Vegan Universalism and Indigenous Food Sovereignty

On the Socio-Cultural Limits of Moral Reasoning

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I provide a reading of the recurring conflict between settler vegan claims to universalism and Indigenous rejections of this claim. I show one way in which such rejections can be justified: While veganism as a practice or a set of action-guiding moral norms is not inherently culturally specific, the justificatory frameworks deployed by various settler veganisms are directly tied to particular cultural, socio-historical, political and discursive locations. The further we move from these locations, the more the validity and moral pull of settler vegan arguments diminishes. Acknowledging this is a precondition for productive conversations between settler vegans and Indigenous interlocutors.

Keywords:

Veganism; animal ethics; Indigenous food sovereignty; Native American worldviews; settler colonialism

INTRODUCTION

In this paper,[1] I provide a reading of the recurring conflict between settler vegan claims to universalism and Indigenous rejections of this claim (Kymlicka & Donaldson, 2015; Kim, 2015). I show one way in which such rejections can be justified. I suggest that while veganism as a *practice* or even as a *set of action-guiding moral claims* is not inherently culturally specific, settler veganisms understood as a set of *justificatory frameworks*[2] for this practice in settler societies are directly tied to particular cultural, socio-historical, political and discursive locations and, specifically, to the moral understandings[3] inherent to these locations. The further we move from these locations, the more the validity and the moral pull[4] of settler arguments for vegan practice diminish.

In suggesting this, I point to an intrinsic limitation of settler vegan arguments that is meant to add to other legitimate, but merely extrinsic, concerns about settler veganisms. The latter would be countervailing moral and political reasons against (imposing) settler vegan positions—having to do primarily with concerns about perpetuating the harms and injustices of settler colonialism as a genocidal structure (Gaard, 2001; Wolfe, 2006; Coté, 2016; Whitt & Clarke, 2019; Hart, 2020)—that simply outweigh or suspend it while leaving its prima facie universalism intact or unaddressed.

While my rejection of settler vegan universalism is intrinsic to settler vegan positions in that it points out the inherent particularity of their *reasoning*, this should be distinguished from the claim that veganism *as a practice* or *a set of moral claims* is inherently white or Euro-centric and thus at odds with Indigenous outlooks.[5] This claim ignores non-Euro vegan and vegetarian traditions and practices (Deckha, 2012; Aristarkhova, 2012; Harper, 2010; Ko & Ko, 2017; Chu, 2019) and runs the risk of assuming a timeless and monolithic essence of Indigenous cultures (Linch & Holland, 2017, p. 328f.) and of marking Indigenous vegans as "inauthentic" (Robinson, 2014, p. 683; Burkhart, 2019, p. 70, passim). Rather, the issue here is one of the culturally and historically embedded nature of moral reasoning.

What I propose is a rethinking of the nature and scope of common moral arguments for (especially dietary) veganism as it developed and is practiced and thought about in industrialized (settler-)colonial Euro-dominant nations (henceforth settler veganisms[6]). I am not referring here to the (widely recognized) fact that these arguments and practices are not *applicable* in all contexts, while remaining theoretically valid (Jones, 2016, p. 16). Rather, I argue that many of the principles and arguments supporting settler vegan practice might not be equally *intelligible*, *reasonable* and *valid*[7] in all contexts.

This will help us reframe the conflict between the presumably *universal* claims of various settler veganisms (Francione, 2012; Steiner, 2013; Kim, 2015, p. 206; Jones, 2016) and the insistence, for instance by food sovereignty advocates (Via Campesina, 2007; Patel,

2009; Noll & Murdock, 2019), on the right to self-determination by *particular* communities as a—politically charged—conflict between particular positions. To be sure, following Laurelyn Whitt, I do not deny "the diversity and non-unitary character of both 'indigenous' and 'western'" and that "[t]here are differences within, and similarities across, western and indigenous" outlooks that belie any "simple dichotomy" (Whitt, 2009, xvi). Nevertheless, I assume that certain moral understandings and hermeneutical commitments tend to be prevalent among settler vegans and Indigenous people, respectively.

I do outline four of these prevalent understandings and commitments below to give a concrete sense of how we might understand the particularity of many settler vegan forms of moral reasoning. However, given the diverse and dynamic character of settler vegan discourse, I ultimately hesitate to define settler veganisms through a clear set of, however common, necessary and sufficient commitments. Instead, what makes someone, such as myself, a *settler* vegan is their reliance on forms of reasoning that are conceptually, historically and materially linked to settler cultures. Thus, my understanding of settler veganisms is ultimately genealogical or formal rather than substantial. This means that what I have to say here is meant to address even settler vegans who do not subscribe to all or even any of the commitments I outline below. These commitments are meant to exemplify a broader point about the difficulty of settler-Native conversations. This difficulty is rooted in the fact that settler cultures are not just particular and distinct from Indigenous cultures. Rather, they often (though not always) evolved in tension and direct conflict with the latter—for instance, when it comes to ideas about food (Lesnik, 2019). Hence, justificatory frameworks tied to and emerging out of these often anti-Indigenous settler cultures and histories might run into conflicts with Indigenous ways of reasoning and sense-making in ways that are hard to predict and evaluate. I therefore suggest that all settler vegans, by virtue of the intertwinement of their modes of reasoning with settler cultures, have reason to remain humble regarding the reach of these modes of reasoning when deploying them in conversation with Indigenous interlocutors.

My goal in making a case for this particular rootedness of settler vegan positions is not to blunt either the force of recognizing the moral standing of non-human animals or to deny the possibility for dialogue. Indeed, given the anti-vegan prejudice in many societies (MacInnis & Hodson, 2017; Earle et al., 2019; Vandermoere et al., 2019), I should say that my argument is perfectly consistent with the claim that the widespread adoption of veganism or vegetarianism would, in terms of overall impacts on humans, animals and ecosystems, be much preferable to the current global industrial food system with its unprecedented focus on animal products (Poore & Nemecek, 2018; Erb et al., 2016; Springmann et al., 2016; Scarborough et al., 2014; Weis, 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 2009; Stănescu, 2010; Stănescu, 2013). Rather, I wish to caution my fellow settler vegans that this moral force can find expression and come to make sense in different ways. The hope is that recognizing this will make conversations on this issue a little more productive and perhaps constitute a step towards an at least partial alignment between the liberatory goals of settler vegans and those of Indigenous anti- and decolonial movements and theories—an alignment that nevertheless would leave room for what Tuck and Yang call an "ethic of incommensurability" (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

In fact, recognizing the socio-cultural limits of prevalent settler assumptions vis-à-vis prevalent Indigenous assumptions has important political implications in that assuming the universality of various settler forms of reasoning—vegan or not—is integral to settler colonialism (Whitt, 2009, p. 72; Burkhart, 2019, p. 45). Conversely, recognizing the independence of Indigenous forms of reasoning and sense-making could help facilitate the recognition of political independence and sovereignty, especially given the centrality of land within Indigenous (moral) understandings (Turner, 2020; Whyte & Meissner, 2021) and the way food sovereignty is an element of decolonization (Noll & Murdock, 2019, p. 12; Grey & Patel, 2015).

I begin with a brief discussion of Indigenous food sovereignty as one way to bring into focus the tension between settler vegans and their Indigenous critics. I then outline the initial plausibility of settler vegan outlooks, but suggest that they must ultimately fail in their universal aspirations, due to their rootedness in particular cultural contexts. I establish the particularity of settler vegan outlooks by showing the difficulty of accessing a universally valid procedure to assess the best way to manage food-related violence. The argument primarily revolves around illustrating how, first, some of the central conceptual commitments and related moral understandings undergirding many forms of settler vegan universalism are not shared by many Indigenous outlooks. Second, I suggest that the alternative commitments underlying these latter outlooks are prima facie just as reasonable to assume as its settler counterparts—all the

while we lack a neutral framework allowing us to arbitrate fairly between these competing reasonable commitments and moral understandings.

