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VEGANISM AND MARXISM: LIBERATION IS REVOLUTION?

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Abstract

Veganism is defined as a philosophy and lifestyle that abolishes the animal use in human activities, and it stands for actions that may affect the material reality according to its stance. Marxism totalizes in an unitary and integrated knowledge its critical stance on the human exploitation made by the capitalist production way, and proposes a revolutionary project to defeat it. The goal is to discuss the political dimensions of veganism, and check if there are any possible convergences with the marxist ideas that are critical of the state form. The analysis is based on a critical theoretical framework and its comparison with veganism literature. The conclusion is that there exists convergence between marxism and the anticapitalist vegan branch, because the erosion of capitalism and emancipation of the working classes is considered essential to its project of total liberation of the sentient beings.

Descriptors: Capitalism; Veganism; State; Marxism; Revolution.

VEGANISMO Y MARXISMO: ¿LIBERACIÓN ES REVOLUCIÓN?

Resumen: El veganismo es considerado una filosofía y estilo de vida que abole el uso de

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<p>animales en las actividades humanas, y asume acciones que pueden afectar la realidad material según la corriente. El marxismo totaliza en un saber unitario e integrado su posición crítica sobre la explotación humana hecha por el modo capitalista de producción, y propone un proyecto revolucionario para superarlo. El objetivo es discutir las dimensiones políticas del veganismo, y evaluar si existen posibles convergencias con ideas marxistas críticas de la forma estado. El análisis es hecho por una fundamentación teórica crítica y su comparación con la literatura referente al veganismo. La conclusión es que hay convergencia entre marxismo y la vertiente anticapitalista, pues la erosión del capitalismo y la emancipación de la clase trabajadora es considerado fundamental para su proyecto de liberación total de los seres sintientes.</p> <p>Descriptor: Capitalismo; Veganismo; Estado; Marxismo; Revolución.</p>	<p>abole o uso dos animais nas atividades humanas, e assume ações que podem afetar a realidade material de acordo com sua vertente. O marxismo totaliza em um saber unitário e integrado sua posição crítica acerca da exploração humana feita pelo modo capitalista de produção, e propõe um projeto revolucionário para sua superação. O objetivo é discutir as dimensões políticas do veganismo, e aferir se existem convergências possíveis com as ideias marxistas críticas da forma estado. A análise é feita através de fundamentação teórica crítica e sua comparação com a literatura sobre veganismo. Conclui-se que existe convergência entre marxismo com a vertente vegana anticapitalista, pois a erosão do capitalismo e a emancipação da classe trabalhadora é considerado essencial ao seu projeto de libertação total dos seres sencientes.</p> <p>Descritores: Capitalismo; Veganismo; Estado; Marxismo; Revolução.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The term veganism, derived from the English word vegetarian, was coined in the 1940's by the *Vegan Society*, which defines it as a philosophy and lifestyle that seeks the exclusion, as far and practicable as possible, of all forms of exploitation and cruelty to animals, and promotes the development and use of alternatives that benefit animals, humans and the environment. One of the most decisive points is food, which is marked by the abolition of food of animal origin from the diet¹. By boycotting animal products, taking action on animal rights, combating speciesism, and forming groups and collectives, it is affirmed as a political movement and even understood as a social movement.²⁻⁴

Speciesism, first defined by Ryder and Singer^{5,6}, excludes other species from the basic principles of equality applicable to humanity, considering them to be of lesser importance since they are not of the human species. From the political viewpoint of veganism, different tendencies towards ending animal exploitation can be detected. Some are resolutely anti-capitalist and revolutionary, understood as a project for the liberation of beings other than animals. Others are

liberal and reformist, as they negotiate with market interests and large corporations, and tend to see veganism as a personal choice and a lifestyle, without adding other social struggles.³

Their parallel with Marxian and Marxist work is inevitable, since they all permeate the capitalist production system. Thus, it is commendable to reflect on veganism through the framework of Critical Political Theory, whether in its approach to the anti-capitalist tendency, in its convergences and divergences, or in its denunciation of the mechanisms that maintain capital in its relationship with the liberal principles.

The essay seeks to contextualize definitions and findings about politics, from the perspective of a critical and derivationist theoretical framework, and how researchers linked to veganism interpret political action in favor of animal liberation, as well as the consensus and dissents between the different conceptions of veganism in its relationship with capital. Furthermore, how Marxist criticism can contribute to the vegan debate, and whether there is an anti-capitalist link between the ideas mentioned.

POLITICS AND MARXISM

In order to approach **politics** from a Marxist perspective, it is above all necessary to situate its role within such thinking. Codato,⁷ a political scientist at the Federal University of Paraná - UFPR, analyzes political space based on post-1848 Marxian writings, diagnosing the conception of political space as a **form**. Thus, the **political form** functions in the political-social space in the same way that the commodity-form functions in the economic-social space, as a **real illusion**. Both are creations of fetishism, the spell that hides the material relations of production processes in the epitome of what a form is: **appearance**. In political fetishism, the appearance is the political forces in their agents - parties, individuals, parliamentary factions, interest groups, publications - to the detriment of the **essence**, corresponded to by the basic finding of historical materialism: the class struggle.

The very utterance of the word politics, and the consequent semantic invocation of a field that is involved but still sectorized from other social relations, comes from a positivist episteme - a bias that underpins the capitalist rule of law in Western modernity. Whether in the neoconservative Samuel Huntington or the liberal socialist Norberto Bobbio, the compartmentalization of politics from the other fields of social relations and power is such a constitutive notion that it ends up being denounced in the very assertion that political theory in Marx is non-existent. Borón,⁸ an Argentine

political scientist specialized in Latin American studies, doubles down on this: in fact, there is none, nor would it be possible.

