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Jainism and Food

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Introduction

One of the most remarkable sights in the Indian Subcontinent (a land of many marvels) is a lightly clad man or woman walking along the roadside sweeping the path head with a straw broom. The sweeper is a Jain monk or nun, and the reason for this action is to clear the path of any insects he or she might accidentally step on and kill.

So great is the Jains' reverence for all forms of life that monks will not kill insects that bite them, till the soil which may harbor small forms of life, or eat after sunset lest they accidentally ingest a bug. It goes without saying that the Jains do not eat meat. As one scholar wrote, "To say that Jains are strictly vegetarian hardly begins to convey either the rigour and severity of the rules which some Jains put themselves under or the centrality of such practices to Jain religious life' (Laidlaw 2003, p. 153).

The 2001 Indian Census reported 4.2 million Jains in India, 0.4 % of the total population. They are concentrated in Western and Southern India, especially the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Karnataka. There are also Jain communities in the United States (estimated at between 50,000 and 100,000), the United Kingdom, and East Africa. However, their significance cannot be underestimated. Vegetarianism and the concept of ahimsa (noninjury), which are central to Hinduism, had their origins in Jain beliefs and practices, while Mahatma Gandhi, although born a Hindu, was greatly influenced by Jainism.

The Emergence of Movements Opposed to Vedic Sacrifice

Both Jainism and Buddhism appeared in the Gangetic Basin (a region extending from modern Pakistan to the state of Bihar) in the sixth century BCE. The movements represented a revolt against what is sometimes called the Vedic religion or Vedism (after the *Vedas,* a collection of prayers, magical incantations, hymns, and poems compiled orally around 1500 BCE). A feature of Vedic society was the development of a caste system, with the Brahmins (priests) at the top. They were all powerful, since only they knew the sacred rituals and could perform the animal sacrifices needed to propitiate the gods – forces of nature with parallels in Greek and Roman mythology.

Somewhat later alternative philosophical and metaphysical ideas were emerging in the forests. One was reincarnation, the idea that there is an endless cycle of births, deaths, and rebirths that is determined by our actions in this world. Under the law of karma, every action has its effects on the future; the sum of our past karma determines

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our present existence and our future lives. The goal of existence is not worldly comforts or wealth but to realize this basic truth and attain release from the endless suffering of rebirths by asceticism, meditation, and yoga.

Mahavira Organizes His Followers

The most important figure in Jainism is Vardhaman (believed to have lived 599–527 BCE), whom his followers called Mahavira (great hero). Like Gautama Buddha, he was the son of the ruler of a small kingdom in northeast India. (There is no evidence that the two ever met.) The word Jain means a follower of *jina* (conqueror), *jina* being another name bestowed upon Mahavira because of his self-control. Vardhaman married and had children, but at the age of thirty left home to become a naked ascetic in search of enlightenment.

For 12 years, he wandered around northeast India experiencing many deprivations and hardships. In the thirteenth year, he attained enlightenment (*kevala*). To Jains, this does not mean union with the Absolute, as in Hinduism, or nothingness, as in Buddhism, but rather pure consciousness and absolute omniscience.

Mahavira was not the founder of a new religion, but is considered the last of 24 *jinas*, called *tirthankaras*, or ford-makers – omniscient teachers who attained enlightenment and then "made a ford", showing others the path. Like Gautama Buddha, he appears to have been an excellent organizer who attracted disciples, converted many people, and founded monastic orders for both men and women. He organized his followers into a fourfold order consisting of *sadhus* (wandering male ascetics, sometimes called monks or renouncers), s*adhvi*s (female ascetics/nuns), *shravaks* (laymen), and *shravikas* (laywomen). While all take the same four basic vows, the renouncers follow them much more strictly and take additional vows. It is they who embody the ultimate ideal of Jainism. They give up their homes, money, and possessions; wander around the countryside in single-sex groups; and depend entirely on laypeople for their food and shelter.

The Basic Beliefs of Jainism

Jainism is essentially an atheistic religion: The universe has existed from all eternity and its changes are due to the inherent powers of nature, not the intervention of a god. All knowledge is relative and temporary; absolute truth comes only to those enlightened people who appear at certain times in history, the *tirthankaras*. Although some Jain temples display their statues, they are not worshipped but are rather regarded as perfect beings to venerate and emulate.

A basic premise of Jainism is that life in the world is essentially bad and painful and that the evil done by humans leads to endless rebirths. The goal of human existence is to break this cycle and end the cycle of rebirths. This can only be accomplished when people can free ourselves from attachment and aversion and attain a state of perfect omniscience. What prevents them from doing this is karma, the effects of bad deeds and thoughts.

The Nature of Karma

Unlike Hindus or Buddhists, Jains view karma not as a spiritual or intangible element, but as a physical substance – a superfine matter that clings to our souls and conforms to mechanical laws of cause and effect. People attract karma particles when they do or say something wrong, such as telling a lie, stealing, or killing a living being. These bad actions cause souls to attract more karma, creating a vicious circle.

Jains believe that a person can avoid the accumulation of karma and remove karma that has already accumulated by behaving and thinking correctly and by having the correct mental state, so that even if an action attracts karma, it does not stick to the soul. This is done by following three ethical principles, called the Three Jewels – right faith, right perception, and right knowledge – and taking five great vows (*mahavratas*): *ahimsa,* nonviolence or noninjury; *satya*, truthfulness; *asteya*, not stealing; a*paragriha*, non-acquisitiveness; and *brahmacharya,* chaste living. All five vows are observed by monks; laypeople only follow the first four.

Ahimsa or Noninjury: The Central Principle of Jainism

The heart of Jain ethics is *ahimsa,* a word sometimes translated nonviolence but more correctly as "not harming." It is summed up in the statement "Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture or kill any creature or living being." Harm is not only physical but mental and verbal. Related to ahimsa is the notion of *daya,* a spirit of compassion towards all living beings.

Properties of Jivas

These concepts are rooted in Jains' views of the universe, which is seen as consisting of both lifeless things and an infinite number of *jivas*, or living entities, sometimes translated as souls. *Jivas* are made of energy and do not have physical form until they are incorporated into a body. Embodied *jivas* are classified according to their number of senses:

- One sense (touch): clay, sand, rain, ice, fire, wind, trees, bacteria, yeast, flowers, vegetables
- Two senses (touch and taste) worms, leeches, termites
- Three senses (touch, taste, smell): ants, lice, beetles, moths
- Four senses (touch, taste, smell, sight): flies, bees, scorpions
- Five senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing): infernal beings, animals, birds, human beings, and heavenly beings

A further distinction is made between vegetables with only one *jiva* and those that contain a multitude of living organisms, such as underground roots, bulbs, buds, and shoots as well as figs and fruits and vegetables with many seeds.

