

Review of omnivore's dilemma

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Book Review: The Omnivores Dilemma In his book, (The Omnivore's Dilemma) Michael Pollan examines what he refers to as "our national eating disorder". The book is an interesting journey through the food chain, a journey that may change the manner in which you read labels on frozen dinners, decide to purchase organic eggs, or dig into steak. Going through the book reveals that the author's enthusiasm for stories explains a lot concerning the book. Not only does the author like stories, but also he is good at telling them. The author's writings are alive and incisive, and even though one may condemn the work as a record of the gourmet's perpetual lack of success to reason in moral terms, we can agree that he writes of food's role in American life in such an unlikely yet thrilling fashion.

Simultaneously, the author's focus on stories helps to offer reasons why the book is troubling in some aspects. In the book, stories are not just a means of communicating facts while engaging the reader. It is even probable that the facts are somehow secondary to the stories. Instead of basic the stories on facts, the author chooses the stories to align to an overarching reactionary thesis. The facts are then worked into the narratives although they may not fit appropriately in some instances.

Where the author's fixation to his reactionary thesis is probably most explicit is in his stories on vegetarianism. Even though there are popular conservative vegetarians, among them Mathew Scully, vegetarianism nowadays is anchored in progressive ideas. Vegetarianism requires people to accept the fact that they can make a difference by eating healthier than their ancestors did. Indeed, the author writes; "Vegetarianism is more popular than it has ever been, and animal rights, the fringiest of fringe

movements until just a few years ago, are rapidly finding its way into the cultural mainstream. I'm not completely sure why this should be happening now, given that humans have been eating animals for tens of thousands of years without too much ethical heartburn" (Pollan 305).

According to Pollan, vegetarianism is a new phenomenon, and his hypothesis for its success in recent times is the weakening of America's traditions. " But it could also be that the cultural norms and rituals that used to allow people to eat meat without agonizing about it have broken down for other reasons. Perhaps as the sway of tradition in our eating decisions weakens, habits we once took for granted are thrown up in the air, where they're more easily buffeted by the force of a strong idea or the breeze of fashion" (Pollan 306). Simply put, vegetarianism does not align with the author's reactionary message because vegetarianism is a new thing that represents a challenge to old traditions. Even before the discussion on vegetarianism, there are indications that the author will not take his debate on the ethics of eating meat seriously. For instance, he informs us that his friend's son is fifteen years and is currently a vegetarian (Pollan 271), which seems to imply that the author thinks vegetarianism is merely a phase in teenagers. Additionally, Pollan explicitly says that he has already decided to go hunting even before facing the ethical concerns relating to eating animals.

In this sense, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* raises awareness with respect to important matters targeting a wide audience. The audience is further expanded by the fact that the book is enjoyable to read. Nevertheless, the book should be at most a beginning point for people learning about the source of what they eat since the implicit reactionary premise may at times

lead the author astray. The fact that we live in an ever-changing world is reason enough to understand that we cannot expect our food chain to remain as it has been in the past. Innovations such as high-fructose corn syrup or battery cages may not be good ideas, but that does not imply that we should stop attempting to progress.

Works Cited

Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. US: Penguin Group., 2006. Print.