

**VEGANISM IS NOT A DIET: DISCURSIVE AND PRATICAL DISPUTES ABOUT
RELATIONTSHIPS BETWEEN VARIOS HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN ANIMALS,
MAPPED IN ONLINE DEBATES**

***VEGANISMO NÃO É DIETA: DISPUTAS DISCURSIVAS E PRÁTICAS SOBRE
RELAÇÕES ENTRE DIVERSOS ANIMAIS HUMANOS E NÃO HUMANOS,
MAPEADOS EM DEBATES ONLINE***

***EL VEGANISMO NO ES UNA DIETA: DISPUTAS DISCURSIVAS Y PRÁCTICAS
SOBRE LAS RELACIONES ENTRE DIVERSOS ANIMALES HUMANOS Y NO
HUMANOS, MAPEADAS EN DEBATES ON LINE***



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How to reference this paper:

CERQUEIRA, R. de M. S. Veganism is not a diet: Discursive and practical disputes about relationships between varios human and non-human animals, mapped in online debates. **Rev. Cadernos de Campo**, Araraquara, v. 23, n. esp. 1, e023010. e-ISSN: 2359-2419. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47284/cdc.v23iesp.1.16900>



| **Submitted:** 04/07/2022
| **Revisions required:** 06/02/2023
| **Approved:** 08/03/2023
| **Published:** 23/08/2023

Editors: Prof. Dr. Maria Teresa Miceli Kerbauy
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ABSTRACT: This article addresses the theme of veganism and the disputes surrounding its meaning and practices, as mobilized through debates in forums of Facebook social groups. The objective is to reflect on the conflicts that cut across the discussions concerning vegan animal ethics, mapping discursive disputes about whether consumption practices, human-animal relationships, and even political agendas align with veganism. Through the observation of these conflicts, a vital expression is identified that leads to the conclusion that the relationships between humans and human-animals need to be interpreted from perspectives that account for the various inequalities at play. Furthermore, two antagonistic tendencies are identified within the Brazilian vegan community, both in terms of boycott and consumption promotion strategies and in relation to the approach to human-animal conflicts.

KEYWORDS: Veganism. Human-animal relations. Consumption.

RESUMO: *No presente artigo, é abordado a temática do veganismo e as disputas em torno do seu significado e práticas, mobilizadas através de debates em fóruns de grupos da rede social Facebook. O objetivo consiste em refletir sobre os conflitos que atravessam os debates em torno da ética animalista vegana, mapeando disputas discursivas acerca de quais práticas de consumo, relações humano-animais e mesmo pautas políticas que se coadunam com veganismo ou não. A partir da observação desses conflitos, é identificado uma expressão importante que aparece nos debates, e que encaminha para a conclusão de que as relações entre humanos e humano-animais precisam ser interpretadas a partir de recortes que deem conta das diversas desigualdades em jogo. Além disso, identificamos duas tendências antagônicas que se desenham no meio vegano brasileiro, tanto no que se refere às estratégias de boicote e promoção ao consumo, quanto no que se refere à abordagem dos conflitos humano-animais.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Veganismo. Relação humano animal. Consumo.*

RESUMEN: *En este artículo, discuto el tema del veganismo y las disputas en torno a su significado y prácticas, movilizadas a través de debates en foros de grupos en la red social Facebook. El objetivo es reflexionar sobre los conflictos que atraviesan los debates en torno a lo que llamaré ética animalista vegana, mapeando disputas discursivas sobre qué prácticas de consumo, relaciones humano-animal e incluso lineamientos políticos son o no congruentes con el veganismo. A partir de la observación de estos conflictos, identifico una expresión importante que aparece en los debates y que lleva a la conclusión de que las relaciones entre humanos y humanos-animales necesitan ser interpretadas desde perspectivas que den cuenta de las diversas desigualdades en juego. Además, identifico dos tendencias antagónicas que emergen en el ambiente vegano brasileño, tanto en lo que respecta a las estrategias de boicot y promoción del consumo, como en lo que respecta al abordaje de los conflictos humano-animal.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Veganismo. Relación humano-animal. Consumo.*

Introduction

This article addresses the theme of veganism and the controversies surrounding its meaning and practices to promote reflection on the conflicts that pervade discussions about what is referred to as vegan² animalist ethics. In this context, animalist ethics is understood as the principle of acting while considering the interests of animals of other species, including humans. This ethic finds application in the practice of veganism, which essentially involves abstaining from consuming food and products derived from animals and avoiding the use of clothing, cosmetics, and even entertainment associated with them, such as zoos, circuses, and rodeos.

It can be affirmed that veganism rests upon widely recognized foundations by a significant portion of its followers and scholars of animal rights theory. Various works within the scope of Brazilian Social Sciences (CERQUEIRA, 2017; FERRIGNO, 2012; LIRA, 2013; PERROTA, 2015) indicate the following fundamental references that shape vegan animalist ethics:

I- The recognition of sentience, which is the capacity that all animal organisms possess to experience pain, physical and psychological suffering, pleasure, and satisfaction (SINGER, 2004). This recognition was more recently validated in 2012 when scientist Phillip Low drafted the *Declaração de Cambridge sobre a Consciência em Animais Humanos e Não Humanos*³, a document reviewed and endorsed by a group of collaborating neuroscientists. Perrota (2015) highlighted that animal rights activists use the declaration above as an approach to bridge the cognitive proximity between human and non-human animals, thus seeking to secure rights for the latter.