I. VEGAN UNIVERSALISM AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

One way in which we can understand the conflict between some settler vegans and certain Indigenous communities is through the tension between settler vegan claims to universalism and Indigenous claims to food sovereignty, i.e., to "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define *their own* food and agriculture systems" (Via Campesina, 2007, emphasis mine). Food sovereignty is not just about having various food stuffs reliably available for production, consumption, and distribution, but also a community's ability to autonomously determine *how* various food stuffs are produced, consumed and distributed in line with the community's moral and political commitments (Edelman, 2014; Noll & Murdock, 2019).

Importantly, community autonomy here also means autonomy in relation to land and thus regarding the treatment of animals whose bodies might end up as food. This is where the conflict can emerge, such as in the opposition of some vegans and animal ethicists to traditional Indigenous hunting practices—e.g., Inuit seal (Randhawa, 2017; Chang, 2020; Nussbaum, 2022, pp. 186f.), Haudenosaunee (Kymlicka & Donaldson, 2015) or Chippewa (Nussbaum, 2022, p. 185) deer, or Makah whale hunting (Kim, 2015)—that are defended with reference to political self-determination (Watt-Cloutier, 2015; Nieves, 2020; McCallin, 2018; Wadiwel, 2018).

The conflict can arise from the assumption that (prima facie) "every human being on the planet is morally obligated to become vegan," (Jones, 2016, p.16) i.e., obligated to not harm or kill animals unless it is required to meet a basic human need.[8] Ethical vegans might still de facto respect the right of other communities to live according to their own forms of human/animal normativity (for example for historical and political reasons (ibid.)), but they would see this normativity as falling short of the universal standards of veganism.

I suggest that the root of settler vegan presumptions of universality lies in their reliance on two imaginative exercises applied to food-practice-related animal death or suffering. First, vegans take the perspective of an animal being killed or assaulted. We could call this animal perspective taking (APT). This exercise presumably suspends any human frames of normativity that justify the act being evaluated. All that remains is the animal's presumed aversion to the act. Thus, Val Plumwood references Marti Kheel and Carol Adams as saying that Indigenous practices of respect "make(…) no difference to the animal" (Plumwood, 2000, p. 299).[9] Assuming, as I do, that animals matter morally, this invites the normative question of whether a certain act is necessary. This is where vegans imagine a way to fulfill the needs in question that doesn't require us to cause this *specific kind* of death or suffering (for instance by getting nutrients elsewhere). We could call this specific idealistic variation (SIV). Thus, the act in question appears unnecessary. APT and SIV, taken together, make a specific (kind of) food-related practice (insofar as it unnecessarily causes animal death or suffering) appear unjustifiable as an unnecessary violation of the animal's body-mind integrity.[10] It would be nothing but an exercise of power against an unwilling subject, indeed an act of "cultural imperialism" (Gruen, 2009, p. 164) against animals that would at least partially run parallel to the colonialism that targets the self-determination of Indigenous communities. This food-related practice of taking animal life would thus be prima facie wrong—even though, again, there might be countervailing reasons to allow it.

II. THE DILEMMA OF NECESSARY CONSUMPTION

I do not deny that these imaginative exercises show that specific food-related practices are morally questionable (in the sense that they warrant moral questioning and vigilance insofar as they involve morally charged phenomena such as death, suffering and the application of force) and perhaps even wrong. However, this is not enough to reject a practice or an act as illegitimate. Instead, I argue, we have to evaluate a food regime—understood as the way in which a particular community organizes (materially and discursively) the production, consumption and distribution of food—as a whole (Plumwood, 2000, p. 300). This is because—at least currently and for the foreseeable future as well as in its historical constitution—*every* food regime includes such morally questionable and potentially dubious practices. In particular, this is also true for settler vegan food regimes, especially insofar as they are integrated into settler-industrial systems of production.[11]

Thus, Lisa Heldke suggests we reduce the focus on particular food-related acts or practices and instead think about food through a relational ontology where every food item and every act of consumption are not isolated,

but nodes in a complex set of relations, "virtually" all of which involve "death…, suffering" and "violence" to some extent (Heldke, 2012, p. 68).[12]

Indeed, if we assume a broad definition of violence as a kind of destructive force, or as any act or structure that directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, harms or destroys the mental and/or physical integrity of another being,[13] we can see that violence is hard to avoid for beings like us who "must consume" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 177; see also Gruen & Jones, 2015, p. 158). And while there might be some acts of consumption that could arguably be seen as free of violence, such as picking and eating some wild berries, it seems unlikely that someone could live their whole life in this way, let alone that we could build an entire food regime only consisting of such acts.

Thus, when morally evaluating food practices, we ought to shift the focus from individual and momentary acts of killing and consumption to a food regime as a whole, in a way that poses anew the question of how settler veganisms establish their universality: Showing that a *specific* food-related act or practice of violence against animals is unnecessary will not do, given that we cannot completely eliminate all such violence. While no *one* practice or act of violence against animals is necessary, at least now and for the foreseeable future *some* are. This constitutes the dilemma of necessary consumption (DNC), which is the dilemma posed to normative beings such as ourselves by the concurrence of the necessity of consumption and the involved violence and our ability to morally question each such act of violence. Thus, the focus of food ethics insofar as it asks how to consume well should be not on specific practices or acts within a food regime, but the entire food regime as a response to this dilemma.

This is insofar as a food regime can be understood as a socio-political arrangement (involving pragmatic, institutional, axiological, phenomenological, aesthetic and conceptual commitments) that manages our need to violently take non-human life by, theoretically and practically, prohibiting, tempering and highlighting some forms of violence in exchange for allowing, encouraging or rendering invisible others. A food regime thus constitutes not so much a solution to the problem of violence through consumption, but an attempt to manage this phenomenon. It is an *economy* of violence (Derrida, 2001, pp. 145f.) (and of death and suffering): specific (kinds of) lives and flourishing are exchanged for others or certain forms of violence are avoided at the cost of engaging in others. In this sense, it is an attempt to morally hedge the necessity to live with morally questionable and perhaps dubious acts.

The task of moral evaluation then is one involving the holistic evaluation of an entire (existing or projected) food regime. Indeed, arguments for veganism often take this holistic form when (settler) vegans respond to charges that veganism is also violent by arguing, convincingly, that, *all things being equal*, being vegan would much reduce (though not eliminate) death, suffering and injustice in the world. However, all things would *not* be equal when a settler vegan critic of Indigenous food practices seeks to compare Indigenous food regimes[14] (in their actual and aspirational nature) to partially realized and partially aspired to vegan food regimes.

