

NARRATING “THE ANGUISH OF BEING VEGAN IN A NON-VEGAN WORLD”

NARRANDO “A ANGÚSTIA DE SER VEGANO EM UM MUNDO NÃO VEGANO”

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ABSTRACT: The autobiographical narrative of the anguish and pain of being vegan in a non-vegan world, similarly to other painful situations, can be characterized by some discursive specificities due to the influence of strong contextual emotions involved. Based on the theoretical concepts of *hardening* and *narrative loop* (Vasconcelos, 2022) this article aims to describe and analyze, through an autobiographical case study, the construction process of the narrative of the pain of being vegan in a non-vegan. The awakening to veganism is characterized as the participant's port of passage creating the boundaries between the before and the after in her life. While pouring out her feelings she becomes capable of comprehending her experience and her capacity of surviving and learning lessons from the pain. The construction of the narrative positioning also counts with several elements such as circumstantiality, value, aspectuality, and repetition.

KEYWORDS: Autobiographical narrative. Narrative positioning. Anguish. Veganism.

RESUMO: A narrativa autobiográfica da angústia e da dor de ser vegano em um mundo não vegano, similarmente a outras situações dolorosas, pode ser caracterizada por certas especificidades discursivas devido à influência de fortes emoções contextuais envolvidas. O objetivo deste artigo, com base nos conceitos teóricos de *hardening* e *loop* narrativo (Vasconcelos, 2022), é descrever e analisar, através de um estudo de caso de uma autobiografia, o processo de construção da narrativa da dor de ser vegano em um mundo que não é vegano. O *despertar* para o veganismo é caracterizado como o porto de passagem da participante criando uma fronteira entre o antes e o depois em sua vida. Ao expressar seus sentimentos ela se torna capaz de compreender a sua experiência e a sua capacidade de sobreviver e aprender lições com a dor e a angústia. A construção do posicionamento narrativo também conta com diversos elementos como circunstancialidade, valor, aspecto e repetição.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Narrativa autobiográfica. Posicionamento narrativo. Angústia. Veganismo.

RESUMEN: La narrativa autobiográfica de la angustia y el dolor de ser vegano en un mundo no vegano, al igual que otras situaciones dolorosas, puede caracterizarse por ciertas especificidades discursivas debido a la influencia de fuertes emociones contextuales

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involucradas. El objetivo de este artículo, basado en los conceptos teóricos de endurecimiento y bucle narrativo (Vasconcelos, 2022), es describir y analizar, a través del estudio de caso de una autobiografía, el proceso de construcción de la narrativa del dolor de ser vegano en un mundo que no es vegano. El despertar al veganismo se caracteriza como la puerta de paso de la participante, creando una frontera entre el antes y el después en su vida. Al expresar sus sentimientos, puede comprender su experiencia y su capacidad para sobrevivir y aprender lecciones del dolor y la angustia. La construcción del posicionamiento narrativo también se basa en varios elementos como la circunstancialidad, el valor, el aspecto y la repetición.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Narrativa autobiográfica. Posicionamiento narrativo. Angustia. Veganismo.

1 INTRODUCTION

The experience of telling stories is present in every human being's life even before its birth. We are born listening to stories and start telling them so early in life that it seems as part of our nature, in other words, "we are so fond of narratives that it looks as natural as our own language" ¹(Bruner, 2010, p.13). Additionally, talking about ourselves is not in a different position, since the "I", according to Bruner (2010, p. 13) is the "[...] current currency of our discourse: no conversation is capable of advancing if it is not unashamedly used".

We tell our own story as a practice "of self-conscious, self-construction, detachment that makes the narrator, in a fortune of internal fragmentation, spectator of itself: an "I" that creates and at the same time observes, dialogues, and intervenes in this process of creation" (Vasconcelos, 2005, p.127). Due to the fact that it is a construction process, the subject that narrates does not mirror the experiences lived to promptly available linguistic forms, as a photocopy machine. The subject that narrates its own experience constructs a position in discourse,

[...] transforms itself in words, textualizes itself, puts itself in text and, this way, undergoes a process of transcription of the I that problematizes, chooses lexically how to present itself to the other, and how to create credibility of what is being expressed, first mentally, and then retextualizes itself to the other, orally or written (Vasconcelos, 2022, p.19).