II- The conception that animals are subject to arbitrary discrimination based on species, known as *speciesism*, in which belonging to a species grants humans the right to subjugate, exploit, and treat non-human animals as objects. The term *speciesism* was coined in the 1970s by psychologist Rychard D. Ryder (1975) and pertains to the differentiation of values among individuals based on species differences. Peter Singer introduces the concept in his book

² The article results from research conducted for the dissertation, “Veganismo não é dieta: Alteridade e conflitos na ética animalista vegana”, defended in 2017 at the PPGA/UFF.

³ Available at: <http://www.labea.ufpr.br/portal/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Declara%C3%A7%C3%A3o-de-Cambridge-sobre-Consci%C3%Aancia-Animal.pdf>, accessed on: 2 Nov. 2020. The original text was not found on the conference website. However, the translation can be readily found on various websites.

Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement (1975), drawing an analogy to racism and sexism. In other words, speciesism justifies unequal and violent practices based on an arbitrarily considered natural characteristic, often employing arguments drawn from contemporary sciences and religious traditions, notably Judeo-Christian traditions.

III- The adoption, at least partially, of the concept of the *subject of a life*, formulated by Tom Regan (2006). In this concept, the author employs the idea of the inherent value of living beings, specifically from the animal kingdom, advocating for rights to the lives of non-human animals. This sets him apart from Singer's debate, which is more grounded in the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham's tradition. While Singer argues that non-human animals should be incorporated into the moral community in terms of equality, this inclusion is based on evaluating the consequences of actions for this community, aiming to maximize positive outcomes for the most significant number of its members while minimizing harm inflicted upon them⁴.

IV- The critique of the property status imposed upon non-human animals, treating them as objects owned by humans and conferring upon them a commodity level in legal, moral, economic, and political terms. According to Francione (2015), the aspect of animals as property is almost always the primary component in resolving conflicts between humans and animals. Even if the property status is not explicitly stated, in nearly all cases where human and animal interests clash, the human prevails due to the right to exercise control over their property. The dispute's winner is predetermined by how the conflict is approached from the outset. This line of reasoning parallels human slavery as a reference point. If we consider the logic that positions an enslaved person as the property of another, they become a commodity, an interchangeable object with an owner. Following this argumentation, the author concludes that the appropriate course is to pursue the abolition of animal exploitation.

V- The distinction between animal abolitionism and welfareism. Not all individuals advocating for animal rights interpret this effort as a quest for rights or liberation from human use. An example is Law No. 9.605/98, Section I, Article 32, which states, "To practice an act

⁴ Lira (2013) argues that in her research with vegans, she identified the adoption of the concept of sentience, elaborated by Singer (1975), combined with the notion of a subject of life by Regan (2006), at least in terms of discourses, rooted in the idea of animal abolitionism.

of abuse, mistreat, injure, or mutilate wild, domestic, or tamed animals, native or exotic"⁵. In this sense, when acts of cruelty and abuse occur, the approach to animal advocacy would be to regulate animal use based on some moral consensus (by whom?) or to reduce the pain and suffering of animals in captivity, preferably with scientific support. This tendency is known as *animal welfare (welfarism)* and is adopted by certain animal advocates and biomedical and animal health professionals, as well as in general legislation and specific regulations related to the use of animals in laboratories and slaughterhouses, for example. In the broader context of veganism, there is opposition to this approach to interspecies interactions.

Perrota (2021) highlights that the "animal rights" movement, which aligns with the practice of veganism, stems from a critique of Cartesian thought that partially underpins the notion of humanity in the modern West. Descartes is questioned for his view that considers the person as a metaphysical entity that establishes reason as the defining criterion of the subject. Such a paradigm sees non-human animals as bodies lacking human attributes, especially reason, and therefore excludes them from humanity and the moral community, using them as a contrast to affirm human qualities (INGOLD, 1994).

According to the author, advocates for non-human animals challenge the extreme segregation between humans and animals, recognizing sensitive and conscious characteristics in other species. The paradigm invoked to contest human exclusivity regarding rights is the cognitive one, recently introduced by neuroscience, in which intelligence is evaluated by studying the brain as an organ instead of Cartesian metaphysics. In this paradigm, the cognitive distinction between humans and animals of other species would be more a matter of degree than two separate ontologies.

However, Perrota (2015) asserts that the Cartesian paradigm is only partially rejected in excluding other species. Advocates and vegans will engage in a dialogue with the cognitive paradigm, reaffirming the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy and the metaphysical idea of a specific animal ontology, extending to other species that Descartes had exclusively attributed to humans.