According to him, the theorization of politics by the conventional social and political sciences as parts, a system or an order of a whole, ultimately ends in a confusing incompleteness of knowledge that constitutes a terminal crisis of the social sciences. Contrary to the aforementioned isolation, for the South American author politics only exists if it is articulated with the economy and society, without the possibility of any of them existing as autonomous and independent realities, but encompassed in a single field of reflection. Thinking about them and then defining them separately is an exercise in empty abstraction in the face of the material reality of things. This integration is recognized by Holloway,⁹ in the debate on the Derivation of the State. For the Irish sociologist, the State is not a superstructure made meaningful by its economic base, but “a historically specific form of social relations”:⁹

The existence of the state as a separate instance is therefore dependent on the capital relation and its reproduction is dependent on the reproduction of capital. From this perspective, political and economic existence (since it is only their separation that constitutes their existence as distinct spheres) is nothing more than an expression of the particular historical form of exploitation (the mediation of exploitation through the exchange of commodities). Politics and economy are therefore separate moments of the capital relation.⁹⁽¹⁴⁶⁸⁾

Economy and politics are particularized as distinct forms in the capitalist State, and the fragmentation of capital is the centrality of commodity fetishism. The feudal serf is transformed into the modern wage-earner through the spell of the transformation of his labor power into a commodity. Thus, separated but necessarily interconnected categories, modified by the veneer of formal equality over their material inequality. This fetishization particularizes social relations in such a way as to annul class organization, since it clouds its experience. It is the process, and therefore the **process-form**, ultimately understood as the state itself, which guarantees the reproduction of capital. The analysis of forms must be historical – **history** classically defined by Marx⁹ as the movement of the class struggle.

The aforementioned definition is crucial, as it is also debated by Casillas,¹⁰ a Mexican researcher at the Iberoamerican University, who broadens **history** to a series of conjunctures that are the moment of insertion of practices and projects by different subjects. He conceptualizes the political as real history, whose primacy is the link with the subject, the latter highlighted in Marx

as the proletariat, and reviewed by the Mexican author as those who generate the projects and strategies for intervention in reality.

POLITICS AND VEGANISM

Following the appearance of the term *vegan* in the UK in the 1940's, any practice consistent with the definition, whether earlier or later chronologically, was defined as veganism.¹¹ However, due to differences in motivation and conception of the practice, some individuals reject the term for self-definition, and use animal abolitionism, for example, because the term veganism for them is associated with counter-revolutionary agendas. Therefore, it is defined here that the term veganism will be applied to designate any position that rejects animal exploitation, in its broadest sense; consistent with what Dickstein and collaborators state: "the term is less important than the praxis that both precedes and follows it".¹²⁽¹⁰⁾ But the mere knowledge of this schism already demonstrates the complexity of the discussion. It is therefore necessary to point out decisive differences within veganism, and to conceptualize the two main currents: Popular Veganism (also called Intersectional, Abolitionist, Revolutionary), and Liberal Veganism (also called Strategic), henceforth abbreviated VP and VL.

The first strand "recognizes the unbreakable links between the vegan way of life, the struggle for the rights of nonhuman animals and the struggles for the liberation of human beings, especially political minorities".³⁽⁷⁸⁾ It criticizes the market and its devices, is concerned with the exploitation of animal industry workers and surplus value, and also with intersectionality, conceived as the way that discriminatory systems create basic inequalities in different subjects by race, class, gender and others. In Brazil, the difficulty of access to public services and the social vulnerability of certain geographies help to reinforce the class character of this stance, in which many of its subjects declare their status as residents of the periphery, also by using the title of peripheral veganism.

The second current advocates gradualism to achieve animal liberation, and considers VP radical and without short-term effect. Although they prioritize vegan companies, they accept non-vegan companies willing to produce vegan or, in a strict definition, plant-based items. Therefore, they are open to negotiating production with the market and palliative measures with the rule of law, and understand such a position as pragmatic.

It's important to point out that the demographics of veganism, nationally and internationally concentrated in a female, white, young and university-educated profile,¹³ are not a conditioning factor for the adoption of one current or another, in the same way that political parties should not be equated with social class,⁷ and in short, that the demographic categories mentioned above within the logic of capital in the democratic state of law are considered by Holloway⁹ to be an **interest group**, since they do not consider the class of individuals.

VEGAN AND MARXIST ENCOUNTERS AND DISAGREEMENTS

In Marx's work, notes concerning animals are found, always in counterpoint to the condition of work, production and exploitation of human labor. An important study on Marx and animal exploitation was carried out by the Australian economist Eliza Littleton.¹⁴ The researcher works on political economy and animal liberation, and highlights the current organization of the industrial livestock system, predominantly used by Western countries and already being adopted by East Asia, while there is an almost absolute abandonment of pastoral livestock in peripheral countries. With the advent of this type of production, market concentration and the centralization of its players spread, in a process of predation of smaller companies in search of increasing their economies of scale, reducing competition and increasing profit margins. The system itself has its genesis in the desire to increase food production - of animal origin - with the use of more **capital**, less human labor and higher production yields.

Changes made possible thanks to efficiency gains through technology, in the quest to produce more quickly and with lower costs and use of human labor. In other words, an increase in relative surplus value, linked to scientific discovery and technological innovation. Despite the advantages, according to Martins,¹⁵ a sociologist and columnist for Boitempo Editorial, in his Theory of the Scientific-Technical Revolution, Marx declares science to be a revolutionary and post-capitalist productive force. Consequently, it is never fully absorbed by capital, whose legacy lasts for generations and sows contradictions that force its system to adapt. From Wallerstein's and Arrighi's neo-braudelian perspective, the changes promoted by science and technology structurally weaken historic capitalism, a system based on the incessant search for unlimited accumulation.