This positioning, these choices, this retextualization are constructed from the interaction of the linguistic, discursive, and social dimensions in which the individual is embedded. That is because, according to Holanda (2020), the narrative of the self is "an event that interacts with these three domains in a cyclic way" (p.110), since the verbal signs, the discursive pressures and the social dimensioning will constitute each narrative process.

Among the diversity of themes in autobiographical narratives there are the ones that narrate the pain, the anguish, the grief, in short, traumatic situations. The experience of living a traumatic situation, in consonance with Vasconcelos (2005), can make the individual write, speak, and pour out its emotions with utterances inexpressible in other contexts. According to the author, narrating life experiences, including the traumatic ones, is a way of comprehending them, of proving the capacity of surviving them, and of being aware of all the lessons, good or bad, that were left by them. Narrating the pain is also considered an appropriate method to deal with traumas and its consequences, since according to White (2000), it displaces the subject from the center of the trauma to another place of its identity.

Silva (2015) in her doctoral thesis which investigated the specificities of the discourse of mothers in grief, caused by the violent death of a child, confirmed the initial hypothesis that these narratives of grief present a specific discourse, among the diversity of autobiographical narrative genres, mainly, concerning the positioning of the subject and the structure of the discourse. According to the researcher, these peculiarities of the discourse occur "due to the strong affective and contextual influence that co-occur in its elaboration process" (Silva, 2005, p.181).

¹ All translations from Portuguese to English are of full responsibility of the authors.

Santos (2019) when analyzing autobiographical narratives about the experience of expropriation in her doctoral thesis came to three enunciation categories, one of which is the deterritorialized. This enunciator is characterized by an idealization of the past, dislocated geographically, recalling birth, the happy childhood, and all the moments lived before the expropriation. This expropriation, that possesses its initial disruption moment established by the notification of such expropriation, becomes a milestone separating the before and the after, which entails a series of misfortunes that will be confronted with great suffering. Each break will leave marks on the individual's life "until he finds him/herself bewildered, uprooted, "not belonged", expatriated" (Santos, 2019, p.136).

Aware of the discursive and narrative specificities in the process of narrating each pain, the objective of this paper is to describe the construction process of narrating the pain of being vegan² in a world that is not vegan. This specific pain was named *vystopia* by the psychologist Clare Mann (2018). She explains *vystopia* as the anguish, the existential crisis lived by vegans by not conforming morally with the use and exploitation of animals, normalized by society in general.

It is worth highlighting that veganism does not imply in suffering. Many are the reasons for becoming vegan, as animal ethics, a healthier lifestyle, an improvement of the sporting performance, environment concern, and spirituality. Likewise, several are the effects and consequences of veganism in the individual's life. Some, mainly those who became vegan due to the animal cause, turn out to be active supporters of the cause, some, due to significant health improvements, live with great joy, however, others start presenting difficulties to adapt in the world that continues to be carnist.

Jertfelt (2019), researcher in psychology, categorizes vegans within the concept of moral non conformism, in other words, "[...] the conscious and active act of a person not behaving as he/she believes her/his peers/immediate group is behaving. This act is motivated by a sentiment and/or belief that what the peers/immediate group is doing is morally wrong, and/or that the act of non-conforming is morally right" (Jertfelt, 2019, p.35).

She explains that non-conformity can be wrongly understood as the absence of action, since this inactivity would represent not conforming to the more frequent behavior. Nevertheless, quite the contrary, not conforming, generally demands a much stronger effort considering the necessity "[...] to actively defend a behaviour different from one's peers, or to resist the impulse to do like everyone else, perhaps even put oneself in harm's way while doing so" (Jertfelt, 2019, p.18).

