



The Ethical Composition of Every Bite:

A Reconnection with Food

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Background:

While the physical process of eating fulfills a natural human instinct, food choice continues to fill us with anxiety.

Driven by a burgeoning awareness of the many factors involved in our food choices and the impact our meals have upon the environment, ourselves, and others, we are increasingly being forced to make the right eating choices.

This poses a complex moral question: how are we to eat?

The purpose of this project was to research perspectives that address this question to find an achievable and applicable solution to this uncertainty.



Why Food Choice Matters: Reaching Beyond Nutritional Value

The impact of eating is deeper than its physical impacts on nutrition and the environment. It reaches into our minds and souls and has a lasting impact on our bodies. This invites personal connection with the food we consume.

To eat virtuously, we must be conscious of not only what we eat, but how it is grown, produced, prepared, and shared with others. These factors culminate in a meal, which is how we connect our human nature to the nature that surrounds us.

The perfection of nature provides an ethical framework that we can measure our food choices against. It prescribes what is fitting to not only our bodies, but our minds and souls as well.

References:

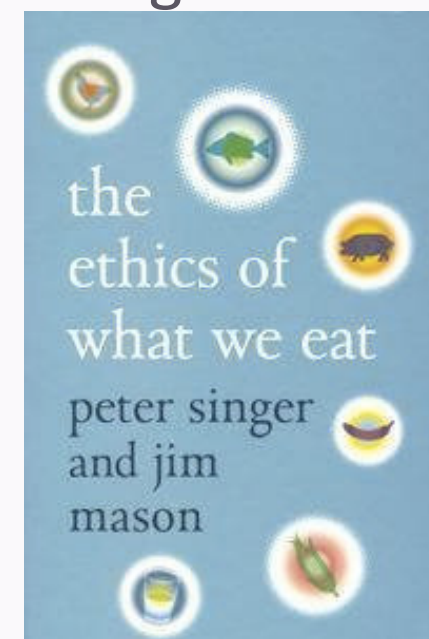
- Pollan, M. (2008). *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Singer, P., & Mason, J. (2007). *The Ethics of What We Eat: why our food choices matter*

Comparing Two Perspectives:

To explore the methodology of making ethical food choices, I compared the perspectives of Peter Singer and Michael Pollan. Since both men have dedicated substantial efforts to researching and conveying their opinions on how to eat morally, the differences that arise between their alternative approaches provide helpful insight into this subject.

Peter Singer:

The insight that can be gained from Peter Singer's perspective includes the following:

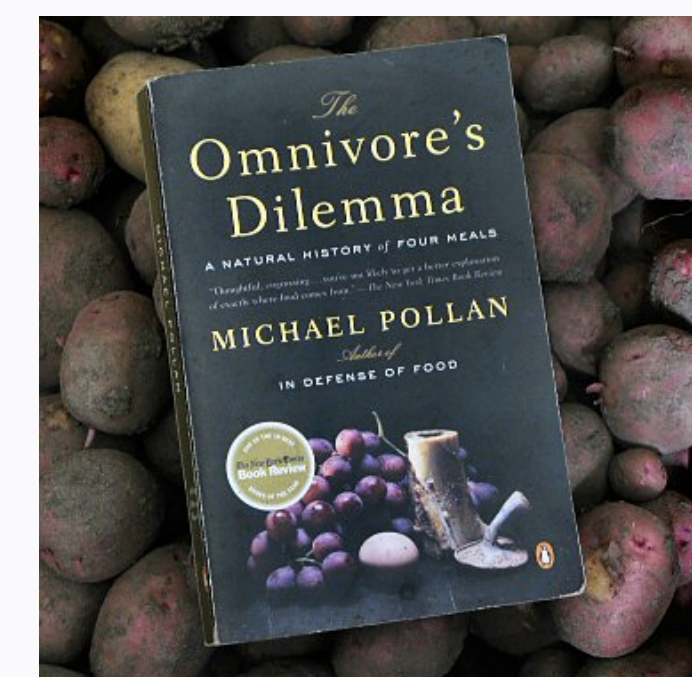


- Singer focuses on the effect of individual food choices in terms of economic and social impacts. He makes the larger picture of food choices clear by illustrating the true cost of our meals outside of their dollar value.
- Singer takes the environment and social wellbeing of humans and animals alike into account through specific scenarios that detail the negative externalities that arise with current techniques of food production.
- Singer aims to educate people by informing them about components of the American food industry that are kept in the dark. While at times brutally graphic, he provides his audience with the truth.
- Singer draws a clear moral line based on causing the least amount of pain in any given scenario. In doing so, his conclusions are well-intentioned in his effort to treat animals with kindness and consideration.

Michael Pollan:

The insight that can be gained from Michael Pollan's perspective includes the following:

- Pollan uses an explorative format to cultivate understanding through experience. His open-mindedness makes his perspective reliable because he transparently shares his journey and how it shapes his conclusions.
- Pollan attempts to establish a cultural understanding by demonstrating the value of food through the communal experience established in a meal.
- Pollan attributes the presence of a soul as the distinguishing factor between humans and animals, which allows him to incorporate animals into the human diet through a transparent understanding of where our food comes from.
- Pollan offers achievable, empowering solutions to the issues he depicts in the food industry. He does so by inspiring an awareness of our actions and inciting us to exercise our own intuition to make moral decisions.
- Pollan uses nature as a guide to establish which foods are fitting to us as humans. He highlights the strengths of using a symbiotic process both to cultivate food and our interactions with it.



Conclusion:

Reflecting on Singer and Pollan's Differences

The most striking distinctions between the philosophies of these two men can be summarized as the following:

- Singer is definitive while Pollan is dynamic.
- Singer encourages dissolution of human interaction with animals, while Pollan involves humans by placing them in the natural food chain.
- Singer focuses on quantitative arguments while Pollan is qualitatively reflective.

The impact of these differences is that they give us the tools to choose for ourselves through an informed understanding so we can combat the confusion of societal food understanding.



Significance: How We Should Eat



The answer to how we should eat is surprisingly simple. There is no formula to a perfect diet. While this would be easy, it would also be meaningless. Instead, the answer to eating ethically can be found in the autonomy of each individual. Consumption should not cause us anxiety. Instead, it should be enjoyed by a culture of communal engagement. The only requirement is that we care enough to seek out what is fitting to us through the parameters already set by nature. This is a rather exciting conclusion, as it encourages us to connect more deeply to our food and each other.

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