Based on these premises, especially within animal abolitionism, veganism emerges as an applied ethic that aims to eradicate animal exploitation in consumption habits. However, the debate about veganism does not conclude at this point. Its implementation gives rise to conflicts, tensions, and negotiations, as observed by Vilela (2017). The highlighted issue is that veganism

⁵ Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/19605.htm. Accessed in: 20 Mar. 2023

is not confined solely to the realm of consumption and remains in constant contention regarding its meaning and the practices that are or aren't aligned with it.

Drawing upon Malinowski's terms, what has been said thus far reveals only the "skeleton" of veganism, a definition in broad terms. The incorporation and observation of individuals applying veganism in their lives – reflecting upon and discussing their practices, whether in person or online – their participation in the various imponderable spaces of daily life – such as conflicts, divergences, difficulties, as well as possible convergences – is what constitutes its "flesh" and "blood," that is, veganism being mobilized and lived by people with its contradictions, negotiations, conflicts, and orders.

There are contentious issues within the vegan community: how individuals and institutions (NGOs, social movements, and businesses) appropriate veganism and aim to assert and justify their practices as vegan. Moreover, what qualifies whether a product, company, or mode of production is consistent with veganism?

Perrota (2015; 2021) examines how the animal rights movement is influenced by the repertoire of human rights, seeking to extend these rights to include non-human animals. This aims to incorporate them into the moral community based on the approaches discussed earlier in this text (animal liberation, subject of a life, animal abolitionism, and the term speciesism in analogy with sexism and racism). Given that veganism thus engages in a dialogue with the historical trajectory of human rights, the question arises: what conception or conceptions of humanity are invoked regarding animal rights and veganism? How does veganism relate to political perspectives emphasizing class, race, and gender?

The data initially evidenced in this article were obtained from groups on the social network Facebook in 2016 as part of the author's research for the dissertation. Subsequently, unfolding the addressed conflicts that led to the establishment of a new vegan organization in Brazil, the Vegan Union of Activism (UVA), will be described. This information was gathered from accounts provided by two of its founders, their official website⁶, and the organization's social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook).

It's important to note that the choice to use the social network as an initial research source was influenced by the dynamics of the field itself. Despite the existence of in-person spaces like vegan fairs and even the now-defunct "Sopão Vegano" in Rio de Janeiro, forums on

⁶ Available at: uniaovegana.org. Accessed in: 10 dec. 2022.

Facebook stood out as privileged spaces for information exchange, debates, and conflicts, even shaping the topics discussed in the in-person sphere.

Research Methodology in Facebook Groups

The groups within Facebook serve as forums where individuals debate posts that include links to images, videos, texts, or inquiries, as well as other content created by the individuals making the posts. These spaces lead to conflicts and divergences among adherents of veganism regarding what truly characterizes veganism and its scope. Furthermore, these forums can give rise to qualitative debates that provide assistance to individuals and have the capacity to establish momentary alliances or, conversely, ruptures.

The data were mapped into discussion topics within various veganism-related groups on the Facebook social media platform. The groups selected for this purpose were: *Veganismo Social – Discussões Interseccionais*, *Trolls Veganos*, *Troll Ajuda*, *Veganismo Libertário*, *Veganismo Popular*⁷. In the Facebook above groups, contacts were established with over 40 individuals in debates about various topics addressed throughout the dissertation. The presentation of images, and names of individuals, companies, NGOs, and brands, has been omitted, as there was neither intention nor relevance to disclose these names. The research focus was consistently directed toward the content of dialogues, debates, and exchanges that occurred in the groups of the aforementioned digital platform related to the subject matter.

Therefore, to remove the personal identification of interlocutors and extract the maximum from the contents of the texts, the names of individuals were replaced with animal characters from the "*jogo do bicho*" (a Brazilian gambling game based on animals). Social scientists often replace the names of their interlocutors in various works to preserve privacy. In this case, the animals from the "*jogo do bicho*" were used as an aesthetic provocation that engages with the article's theme. The naming was chosen randomly. The names of product brands were also omitted, with only a brief description of them provided within parentheses.

It is crucial to contextualize that the online spaces addressed here fall within the definition of "digital," as proposed by Padilha and Facioli (2018) regarding social practices relevant to theory and sociological research. Such methods encompass actions involving both humans and non-humans, with a significant influence on social interactions. Furthermore, such

⁷ The name of these groups in English would be, respectively: Social Veganism - Intersectional Discussions, Vegan Trolls, Troll Help, Libertarian Veganism, and Popular Veganism.

platforms shape social interactions among people who may be geographically distant. Social networks simultaneously empower and are influenced by social relationships (SANTOS, 2022).

The opinions expressed in such forums are accessible to all individuals participating in these groups so that they do not constitute information of an intimate personal nature that could immediately expose individuals without their anonymity and reveal aspects of their private lives.

Furthermore, concerning the presentation of transcriptions, it was necessary to conceive an approach that somehow reproduced the structure of response sequences on the pages of Facebook groups. On this social network, when someone replies to a topic posted in the group, someone can respond directly to each response given to the reference topic. To ensure that the reading of transcriptions was coherent, the level of indentation was increased when dealing with an answer that is a reaction to another response. For example:

The text whose response refers to the main topic was indented like this.

