarian family. This individual becomes a disruptive element of family tradition, of union during meals and communion of values. The refusal of the shared dish is seen as a refusal of ideas as well as the family's worldview.

Beardsworth and Keil [4] affirm that as vegetarianism can involve a rejection of the food that parents offer, such practice can be understood as rejection to their own parents. According to these authors, several family occasions are turned into tension occasions, and the most critical one is Christmas, given the importance of this celebration for the maintenance of the family identity. The tension exists either when vegetarians visit their families or when relatives visit vegetarian families. Furthermore, the situations of conflict are less common when one member of the couple is vegetarian; they also observe that vegetarian couples tend to hold on to each other against the rest of the family.

Two of the participants, declared as middle-class ones, mentioned Christmas specifically and spontaneously when questioned about situations of conflict. One of them, a woman, said she feels a bit excluded of this festivity, when she would never share the main course, even though she had a very strong participation in the arrangements of the party, with typical abundance and exaggeration promoted by her mother. The other one, a man, said he would starve in these occasions for meat would be in every single dish, even in the salads. During the Holy Week, it would not be different because the only dish was the “*bacalhoad*,” a codfish dish popularly consumed at this time of the year.

As he cannot cook, the others would commit him to their choices, which did not consider his restriction. The decision of not sharing the so-called appropriate dish may become a non-sharing of habits, ideas, and worldviews. Likewise, the refusal of an offered dish might be read as insubordination to rules of family relationship.

As an example, we have the testimony of a woman, omnivorous, 45 years old. Her only child has become a vegetarian at the age of 20, influenced by friends. She confirmed she did not understand her motivations and feared for her health. Through the testimony, which she participated spontaneously when aware of this research, she mentioned several situations of arguments and fights. She claimed to feel rejected by her kid's rejection of her motherly food. By refusing not eating a dish prepared by her, she used to feel rejected affectionately and the non-consumption tended to become non-affection.

Mauss [7], when studying human transactions through the analysis of ethnographical exchanges in Polynesia, Melanesia, and the American Northwest, realizes that the gift-exchange demands three obligations: giving, important for building reputation; receiving; and reciprocating. In this sense, we can conclude that giving is a fundamental social action for gratitude and, hence, receiving prestige. Receiving would mean a representative action of acceptance of an alliance, while the refusal would mean an affront.

This idea contributes to understanding the feeling of a mother when her child refuses her food for feeling offended by the offer of meat, which represents indifference regarding ideological option. This is all about linguistic incompetence.

Beyond the family situation, conflicts rise in other sociability loci, mainly when the imagination of omnivorous people of what vegetarian people should be is not compatible with the actual practice.

The stereotype of vegetarian people pictures individuals linked to alternative movements, intention to become healthier, eastern religions, concerns about nature and animals above all, according to the participants in this research. Linguistic incompatibilities lie on face-to-face relations, when one presumes the other one is not a vegetarian and, by acknowledging their food choice, one presumes the ideal type of a vegetarian.

One of the participants, a former vegetarian, affirms that “vegetarian people must eat only vegetables” and her sister-in-law is “this big” (she says making hand gestures meaning overweight or obesity) and only eats “pasta and cheese.” When I asked about her sister-in-law's motivation, this participant affirms she is an advocate of animal causes. In this case, it becomes possible to realize the trouble there is between

motivation and expectation of how vegetarians should actually be when seen by others. When imperatively affirming, “Vegetarians must eat vegetables” it is possible to see the attempt to establish the other’s consumptions based on what they expect or imagine. It is, thus, the imposition, or effort, of some sort of consumption. There is an idea of an appropriate consumption of a specific social category and they assume that that category consumes, as premises of subjective and identity construction, specific products and specific bodies that are considered validators of this very category.