Technological innovation can be seen in the use of selective breeding and growth hormones, which, apart from the interest in increasing production, seek to control the quality of food and make animals resistant to disease.¹⁴ The consequences for collective interests, in turn, as

Wallace, an American evolutionary biologist, points out, are manifested in the increase in global epidemics arising from the over-breeding of confined animals.¹⁶ The way out has been suggested by capital's bet on **laboratory meat**, which promises environmental sustainability, but whose extremely complex and costly process makes it even more impossible for smaller producers to participate, to the detriment of corporations that can afford the creation and maintenance of such sophisticated production laboratories.¹⁷

The way in which the meat industry is structured is perhaps one of the most representative today of the 19th century English model analyzed by Marx in his *Capital*. The division of labor and the speed of the production lines culminate in the slaughtering, gutting, cutting and packaging of a bovine in a 15-minute period. The industry has a low profit margin.¹⁴ This means that the hunger for surplus value chews up the effort of the workers and literally the lives of the animals. In the English language, the word *livestock*, used to designate working animals and the production of goods, in its linguistic analysis of etymology could not be more faithful to its use: stock of life.

Life that is difficult for consumers to understand due to the homogenization of most of the physical parts in packaged meat items, which in turn demonstrates two other Marxian concepts, perhaps even more literally. The existence of the once whole animal, after a long chain of production processes, is no longer recognizable to consumers on the market, who are distanced from the entirety of the production system and convinced by its packaging and product label. Consumers are captives of **alienation**, which **disguises life**, and **fetishization**, which **hides death**.

Still on the subject of the process of transforming animals into things, it corresponds to the process of degradation and fragmentation described by Marx, which reaches the level of a piece of machinery. Littleton brings together Marx's concern and descriptions of the treatment of the working class by the capitalist production of commodities with what happens to the animals themselves, who **become** them. The cloister of confinement has intensified their dependence on human food and care, and can be compared to the dubious and illusory freedom of workers in having the chance to sell their labor power in order to survive. While alive, the animals themselves suffer alienation from what they produce (eggs, milk, honey and even offspring), from their ecosystem, and the denial of important elements of their natural life - outside of farms and confinement. The author recognizes that, although it is not the same, the alienation suffered by animals is similar to the alienation of humans from their natural condition, resulting from the exploitation of their work and life by the capitalist system.

Despite the similarities, they are not correspondences, as it should be noted that Marx's definitions of work and exploitation are specific and refer directly to the mode of commodity production. Traditional left-wing thinking, including Marxian thinking, attributes to animals objectivity and not subjectivity, and the inability to act on their own.¹² Therefore, the definition of labor is constituted by its possibility of being offered as a commodity, which is not applicable to animals, who consequently do not suffer exploitation, since they do not sell their labor power.

For Marx, animals constitute fixed capital alongside inanimate factors of production, the value of which is given by the human labor undertaken to produce them. Nor can their hierarchization as beings used as commodities, even if it has parallels with the division of classes and the exploitation of one by the other, be corresponded to a type of class. The latter consists of a speciesist conception, as it was attributed by Marx exclusively to humans, due to the species' homogeneous cognition and capacity for revolutionary organization, which is limited in animals.¹⁴ Revolution in the traditional Marxist conception implies hierarchical organization (leadership and militancy), membership, a political agenda and a complex communication system.¹⁸

Following authors, however, put forward the need to re-examine these issues, by confronting the model of the **male wage worker**, who not only served as the *corpus* for Marxian analysis in his time, but also protagonized his project of resistance and revolution,¹⁴ consistent with that proposed by Casillas,¹⁰ who considers the need to rethink the classic centrality of the proletariat as the only historical subject, in order to broaden it as a subject who has the possibility of a project.¹⁰

For Marx, activities define the species. Animals produce for immediate purposes, out of necessity. Human production, on the other hand, is universal, guided by one's own will. Animals don't distinguish their activities from themselves; the two are in symbiosis. Thus, while animal production is by instinct, human production is by imagination, and therefore characterizes labour. Littleton argues that Marx's distinction between humans and animals is not strong enough to deny the essence of animal life when its possibilities for subsistence are privatized and subsumed by the capitalist mode of commodity production.¹⁴

The German author lived and died in the last century, so it is not surprising that his assertions about animal consciousness and behavior are disputed and even refuted by scientific and philosophical evidence accumulated more than a century after his writings, in which human

exceptionalism is no longer a certainty.^{12,14} The proposal is that the idea of exploitation, even if it is not in accordance with the original Marxian concept, can be maintained in a Marxist perspective in relation to animals if there is no break with the materiality of class issues. Andréia Galvão, a sociologist and researcher at the Center for Marxist Research - Cemarx, at the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences - IFCH, at the State University of Campinas - Unicamp, when analyzing social movements, in relation to those that demonstrate intersectionality of agendas, states that the struggles are not mutually exclusive; in Latin America since the 1990's, the movements that have emerged and survived come from the working class, which, although heterogeneous, are united by anti-neoliberal ideology.¹⁹ They are the result of the emergence of contradictions that are not necessarily located at the level of the relations of production. Thus, oppression does not come from exploitation in the Marxian sense, but from the possession of certain power derived from social organization, which is concomitantly capitalist, racist, sexist and patriarchal. However, although not every conflict can be relegated to a class conflict, the axis of conflict between capital and labor cannot be disregarded either. Furthermore, the movements should not be understood as a reaction, forms of domination and oppression, but in relation to the exploitation carried out by capital. According to the author, Marxist-inspired research into these intersections articulates them with the objective class situation, as is also the case with the literature on veganism, more specifically VP, including empirical evidence from Brazil, Mexico and Italy.^{18,20,21}

Furthermore, there is a direct dialogue with VP, since its agenda is the liberation of all beings, and the animal issue stands out precisely because non-human species are in absolute objectification. So much so that, in the Marxian critique, the exasperation contained in the situation of the English proletarian of that historical moment resided in his semi-reified condition, a **who** (a person), treated as a **what** (a thing, but in English, **also an animal**). Animals, in the capitalist process of commodity production, are captive meat, and they excel in their **death value**, which does not correspond to any human labor.¹²

Some authors propose discussing whether animals are not included in pre-capitalist Marxian concepts, such as slavery. It is considered valid to mention this, but it is beyond the scope of this essay to address it. Instead, the effort here is less concerned with fitting into classic categories and definitions, and aims to verify the possibility of convergence with his anti-capitalist

project. Thus, it is necessary to analyze these potentialities in the vegan strands, crystallized in a critique of the VL and an examination of the possibilities of the VP.