III. THE LIMITS OF VEGANISM

For the remainder of this paper, I suggest that the possibility of such a comparative evaluation is highly doubtful. It is the more doubtful, the more different two food regimes are in terms of their constitutive discursive and material commitments. Specifically, if we look at some the prevalent discursive commitments (including the moral understandings) of Indigenous worldviews, we find that they are quite different from the corresponding prevalent settler (vegan) commitments.[15] What is important to remember here is that settler vegan claims to moral superiority are primarily directed at *settler* omnivorism, i.e., the consumption or use of certain animals within a settler-industrial context that settler vegan critics largely share in. Settler veganisms thus constitute an autochthonous oppositional outlook, indeed a kind of boycott (Dickstein at al., 2020): they set themselves up against a specific food regime from *within* this food regime, i.e., while sharing many of the material and discursive commitments and relations that constitute the dominant food regime (Cochrane & Cojocaru, 2022, p. 2)—including, though not always uncritically (Deckha, 2020; Montford & Taylor, 2020b), settler colonialism. They are, in many ways, a kind of loyal opposition. It is this shared material and discursive world that grounds the normative pull of settler vegan positions within the Euro-dominant settler-industrial food regime. However, where settler vegan critiques are directed at Indigenous food regimes, this shared world is often either missing or shared non-reciprocally (i.e., even to the extent the world is materially shared, it is often shared neither aspirationally nor discursively). This significantly complicates any comparative evaluation.

This is because—just as would be the case for "disparate social-moral cultures" more broadly (Walker,

2007, p. 260)—, if we are comparing food regimes largely dissimilar in terms of their material and discursive commitments, we lack access to a shared set of evaluative criteria that enable a fair comparison. The problem is that many, if not all, candidates for universal criteria for a presumably fair comparison turn out to be (reliant on) particular hermeneutical assumptions—i.e., assumptions central to sense-making (assumptions which may also double as moral understandings, i.e., understandings central to governing our moral lives)—, as well as on particular material contexts (such as industrial modes of production). I will go over four such seemingly universal but in fact particular assumptions or discursive commitments below. For now, I provide a general account of why certain particular assumptions are mistaken for universal and how this creates a problem for comparative evaluations of significantly different food regimes.

Certain assumptions seem universal to most members of a society (especially those within dominant groups) insofar as they are pervasive as well as constitutive discursive commitments of a communal culture. They are pervasive in that they are operative in most people's views of and interactions with the world. They are constitutive insofar as they conceptually condition the intelligibility or consistency of many other assumptions, categories and concepts at work in the culture. Furthermore, these discursive assumptions are rendered plausible by the very material world they also help justify.[16] As such, these commitments generally go unquestioned—and indeed they *can* only be questioned relatively (i.e., in a seemingly circular negotiation with other constitutive and comparatively fixed commitments) rather than fundamentally.

This matters for comparing food regimes because these regimes, especially insofar as they constitute a response to an existential question (i.e., a question that concerns the general nature of existence, namely how to take life well), precisely deploy such seemingly universal, but actually culturally specific, assumptions. Indeed, food regimes differ partially insofar as they rely on different pervasive and constitutive hermeneutical commitments. Because of their locally pervasive nature, these commitments would not just shape each respective food regime; they would also, insofar as they are constitutive and pervasive of each culture, influence what each community would *take to be* viable candidates for presumably universal criteria of evaluation that would allow us to arbitrate between different food regimes. Thus, some reliance on culturally specific criteria is uncircumventable in our attempts to compare food regimes (which, in turn, are tied to some of the same particular assumptions). This would skew the evaluation in favor of one food regime or another (namely in favor of whichever regime is culturally and conceptually aligned with *our* evaluate criteria). Thus, settler vegans have reason to doubt their ability to fairly evaluate Indigenous food regimes.

Before giving a more concrete illustration of this, I do want to point out that I do not take my argument here to amount to moral relativism understood as the idea that what is actually right for one community might be actually wrong for another and vica versa. My argument here is more concerned with moral epistemology than moral ontology: It does not concern what *is* morally right or wrong, but rather the discursive means by which we come to form our individual and collective beliefs about moral states of affairs. If these discursive means (along with the material and social relations that ground and are shaped by them) differ between two communities or are in tension, we cannot expect one side to simply acquiesce to deploy the discursive tools of the other side—especially if the latter has a long-standing and ongoing history of repressing the former's discursive practices and of erasing the material and social worlds in which those practices make sense.

Thus, while I assume "moral diversity" (Plakias, 2020, p. 155) when it comes to the moral understandings prevalent in Indigenous and settler cultures, I do not presume to know if or how that diversity links to the kinds of moral disagreements often seen as the basis for moral relativism (Seipel, 2020, p. 166). This is both because neither of the two spheres is static or a monolith and because I find it impossible to determine the extent to which settler vegan and Indigenous communities or individuals *could* converge on certain practices or moral judgments when it comes to animals. This is due to the fact that the discursive commitments I discuss below are quite versatile and non-deterministic in the way they function in moral reasoning. However, what seems clear is that dialogue and thus possible alignments will be quite limited as long as settler vegans do not understand the limits of their moral understandings and do not attempt to "listen(….) [to, T.B.] and respect(…) Indigenous peoples in and of their own terms" (Turner, 2020, p. 188).[17] Thus, I am not concerned with the relative truth or falsity of moral judgments, but instead with more pragmatic questions concerning the relative intelligibility, validity and rationality of these judgments.[18]

Similarly, I do not preclude in principle the possibility of settlers raising legitimate critiques of certain Indig-

enous practices and moral judgments. However, this would require settler vegans to take seriously and learn about Indigenous forms of reasoning and to work to dismantle settler colonialism as a structure that systematically undermines preconditions for productive dialogue such as trust, responsibility and respect, something which is a long way off.

IV. THE PARTICULARITY OF VEGAN UNIVERSALISM

Of course, this is all either rather abstract or seems to shift into political considerations that seem to be extrinsic to the inherent merits of settler vegan arguments, and one might wonder whether vegans could not use *inflicting the least violence* as a universally valid criterion of evaluation. Vegan advocates might suggest that although veganism still involves violence (Gruen & Jones, 2015, pp. 157f.; Bruckner, 2019 & 2020), it might be the least violent food regime—if not factually then potentially.

There are good reasons to be skeptical whether veganism can *empirically* establish itself as the least violent food regime either in its current or in a future intersectional (Chu, 2019; Polish, 2016; Nocella II et al., 2014) and decolonial (Belcourt, 2015, pp. 2–3) form.[19] However, here I focus on the *conceptual* issue emerging from the fact that any empirically informed investigation into the comparative moral goodness of a (settler) vegan food regime would have to rely on certain standards of evaluation. It is these standards that are particular: Even if settler vegan advocates succeeded in creating the least violent vegan food regime they could imagine, and even if it would be everything they dreamed of, this would not be sufficient to establish the universal moral superiority of the settler vegan outlook. This is because we would still lack a universally valid conception of how to best manage violence, or because this dreamed-of least violent future would still be a settler, not an Indigenous dream (TallBear, 2019 and Whyte, 2018a).[20]

To be sure, the lack of universally valid criteria to assess the justice of a food regime is difficult to show conclusively: any such conclusive argument would require a meta-rational framework—unattached to any specific histories, communities, cultures or languages—that would allow us to arbitrate between different frameworks of rationality. However, because it is precisely my contention that we lack such a framework, the argument here can only proceed obliquely, namely through illustration by example. I discuss several instances where common settler vegan and Indigenous approaches to the DNC rely on fundamentally different ways of sense-making. These different ways of sense-making, I suggest, are both incommensurable[21] *and* each reasonable in their own way.[22] In each case, the respective internal rationality of each approach combined with their incommensurability illustrates the significant difficulty of accessing a neutral framework to comparatively evaluate each approach. Hence, a reliable comparative evaluation of two significantly different food regimes *in toto* would be impossible, while reliably assessing specific practices or understandings would be very challenging.

