Relations
BEYOND ANTHROPOCENTRISM

12.1
June 2024

Decolonial Animal Ethics and Indigenous Philosophies

Edited by Francesco Allegri

Studies and Research Contributions

Comments, Debates, Reports and Interviews

Popular and Decolonial Veganism*

Animal Rights, Racialized and Indigenous Subjectivities in Latin America

Juan José Ponce León

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (España)

DOI: https://doi.org/10.7358/rela-2024-01-ponj

juan.ponce.leon.psicologo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The white-elitist veganism of the Global North does not adequately respond to the territorial, cultural, and economic particularities of the Latin American region. This article discusses the approaches of animal rights activists from the South and their critical handling of the animal question, which challenges the neocolonial and universalising logics characteristic of hegemonic animal advocacy. It seeks to explain empirically the composition of popular and decolonial styles of veganism in Latin America, using a qualitative methodology to analyse the life stories of Luis, Luz and Puka, indigenous animal rights activists from Ecuador and Peru. Thus, it describes the subjectivities of popular veganism which, sharing the wound of colonialism, develop critical decolonial discourses and practices that affirm the principles of the Andean cosmovision of Buen Vivir - Good Living, the return to the "chakra", respect for the living, the recovery of ancestral memory, and the defence of territorial food sovereignty.

Keywords: animal rights; anti-racist; decoloniality; ethics; indigenous; Latin American; plebeian; subjectivity; veganism; whiteness.

> *Kayachari ñukanchipak llakta kanka* (Tomorrow will be our time).
> Fernando Daquilema
>
> *You have to fight for everyone fairly, kindly, honestly, and rationally.*
> Tránsito Amaguaña
>
> *We are like quinoa grains – if we are alone the wind blows us far away, but if we are all in the same sack, the wind can do nothing. It will shake, but it won't make us fall.*
> Dolores Cacuango

* This article presents the results of the author's Doctoral Thesis.

1. Introduction

The theoretical and political challenge that seeks to unite anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian and plebeian horizons, configuring a veganism with an awareness of class, ethnology/race and gender, rooted in the territorial problems of the people, has not been a monolithic or unitary phenomenon in the Latin American region. Popular forms of veganism are part of an emerging sociopolitical matrix that has also emerged in allied processes, as in Colombia (Ávila Gaitán 2014, 2017), which tried to articulate an anti-speciesist agenda with the Colombian popular movement (e.g., Colectivo Estudios Abolicionistas por la Liberación Animal [The Collective of Abolitionist Studies for Animal Liberation] – CEALA; see the journal: *Animales & Sociedad*).

Similar processes are found in Bolivia, Peru, Costa Rica and Brazil (e.g., the Frente de Resistencia Animal y de la Tierra [Animal and Earth Resistance Front] of Costa Rica and the Movimento AfroVegano [AfroVegan Movement] of Brazil). Similarly in Brazil, the theoretical work of Davidson (2021a, 2021b, 2022) criticises the configuration of a white-elitist veganism in the region as a modern colonial import. She denounces its incapacity to articulate with other projects of social transformation, being reduced to a market niche. Such a prevailing normative expression of this type of veganism ignores the heterogeneity and intersectionality, for example, of the AfroVegan groups in Brazil, which have brought anti-racist struggles into dialogue with decolonial veganism (Trícia Disconzi and dos Santos Rodrigues Silva 2020).

In a framework that is similar to the decolonial positions of the South, but from countries of the North, a critical exercise has sought to challenge the neocolonial and racist views of white-elitist veganism (Harper 2012; Wrenn 2015; Wrenn 2019, 2020; Strutjers Montford and Taylor 2020; Navarro 2021). Such views emerge from a hegemonic composition of veganism as a lifestyle, through which capitalism generates a new option of consumption (Fernández and Parada Martínez 2022), accessible to a small sector of the population and sold as "ethical entrepreneurship": see the case of "Vegandale" (Kelpin 2020) or "Big Veganism" (Sexton, Garnett, and Lorimer 2022). These are seen to operate as a device of elitist and classist distinction, which ends up consolidating a kind of "vegan privilege" (Abhijat and Satabdee Routray 2022).

In this context, an important line of critical thought in North America, as in Brazil, has articulated an anti-racist criticism of white veganism (Polish 2016), betting on an Afro-vegan, postcolonial movement (Harper

1998, 2013; Harper 2010, 2011; Ko and Ko 2017; Boisseron 2018; Greenebaum 2018; Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2021).

These works denounce the epistemic and ethical-political splits in the composition of the white-hegemonic animal advocacy of the Global North and seek to respond to the neocolonial deployment of their totalising narratives, which have also influenced the composition of animal advocacy in Latin America. This line of criticism has its exceptions and porosities, in which the same subjects of the enunciation criticise, from concrete experiences of solidarity between indigenous groups and animal liberation activists (Legge and Taha 2017), or from racialised academics who denounce the discursive whitening of decolonial narratives in Critical Animal Studies (Belcourt 2020).