While in practice it is impossible to survive without killing or injuring some form of being, Jains strive to avoid doing any intentional harm. Thus, they are not supposed to be farmers, because tilling the soil would kill life; perform jobs involving fermentation, digging, and selling weapons or pesticides; or trade in meat products, honey, eggs, silk, or leather.

Wandering monks wear masks to avoid breathing in small *jiva*s and sweep the ground in front of them with a broom as they walk. During the monsoon season, they stay in indoors as much as possible, because the world is teeming with life at this time. A worshipper cannot enter a Jain temple wearing animal products. Renouncers are enjoined against traveling except on foot.

Jains establish animal sanctuaries and hospitals for cows, birds, and other animals. They free the birds when they recover, since they do not believe in confining them; for the same reason, contemporary Jains generally do not keep household pets.

Permitted and Banned Foods

Nowhere do Jain concerns about *ahimsa* manifest themselves more vigorously than with regard to food. While *all* observant Jains avoid certain foods that are absolutely forbidden, including meat, fish, and eggs, there are variations in what they otherwise eat, depending on family customs, sect, age, sex, time of year, personal circumstances, etc. In general, the old follow more restrictions than the young and women more than men; often people allow themselves greater latitude outside their homes. The practice of *ahimsa* and vegetarianism are on a continuum: As a Jain progresses on his or her spiritual journey, he limits the kind and number of foods he consumes.

From the eleventh century onward, Jain texts contain detailed lists of what can and cannot be eaten. Five things are absolutely forbidden for all Jains: meat (including meat products, such as gelatin), fish, eggs, alcohol, and honey. Eating meat is absolutely unthinkable; one renouncer is quoted as saying, "Meat-eaters have the shape of humans but they are not really human" (Laidlaw, p. 67). In India, many Jains will not frequent stores where meat, fish, or eggs are sold and will pay the owners of slaughter houses not to kill animals on certain holidays.

Alcohol is reviled because the process of fermentation and distillation multiplies and destroys living organisms and because it clouds one's thinking and can lead to violence. Honey is banned because it contains the bodily secretions of bees; if the bees are smoked out ahead of time, it destroys other insects that took their place.

In India, most Jain and Hindu vegetarians are not vegans, perhaps because the need for the nutrients in milk products was so important and because cows are (at least in theory) treated kindly. However, some North American Jains do avoid milk and dairy products because of the violence involved in producing milk by machines and the fact that cows are killed when they stop producing (Jain et al. 2005, p. 20).

Other food items are off-limits to renouncers at all times and to laypersons during certain fasts. These items include:

- Fruits and vegetables with many seeds, including figs, pomegranate, guava, and tomatoes
- "Empty fruits," that is, fruits with little nutritional value
- Vegetables that grow underground, including potatoes, turnips, squashes, carrots, radishes, and mushrooms
- Onions and garlic
- Fresh ginger and turmeric
- Foods containing yeast
- Nonvegetarian cheese
- Cauliflower and cabbage
- Buds and sprouts, including sprouted lentils
- Rotting and stale food

Fruits with many seeds are banned because each seed encloses the germ of life. Pulling up root vegetables kills millions of *jivas* in the soil, and the plants themselves contain an infinite number of *jivas* so that even a tiny part will grow if planted. Insects live within the leaves of cauliflowers and cabbages. Turmeric and ginger are not eaten fresh but may be eaten as dried powdered spices since in this form they cannot grow again.

Ayurvedic theories of medicine and folk beliefs reinforce these selections. Throughout India, onions and garlic are believed to inflame the passions and destroy mental equilibrium and thus are avoided by many orthodox Hindus. The orthodox of any religion are suspicious of what is new and foreign, which may account for the ban on such New World products as tomatoes, potatoes, and guavas.

Traditionally, Jains avoid eating after sunset, since they may inadvertently destroy unseen live forms and drink only boiled and filtered water in order to minimize the consumption of minute water-borne organisms. Jain writings contain detailed rules about how long foods can be kept before eating. For example, milk must be filtered and boiled within 48 min of milking the cow; yogurt should not be more than one day unless it is mixed with raisins or other sweetening agents; flour is to be kept for only 3 days in the rainy season and 7 days in the winter; and sweets must be consumed within 24 h (Mahais 1985, p. 105). Although these rules may no longer be relevant because of modern refrigeration, they reflect a sophisticated knowledge of hygienic and health issues at an early date.

The Jain Diet

There is no Jain cuisine as such. Until recently, most Indian food was produced locally and was highly seasonal. Jain food is also largely regional. Its dietary staples are grains and legumes. In Western India, the traditional grains were millet and sorghum, in North India wheat, grounded into flour and made into unleavened breads. Grains may also be coarsely ground and boiled to produce *daliya,* a kind of porridge. In Eastern India, boiled rice is the standard staple.

Legumes are boiled and spiced to make the soupy dish called *dal*. Hing, or asafetida, is a common replacement for garlic. There is no restriction on the myriad of spices that are the distinctive feature of Indian cuisine and impart flavor and aroma to the simplest of vegetarian dishes. Tropical fruits such as mango, coconut, and green vegetables are part of Jains' daily fare. In Rajasthan, much of which is a barren desert, substitutes for vegetables in stews and curries are made from ground grain or lentils boiled and dried in the sun.

Because Jains are not vegans, dairy products are an important part of their diet that provide needed nutrients. They include yogurt, buttermilk, and ghee – clarified butter. In India, ghee was traditionally associated with opulence and good health and affluent Jains are known for the amount they use in their cooking. Indians in general love sweets, made of sugar, dairy products, nuts, and spices, and Jains are no exception, although they give them up during fasts.

Jains abroad adapt to local conditions. A young Jain professional reports he does his best to avoid harming life "to the extent possible and practicable." He never consumes meat, fish, or eggs but will eat onions, garlic, and root vegetables. When dining with friends, he frequents Italian, Thai, and Japanese restaurants which serve vegetarian fare. He eats a lot of cheese, but does not insist on vegetarian cheese (i.e., cheese made without using whey, casein, rennet, or other animal products as coagulating agents). In Thai restaurants he requests that the vegetarian dishes be prepared without fish sauce. In Japanese restaurants, he eats vegetarian sushi.

Fasting

An important way of removing negative karma is by fasting, which Jains have elevated to an art form. (Jain fasting served as an inspiration for Mahatma Gandhi, who used it as a political tactic.) The Hindi word for fast, *tapas*, means "heat" in Sanskrit: A common metaphor is that just as the sun dries up a polluted lake, so fasting purifies the soul by removing negative karma. Fasts are considered essential for spiritual growth.

A fast is always preceded by a vow, which means that it is a religious act and done with a predefined intention. There are no hard and fast rules when or how long one should fast or what form this fasting should take, but it is never obligatory, always a matter of free will. It is not enough just to stop eating; one should also lose the desire to eat and not relish food when one does eat. Fasting is not done in isolation but with one's family or as a community event.