V. FOUR PERVASIVE AND CONSTITUTIVE HERMENEUTICAL COMMITMENTS

My point then is that the meaning of and the ways to manage violence, death and suffering, and the conception of moral discourse that are taken to be obviously correct in a lot of settler vegan thinking and practice are (undergirded by) culturally specific conceptual commitments, commitments which also function as moral understandings. Because these commitments are pervasive and constitutive of dominant settler views, they initially appear as self-evident and universal to most members of settler culture. However, when compared to commitments common in many (North) American Indigenous outlooks, their particularity emerges. I focus on four (interrelated) commitments—although there are certainly others—that are very common among settler vegan advocates which feed directly or indirectly into the illusion of the universal validity of settler veganisms. These commitments are the incommensurability of personhood and edibility, individualist or substance ontologies, life/death dualism and moral abstractionism. I will elaborate of each of these commitments and draw out their particularity both as a matter of fact and by suggesting ways in which one might reasonably reject those commitments and endorse alternative views.

I am not suggesting that all settler thinking or all Indigenous thinking subscribes to each of the commitments attributed to each side here. However, dissenters on each side usually represent a minority view or, on the Indigenous sides, one that historically often was not adopted voluntarily (Robinson, 2014, p. 676).

The Incommensurability of Personhood and Edibility

This refers to the complete rejection—at least ideally—of consuming those we consider persons or kin.[23] Contrariwise, Inuit author and activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier, when faced with a 'Southern' (i.e., settler) filmmaker's reluctance towards eating whale meat on the

grounds that he has too much of "an affinity" for these animals, responds: "Ah, but we too have an affinity for whales, which is why we eat them" (Watt-Cloutier, 2015, p. 248; see also Burkhart, 2019, p. 209). This points to an entirely different logic of eating where it is neither the case that we eat animals because they are things, nor abstain from eating them because they are fellows. Rather, this logic disrupts "the extreme opposition between edibility and ethical considerability" (Plumwood, 2000, p. 287) that is so powerful in many Euro-centered ways of thinking.

Instead, in this view we eat certain others precisely because we have an affinity for them and in the knowledge that they are persons (Kim, 2015, p. 207). Indeed, for Watt-Cloutier, the hunt is not just compatible with the Inuit "culture's respect for these animals," (Watt-Cloutier, 2015, p. 226) but an expression of it. Similarly, Potawatomi plant biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer, finds the recognition of plant and animal "personhood" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 178) perfectly consistent with consuming these others—provided we take life in line with "the honorable harvest" (Kimmerer, 2013, pp. 175–201).[24]

It is true, as Gruen and Jones point out, that this still means that some bodies are "edible" (non-human) and others are not (human) (Gruen & Jones, 2015, p. 163);[25] and we might indeed be reasonably concerned with the practical impacts of applying an edible/non-edible binary on our world of relations. However, we might be equally worried about the practical effects of aligning edibility with objectification or de-personification: The assumption of incommensurability of personhood and edibility is something many settler veganisms share with the industrial system of animal exploitation they reject—with the crucial difference that the logic of the latter infers from animals' edibility that they are things, while many settler vegans infer from the subjecthood status of animals that they cannot be edible.

This latter gambit, however, only offers a livable moral outlook while we can afford to not eat animals and provided we somewhat ignore the death and suffering implicit even in vegan ways of life. Seeing personhood and edibility as mutually exclusive seems perfectly reasonable if it is simply expressing a commitment to non-violence towards those we do *not* eat. However, once we look at the impact it has on our relation to those we *do* eat or consume in some way, its rightness seems less obvious. This is because the idea that we do not eat kin can foster the view that our relations to whoever we *do* eat are unbound by any responsibility. Thus, it can invite the worst forms of abuse and exploitation whenever not consuming the other—and in many Indigenous views this would also involve plants and the land more broadly (Kimmerer, 2013; Burkhart, 2019; Yunkaporta, 2020; Hall, 2011)—is not a viable option, or even where it is simply not something most people are prepared to do.

Substance Ontologies

This impossibility of conceiving of 'edible persons' is linked to another feature of most settler vegan outlooks, namely the focus on individual substances (or individuals *as* substances) rather than relations. This reflects the difference between substance ontologies (prevalent in Euro-descendant outlooks) and relational ontologies (prevalent in (North) American Indigenous outlooks, among others). The former assume the pre-existence of independent substances that only secondarily enter into relations with each other, while the latter take relations to be ontologically on a par with or even prior to individual beings in that what we perceive as substances or individuals only emerges based on these relations (Burkhart, 2019, pp. xxix, 101–105; Castro, 2004, p. 476). In terms of moral theory, substance ontologies tend to foster a focus on the preservation of individuals (as substances and the necessary condition for the, secondary, flourishing of the community) while relationship ontologies are concerned with the preservation of good relations (as a necessary condition for the, often equally important (Burkhart, 2019, pp. 238–243), flourishing of the individual).

Thus, for Indigenous outlooks the good life is not primarily about the flourishing of individual substances conceived of either in isolation, as a disparate collection, or a collective ontologically secondary to its constitutive individuals. Rather, the focus is on the maintenance of and care for relations conceived of as the *preconditions* of individual persistence and flourishing. This includes relationships of consumption and taking life (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 148). For such relationships, the emphasis is usually not on avoidance of consumption (settler veganism) or the restriction of consumption to (de facto) morally irrelevant beings (settler omnivorism). Instead, it is about seeking the *right* relationships of consumption, where a crucial element of such right relations is reciprocity—although not symmetry (Whyte & Cuomo, 2017, p. 240)—between different groups and individuals such that webs of mutual—although not identical—responsibilities are maintained.

Consumption involves responsibility of humans towards non-humans (Whyte & Cuomo, 2017, p. 239; Kimmerer 2013, pp. 319, 338) as expressed both in individual acts of respect for living animals (such as killing as painlessly as possible) and killed animals, and through the maintenance of the conditions of flourishing for various non-human communities (Robinson, 2014, p. 680; Reo & Whyte, 2012, p. 23). Conversely, non-humans are seen as fulfilling their responsibilities to the point where animals (and plants) can be understood as agreeing to giving their life (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 186; Robinson, 2014; Reo & Whyte, 2012, p. 21). It is this seemingly radical notion that provides an entry way to understand the rationale for a reciprocal conception of (animal) consumption. Ideally, the idea of animal consent serves to maintain responsibilities in the face of the necessity of consumption and can be seen as part of a commitment to the least violence.

To see how, we can look at a story relayed by Robin Wall Kimmerer about a hunter, Oren, who insists that a deer he killed offered himself to him. What is crucial about this story is that Oren also says that there were about ten deer who preceded the one he shot that day, but who he did not see giving consent so he left them alone. He also only took one bullet with him, which indicates his commitment to not taking too much, which is to say to not taking more than "what is given" (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 187). This, in turn, can be understood as leaving enough to maintain the conditions of deer flourishing.