In summary, these critical notions agree that there is a historical composition of a white, elitist veganism, which is characterised by: (1) neocolonial logics that are built on notions of progress, economic development, and moral improvement of Western societies; and that, consequently, (2) are incapable, in practice, of articulating a political project imbricated with the most heartfelt needs of the peoples and territories. Thus, this veganism operates as a device of distinction, as an option of consumption and lifestyle of a certain group of white-mestizo urban citizens whose fundamental quality is to be "morally sophisticated". They fail to recognise the material, symbolic and spiritual conditions of marginalised subjects, whose very experience of animality has allowed them to live a process of political subjectivation anchored in class, ethnicity/race, gender and territoriality, which has nurtured alternative horizons of what in other theoretical works we have called "popular and decolonial veganism" (Ponce León 2021; Ponce León and Proaño 2020b, 2020a).

Thus, this article aims to empirically describe the core elements of this "popular veganism", in dialogue with the critical perspectives of animal advocacy that have jointly raised the intersection between decolonial views and plebeian[2] animalist horizons, and with so-called "decolonial, indigenous and black veganism". We work with the life stories of three indigenous animal activists, Luis, Luz and Puka, alongside my ethnographic field work within abolitionist animal rights advocacy in Ecuador, to account for the configuration of decolonial Latin American animal rights subjectivities. This commitment to "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo

[2] Plebeian should be understood as the irruption and affirmation of popular classes in the public space, related to processes of social transformation, historically denied by the dominant culture (Svampa 2010).

2010) has involved problematising the so-called "political subjects" of enunciation, so that ethical and political positions of certain racialised, indigenised, genderised and, transversally, animalised subjectivities, dialogue with the animal issue in Latin America.

2. Methodology

The methodology was qualitative, and the technique used for data production consisted of the life story of Luis Curillo, an activist with indigenous and worker roots, belonging to the Pajón de Guaro indigenous community in the Province of Chimborazo, in Ecuador. We also work with the life stories of Luz Zaruma, an indigenous Kiwcha Kañari woman from southern Ecuador, who runs a vegan restaurant based on native culinary traditions, and of Puka T'ika, an indigenous activist of Aimara and Quechua origin from Peru, as well as my ethnographic fieldwork within Ecuador's abolitionist animal rights movement, carried out between 2021 and 2022, which focused on the intersectional and decolonial discourses and practices of the country. Each interview focused on the experience and life history of the activists around his or her militant trajectory.

All the ethnographic material used here is the result of the author's permanent contact with the subjects through in-depth interviews and spaces for collective reflection such as the *Cycle of Conversations: Decolonising Veganism*, organised by the anti-speciesist and anarchist collective, ADLA (Activistas por la Defensa y Liberación Animal [Activists for Animal Defence and Liberation]), and the *Political School: Animal Advocacy of the South*, organised by ADLA and the Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Críticos Animales [Latin American Institute of Critical Animal Studies].

The qualitative study design followed a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006), which aims to preserve the basic components of the original grounded theory, without accepting its positivist starting point, assuming a relativist epistemology and emphasising a reflective stance (Charmaz 2009). Therefore, this analytical approach is significantly close to reflective thematic analysis (TA) (Braun and Clarke 2006). This opened up the possibility of generating situated knowledge (Haraway 1988), constructed in a specific local and cultural environment.

Hence, the study participants were selected according to theoretical sampling principles (Glaser and Strauss 2006). This type of non-probabilistic sampling was used due to the thematic specificity of the research. The interviews were conducted as an open and non-directive conversation, with the open introductory questions: "How did you get started in the activism?" and "What are the most relevant memories of your getting into the activism?". This enabled the author of this study to receive spontaneous responses that were then thematised to develop and permanently adjust a flexible interview guide.

The analysis of the interviews was made through the Atlas.ti program. Initially, the interview transcripts were analysed line by line, according to the open coding scheme, to generate substantive codes, that is, words that indicate a relationship with the research question (Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 2002). This initial coding was conducted through the software function that enables the generation of free quotes (Woolf 2014) and the thematic units were grouped into categories through two methods in the program, the *in vivo* coding system and the creation of hyperlinks between the quotes. This process favoured permanent comparison between the quotes and the codes, which helped to polish the categories developed.

At the beginning of the interviews, participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research and how the data will be used. Their participation was voluntary, and their consent was verbally informed and recorded.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. *Popular veganism and colonial wound: indigenous perspectives on the animal issue*

This study presents a certain type of development and parallel construction of an epistemic and political animal advocacy matrix that is marginalised and antagonistic with the white-hegemonic animal advocacy of the Global North. It shows an empirical and contextually situated substrate of popular veganism, with the aim of overcoming abstract theoretical dissertations that have not been able to anchor their critical notions in the practices and discourses of concrete political subjects that embody animal advocacy from the South. Thus, the cases of Luis, Luz and Puka

allow us to analyse and characterise what has been called popular and decolonial veganism, which will be developed here as the class consciousness and ethnic/racial and territorial self-determination of the social actors, which emerge from living in material conditions of exploitation and precariousness, in parallel with recognising the material conditions of subordination of non-human animals, called species awareness.