In another testimony, a 21-year-old vegetarian woman tells:

Well, if you really want to know, people always want to tell me what to or not to eat. Besides the usual campaigns for me to eat meat, I remember one trip when I ate one of those cakes made of black-eyed beans. I asked many times if there were not any animal products and chose the fried one. We were able to choose between the fried or the baked one. I chose the fried one, without filling, because it was a shrimp filling. Next to me, a woman started laughing, saying... hahaha she is a vegetarian and eats the fried cake – I do not remember its name – hahaha. She found it absurd that I was eating something fried and being a vegetarian. The oil where she fried the cake was a vegetable one. It drives me crazy. I used to smoke cigarettes and people kept telling me: why, you say – even though they kept telling me I claimed to be vegetarian and was not vegetarian – then, you say you are a vegetarian and smoke? I would not eat the cigarettes and it was made of vegetables. People thought I had to be green and healthy. I just felt like not eating meat. (Woman 2)

Therefore, this claimed identity clashes with a kind of mental construction of a stereotyped individual of normative behavior. There is this prescriptive idea of how someone must be and what a vegetarian must consume as mentioned above: “Vegetarians must eat vegetables” or “She says she is a vegetarian, but she only eats cheese and pasta.” The obese body, smoking habits and not so healthy food habits affront the expectations of what a vegetarian should look like.

I was at a restaurant with someone who eats meat and we ordered a cheese skewer for me and a meat skewer for the person who was with me. As a side dish for the meat skewer, there was rice and cassava. I asked the waiter to bring the rice on the side so the meat gravy would not dirty the rice and we both were sharing this one. He said the meat would not come with gravy. I said I knew it, but I still would like it on the side, just in case. He said there was no gravy with the meat. It was hard convincing him that it happens that meat, with no gravy, still has its juice when resting, this juice would dirty the rice, and then I would not be able to eat it. He said that eating rice and cheese made no sense to him. (Woman 3)

Ideas of pollution only make sense when in Ref. to a total structure of thought, according to Douglas [1]. As for the waiter cited in the testimony, the meat would not dirty the rice given the idea the meat was clean. On the other hand, according to the woman, the meat was a pollution agent when it touched the rice. Intuitively, the waiter realizes the symbolic character of food by demanding the sense of matching cheese and rice. This sense is only understood in a cultural system, for its foundation is not on reason, which is something even more complex in a multifaceted contemporary society.

Attempts to explain it are not enough and they are countless. Explanations do not serve as an interpretation because they are not coherent or comprehensive. Douglas demonstrates that the “abominations” of Leviticus refer to ambiguities, that is to say, the abominations lie on what challenges a socially built logic. Everything that is not in accordance with the structure of classification in the culture in question is considered ambiguous or anomalous and, as these, unclean.

I have had a very unpleasant situation. My daughter and I are vegetarians. My daughter, a child, went to a friend's house, they were making barbecue, and my daughter explained them that she does not eat meat. Her friend's father said she could help herself with some grass from the yard. She got very sad and I found the father's comment was quite offensive. I swore that when his daughter would come to my place, I would offer my dog for her to eat, since she could not do without meat. (Woman 4).

The intention is to offend what is different. It is clear that that man, by offering some grass from the yard, is animalizing the other. The mother hypothetically revenges the situation when she suggests the offer of her dog as food. A vegetarian does not eat grass and an omnivorous will not eat a pet dog. Everyone knows that, but they use these allegations and offers with the only purpose of offending others. It maintains and reinvigorates the belief in superiority of options on which the identity is built.

However, it is important to underline that the identity, in this perspective, is built almost as experimentally. Individuals start conceiving and noticing how far they might go, and what brings them satisfaction, in terms of craving, and not need, when they face multiple restrictions, choices, learning about new dishes, new restaurants, points of sale, recipes, relapses, and new restrictions.