Thus, this view should not be confused with simple projection of human desires or power. This is insofar as there are only certain behaviors that can be legitimately interpreted as granting permission. "If you ask permission," Kimmerer cautions, "you have to listen to the answer"—even (and especially) if that answer is no (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 178). The focus then should not simply be on the fact that certain animals agree to be killed, but that this conversely means that many animals do not. Taking life comes with "quite stringent conditions" (Plumwood, 2000, p. 299). Furthermore, as mentioned above, this agreement carries with it obligations to maintain the conditions of flourishing for those animals who live. The notion of animals agreeing to be killed might, to be sure, facilitate the death of individual animals, and indeed, like other moral understandings, serve to rationalize killing.[26] However, this needs to be understood in conjunction with the fact that this idea, simultaneously, reinforces each time the notion of and respect for animal personhood and "kinship" (Robinson, 2014, p. 677) as well as human dependency on rather than dominion over animals (and other non-humans) (Montford & Taylor, 2020a, p. 137).[27] This notion of animal (or, more broadly, non-human) personhood must, in turn, be seen as part and parcel of a robust system of responsibilities that ensures that suffering and death stay at certain levels and restricted to certain contexts and certain kinds. Keeping the "something" that is meat connected to the "someone" (Robinson, 2014, p. 679) that is the animal person can thus function as a safeguard—both pragmatically and conceptually—against the utterly de-animating and arguably genocidal logic and system that leads to what Deborah Cao calls "crimes against animality" (2014) such as the continued reproduction and abuse of some animals and the (related) extermination of others (Derrida, 2008, p. 26; Patterson, 2002; Plumwood, 2000). This is why Cree thinker Billy-Ray Belcourt establishes a close link between decolonization and ending animal exploitation and oppression (2014; Bendik-Keymer, 2021). Thus, the notion of animals giving permission to be killed, which might seem so anathema to many settler vegans and irrational to many settler omnivores, is central to an attempt to engage in the least violence while acknowledging the necessity of consumption (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 180). To be sure, we might still wonder how far this idea of animal consent reflects animals' experiences (Womack, 2013). However, a fair evaluation of this notion cannot ignore the role this assumption of animal consent plays in maintaining a strong sense of responsibility towards animals and in foreclosing their objectification. As Linch & Holland put it when discussing the Chippewa hunt of white-tailed deer, Chippewa moral understandings and practices overall "foster the skills and habits people need to take responsibility for protecting the capabilities of all sentient striving beings" (2017, p. 332; see also Reo & Whyte, 2012).

Personhood then is understood relationally through mutual relations that involve both flourishing and death and that render death both a form of taking responsibility for flourishing (by those who die) and, therefore, a source of responsibilities (for those who benefit from this death). It is thus that the concept can house both edibility *and* community membership.

This does not foreclose criticism (Robinson 2014; Whyte, 2018a, p. 238). However, what is crucial is that such criticism would proceed according to a different logic than settler vegan arguments, for instance in taking for granted a relational understanding of reality and consumption. Thus, Mi'kmaq scholar Margret Robinson, in

her exploration of the rationale for and the implications of Indigenous (Mi'kmaq) veganism identifies the maintenance of the human/moose relationships as a central concern when she asks: "Is the moose still my brother if we don't eat him?" (Robinson, 2016). This question seems meaningless from a settler perspective. Yet, it is crucial to establish a valid and intelligible vegan perspective in a Mi'kmaq context.[28]

Life/Death Dualism

This idea of reciprocal consumption as rooted in relational (rather than substance) ontologies also manifests itself in an overall different conception of death and its relationship to life. While settler outlooks tend to think of death in purely negative terms and of death and life as dualistically opposed (for exceptions see Derrida, 2011; Chen, 2012; Plumwood, 2008; Leopold, 1949; Benatar, 2008), Indigenous outlooks often see death more ambiguously and life and death as mutually implicated.

This has to do with the fact that settler outlooks, especially within animal ethics, tend to understand death not relationally, but primarily through individual (mental) qualities and individual existence. This yields two dominant views on the question of animal death: Those who see animal death as a harm that ought to be avoided if at all possible (Francione & Charlton, 2015, p. 39; Bradley, 2016; Harman, 2011; McMahan, 2016) and those who see death itself as morally unproblematic as long as it is inflicted painlessly (Francione & Charlton, 2015, p. 34; Singer, 2011, p. 80). Both camps see death through an individualistic lens. In the former view, inflicting death is a clear moral harm in that it robs living beings of life as the individual and sole locus of goodness. By contrast, the latter view sees death precisely as the absence of individual life and of its attendant qualities such as awareness and sentience. Insofar as life and these qualities are what ground moral considerability, death, as the complete absence of life and these qualities, marks a state completely devoid of moral concern. Thus, if we inflict it painlessly, it merely yields a morally neutral state. Death is thus either a bad deprivation or a neutral absence in relation to individual life that, in itself, has no positive valence.[29]

Both the idea of death as a clear and exclusive harm and the notion of death as morally irrelevant are implausible from many Indigenous perspectives. This is because these views often eschew a strict opposition between life and death and see a positive aspect to death as well. This is again based on a relational understanding of the world insofar as death is not seen as the end of relatedness or kinship. First, relatedness and kinship persist across life and death, which means that death is not in radical opposition to life, but understood as "transitional" (Deloria, 2003, p. 171). Second, death is never simply understood through its disruptive aspects, but also its constitutive and productive aspects. This is insofar as relations to death and the dead are understood as part and parcel of the webs of relationships that sustain us. Death – even, to an extent, human death[30] – is a necessary element in the web of relations that constitute individual lives and the relations of responsibility between them (Ibid.; Norton-Smith, 2010, p. 125).[31] This is why "life and death are two aspects of the same thing because one is the visible aspect of the other and vice versa" (Burkhart, 2019, p. 111).

Relatedly, those consigned to death as well as the dead are still subject to moral responsibility guided by considerations of reciprocity. First, there are certain things we owe to an animal before or in the process of taking their life, as we saw above. Second, we have responsibilities after a life has been taken and specifically *for* the dead (Deloria, 2003, p. 171). "[A]nimal death comes with obligations" (Robinson, 2014, p. 680). This involves showing the proper respect to the dead animal both through ritual understood as reciprocal communicative action[32] and by making good use of the animal's body after their life has been taken (Robinson, 2014, p. 680; Kim, 2015, p. 208). Due it its transitional nature and its integration into a solid web of reciprocal responsibilities, death is thus not automatically something "to be feared" (Deloria, 2003, p. 170) or eliminated as far as possible—although it can be the cause of "regret" (Robinson, 2013, p. 192) and the death of kin is still something we "try to avoid" (Burkhart, 2019, p. 237) as indeed a potential "trauma" (Deloria, 2003, p. 171).[33] Especially given the ongoing history of settler colonialism, Indigenous views are not oblivious to the more regretful and brutal aspects of death (Walker, 2019). However, insofar as death is seen as a constitutive and irreducible element of the reciprocal web of relations that conditions each life—and because life, and thus death, are understood to extend far beyond just humans or even animals (TallBear, 2017; Kimmerer, 2013; Burkhart, 2019, pp. 200, passim)—, Indigenous outlooks are far less tempted by eliminativist approaches to death that aim to erase it completely or conversely maximally extend life.[34] Instead, it tends to be a question of whether death occurs in the right way, i.e., at the right time, for the right reasons or in the right set of reciprocal relations and

with the proper respect, care and rites (Kim, 2015, pp. 236f).

There is a sense of a "concurrence of death and life," which, to be sure, can facilitate certain forms of violence and death (Robinson, 2014, p. 677). However, it is at the same time rooted in an honest and responsible acceptance of our reliance on non-human death. As such, it once more constitutes a safeguard against more extensive, reckless and inconsiderate forms of death. By contrast, the life/death dualism dominant in settler views might, to be sure, lead to a view that tries to reduce animal death as far as possible (such as a vegan view). However, it arguably also underlies the worst abuses against animals. This is insofar as the alignment of life—and especially mental life (Plumwood, 2002, p. 226)—with moral considerability and value in conjunction with the strict separation of life and death might, conversely, facilitate a position where animals, once consigned to death, are seen as falling completely outside the sphere of moral consideration. Finally, the inability to see the positive aspects of death might also feed certain, e.g. transhumanist, desires to extend or empower human life indefinitely at the expense of non-human life (Lie & Wickson, p. 2018), or to ignore the ecological conditions of animal life.