This configuration of what could be called "Indigenous Veganism" is characterised by: (a) taking up and rescuing the ancient memory of the Andean cosmovision of the peoples of the South (here it is worth noting the cultural and economic heterogeneity of indigenous and peasant communities in the region, although they do share horizons, practices, and common understandings), (b) criticising the instrumental rationality of capitalist modernity and the objectifying use of the living, (c) questioning the rural-city divide and getting involved in the struggles for food sovereignty and the defence of territory, and (d) looking with suspicion at elitist animal rights advocacy that ignores or shows itself indifferent to the most pressing material problems of the people (job insecurity, hunger, lack of access to health and education, conditions of exploitation of agricultural communities, the dispossession of land, and the expansion of extractive borders, the increase in the cost of living and the political persecution of militant defenders of nature, popular ecologists, the union movement and community feminists). This composition would be based on a shared sense of the so-called colonial wound: "[...] the pain, humiliation and indignation generated by the constant reproduction of the colonial wound originate, in turn, radical political projects, new kinds of knowledge and social movements" (Mignolo 2007, 119).

In this regard, it is noteworthy that Luis comes from a rural area, a small indigenous community called Pajón de Guaro, located in the Pallatanga canton in the Province of Chimborazo. His childhood and adolescence were lived in a context of worsening impoverishment. This is analytically important because it makes it possible to study the relationship between class, ethnicity and gender and the animal issue. Luis is thus an outlier, compared to the western tendency where the vegan profile is of middle-class and urban professionals (Nibert 2008). The life and material setting of his political enunciation allows us to investigate the trajectory of a working-class animal rights social actor with indigenous roots.

His origins and material conditions are significant since this socioeconomic reality represents broad sectors of the population in Latin America. In this way, Luis and Luz and Puka allow us to glimpse the porosities

of a veganism that is anchored in and appears as a refractory condition of a society marked by social inequalities and structurally asymmetric conditions. For this reason, animal rights, however critical they may be, run the risk of operating under a colonial structure of power (Quijano 1992, 2014), similar to that of the whitened elitist animal advocacy, to the extent that they do not take into account the common matrices of colonial domination: patriarchal humanism and capitalist modernity. This theoretical-political warning is based on the lack of materiality of reflections on decoloniality and critical animal studies that take specific political subjects as an analytical basis.

It is precisely the universalist claim, both of white-hegemonic animal advocacy and of the more critical perspectives in the field of CAS (Best 2014) due to their own internal colonialism, has made them unable to situate the ethnic/racial and territorial issue as the central axis of the analysis. The reason for this has been their contradictory defence of revisited notions of progress, moral evolution and the universalisation of animal rights (Ponce León 2021). These elements encompass the modern paradigm of Europeanised universal history. As Puka remarks:

> [...] there is an emphasis on a supposed moral superiority, which is heavily emphasised by western veganism. It is a very comfortable place, largely decontextualised, and little aware of the place of power from which it is speaking. It is a privileged place. It is also heavily influenced by Christianity, using guilt as a criterion to guide your actions. (Interview with the author, 2020)

This leads us to ask from a decolonial perspective, how are animal rights subjectivities that do not correspond to this Europeanised view of life incarnated? How are the cultural, social, and political formations proper to these peoples configured in relation to the potential for building an animal rights proposal based on epistemes belonging to the South? These questions are not minor, particularly for the Latin American region where its primary-export economies and the neo-developmental accounts of modernity have overshadowed other forms of living and have had the effect of resurging extractivist exploitation (Svampa 2010). Returning to Spivak (1998), this poses the important question: can the marginalised subject speak? Because the prevailing trend is a certain rhetoric of modernity (Mignolo 2010), even from the academy itself, which has sought to "enlighten" or "educate" the indigenised and racialised populations. This has, historically, involved exercising a type of epistemic violence against the peoples of the South (Spivak 1998).

In this way, decolonial veganism breaks into the civilising narrative and seeks to generate cracks in the discourses and practices affirmed by an enlightened West, in opposition to and attacking the peoples that exist outside or on the margins of modernity. Puka continues:

> What is qualified from the outside, saying – ah, look, the one who likes such a practice or uses animals in such a way is a savage! –, in fact, if it is qualified based on categories generated from outside, falls into this logic of – I'm going to civilise them. This does not mean that we don't have a critical stance, it doesn't mean that we cannot disagree, as I have had to do in community assemblies, saying: – no, not like animals –. (Interview with the author, 2020)

Luz speaks in a similar vein: "Thanks to the conquest, we have had to submit to new cultural forms, and, for this reason, here I am maintaining Andean grains, such as quinoa" (interview with the author, 2020). This political commitment to food sovereignty found in popular veganism seeks to recover the memory of their grandfathers and grandmothers, and to support the people of their fundamentally agricultural communities, protected by the Andean cosmovision and the political and cultural proposal of Allin Kawsay or Living Well, understood as a historical horizon of meaning and social existence that is alternative to the global coloniality of power (Aníbal Quijano 2014).