Fasts are both an extension and intensification of Jains' regular dietary restrictions. Jain texts classify fasts into many categories and lay down complex rules about what can and cannot be eaten. For example, fasting may mean giving up all food and water for 1 day, 3 days, or 8 days; every alternative day of the year; twice a year; etc. It can entail drinking only water or the water used to rinse out a pot. Fasters may eat only one meal a day at a set time; limit the number of items eaten; give up favorite foods, such as sweets (sometimes on a permanent basis); or eliminate salt or spices from their diet. A common form of fasting requires giving up green vegetables, milk, yogurt, oil, fruits, salt, spices, and sugar and eating only dal and rice.

Like some Hindus, Jains fast on certain days of the lunar cycle when the moon changes, especially the 8th and 14th day of each fortnight. They fast when the seasons change and during the monsoon, when fasting is thought to also offer protection against illness. Most Jains fast during festivals, especially *Paryushan Maha Pava* which lasts 8–10 days during the rainy season (usually in August–September). Some fast for the entire period, others for shorter times, but fasting on the final day is considered obligatory. In this case, fasting means complete abstinence from any sort of food or drink, but some people take boiled water during the daytime. During this festival people ask forgiveness of those they have offended, visit the temple, and celebrate with a community feast.

However, Jains may fast at any time, especially if they believe have committed a sin and need to repent. Women generally fast more than men and the old more than the young; after retirement, some people start to fast on a regular basis.

The ultimate fast, called *smadhi maran* or *sallekhna,* involves giving up all food and water and starving oneself to death. This practice is undertaken by someone who is the final stages of a fatal illness or is very old and feels they have fulfilled their duties in this life. They must have permission from a senior renouncer, which is granted only if death is imminent. The practice has been challenged in the Indian courts.

Impact of Jainism

The basic concepts of Jainism were ultimately absorbed by the religion that came to be known as Hinduism, especially vegetarianism and the concept of ahimsa, which became the centerpiece of the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi. Although born a Hindu, Gandhi grew up in a community in Gujarat where there were many Jains and as a young man had a Jain spiritual adviser. He is quoted as saying:

> No religion of the World has explained the principle of Ahimsa [nonviolence] so deeply and systematically as discussed, with its applicability in life, in Jainism. As and when this benevolent principle of Ahimsa will be sought for practice by the people of the world to achieve their ends of life in this world and beyond, Jainism is sure to have the uppermost status and Bhagwan [a term of respect] Mahavira is sure to be respected as the greatest authority on Ahimsa (Jain Centre 2002).

Summary

The only religion in the world that is unconditionally vegetarian is Jainism, which has around four million adherents, mainly in Western India. Jainism developed in India in the sixth century BCE; its leading figure, Mahavira, was a contemporary of the Buddha. Both religions opposed the increasing power of the Brahmins and animal sacrifice. The Hindu practice of vegetarianism may have originated with the Jains.

The cardinal principle of Jainism is *ahimsa,* translated as noninjury or nonviolence. Jains believe that every organism, from single cell amoebas to human beings, has an eternal soul, or *jiva*. Thus, any injury to any creature, however lowly, must be avoided. Jains are not allowed to follow farming as a profession because of the harm to creatures in the soil.

Jains not only do not eat meat, fish, or eggs, but they avoid a myriad of other foods, including any whose production kills the plant, harms microscopic organisms, or destroys the germs of future life. Thus, Jains avoid honey, fruits and vegetables with little seeds (eggplant, figs), underground roots (potatoes, carrots, onions, etc.), and mushrooms. Milk and milk products are allowed but alcohol is forbidden. Jain monks and nuns follow every more stringent dietary restrictions, than lay persons. This essay will describe the history of Jainism and its main philosophical tenets, with a focus on its dietary restrictions and prescriptions.

Cross-References

- ▶ Agricultural Ethics
- ▶ Alcohol Abstinence and Sobriety
- ▶ Fasting
- ▶ Jainism and Food
- ▶ Meat: Ethical Considerations
- ▶ Vegetarianism

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Jefferson's Moral Agrarianism

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Synonyms

Agrarianism; Liberal eudaimonism; Morality; Progress

Introduction

Thomas Jefferson wore numerous hats: that of statesman, meteorologist, inventor, religionist, historian, architect, ethicist, philologist, humanitarian, paleontologist, botanist, and farmer, inter alia. In none of those disciplines could he claim expertise – he never did – but in none of those disciplines was he a mere dilettante. In that regard, he stood head and shoulders above all other US presidents and head and shoulders above all others of his day, except for a select few.

Among his numerous passions, Jefferson expressed especial affection for farming. Upon retirement from politics, he writes to John Adams, "I return to farming with an ardor which I scarcely knew in my youth, and which has got the better entirely of my love of study" (25 Apr. 1794). "If you visit me as a farmer," he states to W. B. Giles 1 year later (27 Apr. 1795), "it must be as a co-disciple. . . . I am as much delighted and occupied with it, as if I was the greatest adept. I shall talk with you about it from morning till night, and put you on very short allowance as to political aliment." Sixteen years later, he writes C. W. Peale (20 Aug. 1811) of being an "old man," but a "young gardener." "No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden," he adds. "Such a variety of subjects, some one always coming to perfection, the failure of one thing repaired by the success of another, and instead of one harvest a continued one through the year."

"Liberal Eudaimonism"

Jefferson's passion for agrarianism is a consequence of his broad-scale ethical views – what may be dubbed his "liberal eudaimonism" and which comprises liberalism, eudaimonism, meritocracy, and progressivism.

Jefferson's liberalism comprises purchases of "freedom from" (negative liberty) and "freedom to" (positive liberty). Jefferson's conception of liberty is a code of restraint on sovereignty, exercised by a few or many – i.e., negative liberty. Freed from potential abuse through political intervention in their affairs, citizens are at liberty to manage their own affairs as they see fit to do so. Yet recognizing that liberty was no end in itself, Jefferson recognizes the need of some government intervention in citizens' affairs to promote human flourishing – i.e., freedom to. For instance, he proposed a constitutional amendment in 1806 to allow for improvements toward the general welfare – viz., the opening of roads, clearing of rivers, and building of canals.

"Eudaimonism," drawn from Aristotle's and the Greek and Roman Stoics' view of *eudaimonia* (commonly translated as "happiness"), is the view that the best manner of living is to live well or to flourish. Jefferson is a eudaimonist of some persuasion. His addresses and correspondence – e.g., to John Adams, 28 Feb. 1796, and to Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours, 24 Apr. 1816 – especially show that he has a very definite notion of the good life, which critically involves virtuous activity through exercise of the moral sense as well as some stock of bodily and external goods. As is the case with the eudaimonism of Aristotle and the Greek and Roman Stoics, human happiness for Jefferson involves no separation of public and private dimensions.