In terms of the DNC, the focus of most Indigenous views is on how to live well with the dilemma—which, again, is heightened in many Indigenous views given that "everything is alive at some level" (Burkhart, 2019, p. 194). For most settler views, by contrast, there is still a sense that the dilemma can be solved either by eliminating death or by marking whole groups of beings as eminently killable or as outside the sphere of moral consideration. While the latter, exclusionary approach within settler society has rightly been criticized from various perspectives as untenable, the former, eliminativist view, while probably preferable to the exclusionary stance, is not in any obvious way more reasonable than the Indigenous aspiration to live responsibly with the necessity of taking life.

Thus, we see once more that there is no clearly apparent way to reliably arbitrate between Indigenous and settler vegan positions: Each appears reasonable (or, partially, unreasonable) from a certain vantage point—all the while we cannot assume a neutral position to evaluate them conclusively. Indeed, this assumption of or desire for a neutral or universal position leads us to a fourth metaphysical divergence between many settler and Indigenous views, namely the conflict between what Brian Burkhart calls "locality" and "delocality." This is what underlies moral abstractivism, i.e., the conviction that the intrinsic truth or rightness of moral principles, precepts and practices is in principle independent of any specific context, or, put more broadly, that moral rightness can be determined in the abstract. It is this tendency towards abstraction from local contexts that feeds the assumption of the universal validity of their moral positions among many settler vegans (for exceptions see e.g. Bobier, 2021; Whyte & Cuomo, 2017).

Moral Abstractivism

One context that is abstracted from here is the historical, socio-political and cultural context of ethical life, something we have emphasized in our focus on differing pervasive and constitutive hermeneutical commitments so far. However, according to Cherokee scholar Brian Burkhart, the distinction between the locality of many Indigenous forms of thought and the delocality of most Euro(-descendant) thought runs deeper than that. This is insofar as the settler concepts of history, society, politics and even culture are themselves abstract and overly universal, being conceived of simply as the universal unfolding of European (conceptions of) history, society, politics and culture on a global scale (Burkhart, 2019, pp. 22, 32). This is because what is abstracted from in nearly all Euro-descendant thinking is the land. This is not simply the old question of universalism vs. relativism or even universal vs. situated knowledge (Burkhart, 2019, pp. 63-68). Rather, Indigenous views traditionally[35] tend to eschew the moral abstractivism dominant in settler views through a different view of the land as at the root of knowledge, ethics, ontology, existence and politics.[36] Land, furthermore, must be understood not as exclusive of the humans living with it, but through "the epistemic and ontological kinship of people and the land" (Burkhart, 2019, p. xxiii). This view of the land *localizes* (moral) knowledge in the land and its human/non-human communities (rather than merely *situating* it in certain discursive or historical spaces). This undermines the possibility of any simple universalizing move. This is insofar as locality or rootedness in the land renders any such move as in truth delocalizing. Universalization disconnects any supposedly moral claim from one of its important truth conditions, i.e., the land. A simple way to think about this on the material plane is the way in which the question of how to consume justly is deeply connected to what the land allows and doesn't allow for; for example what desert or arctic ecosystems allow for in terms of taking or not taking life as opposed to, say, tropical or temperate landscapes. Settler vegans

can of course recognize the limitations ecology puts on the possibility of being vegan. However, within the settler (vegan) view the land has no bearing on the moral truth of the matter.

The moral question of eating animals is thus never simply that of eating *the* animal or certain species of animals *in general*, but of individual or groups of animals in *particular* ecological contexts (Whyte, 2018a, p. 226), contexts that, in turn, involve both humans and animals (as well as so-called 'inanimate' agents) in complex webs of relations that need to be maintained and established based on principles of reciprocity. In this context, as we saw above, the focus is never simply on *harm* to individual animals. Instead, it is about *right or respectful action* in accordance with the "condition of my proper relationship" to this or that (kind of) animal "in particular" (Burkhart, 2019, p. 287),[37] where this proper relationship and this particularity is constituted through specific (interrelated) geographical, ecological, historical, cultural and epistemic contexts. Furthermore, the land is not just seen as particular but also as always in motion as well as responsive. Thus, even localized (moral) truth is not understood as static (Burkhart, 2019, ch. 5).[38]

Moral questions then are not answered abstractly first and then applied to a concrete situation, nor are they answered permanently and then occasionally temporarily adjusted at certain times. Rather, because everything is constituted relationally and in relation to a particular land always in motion, moral questions are always understood dynamically as playing out in particular ongoing and open-ended conversations with the land (Burkhart, 2019, ch. 6). These conversations can be understood as occurring with particular members of or groups within the land community. The earth around coal, for instance, might agree or refuse to release it (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 187). Similarly, wild leeks (Ibid., p. 176) or trees (Ibid., p. 144) might permit or refuse to be harvested; individual deer might refuse or consent to being killed (Ibid., p. 186); a marten community might refuse or agree to be trapped (Ibid., pp. 192f). It is where these conversations with and through the land are replaced with conversations with and through settler culture that animals might suffer for example through overhunting (Robinson, 2014, pp. 676f.). This is "land speaking" (Armstrong, 2017; see also Burkhart, 2019, p. xvi). Any continuity across contexts of specific precepts, rules and norms (such as the Honorable Harvest (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 183)) is thus never understood as based on abstract, universal and permanent principles grounded merely in logical and conceptual considerations or even merely interhuman relations, but always as rooted in and accountable to the "agent-to-agent" (Burkhart, 2019, p. 43) interaction between the land and a specific human/non-human community.

Insofar as they lack this rootedness in local webs of relations, and in particular the land, many settler vegan discourses derive their presumed universalism from a delocalized stance that does not square well with many Indigenous ways of reasoning and views of the land. In animal ethics discourse, this delocalization manifests itself in the fact that animals are usually discussed as generic abstractions (Derrida, 2008, p. 48) or as highly individualized bundles of "mental attributes" (Crary, 2016, p. 112) rather than as relational beings in a specific and concrete ecological and social context (Montford & Taylor, 2020a, p. 136).

Again, I am not arguing that either the common settler tendency towards gaining abstract conceptual clarity or the Indigenous tendency to focus on the concrete conditions of ethical life are more reasonable. Rather, I want to point out another way in which the conception of reasonable ethical discourse at play in many Indigenous outlooks puts a limit on the claims of universal intelligibility and validity by settler vegan discourse. In this case, it's the claim to universal validity and intelligibility itself that is hard to maintain as reasonable in many Indigenous views.[39]

CONCLUSION

What I hope to have illustrated here is how settler veganisms lack a universally valid way to settle the question of the best way to manage food-related violence. The argument proceeded indirectly, first, by providing several examples of culturally specific commitments underlying many settler vegan conceptions of violence and responsible consumption and showing how these are at odds with widespread Indigenous hermeneutical commitments. This limits the *intelligibility* of settler vegan arguments in Indigenous contexts. Second, we outlined the ways in which the Indigenous alternatives to the settler vegan commitments can be seen as similarly reasonable, all the while we lack any clearly apparent neutral framework to determine any one perspective as more reasonable.[40] Thus, settler vegan views can also not be seen as universally *valid*. Instead, they need to be seen as tied to certain cultural and conceptual contexts in terms of their moral pull as well as their categorization as reasonable.