It is about a return to the land that restores value to peasant agriculture and a different way of relating to Nature, centred on the care and maintenance of life. This approach of the revitalisation of their history and culture occurs as a response, warns Luz, to a process of internal colonialism that devalues what is their own: "with the migration, people no longer want to stay in agriculture, now they want to have money, a car, a computer, it seems that the land no longer has value, they say: – I am poor –" (interview with the author, 2020).

It is important to note that while these indigenous animal rights subjects, from their own legitimacy, question: (a) the logic of the consumption and use of non-human animals, (b) developmentalist narratives, and (c) the Eurocentric homogenising ideas of Latin American nation-states, common in white-mestizo animal advocacy, they also present significant critiques within the indigenous world. These forms of popular veganism distance themselves from the grammars of modernity and are also critical of the romantic approaches to the way of relating to Nature and other animals that may be established in indigenous and peasant communities. It is a critical two-way exercise and, therefore, they include decolonising practices both outside and within their communities.

For this reason, as a response to colonial logics, popular veganism, contextually and historically situated with materialist viewpoints, located in marginality and with an ethical-political focus confronting anthropocentric speciesism, is anchored in what Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) called decolonising practices and discourses. More specifically, it is about anchoring ethical-political animal rights perspectives that recover the memory of grandparents, taitas, and mamas, and that take the tradition of over 500 years of anti-colonial resistance by all the peoples of the Abya-Yala as historical references of struggle. For this reason, they question a white-western veganism devoted to importing neo-colonialist and elitist grammars from the North. The principles on which the Andean cosmovision is based, such as the sense of commonality and community, function as an antidote to the individualist and neoliberal logic of white veganism, considered as a lifestyle.

3.2. *Andean cosmovision and decolonising animal rights practices*

It must be emphasised that these indigenised and racialised political subjects do not fall into the commonplace of romanticising what is indigenous and the agrarian world. In fact, disagreement and criticism within their own communities is crucial. For this reason, returning to Puka, it is a commitment to reaffirm identity: "We need moments to reaffirm our identities, and also our antispeciesist positions, which does not mean choosing between one and the other, which has sometimes been rather difficult due to its historical process" (interview with the author, 2020). This recovery of the memory together with commitment to the identity of the indigenous and of the animal is recognised by its actors as a contingent and mobile process, and from that place of ethical-political subjectivation arises the possibility of cultural questioning and transformation. As Puka asks:

> It's violent to us to believe that we have to be indigenous as in our origins and that we have no right to build emancipatory values for ourselves. There lies the challenge, to assume ourselves not as static cultures, but as processes of transformation. This also implies a generational dispute with great care and respecting the wisdom of our grandparents. Spirituality can accompany us in this greatly, from empathy. (Interview with the author, 2020)

This critical exercise of identity affirmation, which places the animal issue as the core of the debate, has in some cases implied a certain distancing of

these political subjects from their own indigenous communities, which have demanded other forms of relationship. As Luz remarks:

> [...] the cultural thing was that you had to kill the guinea pig, but I had no wish to do that when I was a teenager. They said that to be a woman you had to kill the guinea pig, I didn't want to kill it, I preferred to do other things, help in the minka [an ancient Andean community concept and practice, based on reciprocity and complementarity, which involves collective work in the agricultural context], be with people. [...] In the farming activities I saw the feelings of the animals, I saw that they cried, that they felt. I thought it was me who was exaggerating, I wanted to hug the animals. [...] When I grew up and they did the slaughter, I separated from the communities. Later, I began to understand that the killing was during festive times, that the West imposed that commercially you have to drink cola, eat meat, eggs, and milk every day. (Interview with the author, 2020)

Luis, Luz and Puka share certain characteristics of this critical and reflective distancing within the field of the popular, which presents challenges similar to those posed by Dunn (2019) about "indigenous veganism" and the problems related to class, privilege and the inaccessibility of "whitened" and, therefore, culturally limited vegan practices. On the one hand, it recognises in the indigenous world a completely different relationship both with food and with animals, and it also denounces the colonial role of the Western world in the processes of cultural and food transformation in communities and popular sectors.

The forms of relating to nature and to non-human animals in the indigenous peasant world cannot be compared with the resurgence of speciesist logics sharpened by the instrumental reason of modernity-coloniality. The consumerism of the middle and upper classes in the cities far exceeds the dynamics of consumption in the popular field. This would correspond to the modes of regulation of capitalism, in terms of post-Fordist accumulation regimes and the consolidation of welfare states that increased the capacity of consumption of the middle classes (Harvey 1998).

For this reason, these life stories and their particular ways of relating to animals acquire fundamental importance at an ethical-political and analytical level. Life in the countryside of these actors allowed them to establish affective relationships at an early age with non-human animals. For example, Luis remarks that he became best friends with a dog and a horse, that he took the sheep out to graze when he was four or five years old, that he saw litters of cats and dogs born, and fed and cared for chicks.