Dickstein and collaborators,¹² a group of North American researchers linked to the study of human sciences, elaborate a specific definition of veganism as a boycott, as a tactic in a broader political horizon of total liberation, which offers an effective way of eroding capitalism and other systems of domination. The group considers the definition flexible enough to adapt to many material and cultural circumstances.

Although VL also exists in the popular imagination and understanding, they consider that veganism refers exclusively to a pattern of action practiced by individuals and groups, without concern for the individual improvement of the subject in an existential or philosophical field, as individuals linked to VL profess, but rather the confrontation and rejection of participating in systems of exploitation.¹²

Empirical evidence from Brazil, specifically studies with vegans from the states of Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba and Pernambuco,^{2,21} attest to the idea that the vegan boycott only makes sense when allied not only to gender and race struggles, but mainly against capitalism, in association with anarchism, which is common in many vegan individuals and collectives. In the same *corpus*, the occurrence of both currents is noteworthy, when participants describe veganism with their words: lifestyle, philosophy of life, ethical and political positioning, the first two terms linked to VL and the last to VP.

Despite the tendency for vegans to associate among convergers, as in fact happens in collectives (an organization par excellence in VP) and institutes and NGOs (more common in VL), it is common for there to be vegans who are not necessarily defined or aware of the different currents, whose ideas end up being glimpsed in discussions within market issues, such as consuming vegetable products from large non-vegan corporations, food from non-vegan restaurants but which offer compatible options, noticeable in the national study sample.

Large companies, faced with vegans, see the opportunity of a new market. A neutralizing operation of capitalism through concessions that don't impact the social order.²⁰ This is the movement of capital adapting to possible threats through its **forms**.

In connection with the conceptual path traced in the previous passages by Holloway,⁹ the author states that forms are not abstract categories, as they always take shape from material

relations of production - in other words, through fetishization. Therefore, the fetishized forms in which capital appears are forms of class domination, and are inevitably unstable.

Obviously, because the antagonism generated by exploitation cannot generate stability. The author argues that the normal condition of things is instability, and for this he exemplifies the relationships in families, schools and factories, stages of violence and conflict throughout history, far from the paradise sold by bourgeois ideology. These relationships are never predetermined, because capital is inherently dynamic, its insatiable thirst for surplus value leads it to intensify exploitation and reshape the relationship between capital and labor all the time.

In this way, the form-processes are always changing and at the same time fragmented, in an interconnected historical movement formulated by capital's own contradictions.⁹ which, in order not to be bitten, has to swallow a demand that transcends bourgeois society's concern for profit, and put global corporations from the mass production of meat and animal products to producing plant-based food and items free from animal testing, defined by veganwashing.²⁰

By accepting their products and services, produced in a **sectorized** way to correspond with their anti-animal exploitation demands, VL can justify it as pragmatism, or as its other definition attests, as a **strategy**, because it doesn't see a structural way out on the horizon or consider its own possibility utopian. However, it contributes to the maintenance of speciesist and bourgeois practices, which for anti-capitalist vegans are intertwined.

The **sectorization** accepted by liberal vegans reflects the process of atomization of individuals into particulars by the State form in capitalism for Holloway.⁹ From his perspective, the State is constituted as a State form, an apparently autonomous institution derived from capitalism in its aspect of commodity fetishism. The constitution of the State is a process of fetishization, of fragmentation of class relations into non-class forms, whose social activity reproduces the class in atomized individuals unable to organize against capital.

The State isolates people by treating them as individuals, but not concrete and particular individuals, but general and abstract individuals, i.e. **de-individualized**. The abstraction of commodity production is transferred to an abstract **citizenship**. Individuals are treated by a general relationship, without distinction for their peculiarities, much less for their class. This individualization of capitalism is distinct from the individualization prised in civil, political and social rights, which are achievements of the working class; on the contrary, it is a condition of the

individual governed by a general relationship, an amount of abstract subjects that generates an emptied collective.

In this respect, collectivism is not the opposite of individualism, it completes it on the basis of individualization and abstraction, through a rearrangement of individuals atomized into classes by criteria that obscure the concept of class. This grouping and regrouping are given by various **characteristics**, for example employment, habits, nationalities, political and economic rights, these are the interest groups, but never the class.

Therefore, big industry encapsulates veganism's potential for confronting the capitalist production system by atomizing its subjects, transforming them into interest groups for its sectorized production. The VL accepts and fosters this logic, while at the same time reifying its disengagement from the struggle to change **material inequality** through its allegiance to the rule of law of formal equality in the **legal form** and the concept of subjective rights.

The legal form, according to Mascaro, a Marxist jurist at the University of São Paulo, is guaranteed by the predominance of juspositivism, which is nothing more than the officialization of positive law and liberal political and legal institutions.²² It is in turn another derivation of the commodity form, but as a guarantee of obligations between transacting agents by transforming them into subjects of law, who can then be subjected to the rules of capital, such as private property.²³

The anti-capitalist current's critique of the VL even seeks to make up for what the first contemporary organizations have shown to be lacking, from their point of view. The founding of the Vegan Society was investigated by Davidson,¹¹ from the context of its emergence in the middle of the Second World War to its relationship with the British State.¹¹ Today, the author (a professor at the Center for Bioethics and Applied Ethics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ) perceives a lack of openness to dialogue and recognition of the realities of the Global South, disregarding their own local possibilities for veganism. Thus, the Institution's veganism is characterized by inaccessibility, Eurocentrism and exclusion.