This whole problematization of determining what constitutes the least violence also assumes that settler

veganisms cannot be defended as universal by simply referring to their ideal of not taking animal life unnecessarily. This is because, at least for the foreseeable future and perhaps especially in the anthropocentric industrialized world settlers have created (Linch & Holland, 2017, p. 333), there is no way of consuming that does not take—directly or indirectly—animal life. Instead, what needs to be shown is the universal validity of the settler vegan *economy* of violence. It is this attempt to show that the dominant settler vegan ways to regulate violence are universally superior to its Indigenous alternatives that is implausible. Thus, settler veganisms, while offering some powerful arguments within their autochthonous contexts, cannot claim universal validity and, specifically, cannot presuppose their moral pull and rationality within Indigenous contexts.

Again, this does not mean that there are no Indigenous arguments for veganism, nor that there aren't relational conceptions of ethics within Euro-descendant or settler discourses that could yield practical and discursive alignments with Indigenous outlooks (Burkhart, 2019; TallBear, 2017; Whyte & Cuomo, 2017; Dotson, 2018). However, these arguments, conceptions and practices are likely to emerge from very different socio-political, cultural and conceptual contexts—a difference which might come to matter in ways we do not always foresee. Furthermore, where Indigenous and settler contexts do appear to be shared, this sharing is often not simply voluntary or genuine but the result of the long and ongoing history of settler colonialism, which might well impact the local validity of certain seemingly shared commitments—e.g. to fossil fuel extraction (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019, pp. 54f., 70f.)—as well as reinforce the importance of considering questions of Indigenous sovereignty and settler colonial injustice external to the moral question of just consumption. Relatedly, even where certain settler institutions and outlooks appear to be endorsed autonomously by Indigenous individuals and communities, what appears shared from an abstract point of view—such as the Christian faith (Deloria, 2003), the English language (Burkhart, 2019, pp. 91, 137, passim, Armstrong, 2017) or concerns with (food) sovereignty (Coté, 2016, pp. 8f.)—might often be understood quite differently in the localized contexts of various Indigenous communities. This does not mean that Indigenous individuals or groups could not authentically endorse certain Euro-descendant ideas or theories (Coronado, 2004). However, settler vegans should be careful to not take for granted the conceptual, social, cultural and political conditions that undergird the moral pull of vegan arguments in a settler context. Provided such care is taken and the broader colonial context of any discussion is acknowledged, there certainly can be productive conversations between settler vegans and Indigenous thinkers and communities around shared concerns about animal welfare, ecological integrity and injustice.[41] But this can only happen if settler vegans, such as myself, do recognize their reasoning as particular and thus limited in its range.

NOTES

[1] I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers as well as one of the journal editors for their insightful and helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[2] I thus distinguish three (mutually constitutive) levels of moral live: (1) Practices, which are about what we do (e.g. eating or not eating meat), (2) action-guiding claims, which have to do with the way we describe those practices as normatively charged (e.g. 'you shouldn't eat animals unless you have to'), and (3) the ways in which we justify or reason about those practices and norms (e.g. animals are persons, and therefore…), which puts into play certain moral understandings and hermeneutical commitments, four of which I will discuss below.

[3] I borrow this term from Margaret Urban Walker, who thinks of moral understandings, i.e., understandings integral to our moral lives, as arising out of as well as facilitating and reaffirming our social relations, roles and responsibilities. "[M]oral understandings not only are made available through shared living and thinking, but are understandings of that particular shared life" (Walker, 2007, p. 247). This is linked to her expressive-collaborative model of morality, which is an important influence on the conception of morality I'm assuming for this paper. The model—in contrast to the theoretical-juridical model—holds that morality fundamentally inheres in and is accountable to our social lives (which, for many Indigenous communities, would include non-humans as well). Like myself, Walker does not take her position to be relativist (Walker, 2007, p. 260).

[4] While validity refers to discursive consistency (see note 7 below), 'moral pull' is meant to capture not just the discursive, but also the affective, aesthetic, imaginative, intuitive and relational aspect of moral deliberation.

[5] The charge of euro-centrism and colonialism against veganism is brought up both by Indigenous (Wildquetzal, 2021; Coté, 2010, p. 163) and non-Indigenous individuals (see e.g. Earthling Ed, 2022).

[6] I use the plural, veganisms, to mark the plurality of justificatory frameworks and arguments supporting veganism, while the singular primarily refers to vegan practice.

[7] Intelligibility is about what can or cannot be understood as making sense in a certain context. It is about the (inter)subjective experiences of moral and epistemic agents. Validity is about whether an argument makes discursive sense or about how consistent an argument is or is not within a specif-

ic discursive context. Reasonableness is about the degree to which central assumptions of an outlook can be understood as yielding sensible guides to action.

[8] For more stringent views see Nobis, 2018; Hanna, 2016.

[9] This quote (also discussed in Montford & Taylor, 2020a, p. 132) is not referenced. However, a similar point is made by Nussbaum, 2022, p. 188, and humanemyth.org (https://www.humanemyth.org/faq/1290.htm).

[10] Womack, 2013, a self-identified Creek/Cherokee scholar, offers versions of both APT (where he pits a "squirrel's suffering," as described in Ojibwe author Gerald Vizenor's autobiography—who subsequently gave up hunting—, against "tribal platitudes" (p. 22)) and SIV (where he borrows the phrase "no one's living depended on it" (p. 14) from a regretful hunter in the Salish author D'Arcy McNickle's novel *The Surrounded*).

[11] Examples would be the exploitation of workers (Heldke, 2012, p. 87) and various kinds of direct or indirect animal death involved in plant agriculture (Fischer and Lamey, 2018) (including food transport (Goldfarb, 2023)) and extinctions linked to climate change (Calvin et al., 2023).

[12] See Montford & Taylor, 2020a for a vegan critique of Heldke.

[13] I am relying on a very broad definition of violence that brackets questions of actual or hypothetical consent and necessary or unnecessary destructive acts, given that answers to these questions might again differ from worldview to worldview.

[14] Similar to what Whitt, 2009, says about Indigenous "knowledge systems" (xvi) and Kimmerer, 2013, about Indigenous "principles and practices" (p. 180) guiding killing, I assume that while for each food regime the "details are highly specific to different cultures and ecosystems," (ibid.) "concrete diversity does not preclude commonality" (Whitt, 2009, p. xvii).

[15] Discursive and material commitments constitute a (sub-)culture or community insofar as the latter consists of both discursive elements (speech, concepts, theories, ideas, (moral) understandings, etc.) and material elements ((infra)structures, institutions, practices, socio-political relations, etc.). Both kinds of elements are closely intertwined. However, when comparing commitments below, I focus on the discursive, simply because these elements come explicitly into play in discussions about eating well.

[16] An example of this would be that in a world that has very few (tasty and nutritious) vegan food options, the idea that it's impossible and indeed unnatural to be vegan seems far more plausible.

[17] One succinct way to express the need to "recognize(…) Indigenous ways of thinking about the world as authentic sources of knowledge" is that currently "Indigenous peoples must generate explanations of their deeply held beliefs and spiritual practices in a language that makes sense to the people who are violating their rights and dignity to begin with" (Turner, 2020, p. 187).

[18] In fact, this extends to what I described above as animal perspective taking: All humans should aim to listen to animals in and on their own terms, which, in some cases, involves acknowledging their cultures (Corman, 2020; Nussbaum, 2022, pp. 186f.). However, if settlers listened to various Indigenous communities and nations, we would find that each has their own ways to acknowledge animal cultures and personhood and to listen to, communicate and interact with animals (Descola, 2013; Rasmussen & Akulukjuk, 2009).