This generated a sensitive disposition of empathy and care, which began with the care of wildlife, then expanded with opposition to animal abuse and bullfighting, to years later assume a subordinate form of veganism, where material conditions and access to food played an important role.

In these subjectivation stories, none of the actors knew the western term: "veganism", but in their practices they had assumed certain ways of caring for, looking at and feeling the living, which can be compared to an anti-speciesist position, but which are located beyond the rationalist western perspectives from which animal ethics emerges. It is a way of relating and understanding the world that is core to the Andean cosmovision, which seeks Beautiful Living with the Earth and with animals. As Puka says:

> In my case, moving to defend animals has been a process that has involved doing it from my own kind of feelings; it is difficult for me to feel superior to someone, even though the West seeks justifications for why human beings are superior to animals. (Interview with the author, 2020)

This ontology is biocentric and, thanks to the historical defence of social movements, it has been possible to consolidate the Rights of Nature and Collective Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia. In 2019, in Ecuador, non-human animals were recognised as subjects of rights.

A fundamental feature of this process is the recovery of an ancestral memory of the wisdom of the communities' grandfathers and grandmothers, who tell of this type of harmonious relationship with the Pachamama[3] and, thus, it consists of a dynamic relationship of sensitisation. As Luz explains:

> The connection with Mama Earth does exist in the elderly, loving animals, raising, having that connection, conversing with plants, the chakras[4] [...] I've started with myself, going to talk with the earth, I want to feel sensitive, be gentle. Why are we so macho, so hard, so tough with Mother Earth? We don't want to be gentle! That has been very hard for me. I have in a way managed to open my heart, connect with Mother Nature and value the pure air, the mountains. Although people say that we are poor [...], but we

[3] Concept of the original peoples to designate Mother Earth, coming from the Quechua word "pacha", which means world, universe or time and "mama": mother.

[4] This is a production model of traditional indigenous agriculture, also incorporated by the mestizo peasant population, which works the crops based on the principle of complementarity and associativity in the Andean cosmovision.

> have mountains and rivers. That has been a contrast that they have not been able to understand. Only those who have not been so hard hit by modernity have realised that Nature is our mother. (Interview with the author, 2020)

Thus, the conformation of this popular veganism seeks to revalue a memory lost among the foundations of capitalist-modernity. These processes of animal subjectivation emphasise certain ways of feeling, which place affections and corporality as nodal ways of building empathy and recognition of the other. In this way, these political subjects, through their practices and ways of life, confront a civilisational matrix of the West that has historically tried to make them invisible. Luz refers to a specific type of reconnection with the Earth, a return to an original place of love, sensitivity and respect for life which, at the same time, is dynamic and capable of cultural adaptation without losing its constitutive principles of care.

In addition to this, Puka comments that when he learnt about anti-speciesism, this enabled him to assume an ethical position of care, based on sensitivity, from the point of view of the individuality of non-human animals, since in the indigenous world, while they recognise and value life, it is more in collective and community terms. Therefore, the dimension of criticism against internal colonialism and the colonisation of peoples is a core element of this decolonial veganism, which situates looking, feeling and your own body-territory as an anchor for decolonising animal rights practices.

3.3. *The defence of food sovereignty and the recovery of ancestral memory*

From the material realities of these subjects, these logics of consumption constitute a device of distinction and a place of class privilege, or as Potts (2016) puts it, the increase in the consumption of animals in the West is associated with a "meat culture", which operates for the countries of the Global South through a vertical integration into the production systems of globalised economies, the cultural correlate of which could be interpreted as an attempt at westernisation and whitening. As Luis says:

> I think that among Andean Communities eating meat is a luxury. I remember that until 13 years old we did not eat meat in the countryside, because it was too expensive; what's more, we have never, ever, gone to a butcher shop to buy. What I do remember is that we ate meat once a year, usually a relative killed a pig and invited the whole community and they ate it. (Interview with the author, 2019)

This story illustrates that, in Luis's experience, access to meat as it is lived in large cities is not the same as that of impoverished indigenous communities and, also, indicates a ritual and community dimension of the annual consumption of animals. Similarly, Luz says:

> I have realised that in the past there was no such thing as eating meat every day, in our indigenous world, it was more grains, fruits, vegetables, green leaves, cereals. Meat was eaten in rituals, festivals, in the Andean agricultural cycle, which are the four Raymis [Andean ceremonies to thank Mother Earth for the harvest]. (Interview with the author, 2020)

These accounts stress the constitutive communitarian dimension of the Andean cosmovision and, consequently, its direct relationship with the production of food through the chakra.

This is no minor element, since popular veganism is contextually conceived from the reality of these peoples that is not only material, but also cultural, symbolic and spiritual. This is one of the main reasons why a real exercise in the decoloniality within veganism requires distance from the moralistic, neo-colonial and "evangelical" positions on the animal question of white-elitist animal advocates.

