

The Mystery of Sacrifice or Man is What He Eats⁵

[This translation is based on Volume 11 of the edition of Feuerbach's *Gesammelte Werke* edited by Werner Schuffenhauer, Akademie Verlag Berlin, 1990, pp. 26–52 — C.L.]

The proposition: “man is what he eats,” which I expressed in a review of Moleschott's *Lehre der Nahrungsmittel für das Volk*, [sic]⁶ 1850, is the only sentence from my writings which are well-known as being “long-forgotten” and which certain people have ringing in their ears even today, but only as a dissonant note, as an insult to the honour of German philosophy and culture. But precisely this awful sound put me in such good spirits that I could not resist making this famous play on words the subject of an essay of its own. However, the main subject of my writings is the solution to the mystery of religion, because I consider all other mysteries of the human spirit only in relation to religion, only on the basis of it or on account of it. But at the same time, nevertheless, I am also known as a completely dreadful materialist, engrossed to such a degree in the most primitive form of matter that I no longer even know that man not only eats but drinks as well, and ‘drink’ cannot be rhymed with ‘is.’⁷ Thus have I made an object of gastrology (theory of the stomach, of the palate) straightaway into an object of theology, and admittedly, an object of theology, on the other hand, into an object of gastrology. But I flatter myself on precisely this account with the hope of having supplied a brief yet decisive contribution to the still controversial question: what is the true meaning of the sacrifice of food and drink?

Man is what he eats. “What a scurrilous expression of modern sensualist pseudowisdom!” Nevertheless this scurrilous thought has an already venerable classical provenance, having already been given expression by “the father of Greek poetry” when he classified people by the food that distinguishes them from other peoples. For Homer calls the *hippomolgoi*, a nomadic Scythian tribe in the *Iliad*, *glaktophagoi*, i.e., milk eaters, [The text of Homer actually has *hippemolgoi*. *Iliad* 13.5. My thanks to William Slater for pointing this out — C.L.], although the name *hippomolgos* itself already means a milker of horses, a drinker of horse milk. Thus, in the *Odyssey*, he calls a people to whom Odysseus comes in his wanderings, lotus-eaters. In the same way he speaks of people who “know nothing of the sea and who do not enjoy any food mixed with salt,” and characterizes the inhuman or super-human rawness of the cyclops, *Polyphemos*, by portraying him, too, as a cannibal and explicitly calling him a cannibal, *androphagos*. As with Homer, the Greek geographers and historians too designated peoples only according to their favourite or conspicuous foods and speak accordingly of *ichthyophagoi*, eaters of fish, *chelonophagoi*, eaters of turtles, *akridophagoi*, eaters of grasshoppers, *struthophagoi*, eaters of ostriches, *rhizophagoi*, eaters of roots, *hylo-* and *spermatophagoi*, eaters of wood and seeds, i.e., people who live from the fruit of tender branches of wild trees; *agriophagoi*, eaters of game, i.e., those (according to Pliny) who nourish themselves from the meat of panthers and lions; *pamphagoi*, omnivores; *ophiophagoi*, eaters of snakes, such as the Panchaeans according to Pomponius Mela; *artophagoi*, eaters of bread, such as the Egyptians, according to Athenaeus on account of their moderation; *anthropophagoi*, cannibals.

Homer, however, names not only people according to their foods: he makes nourishment itself into a characteristic adjective and signifier of humans in general. He refers to people as grain or bread eaters, either in a composite word, *sitophagoi*, or separately: “the people of the earth who eat bread”, “the fruit of the earth” or “ mortals eating the grain of Demeter.” Indeed, Homer sets the difference between the gods and men in the very difference among their foods. The goddess Calypso placed before Odysseus: “all sorts of nourishment, of which he would eat and drink, which mortal men enjoy”: but for her, “her maidservants provided ambrosia and nectar”. The *Iliad* expressly states: “the gods do not eat bread, nor do they drink sparkling wine, and for that reason they have no blood and are called immortal.” They eat ambrosia; but ambrosia, according to the ancients, means immortal food. According to the moderns it is a substantive and means simply immortality. God is what he eats. He eats ambrosia; i.e., immortality or immortal food; thus is he immortal, a god; man, on the other hand, eats bread, eats fruits of the earth, hence what is earthly, not-ambrosia, is mortal: hence he is a man, a mortal.

As the food, so the essence; as the essence, so the food. Each one eats only what accords with one’s individuality or nature, to his age, to his sex, to his status and occupation, to his worth. That is: “no feed for men rather only for pigs”, no feed for masters, rather only for indentured peasants”. You are “eaters of donkeys” or “eaters of cats” — these accusations which were made by the neighbouring cities of Germany, were considered so insulting that it came to bloody confrontations, as Michaelis mentions on occasion in his *Mosaic Law* in reference to the Jewish dietary laws. The Jews, according to Eisenmenger called the Christians “eaters of pork” as a way of expressing their disdain for them. In the *Life of Apollonius*, Philostratus calls the Arcadians “pigs” because they ate pig feed, namely acorns. They were thus called *balanephagoi*, acorn eaters, by the Greeks as a characterization of their savagery and primitiveness; for the ancients equated the replacement of acorns by grain with the replacement of primitive life by cultured life and therefore they honoured the innovators of this benevolent transformation as godly beings. Even the wry Chinese, according to the observations of a scholar of Confucius’ work, “otherwise offered a small portion of what they enjoyed to honour him who first accustomed people to a more honourable diet.”

From the barley which constituted their main diet Pliny tells us that the Romans referred to the gladiators as the barleys, or those fed on barley; from the *satureia* or savoury thyme which the poor citizens and peasants enjoyed at mealtime, the Greeks referred to them as the eaters of savoury thyme, *thymbrophagoi*; from the sweet bay to whose enjoyment the ancients imputed enthusiastic effects, the seers and poets were called bay eaters, *daphnephagoi*. “You smell” or rather “you stink of garlic” — this compliment arising from the fare of Roman peasants, soldiers and sailors means the same in the comedy of common life as in the high poetry of Horace: “I hate the rabble and keep my distance”. In the *Bhagavadgita* the Indians distinguish three classes of human beings and in the same way three sorts of foods that correspond to the different classes according to the three qualities of truth or essentiality, of passion and of darkness. The tasty, mild foods which promote health, strength, cheeriness are pleasant to the true humans, the spicy, sour, salty, hot to the passionate; the bad tasting, disgusting and awful

smelling foods to the dark ones. In short, each class is what it eats according to its essential character and vice versa.