The author illustrates this matter with the non-conforming of vegans, stating that it is much more difficult not to consume meat and other animal products than the contrary, since it is imperative to make an active choice in every daily situation – "to say no to the Christmas buffet, finding recipes that suit their diet, and bring their own food to parties" (p.18). It is exactly the contrary, since conforming, namely, eating meat, what the majority does, is much more simple, due to the fact that it demands no type of action nor decision making.

In addition, Rosenfeld (2018, p. 129) states that "[...] becoming vegetarian symbolizes a change in both one's personal identity and one's social identity, as one gives up one's omnivorous social group membership and acquires new membership in a group of meat-avoiders. The author explains that "[...] food choice is intertwined with social relationships, as personal dietary decisions interact reciprocally with one's social networks and sociocultural environments" (p.129), and for this reason vegetarians state that from the moment they decided to abstain from animal derived food they started experiencing several new social situations, most of which were negative.

Rosenfeld (2018) also ascertained in his research that the source of these negative experiences is the existing prejudice against vegetarians. According to the author vegetarians report that this prejudice is displayed in the most diverse social interactions, such as, parents and friends disapproval reaction after the announcement of becoming vegetarian/vegan, anxiety for not knowing how

² The Vegan Society founded in 1944 in England defined in 1949 veganism as a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude – as far as is possible and practicable – all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.

Source: <https://www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/definition-veganism>.

to disclose food choices and preferences with other people, the endless questioning on the vegetarian lifestyle, teasing and mockery, stereotypes, routine discrimination, and even job application discrimination.

Therefore, the next section will be dedicated to describing vystopia, this anguish that some vegans face due to difficulties in living in a carnist world. In the sequence we will address the theoretical and methodological approach of this investigation for subsequently analyze a case study of a vystopian autobiographical narrative. Lastly, we are going to outline our final considerations reflecting upon the social activity of narrating the anguish of being vegan in a non-vegan world.

2 VYSTOPIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR VEGANS

This forementioned terminology was created in 2015 by the psychologist Clare Mann, due to the urgency in naming something that was being wrongly diagnosed by doctors and psychologists. When seeking psychological help because of the difficulty in living in a world that is not vegan, these individuals report having their pain undermined by doctors and psychologists, as well as having received erroneous diagnosis of eating disorders, self-harm and other pathologies. The author explains that these individuals do not present psychological illnesses, they, in fact, demonstrate “normal reactions of any feeling human being after discovering the cover-up of industrialized animal abuse” (Mann, 2018, p.15).

Mann (2018) describes vystopia as the “existential crisis experienced by vegans, arising out of an awareness of the trance-like collusion with a dystopian world and the awareness of the greed, ubiquitous animal exploitation, and speciesism³ in a modern dystopia” (p.29). According to the author, the break with the carnist⁴ culture might make the vegan feel as a foreigner, with the feeling of being deterritorialized implying in difficulties to relate and interact with non-vegans, mainly because of the teasing and underestimation of their feelings.

Among the symptoms experienced by vegans, in addition to the ones already mentioned, the psychologist lists misanthropy, anger for carrying the burden of knowing the cruel reality of animals, guilt for the past consumption of animals and for not being able to avoid the suffering and death of animals that are still being exploited and killed, the feeling of impotence, inability to enjoy normal aspects of life such as a holiday dinner with relatives, going shopping and even traveling and staying in a hotel. All of these experiences and characteristics ongoing in the vegan’s life, according to Mann (2018), produces in them anguish, depression, anxiety, auto medication and the desire to disappear.

Confusing values of veganism with psychological inflexibility, that is the difficulty to change opinions and behaviors, is another problem observed and highlighted by Mann (2018), in her clinical practice. According to her, values such as anti-specism and animal liberation are genuine and constitute the fundamental moral basis for veganism.