In this way, a veganism is proposed that responds to the materiality of their peoples, which dialogues empathically with their horizons of meaning and, consequently, is capable of joining in the struggles and claims of their lands. One of these historical disputes of the indigenous peasant movement has revolved around food sovereignty, which is a political proposal of the Vía Campesina, affirming a peasant political subject and defending the people's autonomy over their food, in opposition to corporate food regimes and in tension against developmental imperatives and the modernisation of agriculture (Giunta 2018).

Ecuador and the other Andean countries are characterised by their agrobiodiversity. This enables greater access to food, which is easily found in markets and popular and neighborhood squares. This marks a substantial difference in the dynamics of food production and consumption between the rich countries of the North and the countries of the South, not only in terms of access but in terms of modes of production and type of food, since as described, the Andean world works the land and relates to animals based on their own cosmovisions. Luis describes the type of food that was usual for him in his childhood:

> Generally, the guinea pigs that my dad used to eat was only during potato planting, which was done every six months, or at harvest, so the rest of the time we ate only grains. My dad planted a lot of corn, potatoes, broad

> beans, peas, wheat, barley, lupine, lentils, and quinoa. We planted a lot of all these products. (Interview with the author, 2019)

In this way, the rural-city disconnect, the cultural annihilation that has undermined the ancestral practices of relating to the Earth and animals, of food cultivation and collective maintenance and care of life, as well as the historical neglect of the countryside by the state, is a politically significant element in the agenda of struggle of a decolonial plebeian veganism. In fact, its emancipatory potential lies in these points, allied with the other marginalised sectors through a politics of original memory. In this regard, Luz, who is devoted to rescuing and caring for the ancestral memory and knowledge of how to cultivate and prepare food (for example, through the use and cultivation of amaranth and quinoa), says that, as an indigenous woman, she has concentrated on "supporting my people of the communities, the farmers, making that communication link between the countryside and the city through agro-ecological fairs and through the vegan restaurant Quinoa" (interview with the author, 2020).

This rootedness in the material and spiritual conditions of the people awakened in Luis, Luz and Puka a popular and community ecological awareness of class and species. Daily access to these rural areas of the indigenous world, enabled by their life in the countryside, made it possible for them to be directly aware of the concrete consequences of the destruction caused by agriculture, livestock farming and extractivism.

4. Conclusions

This study has presented the practices and discourses of marginalised indigenous animal rights activists, which express a certain mode of identity and material connection with the land, where the collective production of food through the chakra and the defence of food sovereignty, and the recovery and revitalisation of the ancestral wisdom of the elders result in decolonising practices that enable the care and maintenance of life in their communities. This political exercise of memory may be understood as a response to the coloniality of knowledge, typical of Eurocentric modernity-coloniality, which affirms a techno-scientific rationality that silences other forms of marginal epistemes, such as decolonial veganism, and makes them invisible (Davidson 2021a).

These social actors rescue the principles of Good Living from the Andean cosmovision, regarding relationships of respect, reciprocity and

care for animals through the experience of their own sensitive and bodily relationship with Pachamama. This promotes a critical posture in the face of the neocolonial logic of white veganism while they also position themselves, in some cases, as agents challenging the speciesism and internal colonialism of their own communities.

The vital and material experiences of these subjects point up, at an empirical level, the structurally asymmetric and culturally heterogeneous conditions of Latin America which, historically, have generated a process of animalisation/sub-humanisation of the Other. As González notes: "One of the most obvious aspects of the intersectional operation between racism/coloniality and speciesism is the sub-humanisation of indigenous peoples and enslaved racialised people" (2021, 127). In this context and in response to the phenomenon of subalternisation, these conditions in turn guide these actors toward a specific configuration of decolonial veganism, based on the dignity of human and non-human life, and on the defence of its plurality.

For these subjects, it is problematic and even impossible to ignore the ethnic/racial, class and territorial problems of the peoples of their region. Returning to Ávila: "The crisis involves not only economic or political-institutional causes, but a war against difference and for the benefit of the One, pure and universal, promoted by the dominant Western thinking" (2017, 347). Thus, the analysis of the experiences and viewpoints of the actors directly questions the uncritical notion of the hegemonic white veganism of the North that presents itself as universal.

This study thus points up the great difference between decolonial and community forms of veganism and those that arise from western and urban schemata. The latter emerge and consolidate at a post-material, individualistic level, symbolically distant from the horizons of meaning of the subaltern sectors. This position of white privilege conditions the limited understanding of the animal issue and the inexorable link that has been described in this study with other popular issues, such as the relationship between animal rights and the defence of food sovereignty and territorial struggles.

The life experience of these actors demonstrates some porous forms of veganism, which act under a corrosive logic, capable of questioning both the anthropocentric left and the declassed, apolitical animal advocacy devoid of territorial and ethnic-racial perspectives. Popular forms of veganism in the region, however incipient they may be, have great emancipatory potential since they are built on the historical memory of indigenous peasant resistance in Latin America.

