Veganism as a new culture: How the abstain from certain foods affect the life of vegan, society and environment.

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Food can be characterized by many things. Some of these things is familiarity, memories, ideology, desire, love, and joy. All these different issues vary according to societies, people, and their experiences. Therefore, every person has their own preferences and experiences around food, but sometimes these preferences may have an ideological or religious reason behind them. There are people that they have choose a total different way of living and have abstained certain foods. These people are called vegans and they have chosen to avoid meat and dairy products because of the animal abuse. Veganism is a new culture that it is spread all over the world and has become a new way of living. The vegan diet has become a new cultural movement in which people share common beliefs across the world, and it has several benefits to the environment, and society.

For all people, food is a way of communication, a set of ideas, practices, and beliefs. The first societies had enough natural resources to live with, but when the population of people increased, the societies specialized according to their available resources and they produced their own food (Montanari, 2016, p.3). The domestication of plants, vegetables, fruits, and animals gave the authority and power to people to make themselves the rulers of the natural world, which exist until these days (Montanari, 2016, p.4). And the birth of agriculture 9,000 years ago, was important for the evolution of societies (Montanari, 2016, p.4). Moreover, people share common cultures depending on their experiences or religions. Over the years taste and preferences change, they do not remain the same they constantly evolve (Montanari, 2016, p.61). And this important because cultures change according to the available food resources that every society has. In past and recent years food was also considered a way of communication to bring people

together. So, food is defined as a cultural reality, not only to value the nutritional food but in the way which is consumed (Montanari, 2016, p.93). When people consume food, they share their pleasure and feelings in what they eat (Ferguson, 2014, p. xiv). So, it is a very important element for every society or family to eat together and share their feelings around food. Sharing food creates a very strong bond around people that is unbreakable. According to Marcel Mauss food can be described as a "total social phenomenon" which is a set of ideas, practices, and experiences so communicative that people cannot imagine their world without them (Ferguson, 2014, p. xv). So, for all people food is more than taste, it is something bigger and stronger that brings people together. Veganism is a cultural movement that shares all these elements and they are similar with all the different existing cultures. But the thing that makes veganism unique is that vegan people are against violence and they fight for the unethical practices of animals.

Veganism is a movement in which people do not support meat and dairy industries and they try to fight for the unethical practices that are performed on animals. The vegan approach is a culture in which people do not consume, meat, fish, dairy products, and honey. Also, they do not use products that are tested on animals or products made from leather and wool, because they do not want to contribute and encourage the production of these capitalist markets (Elorinne, Alfthan, Erlund, Kivimäki, Paju, Salminen, Turpeinen, Voutilainen & Laakso, 2015). The animals in factory farms experience a tremendous pain every day. Most of the animals in these farms are being captive in small cages that there is no room to turn around, and they live in very unhealthy conditions (Singer, 2006 p. 21). Vegans have chosen this kind of diet for ideological reasons rather than health related reasons, and recognize consumption as a political action (Wrenn,

2011). Meanwhile, the meat production has increased five times since 1950, which is a tremendous number (Wrenn, 2011). People spend money to buy food and every day products from animals, therefore supporting the abusive behaviors that are practiced against the animals. Every dollar that a person spends to buy meat and dairy industries supports these industries and encourages these practices. So, the vegan society do not purchase such products, because they do not want to support these practices. In 2009, 57 billion of animals were slaughtered for the meat industries, which is an enormous number (Wrenn, 2011) The vegan ideology recognizes that since the population of people increased there must a bigger production of meat, but this massive production treats animals in terrible ways (slicing their throats, cutting, and pulling tails, teethes, horns and toes of animals without anesthesia) (Singer, 2006 p. 20). Consequently, vegans have chosen to prevent these foods for these reasons. The capitalism market treats animals in such horrible ways. Although, many societies have tried to decrease the abusive behaviors towards animals, the capitalist market does not, because they only care about money (Wrenn, 2011). So, vegans have reject products that contribute to the suffering and killing of animals. The vegan cultural movement was born out of reaction because of the inhuman and unethical practices that supported the cruel exploitation of animals.

The vegan cultural movement has also an impact in the environment. The effects of modern agriculture in the environment are numerous, and it has increased the last decades because of the technological assistance for commodity production (Marlow, Hayes, Soret, Carter, Schwab & Sabate, 2009). This led to a massive energy consumption, exhaustion of natural resources, and to the waste of products (Marlow, et al, 2009). Both the health of the environment and the health of the people is directly connected, so