For me, becoming a vegetarian was part of a long process. I have been a vegetarian for ten years. I have been defining myself as a vegetarian all this time, but actually, I believe I am more vegetarian now than back then, if I can say that. Well, I am lacto-ovo vegetarian and I have already been questioned about the fact that I say I am a vegetarian. I answer that it is, like, an abbreviation of my eating habit: the ovo-lacto vegetarianism. As I said, I used to eat feijoada (a typical Brazilian dish made of black beans, pork sausages and other cuts of pork). I used to take out the meat and eat the beans. When it was meat and potatoes, I used to eat the potatoes. Not today, I do not even try it if they were cooked together. I look at it as if I were looking at a shoe, a chair. It is an object and not food. In my opinion, food is something else. (Woman 2)

In contrast, there are those who have tried assorted diets, macrobiotic and vegetarian ones, and then returned to their omnivorous diet, even if this one was not the same way they were raised. That demonstrates the construction of omnivorous individuals is equally processual and reflexive, although it may seem natural in different speeches.

This multiplicity of comings and goings-away and dietary, gustatory, and social experiences mark individual biographies, which constitutes kaleidoscopic individuals. Dietary values are worth as an allegation, they just have rhetorical value, given the option one ingests or loathes, as they do not base food on nutrients, but a tangle of mental constructions, social representations, and personal idiosyncrasies.

The abominations of certain food can justify the protection of the body, though the adjacent objective is the maintenance of the social organism. Consequently, dietary rules extrapolate their practical aspect and are part of a symbolic system where there is a dispute of advantages and disadvantages of diets based, recurrently, on the three most popular cultural authorities: religiosity, nature and science.

2.1 Religiosity

The analysis conducted by Douglas [1] shows that behind an apparent rationality of Jewish dietary rules, there is a complex symbolic system and it demonstrates that human acts are influenced by a lot of things beyond rationality and medical criteria, which helps us realize that food does not just feed, but it is part of the establishment of identities. Besides this allegation of the humanity omnivorous nature, vegetarians are asked about the religious prescription that advocates that God created animals for human consumption:

This is one of the most annoying topics. People come to me and tell me I must eat meat because God said so. I reply, so what? I am not killing an innocent animal because God or the devil said so. Then they call me atheist, as if it were a flaw. The curious thing is, I remember now, is that that astonished woman who told me that was a divorcée. Does God approve the divorce? People follow God, the bible, or the law according to what is convenient and they think they have the right to criticize who decides to live by other principles. (Man 1)

Coherence is being demanded in this example. A religious individual should, according to this testimony, follow all biblical principles, including the one regarding marriage and the ingestion of meat as well as other demands. Such coherence does not exist for innumerable historical reasons that restrict the way of appropriating the testaments. On the contrary, vegetarians are charged for their coherence as well. If they defend animal rights, the opponents of the vegetarian diet discuss that one must refuse products tested on animals, including vaccines, and to the extreme living with animals considered plagues in cultivations given the impossibility of the use of pesticides and also a stimulated conviviality between predators and preys.

Even though they demand logic, neither vegetarians nor defenders of meat consumption practice it, because both deprive on the consumption of certain species or specific situations completely irrationally.

2.2 Nature

Vegetarians question the culture where they were born, but they also question the humanity omnivorous nature. All vegetarians said they had heard being omnivorous is part of the human nature. In this sense, vegetarians act against their own nature. By proposing respect to animals, vegetarians are accused of not respecting their own species and disregard all human evolution history.

What is not visible in this debate, though it is implicit, is that the man-nature relation is historic and subject to transformations, as Keith Thomas [8] demonstrates in his study on man's relationship to plants and animals in England 1500-1800, a period with substantial changes. According to the author, man used to live in a hostile environment and it would be anachronistic to think of cruelty towards animals in a situation that imposed the need to fight to conquer and control the world.

Nowadays, we can see changes in the way to think about nature, which is a symbolic construction, and there are various alternative proposals to interact with it. One of the conflicts on what the natural world is can be observed in the context of eating. Vegetarianism, in the sense adopted in the testimonies, can be an example.