The Institution was born while the British State was campaigning for domestic food production, mainly vegetable gardens concentrated on women's work, in an effort to guarantee food subsistence in the midst of the war conflict in Europe. The Vegan Society, in the articles in its magazine at the time, supported the government's measures, was silent on the colonialist and classist issues of the British Empire, and corroborated the reinforcement of gender roles given by

the horticultural campaign, either by printing its propaganda, or by the content itself, which was written by women in the publication, reduced in relation to men. Her conclusion is that this veganism, when it was born, did not set out to subvert power relations, but in practice served as a political tool for maintaining economic powers and re-establishing hierarchies.

The Vegan Society is the institution most representative of the interests of the liberal current and its greatest identification, together with other large organizations (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals - PETA, Mercy for Animals, Animal Equality).³ It thus has great weight in legitimizing what veganism is in the view of the VL precisely because it is the one who coined the term and because of its tradition and longevity, as well as the appreciation of its established legal organization.

However, Davidson¹¹ disputes the organization's authoritative status in defining what veganism is, noting the existence of boycott practices well before its emergence and even outside the West,^{11,12} and conceptualizing it as a project for the liberation of beings, veganism must be able to remove elitism and ethnocentrism from its agendas by recognizing **veganisms** - as it calls the incarnations of veganism that embrace local issues, from peripheral countries and their own peripheries, of race, gender and other intersectionalities.

Veganisms, by presenting anti-oppressive responses, are faithful to the goal of **total liberation**, of importance and strong symbolism for the cause, by integrating politically with other struggles. For, as considered by the approach of Dickstein and group,¹² veganism is “intrinsically a form of praxis: a refusal to participate in exploitation as part of a political conviction and strategy for political change”.¹²⁽¹⁰⁾

Interestingly, according to Davidson, the publication of the Vegan Society itself was the scene of disputes over direction, in which Donald Watson,¹¹ less fond of speciesism and more concerned with its exclusion from human food, was contrasted with Leslie Cross, interested in taking animal rights to a constitutional level and seen as radical. The influence and charisma of the former seems to have been decisive for his hegemony, and also for the latter's departure from the organization.¹¹

The reformist tendency of the liberal current, which suppresses the material possibilities of emancipation justified by the need to maintain the legal form, is therefore evident. The class issue should be highlighted, because when Souza³ researched the communication of national organizations linked to the VL, such as the Brazilian Vegetarian Society, he found that they tended

to advertise in places frequented by groups with greater purchasing power, such as upscale neighborhoods, and also in the profile of the models chosen for their advertising pieces.³

The legal form, another of the fetishized artifices of capital relations, here camouflages the desire to maintain private property and surplus value, as it is no different from the commodity form, which enables the reification of capitalist economic relations (such as production and exchange), while simultaneously mystifying and concealing their social essence - that is, exploitation.⁷

Peripheral vegans, faced with expensive restaurants and products that come from complex technological processes in food science (the food of the **future**), protest against this unrealistic market veganism, insisting on the feasibility of a diet made up of food that is accessible at street markets and popular market stalls, and within the peripheral food culture,² that is, of a predominant part of the working class.

The critique of the popular current compares the liberal tendency to a religious asceticism, where ethics resides only in the body and ego of the individual, and which is directed towards a neoliberal consumerist ethic of care.¹² This ethic lies in the de-individualized society of law created by the capitalist system, the result of the process of universal fetishization that characterizes bourgeois society in its idea of an ethical state, representative of the universal interest of society, as Borón points out.⁸

This pretension disregards materiality and, consequently, does not contribute to the emancipatory character of veganism because it isolates itself from the whole, that is, from the class struggle and its contradictions. Marxism's contribution consists of unitary and integrated knowledge, which, as discussed above, rejects liberal divisions. Thus, veganism through the liberal lens actually disagrees with Marxist precepts and there is no harmony.

The popular current, on the other hand, finds convergence with Marxism in its recognition of the class struggle as the foundation for its idea of total liberation, and advocates that the liberation of all sentient beings should be the goal not only of Marxists, but of the entire left.¹²

VEGANISM IS POLITICAL

The question of the political, discussed earlier, survives in some of the criticisms leveled at veganism, which is accused of not being political. It should be noted that from this point

onwards, the term veganism will only cover the popular side, as it is the only one with the potential to engage in dialogue with the discussion; the liberal side will be referred to specifically.

From a classical perspective, which goes back to Marxian studies, politics appears as an element of appearances and the fetishization of class interests linked to parties, and as something that will take on another meaning after the revolution.^{7,8} In materialist thinking, more important than politics as a word is its connection with revolutionary potential.

Casillas¹⁰ recalls that classically Marxism locates politics in a defined place, the State, and the political party is the conduit for seizing power. Such a conception is not appropriate today, and the author proposes ways of re-founding Marxist theory at the methodological, epistemological, political and theoretical levels.¹⁰

Thus, he approaches the **subject** - which in the traditional view is the proletariat - in the concept of the protagonist of a predetermined history. He postulates that there should be a reconstruction of the concept of the subject in Marxist social theory, since it can no longer be sustained that the proletariat is the historical agent of change. From this starting point, history and the subjects in the process of construction are rethought, through a somewhat decentralized character.

As a result, the idea of politics is also broadened, reimagined beyond the exercise of power, within the scope of the relationships that permeate the entire social fabric - in other words, power relations. By broadening the concept of politics, social relations that were extirpated when operating with a restricted concept of politics are rescued.