3 NARRATING THE ANGUISH

In face of painful situations that generate uncertainty and anxiety, Resende (2011) acknowledges that the act of narrating reconnects identities, stitches open wounds, tries to reestablish the temporal linearity broken by the trauma/pain and redefines reality and the purpose of things in the world. These difficult situations also “reinforces the discourses of belonging, produce *we-feeling* and generate strong feelings, even if contradictory” (Resende, 2011, p.11).

³ Peter Singer (2002, p. 6), an Australian philosopher and professor, published in the seventies the book *Animal Liberation*, which had a formative and driving role for veganism. In this book he coins the terminology speciesism which is defined by him as the “prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species” (p.6).

⁴ Carnism is a terminology coined by the psychologist Melanie Joy (2010) to define “the belief system in which eating certain animals is considered ethical and appropriate” (p.30). According to her, since it had never been previously named it was never understood as an ideology/belief system, but as a natural practice among humankind.

Vasconcelos (2022) describes this process of continuity of life after a traumatic disruption and names it *hardening*. According to her

[...] the subject stands in a passage port, from which he/she glimpses all his/her life, or all the others passage ports requested by him/her, without any unimagined objection, creating a constant narrative loop which will “dye” his/her narratives in the possible dimensions of time, and space, always crossed by this “tone”. (Vasconcelos, 2022, p.58-59).

Hardening in physics refers to a metal's ability to cast and return to form, though after a cold shock, it will not fully regain its original state. Vasconcelos (2022) explains that when we bend a metal or a steel wire, through a cold method, it bends easily, but if needed to unbend it, there is the chance of breaking it exactly at the bending point. This happens because the metal, at the bending point, becomes more rigid, more resistant, and therefore, but paradoxically, more fragile.

This journey through the world of physics had the purpose of finding a terminology capable of expressing the marks left by the pain of a traumatic experience in the autobiographical discourse. According to Vasconcelos (2022), this discursive-narrative oxymoron is what she observed in her doctoral research.

Having a child with cancer transformed these mothers stronger and their narratives harsher, but at the same time it produced, after their child's loss, a narrative loop of fragility: their story starts or ends with the dead child. There was no time for resilience, nor any way of developing it. It was imperative to be resistant, aware that this resistance was the fragile point (Vasconcelos, 2022, p.62).

Vasconcelos (2022) characterized this process of *hardening* and the consequent narrative *loop*, that continuously returns to the traumatic event as the milestone where their life begins. Her research was in the context of a hospital with families accompanying their children with cancer, however these characteristics studied are not limited to this specific situation expanding to a variety of traumas and pain.

Narrating one's own story about veganism allows a self-creation of the “new” I vegan after the “awakening”. This terminology, awakening, is commonly used by vegans when referring to the moment in which they “awake” for what they understand as an exploitation and an unmotivated death to which non-human animals are subordinated to satisfy non-essential humans' interest.

This “awakening” is a moment of intense suffering for some vegans, because, as Mann (2015) explains, in addition to the suffering caused by the awareness of the cruel reality of animals used by humans, they also feel guilty for having consumed animals for such a long time before becoming vegan, as well as a feeling of powerlessness for not being able to “awake” the world to veganism and therefore avoid all the suffering and death of animals. Furthermore, vegans after the “awakening” suffer for having their world view and way of living undermined, mocked, and disapproved (Buttny, Kinefuchi, 2020; Abonizio, 2018), besides experiencing micro aggressions, the feeling of uncertainty, and having to deal with the difficulties and limitation in the accomplishment of simple daily activities, as making their meals when in a social group (Rosenfield, 2018).

It is exactly to this traumatic moment of the “awakening” that the narratives of vegans refer to as their starting point. It is the narrative *loop* (“when I became vegan”, “after my awakening”, “after knowing” etc.) to which they return to constantly, since it was from and because of this “awakening” that everything changed and the journey of the anguish of being vegan in a non-vegan world began. Therefore, a new identity is established, driven by the challenge of having to live in a carnist world and all its implications.