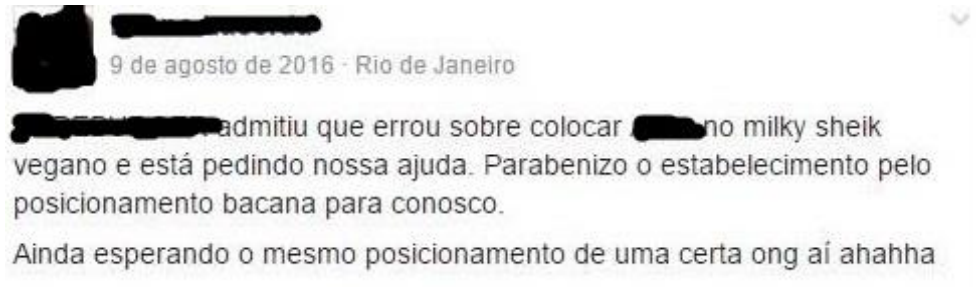
The text debating with the above answer was indented like this.

To follow the discussion, excerpts were taken directly from the groups on the mentioned social network, with appropriate editing. The images of the topic will be presented, followed by the debates between interlocutors using the formatting described above.

The Conflict at Hand: Is It Vegan or Not?

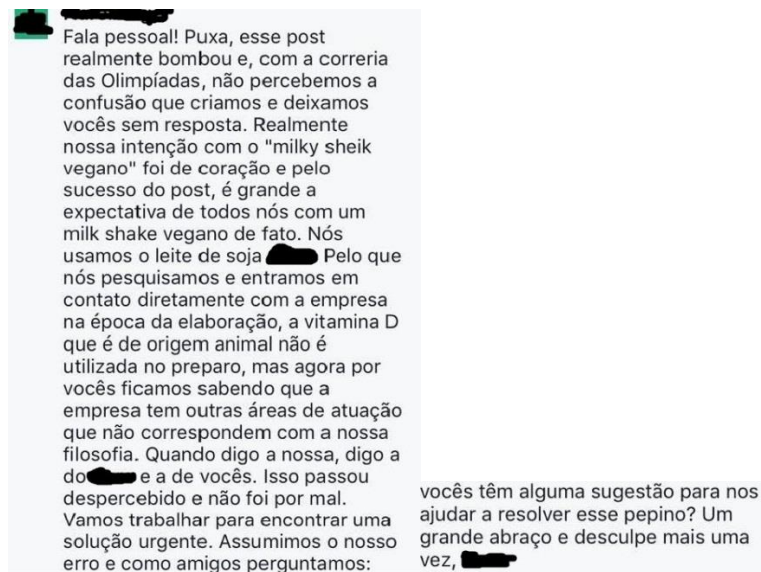
A significant portion of conflicts and debates among individuals adhering to veganism, or even those aspiring to adopt such a practice, revolves around the question of what can genuinely be considered vegan or not—a controversy that sometimes intertwines with the very delineation of the veganism concept. What might initially appear evident—whether products are devoid of animal-derived ingredients and have undergone animal testing or not—frequently becomes a subject of discussion. The actual characterization of the compliance of a consumption practice or a commercially marketed product with veganism principles often lies amidst debates, constant vigilance, and contentions.

Figure 1 – Plant-based milk polemic



Source: Taken from a Facebook group.

Figures 2 and 3 - The company's response to the polemic



Source: It was taken from the same post on the mentioned social network.

In the previously mentioned post, we observe yet another branch of the conflict related to the definition of what is vegan compared to strict vegetarianism. The discussion arose from complaints on the page of a restaurant network in Rio de Janeiro that offers Lacto-vegetarian and vegan options or strictly vegetarian options. The debate was triggered by the announcement of a vegan milkshake that used soy milk as a base, raising questions for at least two reasons: the presence of animal-derived vitamin D in the composition of this milk and its origin as a product from a company that conducts animal testing. Therefore, soy milk could not be considered vegan or strictly vegetarian for some vegans. Additionally, as evidenced in the debate, if the product contains any animal-derived component, it cannot be classified as vegan. In the case of the company conducting animal testing, it could be classified as strictly vegetarian (i.e., composed solely of plant-based ingredients) but would not align with the principles of

veganism. The discussion also addressed the decision not to consume products from animal testing companies.

Interlocutor Goat - The problem with (the rice milk brand) is the high-cost price. An alternative could be (a soy-based dairy brand), which isn't vegan, but from what I've seen, it's strictly vegetarian, or they could manufacture their own.

Interlocutor Bull - (a soy-based dairy brand) is fine; the only issue is that it's from a company that exploits thousands of animals annually.

Interlocutor Donkey - (Soy-based dairy brand) belongs to (dairy company), which belongs to (major international corporation), which conducts testing. So, it can't be used in something promoted as vegan. They could try a partnership with (rice milk brand) to reduce costs.