But what are human testimonies, and so few to boot, though easy to duplicate, against the authority of the gods? The gods are what they are because they enjoy ambrosia and nectar — the liquid ambrosia or ambrosia thought of as a drink. However, nectar and ambrosia are, all the same, only the food of the gods, where they are among themselves, not among humans; only on Olympus or in the heaven of fantasy, of poetry, not on the earthly ground of religion, where they have their temple, their true quarters and native land; only in the illusory fog of theology, but not there, where they show themselves in the light of actual life and prove themselves unmistakable phenomena of anthropology.

Hermes said to Calypso after his air and sea travels, “who chose to wander across the immeasurably great salt plain desert so far from cities of the mortals which dedicate sacred offerings and the slaughter of choice 100 head of oxen [*celebratis hecatombis*] to the gods?” And the Phaeacian King Alkinoos says: “Always and from ancient times do visible gods appear to us — or rather: visible, apparent, corporeal gods — when we honour them with the holy sacrifice of a hundred oxen,” an expression however which first of all only conveys “a preference for the Phaeacians as a people closely related to the gods,” yet nevertheless has general significance, in that almost every people makes its god into the founder of its line [*Stammvater*] and religion generally is based on the kinship of humans with the gods. The advantage of the Phaeacians is thus an advantage which every people, every man can have if only he affirms his kinship with God by means of the appropriate attitude and action; for the gods naturally honour with their personal and corporeal existence only him for whom they are always intelligibly [*geistig*] present. But since at all times the present age, the current reality, is godless and sceptical [*ungläubig*], and at the same time man accepts as true only what is actual, he displaces true religion into poetry, into fantasy generally, so that the true meaning and success of sacrifice as well, is displaced into distant times and remote regions. Thus, according to Homer, the unimpeachable Ethiopians, at whose sacrificial meals the gods personally participate, are the outermost i.e., the remotest people, one part living where the sun rises, the other where it sets, hence “the furthest east and furthest west of all people.” But it is precisely in these remote regions that the gods step into immediate closeness with their people to show us that the true meaning of sacrifice is evident in eating and drinking and not in symbols and mystical interpretations.

Nectar and ambrosia express only the being-for-itself, only the difference between the gods and men. However, even as the gods are essentially different from man — namely from his accursed limitations, wants and sufferings — so too they are not so different, having essentially the same intimate being i.e., being one with him, in agreement with his most secret wishes. The revelation of this essential sameness or essential unity is *sacrifice*. The gods are what man is; thus they eat what man eats: “they sit at our meal and eat with us as we with others.” Same essence, same food, and viceversa. Man has need of food for himself, but he shares the enjoyment of it with the gods. To suffer hunger and thirst is human, but to still hunger and thirst is divine. The gods are

blessed; they possess only the goods but not the human misery associated with those goods; they make independent and objectify only the conditions and feelings which impel men to thanks and praise, which awaken the communicative drive in him, for “good discloses itself”: thus from eating and drinking, too, they have only the good, only the happy enjoyment, not the sorry preconditions, not the burdensome and even disgusting consequences of it.

Homer speaks nowhere about the thirst and hunger of the gods though frequently and elaborately about the thirst and hunger of men. He only talks of the feasting and drinking of the gods. He only emphasizes the act of satiation, of the satisfaction, of the fulfilment of wishes and describes it in relation to the gods in the very words he uses to describe it in relation to men. Thus in the first song of the *Iliad* he refers first to man, and then to the gods: “they feasted and the heart lacked for nothing at that tasty meal.”

When Demeter rescinded her blessing from the growing of cereals on account of the pain and anger resulting from the loss of her daughter, the people would have died of hunger, according to the so-called Homeric hymn to this goddess; however, the gods would have lost their honour and honour gifts and sacrifices if Zeus had not arranged for provisions. Thus it is that the honour of the pleasure of food and drink is paid to the gods and belongs to them, but the effort, hardship and disgrace bound up with it — hunger is referred to as laborious in the above-mentioned hymn — remains behind in the human beings. The laws, on whose basis the gods are constructed and imagined, are everywhere the same; they differ only in material details [*der Stoff ist verschieden*]. According to the ancients, the gods feast but without the material consequences that the Church fathers drew from it in their struggle against the heathen religions. For the moderns, God thinks but without the material exertions and interventions of human thought; God loves but without the temperamental movements, without the pain and suffering which are bound up with human love.

Rationalist religious researchers have correctly recognized and asserted that the sacrifices of edible things are the meals of the gods; but by giving emphasis to the prosaic conclusion that the gods hunger and thirst like human beings because they eat and drink, they put the matter in a false light which contradicts the essence of the gods, the essence of religious belief and representation. This distorting light misled modern symbolists into denying this meaning of sacrifice in spite of the clearest statements of classical antiquity.

Zeus thus goes straightaway in the first song of the *Iliad* to the meal of the innocent Ethiopians, and in the same way, in the very first song of the *Odyssey*, Poseidon “feasted, sitting at the meal of the Ethiopians.” In the *Iliad* Homer says that Aeneas brought no sacrifice only to Artemis, while the other gods feasted on the hecatombs, and in the *Odyssey* the sacrificial meal is referred to as “the meal or guest meal of the gods”; in the Homeric hymn to Hermes the honey “of the gods is sweet food”. In the same way sacrifices to Jehova are called “God’s food” in the third and fourth books of Moses. According to the Greeks, gods, like men, are named according to specific sacrifices, i.e., foods. Thus according to Pausanias, Hera was called *Aigophaga* [*Aligophagos* in the German text — C.L.], eater of goats by the Spartans because they alone among the

Greeks sacrificed goats to her; according to Hesychius, Artemis was called *Kaprophaga*, eater of boar in Samos; according to Athenaeus Apollo is called eater of fish, *Opsophagos* [eater of vegetables, gourmet], probably from fish sacrifice as well; Bacchus, according to Plutarch, was called *Omestes*, also *Omophagos*, i.e., eater of raw meat, from a feast at which raw meat, possibly even human flesh, was enjoyed and sacrificed, probably as a memory of the original religious crudeness of humanity; Zeus per se was called *Eilapinastes*, he who feasts, from the festal or sacrificial feasting. The Romans named the *Lares* after the small bowls or basins into which their sacrificial foods, their foodstuff, was placed: *Dii Patellarii*, bowl gods, and Jupiter himself *Jupiter Dapalis* from the meal or the food, *Daps*, which was offered to him at the time of the sowing. As the gods were named according to the food, so the foods vice-versa were named after the gods. Thus one of the kinds of cuisine that was offered only to Janus was called Janual; Amphiphon, lighting all around, a certain kind of cake sacrificed to the light and moon goddess, Artemis, by torchlight. [A certain kind of cake sacrificed to Artemis is called amphiphon, illuminated all around, because of the torchlight. I thank William Slater for this clarification. — C.L.]

