



# Philosophical and scientific aspects of veganism

**Veganism** as a subject has increasingly been featured in the media. The Guardian, The New York Times and other prominent media outlets write about veganism more and more often due to the increase in the number of people who identify as vegan. According to polls, in the US only 1% of the population identified as vegan in 2014, while that number rises to 6% in 2017. According to Google, search for the term “vegan” via their search engine has risen by 660% since 2011. Having taken these, as well as many other indications of the rise in popularity of veganism into account, we arrive at the conclusion that academia should also comment on, analyze and offer insights about this phenomenon. We want to approach veganism through a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary lens, from various relevant perspectives, chiefly a philosophical (i.e. conceptual, ethical, political, ontological, and epistemological), economic, sociological, psychological, anthropological, biological, medicinal, legal and theological or religious perspective.



We hope to approach the subject of veganism scientifically, analyze it as a social and ethical phenomenon, a worldview and a political movement. We will aim to elaborate on its goals, strategies, and potential in modern political discourse. The subject can be approached in many distinct ways:

- Through the lens of social injustice, which entails the problem of animals as apolitical beings within political discourse and potential holders of rights without reciprocal moral and legal obligations.
- Through the activist dimension of veganism primarily concerned with diet. An important aspect are health considerations, such as switching to a plant-based diet to avoid heart disease and stroke, some types of cancer and diabetes, as well as avoiding antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which can result from a diet that includes meat, due to certain practices in the meat industry. We want to examine claims of correlation between a vegan diet and lower incidence of said diseases and contrary claims of vegan diet not being able to satisfy the nutritive requirements of the human body. It may also be informative to consider the interests of pharmaceutical companies in maintaining the status quo when it comes to dietary habits, due to the profit-oriented nature of capitalist institutions.
- Through a related perspective on the meat industry as regards workers' rights. Badly paid or even unpaid slaughterhouse workers are often immigrants, sometimes even the victims of human trafficking. The job entails a high risk of bodily harm, and, since the human mind does not easily cope with the level of violence inherent in the job, such workers often develop psychological conditions, of which the most common by far is PTSD. On the other hand, many argue that widespread adoption of a vegan diet may spell ruin for many farmers and small business owners and that the subsidies for meat and dairy industries need to remain on economic grounds.
- Through the lens of ecology. Problems such as deforestation caused by monocultural farming of plants used as food for cattle, wasting water, creating "holes" in the ocean by dumping the excrement of cattle, overfishing, degradation of arable land, releasing CO<sub>2</sub> and methane and many others can be related to the choice to go vegan. However, some ecologists argue the opposite, that cattle-rearing has the potential to sequester CO<sub>2</sub> content in the atmosphere, and that reforestation may be achieved with only a reduction in meat consumption.
- In addition to these approaches, an interesting analysis may be reached by examining how meat is connected to masculinity in advertising: commercials display attractive women with meat, cows in make-up, cows, pigs and chicken in high heels, which are ready for male consumption, just like the objectified attractive women in all other commercials.

Veganism, though fundamentally a basic idea, entails a great number of problems and potential solutions which remain unexamined. The goal of this interdisciplinary conference is to provide those interested in the subject a platform to present their ideas, data and arguments, as well as test their own assumptions among people who, broadly speaking, share a common interest, test the strength of their arguments for veganism, as well as the strength of their criticisms and competing systems. This interdisciplinary conference is intended for all those who want to discuss veganism philosophically and scientifically, mainly by way of arguing for or opposing the acceptance of a vegan diet by the general population as a way of resolving serious social and ecological problems, but also by way of discussing different

Some of the suggested topics:

01. Possible strategies for creating a vegan utopia
02. Plans for a vegan utopia: vegan futurology and lifestyle
03. Potential for a vegan criticism of capitalism
04. Veganism in religion: existing traditions and potentials
05. Veganism and problems in ecology
06. Veganism and health problems
07. Veganism and social issues (e.g. hunger)
08. Animal rights: between animal freedom and animal welfare
09. Lobbying industries which provide animal-derived products in schools
10. Influence of various interests on the illusion of meat being healthy
11. Veganism and communism, anarchism, capitalism, nationalism, Nazism...
12. Discrimination against vegans in public kitchens
13. Exploitation of animals through a feminist lens
14. Commercialization of animals through a feminist lens
15. Workers' rights in the meat industry
16. Stigmatization of vegans in modern society
17. How justified is the comparison to slavery and the Holocaust?
18. Question of the ontological difference between humans and non-human animals
19. Speciesism: critique of the phenomenon and of the very term
20. Moral status of animals
21. Benign carnivorous diets
22. Defining the concept of veganism
23. Radical ecological movements: deep ecology, dark ecology, anarchoprimitivism, social ecology, bioregionalism, ecofeminism
24. Utilitarianism of preferences and the problem of experimenting upon animals
25. Possibility of a deontological ethical foundation for protecting and/or freeing the animals
26. Plant-based diets vs. omnivorous diets vs. pure carnivorous diets – a comparison of the benefits and the drawbacks in the search of the optimal diet
27. (Un)sustainability of a meat-based diet in capitalism
28. Environmental aesthetics for green architecture