In the subsequent section, two options emerge in search of alternatives to using milk from the mentioned brand. One of these substitutes is rice milk, which is relatively expensive in supermarkets. The second substitute is classified as strictly vegetarian. However, it's worth noting that not all individuals who identify as vegans make this distinction between strictly vegetarian products from brands associated with animal exploitation and genuinely vegan products. These differing perspectives constitute a prominent source of conflict, which stands out and results in additional implications within the context of disagreements among individuals and institutions advocating veganism.

Interlocutor Pig: (A vegan community-known NGO) was recommending (Animal-testing brand) to everyone, right?

Interlocutor Pig: After we say these NGOs are dubious, they call us annoying. The annoying thing is trying to be consistent with Animals, and then people with influence and power come in and mess everything up. Then it's even more annoying for the Animals to be caught in all this fight.

Interlocutor Donkey: (NGO) is all wrong, recommending (Processed food corporation) cookies, advising (another corporation mentioned in the previous discussion of the same topic), saying we should buy products from companies that test on animals but have no animal-derived ingredients to encourage companies to make more products like that... I'll say one thing: money, ha-ha.

Interlocutor Camel: (NGO) isn't a vegan NGO. Their website says they're only against the slaughter. Their focus is on meat eaters. I don't think it's the best stance, but there won't be any retraction.

In the segment above, it becomes evident that one of the post's purposes is to expose an NGO recommending products classified as strictly vegetarian, which consequently wouldn't be considered vegan. Additionally, it's pointed out that despite engaging in spaces related to veganism, this NGO would restrict its discussions solely to food, without taking positions against animal testing or the use of fur, for example. Returning to the original debate, the

suggestion of recommending strictly vegetarian products is made with the perspective that increasing demand for these products could encourage companies to produce more vegan alternatives and gradually phase out animal exploitation over time. The premise is that animal-derived products would become less profitable.

On the other hand, some argue that purchasing products from companies supposedly involved in animal exploitation would reinforce the tendency to turn veganism into just another market niche. After all, nothing would prevent the company from developing distinct product lines and profiting from the audience that consumes animal-derived products and their derivatives and the vegan or strictly vegetarian audience.

Vilela (2017) highlights that veganism implies a political consumption not only as an individual expression aimed at conveying an ethical principle and positioning oneself in the world but also as a means of intervening in the public sphere. Strategies of boycott and consumption that sustain the considered appropriate production form constitute how proponents of veganism exercise their animalistic ethics. However, it's worth noting that a boycott is not always regarded as adequate. As mentioned earlier, the criteria guiding this political consumption are subject to disputes within the vegan movement.

A situation was noted, among several that occur, where the animal origin of an ingredient in a product or the fact that a company conducts animal testing is questioned. Such elements often give rise to conflicts in spaces focused on veganism, as observed. However, it's noticed that starting from 2015/2016, the emergence of specific themes continues to unfold within the vegan movement. These themes transcend the mere individual consumption choice based on ethical criteria. The debate that arises from a simple product, such as a particular brand of plant-based milk, ends up raising broader questions that problematize not only the consumption practices adopted by vegans but also the strategies for promoting veganism and the political foundations guiding the actions of collectives and individuals within the movement.

Veganism and Intersectionality

Vilela (2017) also points out that, for some vegans, issues related to consumption are not limited solely to the production of goods that in some way involve animal exploitation; they can also extend to the relationships of production of these goods among human beings, as well as the type of advertising promoted by brands. In this sense, intersectionality occurs that considers class and gender in the realm of political consumption.

However, beyond the realm of consumption, intersectionality began to be addressed within the context of the vegan movement, focusing on the conditions that make veganism possible or even considering what conception of being human is being taken into account, thus questioning the notion of a universalized Human⁸ that had been present in veganism until then. Issues related to race, class, gender, and religion started to be addressed and discussed by vegans.

One of the interlocutors, Butterfly, shared their experience about the dilemma of participating in the "cutting"⁹ ritual of a chicken in a temple they used to frequent, despite being vegan. Although animal sacrifice is generally not practiced in Umbanda, the temple they attended was connected to the Quimbanda religious tradition, which does involve animal "cutting."

Butterfly is a young person who, although not having experienced racism and sexism due to their gender and ethnicity (white and male), resides in the outskirts and belongs to the working class. During that period, they were unemployed and facing financial difficulties, while their parents were also going through financially challenging times. They had adopted veganism seven months ago, after being an ovo lacto vegetarian for seven years. During this phase, circumstances limited them to a restricted diet, mainly rice, and beans on some days, to avoid "falling off"¹⁰ veganism. They even worked as a pamphleteer in a political campaign during the 2016 elections. Butterfly frequented a temple located in a favela in the Baixada Fluminense, where the notion of veganism was unknown before its introduction and discussion. They describe that, upon getting involved with the religious temple, an entity assisted them in their

⁸ Perrota (2015) discussed that the notion of humanity erected by humanism since modernity, primarily rooted in Cartesian rationalism and Enlightenment ideals, asserted the idea of a universal human being, a rational and autonomous individual. However, as I observed in my research, vegans who engage in intersectional discourse tend to understand that such a construct fails to address cultural diversity and the inequalities of class, race, and gender, which are consequences of the same colonial and capitalist modernity.