Meritocracy, for Jefferson, involves four tiers of government – wards, counties, states, and the nation – in place so that everyone has some

participatory role in governing. Key, however, he writes to John Adams (28 Oct. 1813), is that the talented and morally superior – i.e., the natural aristocracy (*aristoi*) – will most likely be encouraged to govern at the higher levels. The way to ensure that the naturally best and not the artificially best rule is to leave the election of governors in the hands of the people, suitably educated. Jefferson even claims that having the best rule is the best test of a good government.

Jefferson's writings – e.g., to Joseph Priestley, 27 Jan. 1800; to Count de Moustier, 17 May 1788; to Elbridge Gerry, 26 Jan. 1799; and to William Green Munford, 18 June 1799 – also show that he consistently clung to the belief that humans as a whole were progressive beings. In keeping with the general trend of Enlightenment thinking, Jefferson believed that the human mind and the moral sense were massively underdeveloped and, thus, capable of substantial improvement. There were Bacon in philosophy; Boyle, Brahe, Galileo, Kepler, Rittenhouse, and Newton in science; Locke and Sidney in political theory apropos of human intelligence; and Kames, Priestley, Sterne, and Hutcheson in moral theory. Following the lead of such progressivists, Jefferson's republican ideals were directed toward maximizing intellectual, political, and especially moral improvement to promote human flourishing.

Agrarianism as Moral Nonesuch

Agrarianism had an especial place in Jefferson's notion of the good life. The life of a farmer, he thought, was suited ideally to promote large-scale human flourishing by enhancing independence of all citizens, allowing both for some measure of political participation through the leisure provided by scientific farming and for cultivating virtue through honest and valuable labor. "Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example," he writes in Query XIX of his *Notes on Virginia*. "It is the mark set on those, who, not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on casualties and caprice of customers." "The pursuits of agriculture … are the best preservative of morals," he writes to John Blair (13 Aug. 1787). "Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals and happiness," he tells George Washington (14 Aug. 1787).

Agrarianism for Jefferson is, thus, a moral ideal. He states famously in Query XIX of *Notes on Virginia*, "Those who labor the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue." He iterates that sentiment in Query XXII, where he says no age of history has ever recorded corruption in the "mass of cultivators." To James Madison (20 Dec. 1788), he writes, "I think our government will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they [*sic*] are chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become corrupt as in Europe." To Jean-Nicolas Démeunier (29 Apr. 1795), Jefferson writes that husbandry yields "the most happiness & contentment to one of … philosophic turn."

Query XIX of his *Notes on Virginia* gives Jefferson's fullest expatiation of agrarianism as a moral ideal. In Europe, people are forced into manufacture, as the surplus of people and want of land make agriculture difficult. The costs on human happiness are great. In America, there is a surplus of land and a want of people to improve it. Americans, as farmers, are self-sufficient and dedicated to their land, state, and country.

Farmers, not manufacturers, are self-sufficient, for manufacturers are dependent on the "casualties and caprice of customers" and dependence leads to subservience, venality, ambition, and suffocates virtue. Americans lack many of the goods of Europe, he concedes, but they are better for that, as such "goods," mere bagatelles, lead to loss of independence and unhappiness. "Generally speaking," he writes, "the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its

husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good-enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption."

The consistent message in *Notes on Virginia* – that agrarianism is the most virtuous life – is spelled out in several letters. Jefferson writes to Caspar Wistar (21 June 1807), "I am not a friend to placing growing men in populous cities, because they acquire there habits & partialities which do not contribute to the happiness of their after life." Elsewhere (e.g., to John Jay, 23 Aug. 1785; to James Madison, 20 Dec. 1787; to Jean-Nicolas Démeunier, 29 Apr. 1795; and to Jean-Baptiste Say, 1 Feb. 1804), he says much the same.

The tone in all such letters is that agrarianism is a moral, not economic ideal. Jefferson's commitment to agriculturalism was a commitment to freedom, virtue, and equality, not a commitment to an economic system. He writes to Thomas Cooper (10 Sept. 1814), "And with the laborers of England generally, does not the moral coercion of want subject their will as despotically to that of their employer, as the physical constraint does the soldier, the seaman or the slave?" To Thomas Diggs (19 June 1788), Jefferson says that a manufacturer, transplanted from Europe, would be irresistibly tempted by the independence and well-being of the American farmer and would choose an agrarian lifestyle to his prior life of manufacture. That, of course, is not to say that Jefferson did not have some economic and political motives behind his agrarianism. As Query XIX shows, he did. It is merely to emphasize that Jefferson's agrarianism was chiefly moral and that the arguments on behalf of agrarianism as a way of life were principally evaluative and only secondarily economic or political.

Agrarianism as a Universal Standard

Jefferson appeals to nature to ground moral agrarianism. Agrarianism was for him a moral ideal, because it was closest to nature and nature for Jefferson had a normative slant as it did for his beloved ancients (e.g., the Stoics). By nature, husbandry is cornucopian, while manufacture is fruitless. To Benjamin Austin (9 Jan. 1816), he writes, "Agriculture is productive, manufacturing is sterile, and it is nature that makes this so." He adds, "To the labor of the husbandman, a vast addition is made by the spontaneous energies of the earth on which it is employed: for one grain of wheat committed to the earth, she renders twenty, thirty, and even fifty fold, whereas to the labor of the manufacturer nothing is added." The implicit conclusion is that persons ought not to waste time and effort in activities that are by nature sterile.

It might be supposed that Jefferson's moral agrarianism was a normative ideal applicable to Americans, only because they have surfeit of land and the land is underpopulated, but not to non-Americans (e.g., the British or French), because they have want of land and the land is overpopulated. If so, then moral agrarianism is to be taken as a relative or parochial ideal, applicable to Americans and others, situated similarly. For countries with large populations and little land, a different standard of happiness is applicable. That I shall show is not the case. Jefferson was consistently clear that agrarianism was a standard uniquely idoneous to human nature. For the most part, only people that worked the land could be virtuous and happy.

Jefferson is clear that the life of manufacture that predominates in parts of Europe comes at the expense of human happiness (letter to James Madison, 20 Dec. 1787). He writes John Jay (23 Aug. 1785): "I consider the class of artificers as the panders of vice & the instruments by which the liberties of a country are generally overturned." He adds: "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, & they are tied to their country & wedded to it's [*sic*] liberty & interests by the most lasting bonds." When there is no longer arable land for farming, those citizens unable to farms should become mariners before manufacturers. His judgments in such letters are not circumstance-dependent, but absolute.

Jefferson's letter to Jay shows agrarianism ties one to the land and that suggests a sort of bondage, not independence. For Jefferson, there can

be no notion of independence without some form of yoke. The only liberty worth having is that of a farmer, who is tied to his land and thus to his state and who has work that frees him from the drudgery of manufacture. Manufacturers, following self-interest alone, are yoked to the caprice of consumers. Farmers, following a more patriotic course, are yoked to self-interest as well as the interests of their state.