Among the Indians, at least among “the Aryans and those east Iranians most closely related to them”, according to Lassen’s *Indian Archaeology* “the Sôma-sacrifice was the oldest and in the Vedic period among the first, the most effective and holiest, because it was dedicated to the highest god, Indra. Soma signifies the juice of the soma plant, which, after it was mixed with whey, barley flour and a species of wild growing grain, and fermented, produced a strong intoxicating excitement. Numerous effects were attributed to the drinking of this juice: it gives nourishment, health, protection and immortality and leads to heaven. Even the gods were gladdened and intoxicated by it; Indra enthusiastically performed his deeds through it. According to Bohlen’s *India* the name: *Somapa*, Soma drinker, really stood for a religious believer. But just as the soma juice delighted and intoxicated gods and men among the Indians, so it was written in the Old Testament in the book of Judges: “Oil honours gods and men”, “Wine delights gods and men.” A highly delightful proof, that wine, oil and consequently the other sacrificial substances too have the same meaning for the gods as for men, that they thus owe their elevation in religious services, their religious or theological dignity and significance originally to their actual physiological or anthropological effect and meaning.

“The gods of the oldest nations were not fetishes, but rather personified natural elements such as fire and water, or heavenly bodies such as the sun, moon and planets; how can one therefore think about the unworthy idea of eating and drinking in relation to the sacrifices which were offered to them?” However, when the sun, moon and stars are still nourished by the fumes of the sea and the earth, according to the Greek philosophers themselves, why then should the gods, who after all even as natural powers are also essentially human or human-like beings, not be nourished by the fumes of human food or by human food itself? And how close is namely the idea of eating to the divinity of fire! Is eating or feeding today not a commonly used, valid expression of fire, to be sure, having only a figurative meaning for us, but for man who really personalizes and deifies nature, a literal meaning? Is Jehovah not called and is he not himself a consuming, literally: eating or feeding, fire? But does this word not have approximately the same

meaning here as it does in relation to the sword, in relation to plague and hunger, when it is said that they feed? No, for it is also written: “a fire fell from the sky” or “fire came from God and it consumed,” literally: “ate the burnt offering and the fat on the altar.”

This consumption or eating by fire thus stands in an inner connection with the food offering. In the legal code of Manu “desire for rice and meat” is explicitly imputed “to the holy fires” in the same way that among the Parsees sacrifice to the fire is characterized as nourishment, even if under “nourishment” it is primarily firewood that is understood here. Thus, for example, among the Yasna according to Spiegel: “I pledge to you sacrifice and prize, good food, lucky food, helpful food, o fire, son of Ahura-Mazda.” But how does this tally with the image of eating when living beings are sacrificed to water, into which they are sunk? It tallies well: for water consumes, devours them in exactly the same way. Accordingly, living animals were thrown onto the altar and burned for Artemis Laphria in Patras. Fire and water have the emblem of the living God on them; they give life and death, but death, insofar as they consume their victim. For this reason voluntary death in fire and water among the Indians is not considered suicide but rather a holy sacrifice.

But whether voluntarily or involuntarily, whether alive or dead, whether whole or in pieces, and if in pieces roasted on a spit or stewed in a pot, whether stewed or raw, whether into fire or into water, the victims are thrown to honour the gods. It comes down to this: *sacrifice means feeding the gods*. “Perkune, stop! And send no misfortune to my fields; I will give you this side of bacon.” In this way the peasant in Lithuania prayed to the god of thunder, Perkune. “Take, o Ziemnik! Take with well-wishes this sacrifice and eat it happily.” Thus spoke the peasant in Prussia to his god and sacrificed pieces of pork, geese, chickens and calves to him.¹⁰ But the voice of the people and not the voice of the scholar is the voice of God himself. “But hopefully though it is only the voice of the pagan God in relation to this alimentary consumption.” But is it then only the pagan God, is it not also the Christian, apparently so spiritualistic God, who — even if we leave out the sacrament of communion entirely — eats and drinks human beings? Haven’t the Christian theologians and philosophers inferred in their water-, their fish-, their bird-, their plant theologies the infinite goodness of their creator from the infinite number of excellent foods with which nature has provided man? Haven’t they even asserted that divine goodness itself is an object of the organ of taste, that man “not only tastes how agreeable his Lord is in his soul [*Gemüth*] but also in his mouth?” [The reference here is probably to *Psalms* 34:8, which states: “Taste and see that the Lord is good. — C.L.] In fact, didn’t Cicero for this same reason already get wind of Epicureanism in divine providence? And was he not right? But how can one “make men happy through the variety of foods,” without partaking oneself in the pleasure? But how is it possible to be pleased about something that tastes good to another, how too, to prepare foods at all that taste good only to others, when one has no ‘palate’ [*Geschmack*] oneself?