Veganism is part of these possibilities insofar as it attacks the central point on which the capitalist state was structured - the production of commodities, through consumption, **non-consumption** and boycott. We return to Dickstein *et al's* contribution,¹² which situates veganism as a boycott tactic focused mainly on individual and collective consumption behaviors that affect markets, of the kind that the left has always supported in the context of a broad scope of social justice efforts.¹²

For a better understanding, it is worth mentioning empirical data collected by Vilela²¹ in northeastern Brazil, who, when investigating the political dimension and understanding of vegans, detected boycotting as the most frequently reported action, given its importance in the situation because it is understood as an engaged political action.

Some individuals stated that they act less in the streets and more in their kitchens, by producing their own vegan preparations and offering them to people in general. Classified by the author as “gastronomic activism”, which imbues the kitchen and food with a political role, and evoking Portilho²¹ (a social scientist from UFRJ linked to the Consumption Studies Group) highlights the statement that the emergence of the politicization of everyday life through the re-evaluation of consumption habits is associated with a movement that broadens the very notion of politics.

Regarding the potential for disrupting consumption, going vegan won’t immediately turn the tide of capitalism, but it does hit on important points for reflection: capital won’t disintegrate overnight without changes in the market and consumption prior to its collapse. Such a collapse is made possible by the market impact of the destruction of demand for animal products and the process of obsolescence of their production, and by the reimagining of multi-species relations not based on domination mediated by consumption.¹²

It is important not to reduce the concept of consumption to a single understanding of buying, but to insert it into a network of relationships from a specific perspective, in the case of veganism, the creation of an ecosystem that strives for central ideas of liberation of sentient beings, and which organizes itself autonomously in fairs, collectives and organic farming cooperatives.²¹

Veganism can be found in scientific literature as a social movement,^{11,20,21} but the debate about the accuracy of the term from a Marxist perspective is beyond the scope of this essay. However, regardless of their classification, many elements of social movements fit into the discussion, such as the contributions of Galvão in his investigation into their relationship with Marxism,¹⁹ and also the critical position of some authors in assertions that many social movements have been ignored by Marxism, challenging class methodologies by proposing a reconstruction of the concept of exploitation to consider categories such as caste, gender and ethnicity.¹⁴

Returning to consumption, the controversy over its nature makes sense, since work for a wage, and its use by workers, which is consumption, is a bourgeois promise of freedom, fetishized here. However, it can also be deduced that the left’s criticism is the result of the internalization of a liberal premise that protects consumption as a field of individuality outside of morality and politics,¹² in the current understanding that it fragments and de-individualizes.

Lopez¹⁸ (a researcher linked to the Arts and Humanities department at the University of the Americas - FAM) analyzes what he defines as the vegan movement in Puebla-Mexico, and reflects

on the **vegan revolution**, in the spotlight of the mass media as the new global ecological conscience, associated more with a lifestyle than traditional revolutionary actions. In a Marxist sense, according to the author, it is not possible to speak of a vegan revolution, since it lacks objectives and actions aimed at mobilizing a social uprising, which includes the possibility of using violence against an imperialist or State regime.

The solution found for understanding veganism is to place it in a post-hegemonic perspective, in which the people, or the proletariat, are replaced by the **multitude**. The critique goes on to say that the vegan movement, due to its relatively small number of individuals, non-violent strategies and non-governmental political positioning, is oblivious to the singularities of revolution. Revolution means ideological tradition, like communism and other theoretical traditions, and cannot be defined based on **behavior** and **lifestyle**.

Switching to a vegan diet doesn't change the economic system, it just exchanges one element for another and doesn't alter the capitalist mode of production, nor does it abandon the paradigm of modernity. For Lopez, the vegan crowd has no defined project of society. This is a reductionist view of veganism, which doesn't take into account the internal proposals for restructuring Marxist thought, as seen in Holloway⁹ and Galvão,¹⁹ but especially in Casillas,¹⁰ as well as recognizing veganism only in its liberal incarnation, which in fact keeps the current structure untouched.

Veganism, as discussed above, describes a defined project of total liberation, even in individuals who are not necessarily declared anti-capitalists, and an even more defined project in those who are openly anti-capitalist, as observed in Brazilian samples.²¹ The concept of the multitude, in turn, dialogues with the de-individualization and fragmentation of the individual undertaken by the State,⁹ in an effort precisely to transform veganism into an atomized interest group, which hides the connection between the liberation of all sentient beings and the liberation of the working class.

Thus, the individualized multitude is one of the difficulties of organizing. As indicated by Dickstein's group,¹² despite the tangible effects that boycotts bring, veganism consists of the consumption decisions of disaggregated and uncoordinated individuals, which is the contradiction of collective action: while universal adherence brings many benefits, the immediate effect is low if the action is isolated.

The authors acknowledge that even the existence of organizations in groups and even institutions, it still appears mostly dispersed and almost entirely as an individual consumption practice. This brings it up against the strongest criticism: the inefficiency of its effects and the focus on individual, apolitical and consumer solutions to complex structural issues.

One of the criticisms against the **political consumption** of veganism is that it is in fact irrelevant if it doesn't achieve structural change, and accuses it of a link with neoliberalism, in its reward of personal fulfillment that discourages the will for social change, which infers that such an understanding of the phenomenon is limited only to the VL,³ which in Bertuzzi's words,²⁰ has gone from the streets to the stores.

In fact, this is a trap, as it is nothing more than the internalization of the much-criticized neoliberal categories,¹² as it evokes them by cutting individuals into interest groups⁹ and dichotomies: citizen-consumer, consume-political action, collective-individual, as well as claiming the mutual exclusion of individual action and collective action.¹²

On the other hand, there is nothing to prevent veganism from being articulated, but it doesn't require the necessary political and ideological adherence to any specific animal liberation agenda; nevertheless, Dickstein and colleagues¹² see a revolutionary convergence when they consider that the left's objectives consist of confronting industries and production processes, whose foundations in turn lie in the commodification and violence of animals.