⁹ The practice of ritual slaughter of certain animals in some Afro-Brazilian religions for communal eating and communion with their deities.

¹⁰ Temporarily departing from the practice of veganism.

own words. However, they needed to offer a white chicken to receive this assistance. This scenario generated an internal conflict within Butterfly, especially considering that, when sharing this situation on the internet, they could encounter vegans ready to accuse them of speciesism and being a fake vegan, among other criticisms.

The perception of Butterfly and other vegans is that, at least in Brazil, veganism is more predominant among individuals from "middle" and "upper" social classes and white individuals. Additionally, many vegan restaurants have prices that align with the consumption patterns of the middle class. Products with vegan certification or not tested on animals often come with higher price tags. Butterfly observes that this reality sometimes creates a "bubble" that prevents many vegans from being aware of different facts, such as the one he experiences, leading them to make judgments without a complete understanding.

To address issues like these, groups emerged on Facebook, such as "Veganismo Social – Discussões Interseccionais" (Social Veganism - Intersectional Discussions) and "Veganismo Libertário" (Libertarian Veganism). The group "Veganismo Popular" (Popular Veganism) was also created to share recipes that use more accessible and easy-to-prepare ingredients. In the first group, the definition includes the following statement:

We know how complex the deconstruction of speciesist culture is, and we are aware that specific social sectors will have easier access to this information and tools that aid in the process. Non-human animals cannot be free until humans are also free, in the most profound sense.

We do not want to invalidate individuals who solely focus on non-human animal causes, but to advance the recognition of rights, we need to expand our fight and join forces with those involved in human causes, even if they have not yet deconstructed speciesism within themselves.

For those who are not yet vegan: let's deconstruct the idea that vegans place animals above humans – although the animal cause is sometimes used as a platform for hatred towards humans, typically those who are economically disadvantaged, this is a failing on the part of those humans – it neither aligns with the logic of the movement nor corresponds to scientific studies. For those already in veganism: let's remember the power of capitalism, objectifying culture. Let's remember the difficulty of cultural deconstruction, especially when we lack various resources. Let's engage in a severe social movement that can give and receive support, helping to create a more compassionate world for everyone.

While acknowledging that specific "social segments" might have greater ease in challenging speciesism due to their access to information about this practice, the group and its administrators present themselves as critics of capitalism and classism.

In another context, they recognize the importance of forming alliances with other social causes to deconstruct the notion that vegans are solely concerned with animals. During the "Sopão Vegano"¹¹ (Vegan Soup) events, it was observed that one of the motivations behind the project, mentioned on several occasions by engaged individuals, was the perception that the soup kitchen would serve as a tangible response to criticisms often directed at veganism. These criticisms claim that vegans and animal rights advocates generally do not show concern for human beings. Therefore, apart from serving as a venue for social interaction, the vegan soup kitchen also represented a way to propagate veganism by incorporating a form of activism that aimed to have a practical impact on the lives of people experiencing homelessness while conveying a message to non-vegan individuals.

However, the concern to refute accusations that veganism is misanthropic or anti-human is not the primary motivation of these groups. Among the established norms in the mentioned group, the following guidelines are included:

- Due to its intersectional orientation, the group collaborates with other social movements beyond animal rights; therefore, discussions about feminism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, and other social topics are essential and allowed.
- Machismo, racism, lesbophobia, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, and fatphobia will not be tolerated, with members receiving an initial warning and facing banning if the behavior persists.

The intersectional approach has its roots in the tradition of studies inaugurated by Black intellectuals from the 1980s onwards. Fundamental landmarks in this context include the works of Kimberley Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color* (1984); Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (1982); Bell Hooks, *Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory* (1984) and others. In Brazil, Leila Gonzáles is a reference with works like *O Papel da Mulher Negra na Sociedade Brasileira: Uma Abordagem Políticoeconômica* (1979).

At its core, this intersectional critique originated from Black activist intellectuals who questioned the one-dimensionality present in social movements of the time. This critique highlighted the need to address sexism within the Black movement, combat racism within

¹¹ A collective of vegan and vegetarian activists in which I participated in 2015 and 2016. The vegan soup kitchen entailed a monthly gathering to cook and distribute homemade and nutritious vegan food to individuals experiencing homelessness in downtown Rio de Janeiro. I was involved in preparing, packaging, and occasionally handing out the meals as a volunteer during the mentioned period.

feminism, and adopt a theoretical perspective centered on the Black working woman, as Davis (1982) exemplified. This context led to the creation of more comprehensive and multifaceted approaches that didn't confine themselves to a single marker of difference or social inequality. Thus, these thinkers began to develop a language that explored the intersections between different forms of exploitation and oppression to discuss the condition of Black women and create an intellectual framework that could be applied to other minorities and their struggles.