2.3 Science

The search for coherence finds in science, or in its jargon, an allegation to defend its options. Both vegetarians and the ones against vegetarians appeal scientific allegations. The discussion is, mainly and recurrently, according to testimonies, about the genetic tendency to vegetarian or omnivorous diets, about the risk of lack and excess of proteins. Within this subject, it all comes to health, a highly valued capital in contemporaneity:

I hate it when people tell me how I replace proteins. I do not eat proteins, vitamins, carbo or other scientific names. I eat food. Then they tell me it is not healthy, but I am not worried with my health, I am worried about animals' health. (Man 2)

If rationality is not the only thing that build an eating habit, some scientific allegations, or science-like allegations, despite the popularity they use from media,

do not seem to be enough to change someone's diet, even though doctor's prescription cause some effect on people with heart issues, diabetes, obesity, and others, when they follow some specific dietary prescriptions. Omnivorous and vegetarians discuss about jawbone shape, presence or lack of proteins, length of intestine, among other topics involving scientific terms as a resource of persuasion.

In the dispute about which one is the best, vegetarians and omnivorous individuals appeal to religion, nature, and science to defend their consumption, but what really seems to be at stake is the system of cultural relevance.

3. About vegans

In the world today, we watch the interdiction of all types of animals' meat for reasons of beliefs and health, ethical motivations, and environmental concerns. They question or neglect an alleged humanity omnivorous nature, as discussed in the previous topic, and for these reasons, I highlight the abolitionist vegan aspect. As mentioned, the total or partial restraint of meat can be religious, secular, based on ethical principles, nutritional beliefs, which they defend according to some more or less irrational allegations.

Resuming the classification by Beardsworth and Keil [4], there are six general types of vegetarian diets, which are not fixed, so they can transit among them both ways, from the most rigorous to the least rigorous one and vice-versa. In this most radical diet, there are the strict vegetarians, as vegans are called, one of the groups that compose this subchapter.

Eating vegetables exclusively is the main element that compose the vegan diet, but this one is not only restricted to eating.

Despite many reasons for not ingesting meat, what really motivates veganism is the conception that its followers have about non-human animals. In synthesis, they have the conviction that these are animals with sentience, they are able to feel pain and suffering and have their own interests, and there is no distinction between them and humans that justifies their exploration, slavery, torture, and slaughter.

The conception of humanity and animality is not fixed and not natural among times and cultures. Thomas [8], for example, recalls the creation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in 1824, in England. This society still exists, now with the addition of the distinctive term Royal to its name, a gift from Queen Victoria. In this same country, in 1944, Donald Watson founded a society against animal exploitation: The Vegan Society.

It is important to emphasize the existence of simultaneous values: the man of science of the industrial era, based on Cartesian allegations, justified animal exploitation for they believe they were just automata. However, Thomas [8] highlights the affection that animals start to enjoy and that today we qualify as companion animals or pets. The societies of protection are born in England, in a country where gaming was one of the most refined sports.

Back to the field of science, even though and despite all questions raised by scientists, including Charles Darwin, who lists man in the animal category, the anthropocentric border remains, and only some of them see the approximation with animals, mainly the mammals or those who have conquered some human affection. In this case, scientific allegations – the strongest ones – end up submitted to relations of affection.

Along with various social moments and with the aid of different scientific signatures, the human supremacy goes under a new review and Richard Ryder [9] coins the term speciesism, in 1970, to mean an asymmetry between humans and other animals.

In this point of view, the so-called speciesism is exactly analogous to racism and sexism, that also describe man supremacy (qualified as masculine, white,

European, and western) above all the rest. Nevertheless, this term raised controversies among antiracist and feminist movements about the analogy experienced by the explored ones. After all, is talking about holocaust of cows in slaughterhouses the same as talking about The Jewish Holocaust? Is the slavery imposed to Africans lived similarly as the confinement of animals? Can milking cows and factory-farm chickens be compared to sexist relations lived by women?

For some, the analogy between speciesism and other liberation movements is viable and enriches everyone in terms of power and voice; for others, the comparison is exaggerated. It seems that feminist ecology has more sympathy to movements related to animal rights, because females are exactly the most explored ones by the industry: for milk, eggs, frequent pregnancies, rape, etc., which draws more empathy in women.