[19] While there appear to be no direct comprehensive comparisons between settler vegan ways of consumption and various Indigenous food regimes, the fact that Indigenous lifeways overall—especially where traditional (food) ways have been preserved against the ongoing assault of settler colonialism—seem to be much less violent towards humans, animals and ecosystems (Sobrevila, 2008; Mare & Peña, 2011, p. 198; Linch & Holland, 2017, p. 333; McCallin, 2018; Bendik-Keymer, 2021) suggests that the lesser impact of veganism cannot be taken for granted. Similarly, there does not seem to be a lot of research on what a potential future global, non-industrial vegan food regime would look like. However, how we comparatively evaluate such a regime—which would certainly be better than the currently globally dominant food regime—would depend on empirical (e.g. the number and geographical distribution of people) and axiological factors (e.g. how we weigh animal welfare and ecological concerns) (Peters et al., 2016 (see Mic the Vegan, 2017 for a critique); Mishori, 2017; Bruckner, 2019).

[20] Importantly, this lack of a universal conception of how to take life well would only come into play if there is no obvious discrepancy in the scale of harm, death and destruction between the two food regimes at play (i.e., this does not undermine critiques of the factory farming system). This seems to be the case for ideal settler vegan compared to various ideal Indigenous worlds.

[21] That is, they are at least incommensurable when considered on their own. They might not be fully incommensurable in terms of some of their practical and theoretical implications.

[22] If we indeed lack a meta-rational and non-situated context that would allow us to arbitrate between different frameworks of rationality, we also cannot show conclusively that two frameworks of rationality are both similarly rational. Thus, the argument here can only proceed in a kind of hermeneutical circle, where the plausibility of this argument by illustration should strengthen our initial assumption that we lack any meta-rational framework, which, in turn, is a condition for the argument's soundness.

[23] This is why eating animals can be placed in the vicinity of cannibalism in settler vegan discourse (Jenkins & Twine, 2014, p. 232).

[24] For an Indigenous (Mi'kmaq) critique see Robinson, 2016.

[25] This could indeed be seen as a form of human exceptionalism, but it seems that the same could be said, at least an-

ecdotally, of settler vegans, most of whom (and I include myself here), despite their refusal to objectify animals, likewise seem to distinguish between humans and animals when it comes to consumability both in terms of how acceptable they find indirect and unintentional human vs. animal deaths linked to food production and in terms of who they would eat if their life depended on it. Even so, our moral lives are complicated, so our overall preference for humans certainly doesn't mean that we always do or ought to abide by it (Ferguson, 2004). I would also add that Indigenous views do not completely exempt humans from the web of consumption in that they often seem far more comfortable with being consumed after death than Western outlooks (Reo & Whyte, 2012; Plumwood, 2008).

[26] While it is certainly possible for Indigenous individuals to rationalize an action or judgment (Womack, 2013, p. 24-26; Robinson, 2014, pp. 677-679; Linch & Holland, 2017, p. 329; Nussbaum, 2022, pp. 185-189)—i.e., to deploy patterns of reasoning in an unreasonable way in order to defend a position or action—, it is extremely difficult for settler individuals to identify such rationalizations, because that would presuppose a solid understanding of how particular Indigenous patterns of reasoning are deployed *well*. While Womack, for instance, does successfully raise the possibility that various Indigenous beliefs could be used to rationalize killing animals, he fails to consider these beliefs as elements in a broader framework of reasoning. Similarly, Nussbaum's demand that Indigenous cultures adapt their traditions, while raising some serious issues around the assumption of culture as an unchangeable monolith, does not just omit the crucial role settler colonialism plays in shaping Indigenous-animal relations and reduces Indigenous hunting to mere cultural rather than also political practices, but likewise treats the views underpinning Indigenous hunting as mere traditional beliefs. This is in contrast to Robinson who takes Indigenous views seriously as forms of reasoning which could support a vegan outlook (Robinson, 2016).

[27] Thus, many Indigenous (creation) stories assign a central role to animals and non-humans (Kroeber, 2004).

[28] This also means that the description of Robinson's perspective by Kymlicka & Donaldson, 2015, p. 168 as having "endorsed an AR [=animal rights, T.B.] position" is not quite correct.

[29] Euthanasia is no exception to this because it merely accepts death to attain another good (e.g. freedom from suffering). For an overview over some arguments of both kinds see Nussbaum, 2022, pp. 154-172.

[30] See note 25

[31] See also Walker, 2019, on the different views on death in Native American cultures.

[32] As Kimmerer puts it, when relating to a tree: "If consent is granted, a prayer is made and tobacco is left as a reciprocating gift." (2013, p. 144; see also ibid. pp. 156f., 178, 206, 233, 238). Burkhart, 2019, p. 298, likewise, uses the example of a plant.

[33] The difference here can be understood through the difference between right (e.g. reciprocal and responsible) and wrong (e.g. unjust, disrespectful or violent) relational contexts.

[34] Perhaps the most extreme version of this is the idea (advocated by a very small number of settler vegans) that we ought to exterminate all predators to maximize life and minimize death and suffering (Bramble, 2021), an idea which is often linked to vegan outlooks (see e.g. MacAskill & MacAskill, 2018). Nussbaum, 2022, sees predation as a serious "problem" (p. 252), but does not offer a clear solution.

[35] Tradition here is not a fixed cultural constellation that is adopted without question, but a long-standing, malleable and ongoing set of thoughtful practices and understandings (that are always constituted in an ongoing conversation with ancestors and descendants (Whyte, 2018a, p. 229)).

[36] '(The) land' is frequently referred to in Native American discourse, and while it is difficult to define conclusively (both because of the diversity and local rootedness of Indigenous understandings of land and because of the numerous roles land plays in Indigenous understandings), we can triangulate the idea both by what it is and is not. Land is always understood relationality (Whyte and Meissner, 2021, p. 40; Kimmer, 2013, p. 339). These relations are always local and specific (Burkhart, 2019, p. 41 passim) and they are not simply ecological or physio-chemical. They include human/non-human relations and various relations most settlers would describe as cultural, such as relations of responsibility (Whyte and Meissner, 2021, p. 41; Kimmerer, 2013, p. 335) or pedagogical relations (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 333). Land also underlies the constitution of language (Armstrong, 2017), political and communal identity (Moreton-Robison, 2021), and various forms of normativity (Burkhart, 2020). Thus, land is not simply a geographical area, nor fungible property. Rather, it is a set of localized human/non-human relations insofar as they are in a mutually constitutive relationship with a specific Indigenous community.

[37] Burkhart uses the example of tobacco, but also makes the same point about beavers and buffalo (pp. 299–301).

[38] This relates to the tension between the static settler-style institutions imposed on Indigenous communities, and the temporally integrated, seasonally adapted institutions traditionally governing certain Indigenous societies (Whyte, 2018b, pp. 129–135; Whyte et al., 2018, pp. 150–162).

[39] Again, there are exceptions to this in settler discourse such as Deane Curtin's ecofeminist account of "contextual moral vegetarianism," which sees Ihalmiut hunting practices as justified given local climatic restrictions on growing food (Curtin, 1991, p. 70). Likewise, Walker's conception of morality (2007; see above note 3) eschews moral abstractivism, without, however, considering the land as a relational space.

[40] Of course, someone might make a case for one of these outlooks to be more reasonable based on the impacts these views have (had) on the world or an appeal to affective or aesthetic considerations. However, such a case would lack the

conceptually solid appearance of cases made based on shared discursive background assumptions.

[41] For examples of attempts at such conversations see Plumwood, 2000; Gaard, 2001; Robinson, 2013; Linch & Holland, 2017; Montford & Taylor, 2020b; or Deckha, 2020.

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