If the function of intersectionality is to "offer analytical tools to grasp the articulation of multiple differences and inequalities" (PISCITELLI, 2008, p. 266, our translation), the contribution of Black thinkers allows for a reassessment of alterity, both about the other and to oneself. For vegan activists seeking to adopt an intersectional approach, considering the multiple forms of human individuality's expression and the diverse power dynamics and inequalities shaping these realities leads to the realization that the notion of a universal human, as promoted by speciesism, is insufficient to confront the challenges that fact poses to the expansion of veganism.

"Cutting"

The tool adopted by vegan individuals to persist and broaden the anti-speciesist stance was to introduce the intersectional debate through a methodological tool, so to speak, that was "native" - something not commonly found in the discussions of social movements. This was mobilized through the term "cutting." While this approach wasn't unique to the vegan sphere and not always tied to the issue of intersectionality, it became emblematic within this movement. Just as practitioners of veganism are diverse, all are united in the effort to overcome speciesism. Similarly, opponents of veganism are also influenced by various societal divisions.

The term "cutting" isn't confined to identity matters, such as origin, ethnicity, gender, religion, generation, and sexuality, which refer to relational characteristics that contextualize and represent individuals and groups in a particular historical period. This term can also encompass political beliefs and how individuals perceive their position within power dynamics in the current conjuncture. As per Agier (2001, p. 9, our translation),

The relational conception of identity allows us to approach the pursuit of its "virtual abode." The starting point of individual or collective identity searches is that we are always someone else's other, the other of another. It is necessary to think of oneself from an external perspective, even from various intersecting viewpoints.

In this context, each individual can perceive themselves and be perceived through various perspectives, and their adherence to veganism will be influenced by these diverse views, in turn influencing these same perspectives.

Returning to Butterfly's account from the beginning of this section, it is possible to understand that individuals who criticized him for participating in an animal sacrifice act, to which he did not feel comfortable, did not consider the concept of "cutting." In other words, they did not believe that class issues, for example, could make his choices more challenging than for a middle-class vegan. Ironically, the religious temple in which the entity proposed assistance, mediated by the sacrifice, despite its practices being criticized by many vegans, was a more welcoming and supportive environment for Butterfly than in-person or online vegan spaces. In this location, situated on the outskirts of Baixada Fluminense, an already peripheral region of Rio de Janeiro, he managed to educate people who had never heard of veganism.

Engaging with Perrota (2015), it is possible to introduce the idea that there are regimes of humanization and animalization that permeate interactions between different species. Thus, certain animals can be humanized in specific contexts and subject to moral consideration. In parallel, there are historically animalized social groups and consequently marginalized from the predominant moral sphere. The challenge lies in recognizing and addressing these complex interactions.

In this way, "cutting" represents an attempt presented by some vegans (although not exclusively in veganism, of course) to encompass power asymmetries, inequalities, and the diversity of people who are part of, or could be part of, efforts towards the liberation of both human and non-human animals.

Conflicts give rise to new organizations and collectives

The emergence of new national and international vegan collectives that started operating in Brazil may be related to the developments of the conflicting issues described in the above examples. At least one of these collectives had its origins linked to the initial discussion about supporting the purchase of products considered vegan by some activists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These products come from companies conducting animal testing or are connected to producing animal-derived meat and dairy.

The story briefly addresses an example that relates to the context of the founding of the organization Vegan Activism Union (UVA). Relevant narratives were obtained through audio interviews with two UVA founders on the WhatsApp application. The organization's website and social media platforms (YouTube and Facebook) are also monitored. However, before describing the circumstances that led to the creation of UVA, it is necessary to introduce the Brazilian Vegetarian Society (SVB) and focus on one of its projects and areas of operation.

The Brazilian Vegetarian Society (SVB) is a non-governmental organization founded in Brazil in 2003. It is dedicated to promoting "vegetarian food as a healthy, ethical, sustainable, and socially just choice" and "working to increase public access to vegetarian products and services"¹². One of the missions of the NGO is to "disseminate reference information for professionals, institutions, and Brazilian society in general about the foundations, feasibility, and benefits of strict vegetarian food."¹³

One of SVB's projects is the *Vegan Seal*. According to the organization itself, this seal was established to certify that companies' products are suitable for vegans, meeting criteria such as the absence of animal-derived components, no animal testing on the finished product, and the assurance that supplier manufacturers do not test ingredients on animals (with a minimum 5-year grace period).¹⁴

Two issues deserve highlighting. Firstly, the absence of "veganism" is notable in the sections visited on the SVB website. Instead, when referring to dietary choices, the term used is "strict vegetarian diet." Secondly, it's essential to observe that the vegan seal is related to products and can be granted to companies with other animal-derived products and even to companies that conduct animal testing. This approach can be seen as a "pragmatic" strategy to increase the presence of vegan products on supermarket shelves, aiming to popularize and bring veganism closer to people. However, critics argue that this approach creates what they call "product veganism," meaning the assertion that there are vegan products even in non-vegan companies, which raises conflicts.

SVB is not the only one to adopt this strategy and believes it to be a path for promoting strict vegetarianism or, in the case of social media influencers, veganism. Some of these influencers advertise vegan products from companies that conduct testing on non-human animals.

¹² Available at: <https://www.svb.org.br/svb/quem-somos/sobre>. Accessed in: 20 mar. 2023.