For Jefferson, husbandmen have a link to the land that manufacturers, tradesmen, and merchants do not. In times of economic distress or war, the latter can liquidate their assets and abandon the state; husbandmen can do no such thing. Husbandmen have an investment in the land and, thus, an investment in their state that others do not have. That investment is not just political; husbandry is character enriching. It is a universally applicable moral ideal.

The Scientific Farmer

Jefferson's *Literary Commonplace Book* (§788) – a compilation of notes taken by Jefferson in his early years that is 123 pages in length and comprises sections on prose, poetry, and dramatic verse – provides additional confirmation. Here Jefferson jots down three ideas from Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*: "The cultivation of the earth is the greatest work of man. The more climate brings man to flee work, the more religion and the laws ought to excite them to it. ch. 6. [*sic*] In order to conquer the laziness of climate, it would be necessary that they look to avoid all ways of life without work. ch. 17 [*sic*]" (Jefferson 1989).

In short, agrarianism ties men to their land and country as well as their country's liberties and interests. It is a Ciceronian moral ideal – one in which what is morally beneficial and what is politically beneficial are not dissociable.

There are also Jefferson's observations of the French and British.

In France, conjugal love or domestic happiness does not exist. The French "nourish and invigorate all [their] bad passions." That affords them "moments of ecstasy," he writes to Charles Bellini (30 Sept. 1785), at the price of "days and months of restlessness and torment." To Anne Willing Bingham (7 Feb. 1787), he adds that every person is preoccupied with finding pleasure in the present. Consequently, they are consumed with an ennui, unknown to Americans. "In America, on the other hand, the society of your husband, the fond cares for the children, the arrangements of the house, the improvements of the grounds, fill every moment with a healthy and an useful activity," he writes. "Every exertion is encouraging, because to present amusement, it joins the promise of some future good. The intervals of leisure are filled by the society of real friends, whose affections are not thinned to cob-web, by being spread over a thousand objects."

In England, he writes John Bannister (15 Oct. 1785), things are less deplorable, but also depraved. Britain is a manufacturing society; English education amounts to drinking, horse racing, and boxing. As a manufacturing society, however, they produce splendid goods, yet their splendor is at bottom extravagance, evidence of depravity, and dissipation. "The mechanical arts in London are carried to a wonderful perfection," he writes to boyhood friend John Page (4 May 1786). "But of these I need not speak, because of them my countrymen have unfortunately too many samples before their eyes. I consider the extravagance which has seized them as a more baneful evil than toryism was during the war."

Jefferson's moral agrarianism – a picture of the good life for all humans everywhere – must not be apprehended as a backward-looking, filiopietistic pastoralism in the manner of Hesiod in *Works and Days* or Virgil in *Georgics*. Instead moral agrarianism is a bucolic ideal that is, in the spirit of the progressivist element of his liberal eudaimonism, quintessentially scientific, progressive, and forward looking. Thus, agrarianism for Jefferson, in keeping with the progressivism of the Enlightenment, is a melioristic ideal that preaches the self-sufficiency and autonomy of an agrarian lifestyle, while it advocates science and technology sufficient to make that lifestyle efficient enough both for domestic leisure and for

some measure of local political participation – each an essential component of successful republicanism (Holowchak 2011).

The Problem of Manufacture

Jefferson was not oblivious to the growth of manufacture in the newly formed United States in his lifetime. In a letter to George Washington (15 Mar. 1784), Jefferson acknowledges the influence of commerce and its manufacture. "All the world is becoming commercial. Was [*sic*] it practicable to keep ourselves separated from them we might indulge ourselves in speculating whether commerce contributes to the happiness of mankind." He writes to David Humphreys (23 June 1791) that he endorses America's gradual move toward manufacture. A letter to Jean-Baptiste Say (1 Feb. 1804) 13 years later states, "the best distribution of labor is supposed to be that which places the manufacturing hands alongside the agricultural; so that the one part shall feed both, and the other part furnish both with clothes and other comforts." To Thomas Leiper (21 Jan. 1809), he acknowledges that political autonomy depends on manufacture as well as agriculture. To Governor James Jay months later (7 Apr. 1809), he says that "equilibrium of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce" is needed for American independence. To Benjamin Austin (9 Jan. 1816), he writes that some amount of manufacture is needed to secure independence: "[Whoever] is against domestic manufacture must be for reducing us either to dependence on that foreign nation or to be clothed in skins, and to live, like wild beasts, in dens. . . . I am not one of these; experience has taught me that manufacturers are now as necessary to our independence as to our comfort."

Such passages might seem to suggest some amount of whiffle waffling on moral agrarianism or perhaps, at some point, a change of mind. It is clear Jefferson saw the rise of manufacture in America occurring before his own eyes. It is also clear he recognized in time that political independence required both manufacture and agriculture.

Jefferson's praise of the virtues of farmers never excluded manufacture. Early letters show that. His letter to Jay (23 Aug. 1785) – in which he calls farmers the "most valuable," "most vigorous," "most independent," and "most virtuous" citizens – merely bids citizens to pursue an agrarian lifestyle, so long as there is arable land, in preference to other occupations. "I think our government will remain virtuous for many centuries," he writes Madison (20 Dec. 1787), "as long as they are chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America." If there was any change of mind for Jefferson, it concerned the extent to which the agrarian ideal could be instantiated.

Awareness of the need of manufacture and need of commercial exchange for political independence do not show that Jefferson ever abandoned agrarianism as a moral ideal. They show merely that Jefferson was committed only to some amount of manufacture and commercial exchange, sufficient to secure independence, not so much to unseat agriculture as an ethical ideal.

Summary

Thomas Jefferson had an Arcadian vision for his fledgling country. That vision comprised simple, idyllic, and campestral living. Farms would stretch out from coast to coast and Americans would engage in only that amount of manufacture to keep them independent of the political bickering of European nations.

Close scrutiny of his writings shows that the motivation for Jefferson's political and economic agrarian alternative to European living is a moral vision of human flourishing that aims to be a universal standard for humans. Agrarianism for Jefferson is a moral ideal.

Cross-References

- ▶ Agricultural Ethics
- ▶ Ecotopia
- ▶ Geographical Indications, Food, and Culture
- ▶ Virtue theory, Food, and Agriculture

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Judaism and Food

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Synonyms

Halakhah; Kashrut; Kosher; Ritual; *Sheḥiṭah*; Slaughter; Torah

Introduction

Many of the laws and commandments that lie at the root of Judaism set out rules for how the community of Israel is required to relate to the production, distribution, and consumption of food. The commandments of the Torah (the five books of Moses that stand at the core of the Jewish scriptures) are defined and supplemented by an elaborate oral tradition embodied in the Talmuds and other works by the rabbis over the ages. The present entry deals primarily with the Jewish dietary laws ("kosher" food) with special reference to the diverse interplay between ritual aspects (aimed at instilling holiness in the lives of Jews) and ethical issues that arise in the production of food, notably matters involving the humane treatment of animals. The advent of modernity has given rise to an intensifying of ethical questions sparked by the industrial mass production of food (especially of meat) and by increased sensitivity to ethical concerns.