References

Abhijat, Sujata Roy, and Sudakhya Satabdee Routray. 2022. "Where Does the Privilige in Veganism Come from?". In *Sustainable Society: A New Beginning*, edited by Shahana A. M and Sivakumar A., 158-165. New York: Lulu Publication.

Ávila Gaitán, Iván. 2014. "Especismo antropocéntrico, veganismo moderno-colonial y configuración de formas-de-vida. Una propuesta política (ya en marcha)". *Revista Desde Abajo*.
https://www. desdeabajo. info/ambiente/item/25149-especismo-antropocentrico-veganismo-moderno-colonial-y-configuracion-deformas-de-vida-una-propuesta-politica-ya-en-marcha. html

Ávila Gaitán, Iván. 2017. "El Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Críticos Animales como proyecto decolonial". *Tabula Rasa* 27: 341-351. https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.454.

Belcourt, Billy-Ray. 2020. "An Indigenous Critique of Critical Animal Studies". In *Colonialism and Animality: Anti-Colonial Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies*, edited by Kelly Strutjers Montford and Chloë Taylor, 19-28. New York: Routledge.

Best, Steven. 2014. *The Politics of Total Liberation: Revolution for the 21st Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boisseron, Bénédicte. 2018. *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology". *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage Publications.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2009. "The Genesis, Grounds and Growth of Constructivist Grounded Theory". In *Developing Grounded Theory*, edited by Janice Morse, Barbara Bowers, Kathy Charmaz, Adele Clarke, Juliet Corbin, Caroline Jane Porr, and Phyllis Noerager Stern, 153-187. London: Routledge.

Cordeiro-Rodrigues, Luis. 2021. "Connecting Racial and Species Justice: Towards an Afrocentric Animal Advocacy". *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453721999693.

Davidson, Martina. 2021a. "Feminismo e projeto decoloniais. Ferramentas críticas para repensar o veganismo". *Diversitates International Journal* 13 (1): 1-24.

Davidson, Martina. 2021b. "Veganismo, vegan society e a ausência de antiespecismo enquanto preocupação política". *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Críticos Animales* 1 (8): 108-149.

Davidson, Martina. 2022. "Veganismo enquanto importação colonial. Um fenômeno de consumo do capitalismo". *Revista Estudos Libertários – URFJ* 04 (09): 30-60.

Dunn, Kirsty. 2019. "Kaimangatanga: Maori Perspectives on Veganism and Plant-Based Kai". *Animal Studies Journal* 8 (1): 42-65. https://ro.uow.edu.au/asjAvailableat:https://ro.uow.edu.au/asj/vol8/iss1/4

Fernández, Laura, and Gabriela Parada Martínez. 2022. "El veganismo no es una dieta. Una revisión crítica antigordofóbica y antiespecista del 'Veganismo de estilo de vida'". *Animal Ethics Review* 2 (1): 44-59.

Giunta, Isabella. 2018. "Soberanía alimentaria entre derechos del buen vivir y políticas agrarias en Ecuador". *Theomai* 38: 109-22. http://www.revista-theomai.unq.edu.ar/numero38

Glaser, Barney. 1978. *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley (CA): Sociology Press.

Glaser, Barney, and Anselm Strauss. 2006. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. London: AldineTransaction.

González, Anahí. 2021. "Políticas feministas de la animalidad. Decolonialidad, discapacidad y antiespecismo". *Instantes y Azares. Escrituras Nietzscheanas* 26: 123-146.

Greenebaum, Jessica. 2018. "Vegans of Color: Managing Visible and Invisible Stigmas". *Food, Culture and Society* 21 (5): 680-697. https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2018.1512285.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective". *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575-599.

Harper, Amie. 1998. "Vegan Consciousness and the Commodity Chain: On the Neoliberal, Afrocentric, and Decolonial Politics of 'Cruelty-Free'". PhD Dissertation. https://sistahvegan.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/harperpdftelfordupdates.pdf

Harper, Amie. 2010. *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*. New York: Lantern Books.

Harper, Amie. 2011. "Vegans of Color, Racialized Embodiment, and Problematics of the 'Exotic'". In *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*, edited by Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman, 221-238. London: MIT Press.

Harper, Amie. 2012. "Going beyond the Normative White 'Post-Racial' Vegan Epistemology". In *Taking Food Public: Redefi Ning Foodways in a Changing World*, edited by Psyche Williams-Forson and Carole Counihan, 155-174. New York - London: Routledge.

Harper, Amie. 2013. "Doing Veganism Differently: Racialized Trauma and the Personal Journey towards Vegan Healing". In *Doing Nutrition Differently Critical Approaches to Diet and Dietary Intervention*, edited by Allison Hayes-Conroy and Jessica Hayes-Conroy, 133-150. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Harvey, David. 1998. *La condición de la postmodernidad*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu.

Kelpin, Ryan. 2020. "Morality on Tap: The Production and Consumption of Morality by 'Vegandale'". *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 29 (2): 55-69.

Ko, Aph, and Syl Ko. 2017. *Aphro-Ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters*. New York: Lantern Books.