Salt plays an especially important role in the sacrifices of the ancients. The Hebrew God commanded, literally translated: “You should sprinkle with salt every victim of your (bloodless) gift or sacrifice and not leave this salt out of God’s covenant in your gift; on all your sacrifices you should sacrifice salt.” Among the Indians if salt is not part of all sacrifices — which I do not know — nevertheless it is part of certain sacrifices, such as

those sacrifices so important for the Indians called *Sraddha*.¹¹ Among the Romans salt is mixed with sacrificial shards, the *mola salsa*, with which they dusted the forehead of the sacrificial victim, the altar and the knife. It is such an important element of the sacrifice that the word sacrifice itself, *immolare*, is derived from it. Thus, according to the Roman poets Horace, Ovid and Tibullus what is necessary to appease the gods, i.e., to make them friendly and well-disposed toward men, is only some sacrificial flour and a few grains of salt roasting in the fire — or also incense, a customary sacrificial article but only in a later period. In Homer, where he exhaustively describes sacrificial practices, one also finds there the custom of sprinkling the foreheads of the sacrificial animal with mashed kernels of barley — the oldest food of the Greeks. But there is no explicit mention of the use of salt, even though the ancient commentator on the *Iliad* and the later expositors who followed him unhesitatingly asserted that the kernels of barley had been mixed with salt, as they had been among the Romans. More recent critical expositors conclude that salt was used in religious services according to Homer based only on the banquet in the tent of Achilles, where the meat was salted first and then pieces of it were thrown into the fire to the gods. However, Homer referred to the use of salt nevertheless as divine, apparently an expression of admiration of its excellent effects and properties. How then should the divine salt, salt loved by God, as Plato calls it, be absent from the table of the innocent Ethiopians and Phaeacians?¹²

But why then was salt now used in sacrifice? “Because a certain cleansing power was ascribed to it.” However, salt is only a means of purification usually in connection with water, hence the ¹³ salt flood, seawater, as in the first song of the *Iliad* — where the Achaeans are purified and “their blemishes are thrown into the sea,” and the saying of Euripides: “the sea washes away all the sins of man,” already prove. Moreover, the purification already preceded the sacrifice as we know and indeed with the most natural, most effective, and most general means of purification, purification with water. “Chastity, purity are pleasing to the gods: therefore, approach them with clean clothes and clean,” i.e., washed “hands” — free of murder and blood, but also free from dirt of any kind. Antiquity attributed to water — also to fire — generally, the power not only of physical, but also of religious purification, and in fact for that very reason. The Roman poets called salt and the salt-cellar, pure; but all things pertaining to sacrifice and to religious service are and are called pure, even the containers. Achilles cleansed his goblet according to Homer before he poured wine out of it for Zeus; but not with salt, rather with sulphur, and washed it later in “the water of pleasant streams.” The Indian holy man, the hermit, the Sannyassi, must even purify his tools and sacrificial containers only with water, according to the law of Manu. The Parsee cleanses his containers, even himself, as, by the way the Indians also do, with bovine urine and earth, but at the conclusion of this purely religious super- and contra-natural purification, he too, in fact has recourse to the natural understanding and to natural means of purification, to water.

Salt was used in sacrifice because it is, as an essential component of blood, an indispensable component of food, because food without salt, without stimulation, without taste, is without sense. Nevertheless, food is the significance and core of sacrifice. Sacrifices are communal meals [*symposia*] of the gods and men; but to set food without salt before a guest, means to show him scorn instead of honour, hatred in place of love.

“If you take away the salt, you might as well throw it to the dogs,” goes a saying of the Rabbis quoted by J. Saubert in his *De sacrificiis*. Nothing is more topsy-turvy when it comes to salt, than leaving out of consideration the obvious but at the same time allimportant significance which it has for human life, and in place of its actual physiological significance posit a sought-after mystical and symbolic one. Salt is “symbol of friendship, fidelity, and of an alliance,” but not only because it protects the material which is in contact with it from decay and decomposition, but because salt is the symbol of food. It is the symbol of food because it gives food its soul, taste and digestibility, leaving out of consideration the fact that salt itself is a comestible — since there where it is used for itself alone, whether in life or in language — for example, in the saying: “many bushels of salt we’ve eaten together,” according to a well-known figure of thought and of speech — it is used only *pars pro toto* i.e., where it stands for food, a community of food. But this either presupposes or results in a community based on sentiment, a natural community. Thus, in the Oriental, even in the Hebraic tradition according to Ezra — incidentally in one of the ambiguous passages — to eat salt means the same as in German, to eat bread, which, admittedly, includes both “to be a servant,” and “to sing a song.” Thus the Arabs to this day eat bread with salt when they conclude a pact, and the Greeks add the table at the same time to their expressions where salt is the symbol of friendship, in particular, of hospitality, the most sacred friendship — .8" P"Â JDvB.< [(some) salt and (a) table]. The Romans, however, put onto the table sacred to the Penates a plate full of first fruits in addition to the salt-cellar, in order to remind us, apparently, that the table goes with salt, food goes with the table and we ought thus not to forget the common use and employment of salt beyond the symbolism, the *sale nihil utilius*. (Nothing is more useful than salt.) How truly important it is not to deny in thinking even about divine matters themselves the above quoted Homeric proverb concerning man, not to forget in thinking the connection of the head with the stomach, the nerves with the blood, the soul with the body! We see in our symbolists the pernicious consequences of forgetting this, when they see in the salt-cellar on the altar, the “table of God” or of the Lord, but overlook the plate full of food standing directly next to it.

Surely the Hebraic “covenant of salt” too — an expression appearing twice in the Old Testament — or, as it is inversely stated in one passage: “the salt of God’s covenant,” signifies nothing more than the sacrificial or food covenant between Jehovah and his people. In his dictionary Gesenius himself approves of the derivation of the Hebrew *brit*, i.e., covenant, from *barah*, i.e., food, because in the orient “to eat with someone” is tantamount to making friends with them, and the Hebrews, on concluding a covenant, feasted, as the first book of Moses proves. Since the salt covenant is an “eternal” one, it was thus concluded that salt is here a symbol of durability and constancy on account of its conserving, preserving property against dissolution. But even if salt really has this meaning here, its connection with the table or food is not eliminated thereby; for salt not only makes food digestible and palatable, but also durable, protects it from decay, insofar as it absorbs its water content. The Greek philosopher Chryssipos, following Varro and Cicero, thus says that the pig, because it is only a carnivorous food created by nature for the enjoyment of man, received a soul instead of salt, so that its flesh would not decay. Now the Hebrew ate no pork, and thus no ham, which the Greeks and the Romans on the other hand valued so highly that Cato the Censor himself wrote a

whole chapter only on salting; but they certainly were acquainted with this conservative meaning and effect of salt and used it in relation to other foods. The Israelites longed for Egyptian fish, chives and garlic, melons, onions and pickles in the desert. Who can say if they hadn't already known about delicious salted pickles and sardines as well? In fact, the Jews already enjoyed the brine of marinated fish, at least the later Jews, according to *Pliny*. By the way, small salted fish were actually sacrificed to the gods by the people of Phaselos in Lycia, at least as J. Saubert informs us in the above-mentioned text, referring to C. Rhodesius. In addition, whether the small sea fish too, *mainides* as they were called by the Greeks, which were salted like herring and which along with the sea pines were sacrificed to Hecate — for that reason called “Hecate’s food by Antiphanes according to Atheneus — were sacrificed salted, alas, I know not.

