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ANTHROPOS PAMPHAGOS: Meat in the Golden Age?

One apparent rationale for ancient Greek vegetarianism is the archaic image of a Golden Age in which fields gave crops of their own accord and general vegetal abundance prevailed (Hesiod WD ll. 109-126). Presumably, Golden Age inhabitants lived free from the gluttonous lust and metempsychotic ignorance of which vegetarian philosophers such as Porphyry and Plutarch accuse later meat-eaters. But how did the Greeks envision humans' relationship to animals in the Golden Age? The traditional Hesiodic description keeps silent on the presence of animals at all, but an additional line of the poem as quoted by Diodorus Siculus calls Golden Age inhabitants *φνειοὶ μῆλοισι*, 'rich in flocks.' Beginning from this textual variant, this paper seeks to develop a more complete portrait of the Greeks' idealized prehistory, which ultimately becomes a defense for vegetarianism. As such, the paper traces the reception of Hesiod's Golden Age through Plato and Dicaearchus to its fullest exposition in Porphyry's *De Abstinentia*. Some central questions that frame this study include: To what extent, if any, did the Greeks imagine that the Golden Age involved interspecies contact? Were sarcophagy and vegetarianism necessarily opposed in this worldview? How did vegetarianism accord with perceptions of a natural biological order? If the Golden Age contained no non-human animals, when and how did the Greeks imagine they arose? Answers to these questions shed light not only on the Greeks' view of the past but also on the evolution of their ethology. While the practical and personal motivations for not eating animals may have varied through the course of antiquity, an appeal to the primordial human vegetarian condition always served as foundation, or bulwark, for more esoteric arguments. Ultimately, I suggest, the Golden Age remained a useful model for furthering these philosophical agendas even after its greater moment of spiritual import had passed.