These individuals, beyond this specific circumstance of becoming vegan after an “awakening”, according to Vasconcelos' (2002) theory, could be prompted by their subjectivity to narratively position themselves about the events along their experiences and from their own narrative, ponder such experiences, build knowledge, values and therefore establish their new identity. The “awakening” to veganism will be, as already mentioned, the passage port, from which these subjects will acknowledge their whole life, constructing a narrative loop that will guide their narratives in all its dimensions.

The next section of this paper will be dedicated to the analysis of an autobiographical narrative of a vegan⁵ who experiences vystopia and tells her story concerning veganism and how is it to be vegan in a non-vegan world. This autobiographical narrative was taken from the doctoral thesis' (Neres, 2024) corpus of the author of this paper. Aiming the obtention of autobiographical narratives of vystopia the researcher contacted a Brazilian psychologist specialized in vystopia who enabled this interaction between researcher and subjects. After complying with the protocol and necessary requirements for the use of such information the researcher contacted the research subject through WhatsApp asking the person to tell her/his story and experience with veganism, specifying the reasons to go vegan, how was the transition process and how is it to be vegan in a world that is not vegan.

The analyses are grounded on Vasconcelos' (2022) theory which enables a linguistic analysis of an autobiographical narrative without having to invoke "neighboring and insipid theories that do not feature the genuine taste that the story of an individual has" (Vasconcelos, 2022, p.67). A dialogue of these categories and elements of the narrative positioning defined by Vasconcelos (2022) with vystopia is illustrated in figure 1 below.

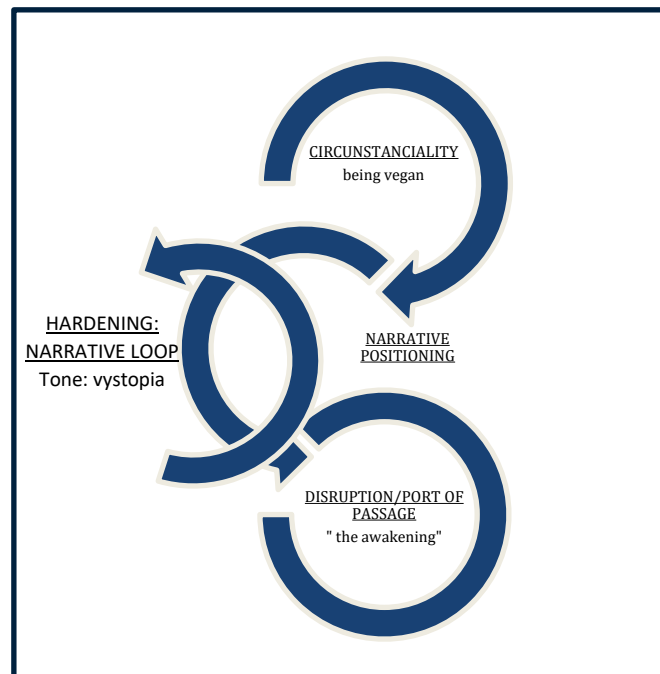


Figure 1: The narrative positioning and vystopia

Source: The author (2024)

The narrative positioning of the vystopian autobiography departs from the specific circumstance of being vegan in a world that is not vegan, and from this positioning this individual narrates his/her life experience as an assignment of its own subjectivity developing and establishing an identity. This building process will revisit continuously the breaking point, which for these individuals is the "awakening" to veganism. It will be from this passage port recovered from time to time that the narrative loop is established becoming responsible for dying the narrative in all its dimensions, in other words, the color of the anguish of being vegan in a world that is not vegan. Therefore, the categories of repeatability (frequency of narrated events) and value (used lexicon choice) receive a prominent role.

⁵ During the process of obtaining the narratives for the doctoral thesis no specific information was collected from the participants, such as age, where they live, etc.

4 A NARRATIVE OF THE ANGUISH OF BEING VEGAN IN A NON-VEGAN WORLD

The participant starts her narrative introducing herself as vegan, dating the moment of such change in her life, defining what is veganism for her and placing this transformation as an awakening, event that changed her life forever. From that moment on there is a before and an after in her timeline. Subsequently, she will narrate how this “awakening” arose in her life, how was the process of becoming vegan and all its implications and how is it to be vegan in a non-vegan world.