This conception is inspired by the description of Steven Lukes,¹² a British sociologist, who sees the left as a tradition and project that confronts the sacred principles of the social order, unjustifiable but remediable inequalities, through political action, together with a growing commitment to environmental justice.¹² It is remarkable how much speciesism has structured capitalism, from the beginning of its shift from feudalism to the consolidation of European States, which for Wallerstein and Arrighi,¹⁵ is the inception of the world-system.

Their foundation in Europe required an organization equipped with networks dependent on animal transport and the breeding of large herds, to set up their administrative sections, communicate and feed their military forces. In the same way, animals were central to production in the North American colonies, and therefore fundamental to the origin of the United States of America.¹²

Understood in this way, the total liberation promoted by veganism in attacking excessive meat consumption affects the structure of world consumption, the political-economic-ecological

process of meat production. Such consumption is obviously umbilical to the production of commodities promoted by the great Inter-State System of today.¹⁵ Organized across borders and therefore conferred with protections against local threats, capital in its **disembodied** incarnation, and whose mainspring is the unlimited accumulation of capital.

Still in view of the examination of history, and in convergence with the aspects of the struggle that bring issues of intersectionality into the debate, it is important to note that the current model of the American South for livestock farming is a legacy of its history of a racialized economy since black enslavement, and maintained today by subcontracting and overexploited and precarious work, carried out mainly by immigrants, black people and women. The US poultry industry, for example, uses threats of deportation against immigrants to force them to adhere to its working conditions, and even uses the labor of individuals in the prison system.¹²

For Dickstein *et al*,¹² the reluctance of left-wing sectors to address the animal question signifies a refusal to deal with the fundamental speciesism of current institutions, relationships and habits, and should be adopted strategically by those involved in other anthropocentric struggles. The authors reiterate their understanding of speciesism along the lines of Cary Wolfe¹² (an American academic in animal studies, critical theory and cultural theory), which differs from Singer and Ryder's definition, which compares speciesism with racism and sexism, and for this reason has suffered more recent criticism.

Wolfe¹² believes that speciesism is the institution of social acceptability of systematic, non-criminalized animal killing, based exclusively on its species. Consequently, speciesism is anchored in a material and institutional base, and does not run parallel to racism and sexism, but operates in conjunction with social arrangements that distribute precariousness and mortality among marginalized populations in a non-uniform way, argue the American authors.

There is a connection with Holloway's⁹ reflections on the State form, since its institutionality ensures the material form of survival of capitalist interests, since the expansion of capital implies its ever deeper involvement in every aspect of our lives, achieved in part by the State.⁹

Perhaps the most complex question to be asked objectively is about the difficulty of abandoning the consumption of food of animal origin. Its presence in humanity, symbolism, nutritional practicality and cultural aspects are impossible to ignore. Anthropology studies how important food is for human groups, in terms of unification and identity.

Fischler,²⁴ a French anthropologist, uses the concept of “incorporation” to demonstrate how consuming certain foods identifies a group. In other words, you are **what** you eat, but also **who** you eat with. And that **which** determines **with whom**. This is an extremely important aspect of the discussion, but it goes beyond the limits of the objectives set out here, and requires the elaboration of analyses entirely dedicated to the issue.

What can be preliminarily stated is that food certainly has dimensions that make it difficult to change. Cited by Dickstein *et al*, Wadiwel,¹² an Australian academic in Critical Animal Studies and professor of Human Rights at the University of Sydney, postulates that abandoning animal products is felt from a traditional perspective as the loss of the world. The authors point out, however, that the logics and meaning behind consumption do not remain static, as these social conditions are unstable because they depend on social norms and their influence on individuals’ behavior, which can change dramatically, such as the social acceptance of smoking.

Thus, it is important to establish that such apparently ingrained aspects are perhaps not natural, but naturalized. Not unlike the liberal statements about their way of organizing society. Marx analyzed reality in order to weaken the apparent solidity of bourgeois categories, and as a result show that they are not given by nature, but demonstrate them through historically specific and transitory forms of social relations, such as money, which is not a thing, nor a natural phenomenon, but a historically determined form specific to societies shaped by the production of commodities.⁹

As mentioned, in the same way that the Marxist approach strives not to reproduce the positivist isolation of the liberal divisions, and their sectorized understanding, one cannot accept the speciesist use of animals as detachable from capitalism, and vice versa. At the same time, exasperation in the face of capitalist exploitation evokes the ethical and philosophical dimension of revolution; as found in the speech given at an event at the University of California at Berkeley in 2012 (27th Empowering Women of Color Conference) by Angela Davis,²⁵ a famous American Marxist activist, who approaches veganism itself from a revolutionary and ethical perspective:

I don’t usually mention that I’m vegan, but that’s changed... I think it’s the right time to talk about it [veganism] because it’s part of a revolutionary perspective - how we can not only discover more compassionate relationships with human beings but how we can develop compassionate relationships with other creatures with whom we share this planet and that means challenging every industrial form of capitalist food production. [...] Many people don’t think about the fact that they are eating animals, when they eat a steak or chicken, many people don’t think

about the tremendous suffering that these animals endure simply to become food products for human consumption. I think the lack of critical engagement with the food we eat demonstrates the extent to which the commodity form has become the primary way we perceive the world. We don't go beyond what Marx called the exchange value of the actual object - we don't think about the relationships that the object embodies - and that were important for the production of that object, whether it's our food, or our clothes or our *I-pads* or all the materials we use to acquire an education at an institution like this. It would be truly revolutionary to develop a habit of imagining the human and non-human relationships behind all the objects that make up our environment.^{25[unpaginated]}

The lack of recognition that meat is an animal, as a result of the alienation already discussed, is one of the points often raised by vegans in terms of the interference and impact on their lives in Vilela's research, as there was difficulty in understanding, for example, what each element in the list of ingredients of industrialized food means at the beginning of the practice, and to some degree still persists. Gelatine, cochineal dye, among others, have their animal origin suddenly discovered, initially hidden by the fragmentation that constitutes the production of goods.

