

**Annette Exon kindly writes to us (3rd November 2005),
expressing her view that eating meat represents a debasement
and thus ought to be considered in the work of HumanDHS.**

Annette Exon writes:

Although vegetarianism seems like a small issue it is actually one of the MAIN issues: Respect can/should be given to all living entities not just to humans. It is only lip service for people to say that they care about peace and love and at the same time hoe into a steak or chicken. This makes a mockery of their own words. We have been so conditioned into meat eating that we have all become very desensitized. Then there is the satisfaction of the tongue - it is not that we cannot survive without meat (although the meat industry and lobby groups would try to tell us otherwise), some people find it very confronting to have to give up something that they are attached to and enjoy very much. Also there is the conditioning of western traditions such as turkey eating at Christmas and thanks giving. I find these times of the year especially hypocritical! I know meat tastes good, otherwise people would not eat it (a person's own arm or leg would ALSO taste good but that does not mean we eat it?). Of course there are also environmental issues, health issues, cost issues, as well as philosophical ones.

Please see more reflections by Annette Exon: [Vegetarianism and Religion](#)

Annette Exon provides us with the following quotes:

George Bernard Shaw wrote: While we ourselves are the living graves of murdered beasts, how can we expect ideal conditions on this earth?

George Bernard Shaw wrote: "We pray on Sundays that we may have light
To guide our footsteps on the path we tread:
We are sick of war, we dont want to fight,
And yet we gorge ourselves upon the dead."

Adam Smith, wrote in *The Wealth of Nations*: "It may indeed be doubted whether butchers' meat is anywhere a necessity of life. Grain and other vegetables with the help of milk, cheese and butter, or oil, where butter is not to be had, afford the most plentiful, the most wholesome, the most nourishing, and the most invigorating diet. Decency nowhere requires that man should eat butcher's meat."

Gandhi wrote: "I do feel that spiritual progress does demand at some stage that we should cease to kill our fellow creatures for the satisfaction of our bodily wants."

Thoreau wrote: "I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals."

Pythagoras wrote: "Oh, my fellow men, do not defile your bodies with sinful foods. We have corn, we have apples bending down the branches with their weight, and grapes swelling on the vines. There are sweet-flavored herbs, and vegetables which can be cooked and softened over the fire, nor are you denied milk or thyme-scented honey. The earth affords a lavish supply of riches, of innocent foods, and offers you banquets that involve no bloodshed or slaughter; only beasts satisfy their hunger with flesh, and not even all of those, because horses, cattle and sheep live on grass." The biographer Diogenes tells us that Pythagoras ate bread and honey in the morning and raw vegetables at night. He would also pay fishermen to throw their catch back into the sea.

Plutarch, wrote in an essay titled "On Eating Flesh": "Can you really ask what reason Pythagoras had for abstinence from flesh? For my part I rather wonder both by what accident and in what state of mind the first man touched his mouth to gore and brought his lips to the flesh of a dead creature, set forth tables of dead, stale bodies and ventured to call food and nourishment the parts that had a little before bellowed and cried, moved and lived. How could eyes endure the slaughter when throats were slit and hides flayed and limbs torn from limb? How could his nose endure the stench? How was it that the pollution did not turn away his taste, which made contact with sores of others and sucked juices and serums from mortal wounds? It is certainly not lions or wolves that we eat out of self-defense: on the contrary, we ignore these and slaughter harmless, tame creatures without stings or teeth to harm us. For the sake of a little flesh we deprive them of sun, of light, of the duration of life to which they are entitled by birth and being... If you declare that you are naturally designed for such a diet, then first kill for yourself what you want to eat. Do it, however, only through your own resources, unaided by cleaver or cudgel or any kind of axe."

Leonardo da Vinci wrote: "He who does not value life does not deserve it". He considered the bodies of meat-eaters to be "burial places," graveyards for the animals they eat. His notebooks are full of passages that show his compassion for living creatures. He lamented, "Endless numbers of these animals shall have their little children taken from them, ripped open, and barbarously slaughtered."

Jean Jacques Rousseau was an advocate of natural order. He observed that the meat-eating animals are generally more cruel and violent than herbivores. He therefore reasoned that a vegetarian diet would produce a more compassionate person. He even advised that butchers should not be allowed to testify in court or sit on juries!

Benjamin Franklin became a vegetarian at the age of sixteen. He noted "greater progress, from that greater clearness of head and quicker apprehension". In his autobiographical writings, he called flesh-eating "unprovoked murder."

Leo Tolstoy became a vegetarian in 1885. Giving up the sport of hunting, he advocated "vegetarian pacifism" and was against killing even the smallest living things. He felt there was a natural progression of violence that led inevitably to war in human society. In

his essay *The First Step*, Tolstoy wrote that flesh-eating is "simply immoral, as it involves the performance of an act which is contrary to moral feeling - killing." By killing, Tolstoy believed, "man suppresses in himself, unnecessarily, the highest spiritual capacity - that of sympathy and pity towards living creatures like himself - and by violating his own feelings becomes cruel."

H.G. Wells wrote about vegetarianism in his vision of a future world, *A Modern Utopia*.

Isaac Bashevis Singer became a vegetarian at age 58 years. He said: Naturally I am sorry now that I waited so long, but it is better late than never. We are all God's creatures - that we pray to God for mercy and justice while we continue to eat the flesh of animals that are slaughtered on our account is not consistent.