

Free book review on the omnivores dilemma

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Introduction

The Omnivores Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals is a 2006 book by American author, Michael Pollan that takes readers through an enthralling expedition of the American food system. The basic question that Pollan tries to pose in this book is what people should essentially eat. To explore more on the modern food choices, Pollan divides his book into three parts that follow the particular food chains that sustains the human race. These are industrial food, pastoral food and the food that we normally store for ourselves (personal).

The second part of the book, which is the pastoral section, is one of the most fascinating parts of the entire book. Pollan describes the interconnectedness that exists between all living things and their dependence on grass. He also explicitly explores organic farming principles and how these principles have been implemented in modern day America. Pollan follows the organic food chain and finds that it's actually based on grass. Grass is essentially a cow's natural food and chicken are also allowed to freely roam on it freely (free range). This means it is actually one of the simplest and most straight forward food chain sources. Unfortunately when Pollan further explores this concept, he establishes that organic foods have evolved into big and booming businesses. With the government involvement, Pollan finds that it is actually becoming quite hard to differentiate real organic foods from unreal or synthetic ones-that if this ' organic' designation means anything anymore.

For example, Pollan visits a chicken farm that is supposedly " free range". This chicken is designated as free range because here, there is a minimum

requirement for the amount of chicken that can be reared in an open range. Unfortunately, Pollan finds that the chickens are actually afraid of exploring out of that vicinity and prefers staying inside the building. Pollan is able to show that although organic food industry popularity has risen considerably, the producers of this particular industry have actually adopted most of the industrial agriculture methods therefore straying away from the organic industry movement against industrial principles.

The highlight of this part of Pollan's book is however when he visits a small ecological rotation farm owned by Joel Salatin. Salatin owns a sustainable and adequate farm and the farm operations support the local customers and he also exclusively sells his produce to them. In this farm, there is a very close adhering to natural conditions and only few chemicals are used. There is also the recycling of old waste in this farm. Salatin goes forward to prepare a meal for Pollan using locally produced ingredients from local small scale farms. Pollan is extremely pleased with the farm and brings forward an argument that a "relationship marketing" system where the customers of a particular farmer know him on a personal level will inadvertently cause the farmer and his counterparts to have greater integrity as well as produce quality products. Pollan also argues that modern American citizens should try to return to the pre-industrial system of agriculture that is based on local produced foods from farms that are family owned, for example, the Joel Salatin's farm.

Overall, this second part of *The Omnivores Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* can best be described as honest and fair. Michael Pollen looks at morality and biology through the eyes of an open minded and thoughtful

inspection of all the sides of the issue at hand. Every single concept in this section is the truth and there is no hidden agenda.

References

Pollan, M. (2006). *The omnivore's dilemma: A natural history of four meals*. New York: Penguin Press.