Drinking goes along with eating, wine with the table — thus, according to the ancients, being “at wine” is the same as being at the table — the sacrifice of drink goes along with the sacrifice of food. “It was said that the libations speak for the better side of the sacrificial service, libations that were poured on the ground yet not for the consumption of the gods.” But that drink offerings have the same meaning as food offerings, is proved by the passages in the Old Testament where not only “a sweet smell was prepared for God from cattle or sheep” but wine too was prepared as a drink offering which was poured onto the altar or onto the ground around it, and called “a sacrifice of the sweet smell to God.” The Roman custom proves that the priest, who is everywhere in fact the deputy of God on earth, tasted wine from the sacrificial crockery and gave those around him a sip before he poured it out of the sacrificial chalice between the horns of the sacrificial animal. *Those* passages in Homer ultimately prove this, where it is explicitly stated that the wine was poured not, as many translate, “into the blazing flames of the sacrifice,” or “onto the glittering flames of the sacrifice,” but rather onto the burning sacrifice or parts of the animal sacrifice in order to make palpable to us how appropriately food and drink go together.¹⁴ That the wine, moreover, was poured onto the table or altar, onto the stove or even onto the ground, is self-understood, for the wine does not rise to heaven as does smoke from the burnt offering. “He poured out wine,” the *Iliad* states of Achilles, “looking up to heaven.” Why did he look up to heaven? Did he really see the father of the gods, for whose honour he sprinkled the wine? Are the gods, physically, prosaically visible as the stars or clouds in the sky? No! Man sees them only in his mind, in his imagination, in belief, because they themselves exist only in thought, belief, imagination. And in the same sense and spirit the wine too rises up to heaven even though it immediately falls to the earth as a sensuous deed and in actuality. Does God then actually hear the prayers of mortals? Does he answer, as the hearing of the Hebrews indicates, with an unambiguous, audible voice? Are your hymns and prayers then, your religious dogmas and ceremonies in general, not just as much without object and sense as the alms and sacrifices of the ancients, if you consider the wooden beams in your own eyes with the same keen rationalist sharp-sightedness with which you recognize the motes in the eyes of the pagans? Thus the gods enjoy the food which is presented to them in the same sense and in the same way as the wine poured onto the earth, for they don't really enjoy them either, not corporeally; rather, they have, as abstracted, ideal i.e., imagined beings, only the abstracted ideal enjoyment of them. The actual material enjoyment falls only to those who do the sacrificing, above all to the priests. Thus,

because in reality the priests eat in place of the gods or in their name, the best foods and tasty bits are naturally the parts reserved for the gods, also called a priestly or spiritual meal as much as a delicious meal.

In a common German proverb, which is as common as it true, “eating and drinking keep body and soul together,” not only body and soul, but also God and man and I and Thou. In the same way as the Greeks and Romans remembered their absent benefactors as well as their friends of both sexes at their feasts and bacchanalias when they drank to their health and their prosperity, in order to make their genial companionship and presence tangible in spite of the spatial divorce, so too when they were about to drink and before they themselves took a drink, they dedicated the first and last drink to their gods,¹⁵ sprinkled wine for them in general at every important occasion — to be sure other drinks as well, but here we emphasize only the most noble material. But this sprinkling was done — as was said, only on the ground or somewhere else, because in spite of their apparent corporeality, the gods do not in fact have anatomical, physiological throats and stomachs — in order to prove their own consanguinity with the gods and among themselves through the wine which “quickens gods and men in the same way,” notwithstanding the poetic difference between human blood and the mystical juice of the gods. Thus among the Greeks a spent libation signified a pouring, a consecrated pouring, then it referred to the wine poured out at concluding pacts, finally, in the majority of cases, the pact itself. In the same way among the Hebrews as among the Greeks, it was tantamount to concluding a pact.

Peoples and individuals of barbarous sensibilities themselves mix wine with their blood, when they make pacts — the Romans even have their own word for this drink; *assiratum*, from *assir*, blood — or they drink their blood even unmixed in order to indicate and to effectuate by it a condition which binds them in life and death, as of one blood, being also of one will and essence, in order to compel as it were the binding power of natural consanguinity through a consanguinity forcibly established. Among the Hebrews as well the covenant with their God is consecrated through blood, even if not with human blood but rather the blood of steers; if not with blood that is drunk, then with blood sprinkled on the people and on the altar.

But, if blood were made the main point of sacrifice, the part would be put in place of the whole. Even if the spilling and sprinkling of blood actually means that the one who breaks the pact ought to be slaughtered too, like the sacrificial animal, or that the blood of the sacrificial animal represents human blood which should really be sacrificed as an expiation to the godhead, to want to completely exhaust the meaning of sacrifice in this way would be in fact in the greatest contradiction with the essence of the gods. The gods are angry and hate, but they also love; they punish but they reward as well; they kill but they revive too. Only the evil, the angry, the killing god feasts on the blood of the slaughtered victim, whereas the good god, the god who is one with man, the god who gives life, feasts on the food. Blood, death, is the means of atonement whereas the purpose of atonement is food, life. Thus, the “salt of covenant” succeeds the “blood of covenant.” After Moses had sprinkled the people with blood, he climbed the mountain of God with the most ancient and prominent of Israel, and “they saw the God of Israel, and

because they had seen God, they ate and drank,” i.e., instead of being killed by the sight, their lives were gladdened, for food and life are one. “From food,” in the third Fargard of Vendidad according to Spiegel, “the entire corporeal world lives; without food it dies.” *Bios* in the Greek, *vita* in the Latin thus signify not only life, but also means of life, means of nourishment and the kind of life that is conditioned by it, in the same way as it is said in German with the same meaning as well: that from which we live and from which we are nourished. Thus Demeter or Ceres is and is said to be the one who gives nourishment as well as life. And in the Old Testament consuming food, eating, simply stands for life. That’s why it means explicitly the very same in relation to the idols too, the manufactured, dead gods: “they see not and hear not and *eat not*.” Eating is thus the sign of a true, living god.