everything that a person consumes has a direct effect to the environment. And this is what the vegan society supports. People that have switched to a diet that excludes meat, milk, cheese, eggs etc. have a positive effect on the environment, such as reducing speed of global warming (Steele, 2013). Also, the vegan or vegetarian diet has a positive impact to the air pollution, climate change, to the reduction of biodiversity and finally to water and soil abasement (Steele, 2013). The livestock farming is responsible for 30 % to 50% of the greenhouse gas emission, that causes environmental disaster (Steele, 2013). So, the contribution of the vegan society in the environment is important. Many people have switched to a vegan diet not only for the ethical reasons but also for the environmental reasons. A study showed that these people are more environmentally conscious and they have a higher tendency to recycle and buy organic products that have no pesticides which also harm the environment (Steele, 2013). Also, the amount of clean water that is being used for animal farming is gigantic. They use 1,799 gallons of water for one pound of beef, 576 gallons of water for one pound of pork etc., which a huge waste of the natural resources (Steele, 2013). And this is a problem because 64% of the population do not have access to clean water. So, this diversion creates an ethical awareness weather the agriculture of animals – pleasure of people regarding food- is more important than the lives of people in such countries. But in a capitalist market, the agriculture of animals is more important than the lives of people, because there is always a need for more money. Finally, another environmental benefit is that people that do not consume meat they do not contribute to the greenhouse emissions that are caused from feedlots. One kilogram of beef causes so many greenhouse emissions as a 6.2 gallons of gasoline (Steele, 2013).

Vegans by not consuming meat and dairy products have a positive impact in the environment, which is really important because the feedlots are destroying it.

The ethical approach of the vegan society maintains that all non- humans are valuable and must be free from pain. In the post-western societies, there can be no prefect argument, because arguments are shaped according to values and values cannot be proved (McGrath, 2000). So, the vegan culture believes in certain values that no one can criticize, because every person has their own experiences and principles, and there is no right or wrong when it comes to values. According to the equal consideration of interest, interest is important, unrelatedly of whose interest are (Singer, 2006 p. 21). Anyone can agree that everyone has an interest to live a happy life that is free from suffering and pain (Singer, 2006 p. 21) So, people need to take into consideration all the living beings that can feel pain. Since human beings evolved from over spices, the part of the brain that is responsible for pain is almost the same with humans (Singer, 2006 p. 21). This proves that non-humans can feel pain as much as people do. And this is another reason why vegans fight for the animal liberation. Since, people and animals have feelings and they can both feel pain, animals must have the same right as people, to be free from pain. There are two main theories for the animal liberation. The first one is Singer's approach that supports the minimization of suffering of animals, and the second one is the Kantian perspective that maintains that all who have value must be equal, humans or non- humans (McGrath, 2000). The vegan lifestyle supports these two theories and show compassion for the non-humans. Likewise, they maintain that animals cannot stand up for themselves -as they are weak members of society- so they need someone to support and fight for them. They believe that animals must have rights and because they have feelings – as

people do- they should be not treated in such horrible ways. Vegan people fight every day for the animal rights movement by not buying products made from animals. Also, they fight for the unethical practices that are performed on animals and are against violence. And this is an important element of the vegan culture that keeps vegan people together.

The vegan diet is a cultural movement in which people can share the same values and beliefs across the world, regardless of where they are. The vegan society may have been started 70 years ago, but there is evidence from 2,000 years, that they were people that did not consume meat, known as vegetarians. An example that traces many years back is the Buddhist diet, that has excluded meat from their diet as it supports love and kindness towards all. Also, Buddhist supported that is important to approach all living beings as if they have the same nature as people (Gaziano & Lewis, 2013). There are a lot of evidence from ancient times where people stopped eating meat for religious and ideological reasons. And this is truly important because people can see that the origins of this movement can be traced several years back. According to Melucci's definition a social movement is characterized by a form of mutual actions based on commonality that fight for a "battle" and by breaking the rules of the system (Cherry, 2006). In the case of veganism, people do not consume meat and dairy products which contradicts the nature of people, that they must consume meat in order to survive. The vegan people believe that since they do not live in a society in which they must hunt to survive, they can be feed from other sources which do not cause harm on animals or the environment. Additionally, they fight for a common reason and have a strong belief in which they try

to support it no matter what. This proves that the vegan diet is not just a trend that people have adopted the last several years, but it something stronger and bigger, it is a culture. It has adopted several elements from other religions and movements and they have created their own small "society". A society that share the same values and beliefs across the world. As it is mentioned before, every country has it is own culture, but in the case of the veganism society they have chosen to overlook their own culture and believe in something new. And this is what makes it so powerful.

The vegan culture is a movement in which people do not consume meat and dairy product, because they do not want to support the big industrialized factories that perform unethical practices on animals. Moreover, the vegan diet has a positive impact in reducing climate changes and other environmental problems. Also, the vegan society has become a powerful culture in which people all over the world they can share the same beliefs. Finally, the veganism movement support that at the end of the day people are what they eat, and how people can know what they are if they do not know what they eat. Vegans support that people who eat animals cannot live a peaceful life, since they eat something that had been under a lot of pain.

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