Relevant Ethical Principles

In Rabbinic Judaism, ethical questions are often framed in terms of law, though the relationship between law and ethics is not always easy to define. In particular, there exists a flexibly defined realm of "within the line of the law" (analogous to the English "beyond the letter of the law") which comprises moral behavior that is not enforceable by the judiciary and yet is regarded as part of the structure of religious law.

The Prohibition Against Causing Suffering to Animals

Jewish religious law – "*halakhah*" – forbids the inflicting of unnecessary suffering on animals [*ṣa'ar ba'alei ḥayyim*]. Most authorities understand that this is implicit in Exodus 23:5 which commands to ease the burden of an animal even if it belongs to a personal enemy. Differing views have been expressed as to when the suffering should be classified as "unnecessary"; some of these views, as they relate to agricultural activities and food preparation, will be discussed below. The imperative of humane treatment of animals became an important issue, for example, in modern Israeli farming when dealing with the talmudic prohibition of milking cows on the Sabbath. Concern for the pain that would otherwise be caused to the cows motivated rabbis to devise permissible ways of milking, whether by means of ingenious legal constructions or with the help of technological solutions (automatically timed milking machines) (Steinberg 1979; Schwartz 1997).

The Prohibition Against Destroying Food

Deuteronomy 20:19 states "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down; for is the tree of the field human, that it should be besieged of thee?" Talmudic law understood this as an interdiction against wanton destruction of any fruit-bearing trees. Protection was extended to the fruit itself, and the law forbids any other kind of wasteful spoiling by direct or indirect means, such as hunting for sport or diversion of water sources. This principle has come to serve as a central foundation for recent attempts to incorporate ecological and environmental criteria into religious law, including the dietary regulations (see below) (Zevin 1969). Earlier treatments of the topic were often limited by their acceptance of the doctrine ascribed to Aristotle that divine providence prevents the extinction of entire species (e.g., Maimonides, *Guide* 3:17).

Torah and Vegetarianism

The biblical narrative depicts the earliest stage of humanity as essentially vegetarian. The first man and woman were instructed to eat only from the fruits of the trees in the garden of Eden, and it was only after the flood in the days of Noah (Genesis 9:3) that God told the survivors "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you, and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything." While this suggests that ▶ vegetarianism is an ideal state reflective of humanity's original vocation, biblical law and practice make it amply clear that the slaughter of animals and consumption of meat are not merely a concession to human weakness, but a central requirement of sacrificial worship and other aspects of Israel's religious life. At any rate, notwithstanding the diversity that usually characterizes Jewish theology and exegesis, no one has challenged the basic premise that humans occupy a higher plane of the spiritual hierarchy than other living creatures.

The Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds (j.*Kilaim* 9:4 [32b]; b.*Bava Meṣia*' 85a) tell a remarkable legend about Rabbi Judah the Patriarch being approached by a young calf that was pleading to be saved from the slaughterer's knife, but Rabbi Judah dismissed him saying "This was what you were created for." As punishment for his indifference, Rabbi Judah was subjected to a severe and prolonged toothache that did not cease until he redeemed himself by showing compassion to a nest of rodents. There is no suggestion that the author of this story was calling for avoidance of meat on ethical grounds – but nevertheless, feelings of compassion toward animals are nonetheless to be expected from decent and pious people, in emulation of the divine quality expressed in Psalms 145:9: "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Even an influential thinker such as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935) who promoted the ideal of vegetarianism as part of his eschatological vision (and is often described incorrectly as being himself a vegetarian), was opposed to its practice as long as the world remains unredeemed (Rosenak 2007, pp. 358–364).

Distribution of Produce

The Torah and much of talmudic literature were composed against a background of peasant life. The Israelites to whom they were addressed lived off the land for the most part, sustaining themselves through farming or husbandry. Biblical law contains elaborate instructions for setting aside certain portions of produce that must be distributed to various recipients, such as the poor, or (what sometimes amounted to the same thing) the Levites and priests who possessed no land of their own and would therefore rely on those portions for their subsistence and to enable them to pursue their spiritual tasks. A "poor tithe" was to be paid on the third and sixth year of every seven-year cycle. Similarly, during the harvests of the respective crops, the Torah designated portions of the produce that must be left for the poor. These include the "border of the field," the forgotten sheaves and olives, and the gleanings of the vineyard (Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19–20). All of these practices

were defined with precision in rabbinic law, especially in the tractates *Pe'ah* of the Mishnah and Jerusalem Talmud which include descriptions of sophisticated municipal social welfare structures for the collection and distribution of food for the local and indigent poor. The Torah regards these portions as belonging to the poor by moral and legal right and not subject to the vagaries of the donors' generosity.

Underlying the scriptural institutions of sabbatical and jubilee years (see Exodus 23:10–11; Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15:1–10) was an ambitious agenda that combined theological, social, and environmental dimensions. Whereas the command to leave the fields fallow every seventh year might serve a pragmatic purpose in restoring nutrients to the soil, the Torah also incorporates that command into far-reaching social legislation such as leaving produce for the poor and beasts of the field, cancellation of debts, emancipation of slaves, the restoration of ancestral properties to their original owners (who had likely sold them out of economic duress), and other measures that convey the profound ideal that "the land is mine [God's], for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23). Evidence indicates that sabbatical years (at least, their agricultural aspects) were observed quite rigorously in Second Temple and talmudic times; though in modern times, the dominant tendency among religiously observant Jews has been to circumvent the more burdensome prohibitions by means of legal fictions or by relying on imported produce (the restrictions are understood to apply only in the land of Israel).

Seeking Reasons for Dietary Laws

A characteristic feature of biblical writing is its tendency to refrain from supplying explicit reasons for the commandments. In many cases, the reasons may be self-evident, while in some instances (particularly in ritual and cultic matters), religious virtue may well lie in the simple readiness to obey a divine commandment *qua* commandment, without seeking a more specific rationale. There are cases in which the tradition is altogether ambivalent about whether a given law was commanded as an ethical precept or as a sacramental or disciplinary ritual.

This ambivalence is very evident in some of the dietary laws, which include several components that lend themselves to ethical interpretations, though those interpretations are not spelled out explicitly in the official texts and are not necessarily authoritative. Indeed, rabbinic discourse often prefers to deal with the mechanics of religious laws independently of their theological or moral foundations. Although the ethical and the theological aspects are both essential components of Torah law, the conceptual terminology of rabbinic discourse distinguishes between the social and the ritual realms – those commandments that involve the relationship "between a person and one's neighbor" as distinct from those that are "between a person and the Almighty" (*bein adam leḥavero, bein adam lammaḳom*).