But the gods don’t eat everything uncritically and indiscriminately; on the contrary, a god only eats what he is, what bears his colours, what has the same characteristics, the same essence as he. Thus the male god eats male, the female god, female animals, the eternal virgin a virgin calf, the fruitful mother earth a breeding sow, the fleet god, just as the river or sun god, the fast horse, the dark, gloomy god dark-skinned, the bright, cheery god, fair-skinned animals, the ancient god, ancient foods; thus Carna eats bacon and beans mixed together with roasted spelt, hence Cybele as “god of the most ancient time” eats the oldest food, “herbs mixed with cheese;” the “country divinity” on the contrary, such as Pales, millet and millet cakes.

Above all, however, the food of the Hebrew God is not common but select, as the food of the Hebrews is select, because they are a chosen people. “Everything that crawls on its belly,” says the living Hebrew God according to Luther’s translation, “you should not eat; it should be an abomination to you. Do not make your soul into an abomination and do not make yourselves unclean, that you not sully yourselves. For I am the Lord your God. Therefore, you should sanctify yourselves, that you will be holy, for I am holy, and you should not make your souls unclean with any of the crawling animals that slither on earth.” You should be holy for I am holy, i.e., you should not make yourselves unclean, because I am pure: for the word “holy” here has this meaning as the context indicates most clearly as even earlier commentaries already noticed. You should not make yourselves unclean with what I here forbid, which means nothing other than: you should not eat what I don’t eat, what I shun, that with which I do not make myself unclean. But why should they not eat what is unclean? Because man is what he eats; whosoever eats what is revolting is himself revolting. And is it not really thus? Is not the man who eats what is abominable and disgusting, an object of abomination and disgust for us? Were the Jews not so ridiculed and hated by the pagans because they rejected the foods that the pagans loved? Does *Rutilius* for that reason not call them a *humanis animal dissociate cibis*? (species [*Wesen*] that doesn’t tolerate human foods well)? “Holy,” says Synesius, “is the table because the god of love and hospitality is honoured on it.” In the opposite sense is not the god of hate and enmity honoured where the communal table is annulled? But does not this hatred lie in the thought: whosoever does not eat what we eat, is also not what we are?

Yes! Man is what he eats. But he eats not only by means of his oesophagus; He eats

as well by means of his trachea, which actually is of higher rank than the oesophagus. To eat or drink air means to breathe. For this reason the ancients called air, a food, a nourishment, and this was entirely correct; for only with the participation of air, with the influx of oxygen, does food become arterial blood. But who doesn't know how much the nature of the human being and essence is dependent upon the nature and mixture of this ethereal food? Who can deny, that "pure being" and "pure thinking" are found only in pure air, that in general, where edible air ceases, life and consciousness cease as well? But man eats not only by means of his trachea; he also eats with his senses, especially with the noblest senses, with eyes and ears. Eating with the eyes is called seeing, eating with the ears is hearing. Evidence of this kind of eating are, for example, the expressions: "to devour something with the eyes," "to satiate the eyes" or through the eyes "to fill oneself" with something, "to provide a feast for the eyes," as well as the Greek and German "Ohrenschmaus"[feast for the ears]; so too are the Hebrew "words sweet as milk and honey," as are the expressions: to "devour" "eat" or "drink down" words, speeches, commands. Man especially "devours" an object "out of love" and indeed, devours it with all his senses.

Admittedly we love not what we eat and eat not, at least officially, what we love; but only because what is eaten, is destroyed, love, however, would be against itself, would act contrary to its own will if it destroyed its object. Nevertheless, it could or would want to consume it — so appetizing is the object for it — if only love didn't simultaneously destroy itself with the object. For this reason alone love doesn't take the step from a hearty liking to a heartless actuality, from a sensitive mouth to grinding teeth and a voracious gullet. To the Christian theologians goes the honour of discovering that there is a difference between metaphorical and corporeal or natural eating, in that the body of the Lord is enjoyed orally but not in the flesh. As a matter of fact there is this difference between eating out of love and common eating. Love is not a vulgar, corporeal, but rather an affectionate and a metaphorical eating. In Latin, the kiss is the diminutive of mouth; in Greek, love and kiss are *one* word: *philein*, and in German kissing out of love means primarily: "heart." Now then if love is eating and the lover "is that which he loves," then the sentence: man is what he eats, has the authority of divine love for itself.

Man, however, eats not only with his senses; He eats and digests too — what is eating without digesting? — with his brain, with the organ of thought. The brain is the stomach, the digestive organ of the senses, thus also of the sense of taste, which interests us here above all in relation to the common table of gods and men. The taste which is digested, refined and generalized by the brain, that is communicated by the taste nerves to the brain, is the metaphorical, allusive taste, which in German, it is true, only refers to the aesthetic taste, but in other languages signifies logical taste, judgement, understanding, wisdom itself, as well — as clear proof, that taste is not only a matter of the palate, but also of the brain itself, that food not only has a corporeal, but also a mental significance and, as a consequence, man not only absorbs food into his stomach, but into his head as well. For that reason salt signifies *the* salt, without which as Pliny says, man cannot lead a human life, without which food is inedible and insipid, as the salt, too, without which man himself, his doing and speaking is unenjoyable, vulgar, dull, as is his

wit, understanding, spirit. But where there is no salt in the blood, there is also no salt in the head. “Without phosphorus no thought,” and without salt no wit, no brilliance. Homer calls food and wine “strength and power” and “wheat and barley flour the marrow of men,” in order to show thereby that food penetrates to the core. He says, it is true: “to feed or fill his stomach with food and drink,” but he also says: “fill or satiate his heart, his soul with food and drink,” refresh, as Voß translates it. In the same way the Old Testament says: “satisfy his stomach”; but it also says: “satisfy his soul” and distinguishes the two of them in this way in the sayings of Solomon: “the righteous person eats to satisfy his soul. But the stomach of the sinner, of the godless,” as Luther renders it, “never has enough”; literally, is wanting. According to the prophet Isaiah the soul even stands for nourishment: “you minister or give your soul sufficiently to the hungry and you satisfy the troubled souls.”