The following chart (chart 1) features each moment of the participants self-introduction and her initial experience with veganism.

<u>Moment 1:</u> Dates the moment of the “awakening” (using the terminology awakening) to veganism and defines her understanding over veganism.	Hi, my name is Simone, I live in Rio de Janeiro, and I am vegan since the end of 2015, December. Firstly, I would like to say that veganism has nothing, nothing to do with mysticism, religion, sect, or any other type of creed. Veganism is an ethical movement. It is something that should have been the normal for a long time, that is to perceive animals as animals and not as things. And it was this, it was for this that I awakened in December.
<u>Moment 2:</u> Her first contact with veganism/vegetarianism generated many myths and a very limited knowledge that today she understands as totally wrong according to her current knowledge of veganism.	I had a contact with vegan diet in a time, a long time ago, when I had, I attended Hare Krishna for some months. So, in my mind since then, the vegetarian diet was associated to mysticism.
<u>Moment 3:</u> An inner interest for vegetarianism.	In 2015 I was fond to stop eating animals, I was not feeling well.
<u>Moment 4:</u> Isolation for not knowing any vegan/vegetarian person and for not knowing anything about it.	I felt as I was in an island , and I asked so much and in a few months, I met a person
<u>Moment 5:</u> New information about veganism/vegetarianism was a great impact.	Her first post that I saw was near, we were close to Christmas, and she made a post with a Christmas turkey, a turkey, a cartoon writing a letter to Santa Claus saying that his wish was that people turned vegan. And that caused an impact on me.
<u>Moment 6:</u> First contact with veganism as she understands today – impact (positive).	Then, I contacted her, and we added each other, and she suggested me a group of vegetarian food and I was so impacted because all the idea I had in which it would be related to mysticism, it was, right there, it was broken, because I saw food that we eat daily, fast food and others that was nothing related to mystic spheres, it was normal daily food. That impacted me very much. It was my first impact.
Moment 7: Knowledge on veganism.	From that moment on I started being part of other groups and researching and it was when I discovered veganism that until then I knew absolutely nothing, I didn't even think about

it, nothing, nothing [...] And it was when I acknowledged veganism a so on, that it extended, that it was not only diet...

Chart 1: Self-introduction and the initial process of discovering veganism

Source: The author (2024)

As forementioned, while narrating, the subject observes, dialogues, and intervenes with her past to build her present identity (Vasconcelos, 2022). This construction is done from the interaction of the discursive, social, and linguistic dimensions (Holanda, 2020). It is possible to perceive this interaction of dimensions in the participants self-introduction.

In moment 1 the participant, right at the beginning of her narrative, has already positioned herself with the statement “I am vegan”, in other words, this is the moment and circumstance of her biographical narrative production. This circumstantiality, according to Vasconcelos (2022), is one of the discursive elements that anchors the positioning of subjects in their stories. The use of the verb “be”, that has a semantic feature of permanency shifting to what it refers an identity or quality of permanency (Castilho, 2010), has considerable relevance in this narrative. It is from this vegan identity that arose from the “awakening” that she is able to narrate, to understand the world, to judge, to act, etc.

The participant’s first contact with veganism is detailed in moment 2, when she says that this experience happened in a distant and punctual past that created on her an erroneous vision of vegetarianism/veganism. Even having a limited vision, she was very fond of not eating animals anymore, as told in moment 3. This lack of knowledge and doubts that reigned her life, added to the fact of not knowing any vegan or vegetarian person that could help and ease her endeavor made her feel very lonely (“I felt as I was in an island”). The feeling of not belonging to a place starts to emerge in her life. She starts reflecting upon the fact that she does not belong in the culture that normalizes unnecessary animal killing and exploitation.