For example, Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 set guidelines for distinguishing between permissible and forbidden species of land animals, birds, aquatic creatures, and insects. The rules are justified in terms of purity and holiness, not morals or ethics. Edible quadrupeds are identified only by physical criteria: they must chew their cuds and have cloven hooves. However, some commentators, such as Don Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508) noted that all the animal species that are permitted under that definition are peaceful herbivores; they do not possess the sharp teeth or claws that would equip them to be predators. The forbidden birds enumerated by the Torah are also predatory by nature, and to some extent, the same principle can be extended to sea creatures as well.

This kind of exegetical ambivalence pertains to some other scriptural dietary laws that are more likely to be rooted in ethical concerns, such as not seething a kid in its mother's milk (Exodus 34:26; 23:19; Deuteronomy 14:21), which rabbinic law expanded into the complete separation of dairy and meat. The same ethical interpretation might apply to the precepts "a cow or a ewe, you shall not kill both her and her young in one day" (Leviticus 22:28) and "if a bird's nest

chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: but thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee" (Deuteronomy 22:6–7). All these precepts can be interpreted as intended to avoid acts of real or symbolic cruelty in recognition of the maternal instincts common to all living creatures (thus Rashbam, S. D. Luzzatto, and others); however, several Jewish commentators (including Naḥmanides, Baḥya, and others) explained the latter two precepts on ecological grounds, as being motivated by pragmatic concerns for possible depletion of the fowl supply. As regards the "bird's nest" precept, the issue was especially confused by a passage in the Mishnah (*Berakhot* 5:3, *Megillah* 4:9) that forbids the liturgical formula "your mercies extend unto a bird's nest" (a formula that has in fact survived in a Palestinian Aramaic *Targum*). An authoritative opinion in the Talmud (b.*Berakhot* 33b; b.*Megillah* 25a) explains the reason for this liturgical prohibition as "because one is thereby treating the qualities of the Holy One as if they were based on mercy, whereas they are really absolute decrees." The severe difficulty that this text placed in the way of Jewish ethical thinkers is particularly apparent in the writings of the great codifier and philosopher Moses Maimonides (1135–1204). In his earlier works (his Arabic commentary to the Mishnah and his Mishneh Torah code of Jewish law), he copied the talmudic ruling, adding that "if the precept were really motivated by compassion, then God would have altogether forbidden slaughter." However, in his more mature philosophical treatise, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, he dismissed that approach as reflecting nothing more than a marginal minority opinion among the talmudic sages, whereas a proper understanding of the Torah does indeed require that all its commandments be placed on a rational or ethical basis (Segal 1991).

The Torah prohibits hybridization of mixed species of fauna and flora, or even ploughing with mixed species or wearing fabrics of mixed wool and linen. Some commentators, such as Rabbi S. R. Hirsch [*Horeb* Ch. 57] ascribe this to a fundamental obligation to "respect the Divine order in God's creation" in the sense that "You should not interfere with the natural order which you find fixed by God in His world for its ultimate good" (Hirsch 1962, pp. 282–289). If applied consistently, this approach could lead to a complete rejection of genetic modifications of food, though that has generally not been the policy followed by Jewish law. The ban on mixed fabrics has in fact been classified as a "*ḥoḳ*," a humanly incomprehensible ritual precept; whereas that on ploughing with an ox and an ass is usually explained as motivated by concern for the animals' discomfort when they work together at different paces.

Medieval Jewish rationalists like Baḥya Ibn Paḳuda and Maimonides insisted that the specific commandments and laws must be understood within a broader spiritual context and that observant Jews should never lose sight of their higher religious purposes. However, their worldviews were usually directed toward a goal of intellectual perfection, and they regarded ethical and moral improvements as means toward that end rather than as ultimate objectives in their own right. Followers of the Lithuanian "Mussar" (moral discipline) movement led by Rabbi Israel Lipkind Salanter (1810–1883) stressed the primacy of ethical concerns.

The required method of killing animals for both sacrificial and private use, known in Hebrew as *sheḥitah*, was not set out explicitly in the Torah, but was defined in very precise terms in the rabbinic oral tradition. It involved the slashing of the animal's trachea and esophagus with a very sharp and smooth knife in a single movement. The rabbis supervised the slaughterers very carefully to make sure that there were no nicks in the knife and that the act itself was performed without pauses or inconsistent pressure that could cause pain to the animal. Violators would have their meat declared ritually forbidden for consumption, and the butchers might be disqualified from practicing their profession (Berman 1941, pp. 83–134). It was Maimonides who made the most influential case advocating an ethical or humane rationale for the Jewish procedures of

slaughtering animals and fowl for food. In the *Guide* 3:26, in the context of his general argument for the rational basis of the Torah's laws, Maimonides confronted a problematic passage from the Talmud in which a rabbi stated that it makes no difference to God exactly how an animal is put to death and that the required procedure for slaughter was instituted only to "refine" people and test their obedience. Against this position, Maimonides argued that the Jewish procedure for slaughter embodies the optimal method for achieving a number of desirable ethical objectives. Given that the consumption of meat is essential to the physical well-being of human beings (on this point Maimonides invoked his considerable credentials as a physician), it follows that animals must be killed for food. The sacred law therefore provided a set of rules that would ensure an easy, painless death for the victim. While there might be other ways of achieving this objective, *sheḥitah* has the advantage of being comparatively easy to perform without the need for expensive specialized instruments. It thus provides a reasonable balance between considerations of humaneness and of practicality. If Jewish law had insisted on more elaborate or costly methods, it is unlikely that they would have been widely observed, and this would have defeated their original purpose (Berman 1941, pp. 432–433).

Medieval rabbinic documents indicate a number of ethical issues that were encountered frequently in connection with the slaughter and sale of meat. For the most part, the issues that arose involved fraud (passing off non-kosher meat as kosher) or the general ethical and moral standards that should be demanded of a butcher, such as whether they could be allowed to follow their trade after being found guilty of a sin or crime. The primary impact of such questions was on the trustworthiness of the butcher's declaration that his meat was kosher. The humane treatment of the animals, albeit a value well established in traditional Jewish ethics (see above), was not considered a central issue in the observance of the dietary rules. The spread of Kabbalah, especially since the sixteenth century, tended to emphasize symbolic and theurgic interpretations of the commandments rather than their social or ethical dimensions. Nevertheless, the kabbalistic doctrine of reincarnation (*gilgul*) promoted the belief, especially in the eastern European Ḥasidic movement, that proper slaughter might be necessary to allow the errant soul that was reincarnated into the animal's body to be elevated to a higher state of being in its next life (Shmeruk 1965).