Since not only the body but the soul, too, hungers and thirsts, that it, too, as a consequence, is satisfied by means of food and drink, for this very reason man has carried over hunger and thirst, food and drink to things too, which are not really eaten or drunk but which are equally well transformed into his essence, only by means of other organs and in other ways than food and drink. For that reason, too, food is not only the marrow of the human body, but also the marrow of human language. How empty, how anaemic and without force, language would be, if, in the construction of words and concepts, the mouth was complicit only as an organ of breath and speech and not at the same time as an eating organ. How can one e.g., curse a prince more intensely than by calling him a devourer of people, *Demoboros*, as the angry Achilles called Agamemnon, or a judge when he is called an eater of gifts, as he was by Hesiod? An example that man, even where he develops into a “political animal” from a Cyclops, does not at the same time give up the “animal function of eating,” only that now the objects of his feeding change, that he now becomes an eater of peoples instead of a man eater, an Aristophanean bean eater (*Kyamotrox*) or eater of figs (*Sykobios*) and sycophant, i.e., a political denouncer and man of intrigue instead of an acorn eater.

But what has food to do with the underlying essence of man for all that? This consists manifestly however in the fact that he is self-conscious, that he is an object for himself. Man alone eats not only others exclusively; he eats himself too, his own flesh, as the Hebrew does his own heart, as the Greek says, even if only out of sorrow and grief. “Eating his heart out, he wanders lonely, avoiding the path of mortals,” according to Homer. “He eats himself, the mourner,” says Plautus in *Truculentus*. “Don’t eat your heart out!” stands among the Pythagorean proverbs or symbols. But this eating one’s heart out or eating one’s self, however, is not only a poetic or metaphorical selfconsumption; it is an actual, a physiological self-consumption. As one who is starving consumes himself because no material nourishment is offered him from without, man will nevertheless eat, eat at least air, must breathe, must certainly consume oxygen from the air, as long as he exists; — so too must the depressive because, even if he is not lacking in material foodstuffs, he lacks the strength and desire to eat. But whosoever eats himself, is a self-eater or a self-feeder, *sit venia verbo* [said with your permission] a reflexive *anthropophagos*, i.e., recurring back upon himself. He is a reflexive or immediate cannibal; for every man is a mediate or indirect *anthropophagos*: we eat and

digest from an animal or a plant only that which is our equal, our essence, what is possibly and mediately human flesh and blood. “Nourishment,” says Moleschott in the *Physiology of Metabolic Interaction*, “is every inorganic or organic combination, which is either composed of the same or of elements similar enough to the essential components of blood to transform them into these essential elements through digestion.”

Our first original nourishment is the manifest mystery, the sensuous concept of food. This is human blood in the body of the mother, human milk outside the body — human blood in mediated, separated form — hence, liquid, but a liquid identical with the essence of the mother and with our own essence, for surely we ourselves in this stage are still the same liquiform, aqueous, incomplete, not yet fixed, skeletal being. Thus the nature of our being is one with the nature of our nourishment, the individuality of the animal or human with the individuality of the primary, archetypical, original food, of milk; even though the materials in all milk are the same, they stand in such a different relation to one another, that each kind of animal, yes each woman herself has her own individual milk. The child, however, consumes his own mother when he sucks at her breast; he sucks up the blood in the milk, the essence of his mother — “it is no prejudice,” says Moleschott, in the *Lehre der Nahrungsmittel*, “that the essence of the mother is given to the child also through the milk” — in itself; it is what it eats and eats what it is: thus the child is an *anthropophagos*. But this cannibalism, this unity of child and mother, of subject and object, of satisfaction and the object of satisfaction, is not overcome, when man goes over from drinking his mother’s milk to plant or animal food, only now it becomes discerning, mediated and complicated by the labor of the hands and teeth, corresponding to the changed and developed organism, a critical, solid and liquiform, food and drink, which are combined in the milk. Only the barbarian, whether learned or unlearned, knows nothing of this mediation and thus finds meaning in the proposition: “man is what he eats,” only in formal, actual cannibalism and human sacrifice. But as man raises himself to the level of culture, — excepting in those moments, where on account of superstition, fear or hatred he sinks back into the old barbarism — he then transforms human flesh on the table as on the altar into bread and animal meat, human blood into “the blood of the vine, of the olive tree,” into water, milk and honey or yet other juices, in just this way, because now he still knows of their effects on the basis of feeling, even if not on the basis of reason, and eats human flesh and blood in plant and animal protein and in the other nourishments necessary for human well being as well, and summons his gods for atonement.

5. In the original this title stands on a special title page before the text

6. The correct title is: *Lehre der Nahrungsmittel. Für das Volk*. In fact, as Schuffenhauer points out, Feuerbach had first used a similar expression in a later edition of his *Thoughts on Immortality and Death* entitled: *Die Frage der Unsterblichkeit vom Standpunkt der Anthropologie* (1847).

7. Feuerbach refers to the fact that in German the third person singular of *essen* — ‘to eat’ is the word *isst* or *ißt* which rhymes with the third person singular of *sein* — ‘to be,’ the word *ist*. Of course the word *trinkt* in German, the third person singular of the verb ‘to drink,’ does not rhyme with them.

8. “As I dwelt among men in transformed shape...,” says the Indian Urwasi to her husband, “I ate one day a drop of butter, from which I am still satiated”, i.e., “for that reason I won’t forget

you.” Thus because she ate earthly food, the memory of an enjoyed earthly pleasure remained with her; she is, therefore, half forfeited to the earth as Persephone was to the underworld through eating the pomegranate seeds. According to many German references as well, once one has eaten underworld foods one is forfeited to the underworld. [*Die Herabkunft des Feuers und des Gottesgetrankes* v. A. Kuhn, Berlin, 1859, S. 83.]