While narrating this feeling she makes use of the past imperfect tense that has as one of its language functions to represent “the state of things that lasted in the past” (Castilho, 2014, p.432). This sense of loneliness was not something punctual in her life, lasting for a period of time until a specific moment when she met new people and had contact with new information, what expanded her horizons to learn more about vegetarianism and veganism. Because of this punctual fact, the feeling of the participant changes from a continuous state of loneliness to a feeling of impact, that was fundamental for her “awakening”. This feeling of impact in her life was narrated (moment 5 and 6) using the past perfect tense (“And that caused an impact on me”, “That impacted me very much. It was my first impact”), which unlike the imperfect tense it will indicate a punctual and complete action in the past.

In moment 7 of the narrative the participant will reaffirm that only with this new information that she knew what veganism was and from this moment on her life changed. This transformation moment of her life will become her “port of passage” (Vasconcelos, 2022, p.58) which she will return to constantly while narrating her story. This change will leave a past of lies behind, since she identifies herself not belonging anymore in the carnist world.

Chart 2, below, features the participants’ narration of her transition process to veganism. Vegans, regularly, use this terminology, “transition”, to refer to the process of changing daily carnist habits to vegan’s ones. Some make that change instantaneity, in other words, they change their diet, clothes, personal hygiene and other daily practices from the moment they decide to become vegan. In contrast, others need some time to adapt to the new vegan habits, which might take even some years to conclude the transition.

<u>Moment 8:</u> Beginning the transition process	First, I took out the land animals , not the aquatic ones, I used to eat not much fish actually so it was not so difficult.
<u>Moment 9:</u> New attitudes, new world comprehensions held her accomplish the transition process.	Then, when, on that week that I took out the animals, the land ones, I had a vision that was very clear, like those of science classes where we separate materials in a container. It exactly happened that. The animal kingdom, as a whole, went to one side, food that is plant, food is plant, it went to another side and products that can't come from animal exploitation went to another. It was incredible, it was an impressive vision, I had no floor because when we break a conditioned lie that was told to us during our whole life, it is very shocking. I had no floor literally, I was, I felt very strange, felt shame. It was very strange. But still I continued, and bit by bit I took out started taking out, first I had already taken out the land ones. I thought, well, the aquatic I am not going to eat as well, and on the second week I took out, second or third, I took out the eggs and milk, at once.
<u>Moment 10:</u> What veganism brought	I learned many things; veganism brought many things . Besides information that won't be said by anyone because animal exploitation is a stratospheric profit, everything in almost everything has exploitation, almost everything that we know, whether actions or products. I have had incredible learnings [...] so I could put each thing in its right place. Animal is animal, not food , feelings are feelings, they are not object, you know, things went to where they should be, since always and I realized how bad is the world , and people, and I awakened about me as well, I have always been humanist, and I had, I felt powerless to fight , and I also felt powerless when I used to see advertisements in TV commercials and news. I saw myself as an activist when I awakened for my, for my hypocrisy. It was very painful to see. I don't know what was more difficult, taking out, for instance, not going to the places I used to go, the products I used to use or the shame. Maybe the shame was the most painful because we imagine ourselves much better than we are, much fairer, much more honest, much nobler and, however, when we realize that we are part of the group that explores, that explore animals in a grotesque way, we feel completely lost.
<u>Moment 11:</u> Being vegan x being carnist	As how I had already concluded my transition, I had perceived the animals, I saw a life there , that was being glorified as a wonderful plate of food.
<u>Moment 12:</u> Despite the difficulties of living in a carnist world, being vegan is very joyful.	Carnists think that being vegetarian is limiting ourselves and it is totally the opposite. You open many doors and windows, you close one door, the door of exploitation and open several doors and windows, the ones of creativity, because there is a world out there. There are more than 300,000 edible plant species cataloged and people have no idea of that , because this is not disclosed. We live in an island of misinformation that interest the economic power that has its bases, its biggest profit bases. I can say this, I affirm this with no fear of mistake that it is animal exploitation, it is everywhere, in almost everything we use in a daily basis. But there is a way out, there are paths, and this path is being followed by many people, more and more. It a parallel world with no spotlight, made by ordinary people, because veganism is about simply being normal, it is looking at animals in a normal way and not as objects as we have learned.