Two authors, among others, appear in the discussion about animal rights. The philosopher Peter Singer [10] claims that animals are sentient and have their own interests and it is not ethical using them for human interests. Tom Regan [11], in the field of law, questions the use of arbitrary weights and measures compared to a distinctive treatment among species, for there would be no difference between the humanity and the rest of the living beings that would rationally justify a pending scale.

The discussion proceeds towards an endless path, walking from the real desire about having a rigorous anti-speciesism attitude; finding yourself deciding whether you are going to take your son to vaccination or not, because it has been tested in animals; giving dog food made with animal by-product to a dog that has been rescued from the street; or willingly or unwillingly killing an ant. The animal rights movement divided itself mainly in these parts: (1) Abolitionists: Contrary to any type of dominance of an animal of any species. Abolitionists believe that all types of interspecific relations will end up being asymmetric and so, instead of abolishing the exploitation. For that, they defend the abolishment of any relation, including with pets and they are, despite the coherence of their speech, impracticable in every single way; (2) Welfarists: They carry the flag of better life conditions for animals, including revivifications in the field of law. For instance, welfarists are favorable to a more human cattle farming, even if it comes to beef cattle. In general, activists that are more radical criticize them and accuse them to defend only the animal welfare for the benefits they can obtain from these practices, like havening more tender meat; (3) Protectors or rescuers: they are not necessarily against beef cattle farming and not against consumption of meat, but they offer temporary or permanent shelter to species elected in terms of affection, specially feral cats and street dogs, but occasionally they also manifest against animals used to pull wagons, tortoises, guinea pigs, and others that, for a given reason, moves someone.

We have generally described the broad terms of these animal right movements, each one their own way, that fight for animals, which are incapable of fighting for their own cause.

At this point, we understand some subdivisions of the movement, because there are people who claim to be vegans, and have a restrict action to the boycott of meat consumption or clothing industry, and are less rigorous about animal products in general. Others get more directly involved in political causes; they free animals from captivity; and actively intervene for changes in the law related to animal rights, among other manifestations. However, in the case of consumption and lifestyle, the fundamental terms of this discussion, we can affirm that an ideal-typical vegan: (a) Refuses to ingest animals and animal products like meat, eggs, milk, honey, and gelatin desserts. (b) Refuse to consume clothes, accessories, and shoes made of animal products. (c) Refuse to consume health, hygiene, and esthetic products tested on animals. (d) Oppose to vivisection as a pedagogical practice at universities. (e) Oppose to the use of animals in scientific researches. (f) Oppose to entertainments that use animals, like rodeos, circuses.

Although the outlines of what a vegan “must be” are clear, the everyday life comes with surprises, from food for your pet, taking your kid to vaccination, being or not being a new target of companies that produce animal products. After all, would it be illicit for a vegan to consume a vegetable burger produced by a famous company that makes lots of profit producing other burgers made from the slaughter of cattle and chicken? The companies are interested in catching vegans, but that is when they should watch what they say. Deciding what to put in a shopping cart becomes an ethical dilemma; deciding whether adopting or buying a pet; offering or not offering vegetables to carnivorous pets in apartments; demanding or not demanding children to follow a vegan diet and restrict their socialization in children’s parties. At last, the idea is coherent and of easy understanding, but the difficulties to practice it vigorously are much more difficult and what one lives with it, at the end, is the biggest possible coherence in a world of incoherence and inequality.

4. Conclusions

The results of this research show that the option for vegetarianism or veganism finds resistance and it is subject to everyday embarrassments; nevertheless, despite the divisive role played by vegetarians and vegans in rituals surrounding eating, sociality prevails. Through the data, we realize that the negotiation, the refusal, and the acceptance of varied diets help understand the complexity this decentered society today, which favors the dilemma of individual choices, elaborated by available information and social life embarrassments, whose patterns are fragile. In the intertwining of these vectors, the options for consumption as well as the refusal of consumption provide social roles, communicate social places, and favor the reflection about the contemporary society and its multiplicity.

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