9. “Et libate dapes, ut grati pignus honoris *nutriat* incinctos missa patella Lares [and you offer a feast so that the sacrificial bowl upon which this pledge of welcomed honour is poured, nourishes the house gods adorned with wreaths]”

(Ov. “Fast[orum libri VI]”, 2, 634). It was also said of the goddess Carna (in *ibid.*) 6, 171 that she, as a classical goddesses, was nourished, alitur, by the foods which she enjoyed for ages.

10. These coarse, peasant, but nevertheless not untrue expressions and examples of gastro-theology are taken from Ersch and Gruber’s *Encyclopaedia*, from the article on sacrifice. According to Georgi, *Observations on a Voyage in the Russian Empire*, Petersburg, 1775, volume 1, p. 333, among the Buryats, too, the shaman, upon presenting the sacrificial victim, says: *God is eating and drinking.*” — In relation to the living sacrifice we think additionally of his Majesty, King Moloch as well, who indeed welcomed the children to be sacrificed to him there into his outstretched arms, but only to hurl them down into the fiery gullet of his body or stomach — he was of course portrayed, according to tradition, in human form having the head of a steer — and in this way it was made clear to the world that anthropothysy, anthropophagy, is human sacrifice, cannibalism. Thus the prophet Eziekiel 23, 37 says of the Hebrews that they “burned” their children to the idols, to which Moloch belongs: i.e., offered them there, not as it says in Luther’s translation, “as a sacrifice” but rather literally, “as food, as feed”; for the word is also used in relation to animals.

11. With the sacrifice of the Parsees, which consists of small buns, some meat and the juice of the haoma plant, salt is not explicitly mentioned. — Of course, gods and genies were invited to the sacrifice; they “put what was useful and pleasant into the foods,” as did Ramaquaçtra as well, “who lent the foods taste,” as did other genies in just the same way, though it cannot be concluded from this that among the Parsees sacrifice is the food of the gods. According to *Spiegel* (“Introduction to the Vispered and Yasna,” 4 Chapter) the Zaota, the priest, th nevertheless acted in the name of the genies who were invoked — with the exception of the aforementioned “nourishment of fire” — among whom the highest genius or god of the Parsees is found, when, as their representative he enjoys the *daruna* (the holy bread) and the *myasda* (the consecrated meat to the gods) and the holy *haoma*.

12. According to Athenaeus (“*Deipnosoph[istarum libri XV]*”, 14, 80) a cook who praises the merits of the culinary arts in relation to the religion and culture of man nevertheless says that in earlier times the entrails were roasted for the gods without salt being added. *Casaubonus* notices in his remarks to this passage: “It is true what Athenius says here of the salt: if you read all of the descriptions of sacrifice in the most ancient of writers, you will never find salt mentioned.”

However, this is certainly only the case for animal, not for vegetable sacrifice, where salt is not mentioned of course because it is self-understood, for man’s taste or instinct told him that “vegetarian foods contain less cooking salt than animal foods.” “Hence, as a rule, animal fare is mixed with less salt than vegetarian, some peoples eating their meat or their fish without the addition of salt.” (*Moleschott*) If the Egyptian priests were thus so supernaturally oriented that they ate no salt at all, not even salted bread, as Plutarch asserts (*Sympos.* V, 10) it was probably because salt was only seen as a stimulus to the desire to eat, an *irritamentum gulae*, as *Sallust* referred to it. In this manner, the priests, too, confirm that man in spite of his conscious

abstraction from nature nevertheless remains constantly in unconscious union with her. For, since the Egyptian eccentrics, according to *Herodotus* II, 37, enjoyed numerous meat dishes, they unconsciously absorbed in this way the disdained salt of naturalism as well into their supernatural brain and heart [Feuerbach is referring to the aforementioned Egyptian priests who avoided salt in their diet. My colleague William Slater suggests in a private communication that this passage “refers indeed to the extremely pious Egyptians, whom Herodotus 2.37 calls ‘thesebeis,’ a word that has been much discussed because of its appearance in later Jewish inscriptions from Asia Minor. It means literally ‘god-worshipping’ with implications of god-fearing and orthodoxy, and extremist dedication to ritual.” — C.L.]. To discover and depict this salt of naturalism in the witches cauldron of religion and theology, the salt of naturalism scorned and denied by the priests - not only of the Egyptian religion but by those of all religions and nations — priests are, of course, as the saying goes, everywhere the same — was the author’s task here too, as elsewhere. — In relation to the apparent objections to the alleged necessity of the use of salt, reference is made here to: “Chemische Bilder aus dem täglich. Leben” [“Images of Chemistry from Daily Life”] by W. Hamm, Volume II, pp. 453–55.

13. According to Ezekiel 16, 4 the newborn child was strewn or “salted with salt”, but also “cleaned up in water as a purification.” *ad purgationem*, as the Hebrew word which appears here only once is translated by Gesenius and others. — According to Theocritus Hercules’ house is first purified with sulphur, then with water mixed with salt.

14. Wine, of course, was also poured on the incense that, after all, was not eaten. *Thure dato faminis, vinoque in thura profuso*. [after incense is consigned to the flames, together with the wine which was poured into the incense]” (Ov., “*Met[amorphosen libri XV]*”, 13, 656). But aside from the fact that the incense, at any rate among the Greeks and Romans, already belonged to later religious indulgence — Homer knows nothing of it yet — the food destined for the godhead is consumed by fire, consequently it evaporates in steam and vapour. And the incense stands in perfect harmony with this result. Among the Hebrews incense itself was placed on the food offering of bread flour and then burned together with one part of it. That is a fire, according to *Leviticus* 2, 1 & 2, “as an aroma pleasing to the Lord.” And among the Egyptians, according to Herodotus, the body of the animal sacrifice was filled with pure bread, honey, raisins, figs, incense, myrrh and other smoked ingredients and then burned, showing through this connection of pleasant-tasting and pleasant-smelling items, however, that the sacrifice was meant, at the same time, not only for the divine taste but for the divine sense of smell as well.

15. The gods are really palpably absent friends and benefactors of human beings, whom, however, antiquity wished and believed to be present at their feasts at the same time. “*Mos erat, et mensae credere adesse deos*. [it was customary to believe that the gods were present at the table]” (Ov., “*Fast.*” 6, 303).