Modern Developments

In modern times, Jewish religious authorities began to take a more serious interest in the humane treatment of animals used for food. This was often in response to government initiatives to introduce regulations in that area, beginning in Switzerland in the 1860s, and notwithstanding the fact that such initiatives were frequently motivated by anti-Jewish or anti-semitic agendas (animal rights enactments were among the earliest legislation to be introduced by the German Nazi party). Jewish law also had to confront new realities created by the industrialization of meat processing, as the economic desire for massive output promoted practices that cause severe discomfort and pain to the animals, such as "hoisting and shackling," force-feeding and restrictive confinement of calves or geese to produce veal or pâté de foie gras. For example, Canada's "Humane Slaughter of Food Animals Act" of 1959 impelled the local rabbis to investigate humane alternatives to hoisting and shackling, and this led to early adoption of pneumatic restraining mechanisms that were far less traumatic to the animals, but could nonetheless be run at an economically acceptable pace (Klein 1979, p. 93).

As the locus of food processing and distribution shifted away from individual homes and villages and was delegated to impersonal corporations, consumers were increasingly unaware of inadequacies in the standards of humane treatment of the animals. Furthermore, the Jewish insistence on performing the slaughter while the animals are conscious conflicted at times with secular standards that preferred that they be

stunned first. The traditional Jewish position has usually been that the procedures for stunning, which might involve a blow to the head or electric shock, cause greater pain than the instantaneous slashing of vital organs required by Jewish law; at any rate, the injuries that are inflicted on the skulls and brains during the stunning can render the animals ritually forbidden. In some cases, attempts were sought to devise halakhically acceptable alternatives for rendering the animals unconscious before the slaughtering.

An instructive example of ethical rethinking in Jewish law is the question of veal. The twentieth century's foremost Orthodox authority on Jewish religious law, Rabbi Moses Feinstein (1895–1986) devoted a responsum to the subject (*Iggerot Moshe E.H.* #92) in which he concluded that the standard methods for producing veal are objectionable for a number of reasons. For one thing, as a consequence of the unnatural conditions in which the calves are bred, the great majority of them are too weak and damaged, especially in their lungs and intestines, to satisfy the health requirements for kosher meat. Ultimately, Rabbi Feinstein declared that the Jewish ethical principle of humane treatment of animals – *ṣa'ar ba'alei ḥayyim* – will not tolerate the practice. Even after conceding that legitimate human needs, such as the elimination of hunger or disease or harnessing them for labor, may sometimes override concern for the animals' comfort, the cruelty associated with raising veal calves for financial profit can hardly be classified as a real "need." In the present instance, where the calves are fed nutritionally inappropriate foods in order to whiten the red meat and (as Rabbi Feinstein understood it) to create a misleading impression that it is more healthy, the process is essentially fraudulent and ought to be forbidden for that reason alone. While Rabbi Feinstein's responsum confined itself to very specific issues and did not distinguish clearly between the raising of veal calves and the post facto permissibility of veal, other rabbinic authorities (including those from more liberal Jewish streams such as the Conservative Judaism's Committee on Law and Standards) have extended his principles to warrant the disqualification of other meats whose methods of production cause undue suffering to the animals (Bleich 2007; Golinkin 1993).

The Impact of Postville

An important milestone in the relationship between Jewish dietary laws and ethics occurred in 2004–2008 with the public disclosure that the Agriprocessors abattoir in Postville, Iowa, the largest kosher meat-packaging plant in America, was guilty of numerous infractions involving mistreatment of the animals, environmental violations, and abusing their workers many of whom were illegal immigrants or children. Jewish religious authorities who might otherwise have maintained a theoretical aloofness from the ethical aspects of kosher food production and marketing were now placed under strong pressure to respond to the moral challenges implicit in the scandal. Previously, avowals of the ethical imperative in food production had been made only by individuals and small groups such as the Jewish Renewal movement (which was advocating the inclusion of ecological criteria for kosher certification in the 1970s), but had minimal impact on the institutional mainstream, especially among the Orthodox communities who were most consistently involved in the observance and enforcement of kosher standards (Waskow 1995; Zamore 2011). Apart from condemnations of the immoral and illegal practices, which were of course shared by Jewish leaders and organizations across the theological spectrum in North America and in Israel, there has been a call for more consistent institutional policing of ethical standards as dictated by Jewish religious law. Some groups announced plans to issue certificates to any kind of business that satisfied ethical standards for the treatment of their employees (as mandated by Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:14, etc. and in the Talmud *Bava Meṣia'* Chapters 6–7, etc.); however, most such programs focused more narrowly on food-related enterprises, taking their cue from the extensive network of agencies that were already in place to certify compliance with the ritual dietary laws.

Heretofore, rabbinic bodies usually maintained the traditional distinction between the human-divine and the interpersonal realms, so that a declaration that an item is "kosher" related to such criteria as the ingredients and the vessels in which the food was prepared. Consideration of more indirect factors, such as Sabbath violations or sabbatical year restrictions, has sometimes proven controversial, but has generally been accepted as a legitimate criterion. Now the question is accordingly being posed as to whether kosher certification can also include assurances that labor conditions, humane treatment of animals, honesty, organic standards, and ecological sustainability conform to acceptable halakhic requirements. The type of investigation that is necessary to ascertain compliance in those categories would be much more difficult to monitor and verify than the already complex inspections that are conducted in order to establish the animals' physiological soundness, the chemical and biological components of the food, etc. (Fishkoff 2010). The research would likely need to be expanded to include financial audits, labor contracts or union policies, information about disposal of waste products, energy consumption, and much more. Such specialized investigations might prove financially prohibitive, and perhaps the most that can be expected is some sort of conditional certification that would be removed in the event of a proven violation.

The flurry of noble intentions and projects that were announced in the immediate wake of the Postville disclosures have been quite slow to translate into concrete actions, but it appears that there can be no turning back at this stage and that Judaism stands at a momentous turning point in its confrontations with the ethics of food.

Summary

The authoritative sources of Jewish religious tradition contain extensive guidelines for the production and distribution of food within a nonvegetarian ethic. Although there are a number of ethical principles that are implicitly bound with the preparation of food – such as the requirement to set aside portions of the produce for the needy and the prohibitions against causing suffering to animals and against wastefulness – the classification of food as "kosher" has been perceived overwhelmingly as a matter of ritual practice intended to promote discipline and spiritual holiness. Nevertheless, individual Jewish commentators pointed out ethical themes in the dietary laws, such as the implicit exclusion of predatory species, and the fact that the prescribed method of slaughter brings about instantaneous and painless death. Until recently, there were relatively few instances in which rabbis were called upon to invoke ethical factors in connection with food production, such as the problem of milking cows on the Sabbath or the raising of veal calves under conditions of unnatural confinement and unhealthy diet. The scandal of the Agriprocessors kosher abattoir in 2004–2008, with its numerous abuses of animals, workers, and the environment, is leading to a renewed awareness of the ethical factors involved in meat production and how these might be incorporated into the definitions of kosher food.

Cross-References

- ▶ Food Rituals
- ▶ Food Preparation, Cooking, and Ritual in Judaism
- ▶ Hazon
- ▶ Industrial Food Animal Production Ethics
- ▶ Industrialized Slaughter and Animal Welfare
- ▶ Judaism and Food
- ▶ Meat: Ethical Considerations
- ▶ Vegetarianism

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