Chart 2: The transition process to veganism

Source: The author (2024)

When narrating, in moment 8, how the process of habits change occurred, the participant uses the lexicon animals to refer to what typically the carnist culture names meat. This choice is a narrative attitude that builds a narrative positioning. Vasconcelos (2022) highlights that the element value which is this narrative attitude in the lexicon choice as another fundamental element to be considered by the discourse analyst.

This use of the lexicon animals to refer to the variety of meat eaten by the carnist culture is very common among vegans. This happens, exactly as that participant narrates in moment 9, because vegans, after the “awakening” understand that these so-called meats are not food, they are, in fact, animals and therefore should not be eaten. This use of the lexicon animals in this context is also a reason for many controversies and disagreements between vegans and carnists.

In accordance with Joy (2010) it is the carnist ideology and the psychological numbing, that includes negation, escape, routinization, objectification, deindividualization, dichotomization, rationalization, and dissociation that will be responsible for holding this distance between meat and animals. Carnists see food, however, vegans see an animal. This distinction is very clear and explicit in moment 11 of the narrative, an attitude and understanding that the participant has upon animals only because she crossed her port of passage.

Similarly, Buttny and Kinefuchi (2020) will explain that the carnist dominant discourse besides promoting an invisibility of the lives of the animals we consume, it also enables a dissociation between animals and meat, blurring the violent reality that animals for human consumption are submitted, practices that the use of language is capable of not only reflecting but also maintaining. Therefore, these authors understand that the carnist ideology reflects and maintains the invisibility of this distinction of an animal that is supposed to live and of food that comes from the plant kingdom, just as the participant narrates.

With this new world vision, the participant again emphasizes the impact that the “awakening” caused in her life and with it the suffering. In moments 9 and 10 of the narrative she describes a strange feeling and shame for having eaten animals for so long and for having lived in what she names as a lie for such a long time. In moment 10 of the narrative, she will detail the different pains that arose in her life after the “awakening”, such as, the awareness that animals are exploited on a large scale, that the world is bad, that she is powerless, that she was hypocritical for having lived great part of her life as part of the group she names as exploiter.

Finally, in moment 12 of her narrative, the participant will explain that all the suffering concerning veganism is not due to veganism itself, but rather to the fact that the world is not vegan. Veganism and the new world view and lifestyle will bring joyfulness for the vegan, just as the participant narrates, it is capable of opening several doors that were not perceived before the “awakening”. However, since this “awakening” is individual, this joyfulness carries difficulties, because the world continues to be carnist, therefore this vegan needs to learn how to live immersed in a world in which the moral values related to the relationship between human animals and non-human animals are totally antagonistic.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Similarly to other painful situations, the autobiographical narrative of anguish and pain of being vegan in a non-vegan world can be characterized by some discursive specificities due to the influence of strong contextual emotions involved. The process of *hardening* and its narrative *loop* described by Vasconcelos (2022) was a constant characteristic of the narrative. The participant clearly characterizes her “awakening” to veganism as her pivotal moment, delineating the before and the after in her life, and during her narrative it seems essential to come back to this moment because it will explain almost everything.

While pouring out her feelings, the subject was able to comprehend her experience and her capacity of surviving and learning lessons from the pain (Vasconcelos, 2022). As we have observed in the dystopian narrative the participant, despite all the difficulties of being vegan (a minority) in a non-vegan world she seems to understand that, according to her values and world view, she is following the right path, one that has opened several new opportunities.

Additionally, several elements contribute to and define the construction of the narrative positioning, such as circumstantiality, value, aspectuality, and repetition. All these elements are connected to the cyclic dimensions of narratives (Holanda, 2020) and respect the subjectivity, the experience, and the place of speech of the individual who is vegan and narrates the anguish of being vegan in a non-vegan world.

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