¹³ Cf. note 10.

¹⁴ Available at: <https://www.selovegano.com.br/sobre/>. Accessed in: 20 mar. 2023.

Part of the founders of UVA originated from one of the state branches of SVB. When they noticed the organization's relationship with brands and its approach, which they considered "more liberal and market-oriented," they initially attempted to vie for leadership positions within the organization with the intention of promoting internal changes. This likely stems from the influence and reputation that SVB has built since 2003. However, in parallel, these activists collaborated with others to conceive an intersectional and famous vegan collective, which would become UVA. It was only after exhausting attempts to influence the organization from within and face the wear and tear of the electoral process that UVA's founders drafted an official letter formalizing the withdrawal of the state branch from SVB National.

One of the founders of UVA shared that she has always been concerned with connecting causes like feminism, environmentalism, and, more critical veganism about capitalism and the food industry. She mentioned noticing a tendency not to allow space for these discussions and a greater alignment with companies and the food industry, accompanied by a silencing of accusations of sexism directed towards a well-known influencer in the vegan community. Through discussions with other activists about the importance of combating oppressions suffered by human and non-human animals, she became involved in forming UVA.

UVA expresses, in its "Declaração de Recife", its statement of principles, a commitment to fight based on anti-speciesism, social justice and equity, autonomy, non-partisanship, food sovereignty, and the right to adequate food, secularism, health, and sustainability. The organization is structured through municipal and regional branches present in some states of Brazil, along with members, with the General Assembly as its highest decision-making body.

UVA has already held two national congresses, one in 2019 and another in 2021. One of them was conducted online due to the pandemic.

Final Considerations

After this article, at least two trends within the vegan community can be identified, exhibiting both convergences and divergences. One advocate for promoting the consumption of industrialized vegan products on the shelves, aiming to reform the system of animal exploitation or its eventual extinction through campaigns that encourage the consumption of these products. The other trend seeks to distance itself from these approaches, demonstrating a critical stance towards capitalism and large corporations that have come to view veganism as an opportunity for a new market niche. Followers of this latter trend also seek to engage in

dialogues with issues related to class, race, gender, and other banners of left-wing politics and/or human rights.

Veganism, by denouncing the practices of exploiting non-human animals, challenges the logic of control rooted in the binaries of nature-culture and animality-humanity, which also historically manifests in the colonial context.

However, by presenting a dichotomy in which there is only a universal oppressive concept of human versus non-human animals, many vegans end up reaffirming a Western and Eurocentric perspective of thought infused with colonizing elements. Just as individuals of the human species exhibit remarkable diversity in terms of the relationships they experience, non-human animals also vary significantly for the same reasons.

Inspired by Perrota (2015), it is worth considering that we live in a structure where certain non-human animals are excluded from the moral community, while others are partially considered within this context. Similarly, some human beings are wholly or partially marginalized from the moral society, while others are not. Adopting this perspective, it becomes possible to comprehend the complexities of conflicts that emerge within veganism between human rights and animal rights.

In this context, where most societies face Western capitalist modernity's ethical, environmental, and social implications, veganism emerges and finds adherence. It is founded on the bases discussed in this text, even as it carries its contradictions. What becomes evident from this analysis is that conflicts within the vegan community have evolved into the emergence of divergent trends, manifesting in approaches related to the market, boycott strategies, promotion, as well as adherence to broader agendas that transcend the narrow dimension of veganism as a cause solely associated with the treatment of other animal species.

The two types of conflicts presented in this article, those addressing boycott, promotion, and the food industry, as well as those exploring human and animal issues, have had consequences for the way internal divisions in the vegan movement have been shaped in recent years, at least in the Brazilian context.

This is evident through the strategies adopted by the NGO SVB, which aims to promote veganism centered around food industry labeling, considering such an approach as a means to broaden access to and popularize veganism. In contrast, the UVA emerges as an entity that opposes what would be the practice of veganism advocated by SVB. The UVA criticizes the lack of a deeply critical approach towards the food industry and specism and the absence of

concern to engage in intersectional discussions or at least address issues related to class, race, and/or gender.

These trends were already present since the fieldwork conducted in 2017, which served as the foundation for a significant portion of the data discussed in this article. This research becomes essential to understand the issues in motion within the realm of veganism discourse in Brazil today.

Returning to Malinowski's initial metaphor, now that we have managed to explore beyond the "skeleton," the "flesh," and the "blood" of veganism, it becomes understandable that as the movement expands and theoretically gains more followers and popularity, new conflicts related to its practices emerge. These conflicts can generate trends and even opposing lines of thought. Therefore, it is unfeasible to approach veganism as a homogeneous and singular movement if one wishes to engage in this debate seriously.

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CRediT Author Statement

Acknowledgements: Not applicable.

Funding: Not applicable.

Conflicts of interest: Not applicable.

Ethical approval: Not applicable.

Data and material availability: Not applicable.

Authors' contributions: Rodolfo de Moraes Santos CERQUEIRA is responsible for the research, analysis and writing of the paper.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

