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Veganism vs Carnism, and the metalevels of communication

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The present paper intend to provide some insights on the cultural and ideological debate between veganism and carnism. The increasing popularity of the vegan lifestyle among diverse layers of society, and most of all its transition from a hardly-tangible phenomenon to a very visible and outspoken one, has generated a strong reaction from those who Melanie Joy has defined "carnists" (i.e., meat-eaters not only in the culinary sense, but also in the cultural one), but it has also brought to the fore the question of the different communication strategies of the two parties. After a brief but hopefully-exhaustive introduction to veganism as socio-cultural and ideological movement, the paper shall proceed to focus on the communication strategies operated by carnism to convey or disguise (depending on the case) the kind of information that veganism is ethically pointing the finger at: the promotion of meat as product, necessity, display of luxury, nutritionally-valuable aliment, and so forth. In describing such cases, and offering a theoretical framework for their interpretation, it is also argued that carnism, like any other form of anthropization, is filtered via three similar-but-compatible mental attitudes: anthropocentrism, speciesism and anthropocracy.

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