The ignorance and astonishment about these ingredients is even used to convince other people, through the shock of discovering how much animals are used and are everywhere in production.²¹ In the same survey, another aspect cited by the participants is the strategy of example, which confirms Dickstein *et al's* assertion that veganism acts as a form of propaganda through action.¹² By their very existence and by displaying and offering their food, the participants demonstrate that, despite the daily omnipresence of animal use, it is possible to be vegan.

One of the main issues in Holloway's⁹ critique of the capitalist State form, especially in its already discussed legal form, is the extent to which its movement produces an abstract individuality, without traces of the subjects in their peculiarities and true individualities.⁹ Aware of how much deindividuation is everywhere, it's not surprising to see it in the production of food of animal origin, where the process from slaughter to packaging removes all individuality from the slaughtered: tails, horns and genitalia¹⁴ until they are reduced to torsos and pieces, making it difficult to even determine which species they belong to.

Following on from what has been said so far, it is important to look at the possible changes and how veganism is not only related to, but can be decisive for, a project against capital. Casillas¹⁰, by making revolution possible by transferring thinking from the exercise of power to power relations, based on Foucault, points to the reconstruction of relations of force and power with greater precision, since it is a question of reconstructing an articulation between

resistance and domination. This articulation is between power and **strategies**, in an expanded idea of politics that rescues relationships that were previously excluded. The author evokes the Chilean sociologist Zemelman,¹⁰ when he states that the possibility of political action is only feasible when it can be constituted and is not predetermined.

By moving away from such determinism, in an allusion to the path the debate has taken so far, veganism empowers the movement against capital by blurring its imposed hierarchical divisions.¹⁴ The erosion of exploitative relations must take place immediately under capitalism, because if another world is possible, it will be born from it; its birth can be from the introduction of vigorous initiatives of emancipatory non-capitalist economic activities within the capitalist ecosystem.¹²

The recognition of starting action within the current situation and the systemic shock of the affront to its form of production corresponds to the moment of reorganization recognized as opportune by Holloway.⁹ The Irishman states that the aforementioned process of individualization is the first and basic moment of state form, organized in such a way that in the daily life of the working class the important questions are not asked - one of them, it is argued here, is anthropocentrism and its consequent speciesism. Returning to the author's postulate, the restructuring of the political constitution is part of the crisis and restructuring of capital, which is very important as an opportunity for socialist strategy and action. It is therefore the attempts to reorganize populations into new interest groups that pose political organization, and therefore new problems and opportunities.⁹ As Galvão states,¹⁹ it is important to understand the dimensions of the struggles, which cannot be seen as watertight.

There is a risk, since many movements have sought more to evade bourgeois forms than to abolish their processes of constitution and reconstitution,⁹ because just as authors consider social movements to be an expression of class struggles, at the same time fighting for the transformation of the socio-economic system does not mean that it is revolutionary, because it depends on its political dimensions.¹⁹

In veganism, these dimensions are expressed in their political essence by solidarity with the exploited (from animals to slaughterhouse workers) in all human and non-human ecosystems, as well as the political project that fights against the depredation of capital.¹² Casillas,¹⁰ reiterates that the primacy of the political is the link between history and the subject, and it is the subjects who generate intervention projects and strategies.

The boycott of veganism is an intervention, the impact of which can be recognized in the very effort that forces capital to dialogue with the VL, since capitalism **only defensively** incorporates conscious consumption to protect itself from criticism, and in doing so shows that it needs to sustain repressive logics that locate all other non-conscious consumers as **deviant**. This creates a contradiction for capital, because in an ideal capitalism, any political concerns about consumption are minimized in order to maintain the illusion of consumerism as a paradise.¹²

Their reorganization is forced upon them, because the prevailing rule is that animals, like workers, are treated like machines without regard for their welfare, only considered when it impacts on the quality of the production of their goods.¹⁴ So, just as it is not the goodwill of the bourgeois commodity production system that produces vegan items, it is not bourgeois democracy that limits the power of the state, but the strength of the working class, Holloway points out.⁹

Casillas'¹⁰ critique of Marxist theoretical restructuring affirms the need to recognize the real possibilities for social subjects to act,¹⁰ and the attack not only on production but on the organization of capital that characterizes veganism can be seen as one of them. The transformative potential of movements is linked to their objective and form of action, whether systemic or anti-systemic, pro-order or counter-order, and above all their political project and ideology.¹⁹

Veganism, dissected in its potential and laid bare in its essence of total liberation, overcomes the tension of questioning whether it is **individualized collective action or personalized protest**,²⁰ and within the critical political project that affirms the attack on capitalism as central to the total liberation of sentient beings, converges with the Marxist revolution against capital and the emancipation of the working class.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Veganism, despite associations with liberal positions of negotiation with the mode of production of the capitalist state, takes on a revolutionary perspective in the face of understanding its essential cause - liberation - as for all sentient beings, which is crystallized in its anti-capitalist strand, VP. The critical theoretical approach can contribute to its reflection on a more structured and organized action project, which still suffers from the dispersion of some of its individuals, many of whom are united only by a common boycott.

This disintegration, however, is already showing changes with the emergence of organizations such as the Vegan Activist Union (UVA), a network that connects national anti-speciesist and anti-capitalist collectives. This essay was intended as an initial examination of the

situation, and in no way claims to be definitive or to exhaust the discussion. The convergence that has been found is open to debate, and also for the research undertaken to be continued and deepened. The hope is that new voices linked to the popular strand will gain the eloquence and academic visibility needed to demonstrate the existence and political action of peripheral vegans, who are so accustomed to invisibility - since they come from the peripheries of the periphery of the world.

AUTHORIAL CONTRIBUTION

The author J. F. Oliveira planned the topic, researched the literature, carried out the analysis, data interpretation and review.

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