

Why should men abstain themselves from eating meat? Perspectives towards vegetarianism in Ancient Mediterranean world

Alexandra Kovacs

Pourquoi s'abstenir de viande en Grèce ancienne ?

Bien que le terme « végétarisme » apparaisse au XIX^e siècle, l'abstinence de viande existe déjà dans l'Antiquité grecque comme l'attestent les sources philosophiques. Ce refus volontaire de consommer de la viande se construit tout au long de la période allant du VI^e av. siècle J.-C. au V^e siècle ap. J.-C. à partir d'arguments variés que nous nous proposons de présenter dans cette communication. Santé, question animale, place du végétarien dans la vie civique sont autant de thèmes aux résonances étonnamment contemporaines. Toutefois, ces similitudes ne doivent pas faire oublier des différences que seule une compréhension de la société grecque éclaire.

Chiara di Serio

Abstinence from Meat of Marginal Communities in Classical and Late Antiquity

This study focuses on the cultural model of the vegetarian diet, as it was used in different contexts – both in the Greek world and in early Christianity – to identify and define marginal communities who isolate themselves from society and the world. The Greek tradition represents groups of mystics, such as the Orphics and Pythagoreans, who refrain from eating meat, because they reject the rite of sacrifice (Sabbatucci 1965; Detienne-Vernant 1977) and therefore traditional religion and *nomos*. In general, in the ancient world vegetarianism constitutes one of the characteristics attributed to the lifestyle of sages, philosophers and priests (Garnsey 1999), such as the Egyptian priests, the Brahmans, the Magi, the Essenes which they are described as utopian communities. Among the Christian communities of the first centuries, the sect of the Encratites also practised abstinence from meat and sexual abstinence as forms of asceticism. Their life presents traits of a utopian existence and their behaviour is a way of rejecting the world. From the classical to the Christian world abstinence

from meat is a manifestation of a life outside the norm: a mythical dimension is opposed to history and the state of nature is opposed to culture.

Pedro Martins

The reception of Greek vegetarian discourses in the work of Clement of Alexandria Addresses
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“Vegetarianism in antiquity” is an expression used to refer to a voluntary abstinence from meat grounded on ethical reasons, religious beliefs or in accordance to certain world-views. This terminology is generally associated by modern classical scholars to a debate among those who defended this way of life, e.g. Porphyry and Plutarch, and those who developed arguments against it, as some of the Stoics, Peripatetics, Epicureans, and others (Porph. *De Abst.* 1.4-26). For instance, in my book *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike im Streigespräch* (2017), I approached this subject by discussing the relationship between Theophrast’s fragment *On Piety*, transmitted by Porphyry, and the fragment *Against the Vegetarians* (*De Abst.* 1.13-26) which Porphyry assigns to both Heraclides Ponticus and an unknown Clodius of Naples (*De Abst.* 1.26.4). In this presentation, I shall argue that certain topics of that debate were object of reception in early Christian authors, such as Clement of Alexandria. In the seventh book of his *Stromateis*, Clement discusses pagan sacrificial habits. In this context, he quotes Xenocrates’ treaty *On Animal Alimentation* (Περὶ τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ζώων τροφῆς), and Polemon’s *On Life according to Nature* (Περὶ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν βίου) (*Stromateis.* 7.6.32.9). Clement suggests that it was argued in these writings that meat is prejudicial to the human being for the eating of animals would downgrade the human soul to the level of the souls of irrational animals (*Stromateis.* 7.6.32.9). Based on this evidence and others that I will present in this communication, I intend to trace back the relationship between the discussion about vegetarianism in Greco-Roman philosophy and the establishment of ascetic practices in the work of Clement of Alexandria by discussing a set of passages in which Clement seems to display a very specific knowledge of that intellectual debate.