Legge, Melissa Marie, and Rasha Taha. 2017. "'Fake Vegans': Indigenous Solidarity and Animal Liberation Activism". *Journal of Indigenous Social Development* 6 (1): 63-81. http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/social_work/research/jisd/

Mignolo, Walter. 2007. *La idea de América Latina. La herida colonial y la opción decolonial*. Barcelona: Gedisa editorial.

Mignolo, Walter. 2010. *Desobediencia epistémica. Retórica de la modernidad, lógica de la colonialidad y gramática de la descolonialidad*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del signo.

Navarro, Marilisa C. 2021. "Radical Recipe: Veganism as Anti-Racism". In *The Routledge Handbook of Vegan Studies*, edited by Laura Wright, 282-294. New York: Routledge.

Nibert, David A. 2008. "Animal Rights and Human Social Issues". *Society & Animals* 2 (2): 115-124. https://doi.org/10.1163/156853094x00135.

Polish, Jennifer. 2016. "Decolonizing Veganism: On Resisting Vegan Whiteness and Racism". In *Critical Perspectives on Veganism*, edited by Jodey Castricano and Rasmus R. Simonsen, 373-391. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-33419-6_17.

Ponce León, Juan José. 2021. "¿Nuevo abolicionismo o veganismo popular? El problema de las políticas de la liberación total y sus vestigios moderno-coloniales". *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Críticos Animales* 1 (7): 342-371.

Ponce León, Juan José, and David Proaño. 2020a. "El Asunto antiespecista. Un desafío para la Izquierda". In *Reflexiones animalistas desde el Sur*, edited by Juan José Ponce León and Antonella Calle, 45-62. Quito: Editorial Abya Yala.

Ponce León, Juan José, and David Proaño. 2020b. "Reflexiones animalistas desde el Sur". In *Reflexiones animalistas desde el Sur*, edited by Juan José Ponce León and Antonella Calle, 23-44. Quito: Abya Yala.

Potts, Annie. 2016. "What Is Meat Culture?". In *Meat Culture*, edited by Annie Potts, 1-30. Boston: Brill.

Quijano, Aníbal. 1992. "Colonialidad y Modernidad-Racionalidad". In *Los conquistados 1492 y la población indígena de Las Américas*, 437-447. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores.

Quijano, Aníbal. 2014a. "'Bien vivir'. Entre el 'desarrollo' y la des/colonialidad del poder". In *Cuestiones y horizontes. De la dependencia histórica-estructural a la colonialidad/descolonialidad del poder*, 847-859. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Quijano, Aníbal. 2014b. "Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina". In *Cuestiones y horizontes. De la dependencia histórico-estructural a la colonialidad/descolonialidad del poder*, 777-832. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia. 2010. *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.

Sexton, Alexandra E., Tara Garnett, and Jamie Lorimer. 2022. "Vegan Food Geographies and the Rise of Big Veganism". *Progress in Human Geography* 46 (2): 605-628. https://doi.org/10.1177/03091325211051021.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1998. "¿Puede hablar el sujeto subalterno?", edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. *Orbis Tertius* 3 (6): 1-44. http://www.orbistertius.unlp.edu.ar/

Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet Corbin. 2002. *Bases de la investigación cualitativa. Técnicas y procedimientos para desarrollar la teoría fundada*. Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquía.

Strutjers Montford, Kelly, and Chloë Taylor. 2020. *Colonialism and Animality: Anti-Colonial Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Svampa, Maristella. 2010. "Hacia una gramática de las luchas en América Latina. Movilización plebeya, demandas de autonomía y giro eco-territorial". *Revista Internacional de Filosofía Política* 35: 21-46.

Trícia Disconzi, Nina, and Fernanda dos Santos Rodrigues Silva. 2020. "Movimento afrovegano e interseccionalidade. Diálogos possíveis entre o Movimento Animalista e o Movimento Negro". *Revista Brasileira de Direito Animal* 15 (1): 90-108.

Woolf, Nicholas. 2014. "Using Quotation Names for Coding: An Illustration from Grounded Theory". https://study.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/chapter_5.pdf

Wrenn, Corey Lee. 2015. "Human Supremacy, Post-Speciesist Ideology, and the Case for Anti-Colonialist Veganism". In *Animals in Human Society: Amazing Creatures Who Share Our Planet*, edited by Daniel Moorehead, 55-70. Lanham (MD): University Press of America.

Wrenn, Corey Lee. 2019. "Black Veganism and the Animality Politic". *Society & Animals* 27 (1): 127-131. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341578.

Wrenn, Corey Lee. 2020. "Breaking the Spell: A Critique of Intersectionality and Veganism in Anti-Racist Activism". *Society & Animals* 28 (3): 327-330. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-bja10004.

How to cite this paper: Ponce León, Juan José. 2024. "Popular and Decolonial Veganism: Animal Rights, Racialized and Indigenous Subjectivities in Latin America". *Relations. Beyond Anthropocentrism* 12 (1): 49-67. https://doi.org/10.7358/rela-2024-01-ponj