

Deviant Diets? What is a 'diet'?

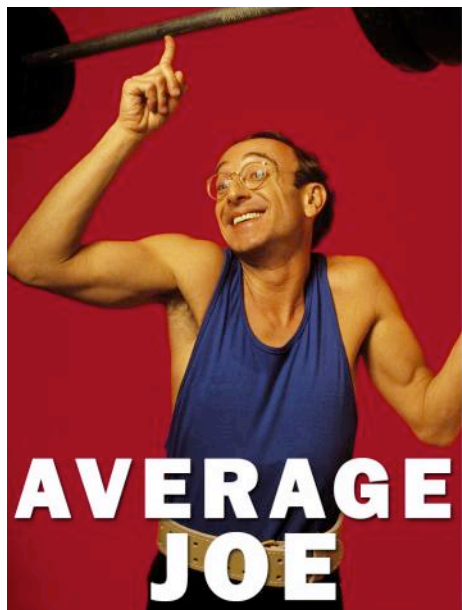
Greek: *díaita*

(way of living, mode of life)

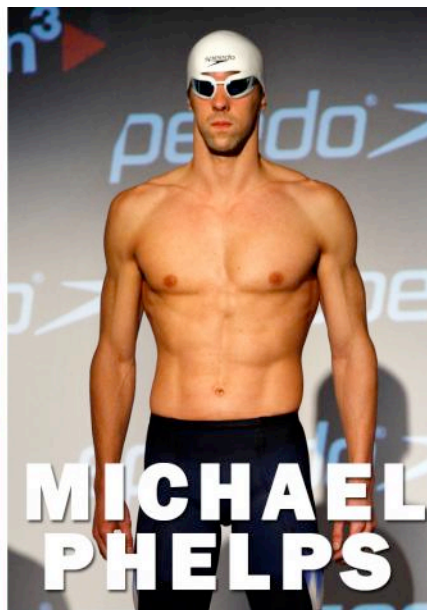
Roman equivalent: *cultus victusque*

(way of life and food)

Attitude that *eating* is more or less co-extensive with *living*



**AVERAGE
JOE**



**MICHAEL
PHELPS**



Athletes



Cheese and grain ... to more and more meat

Diet depended on sport...

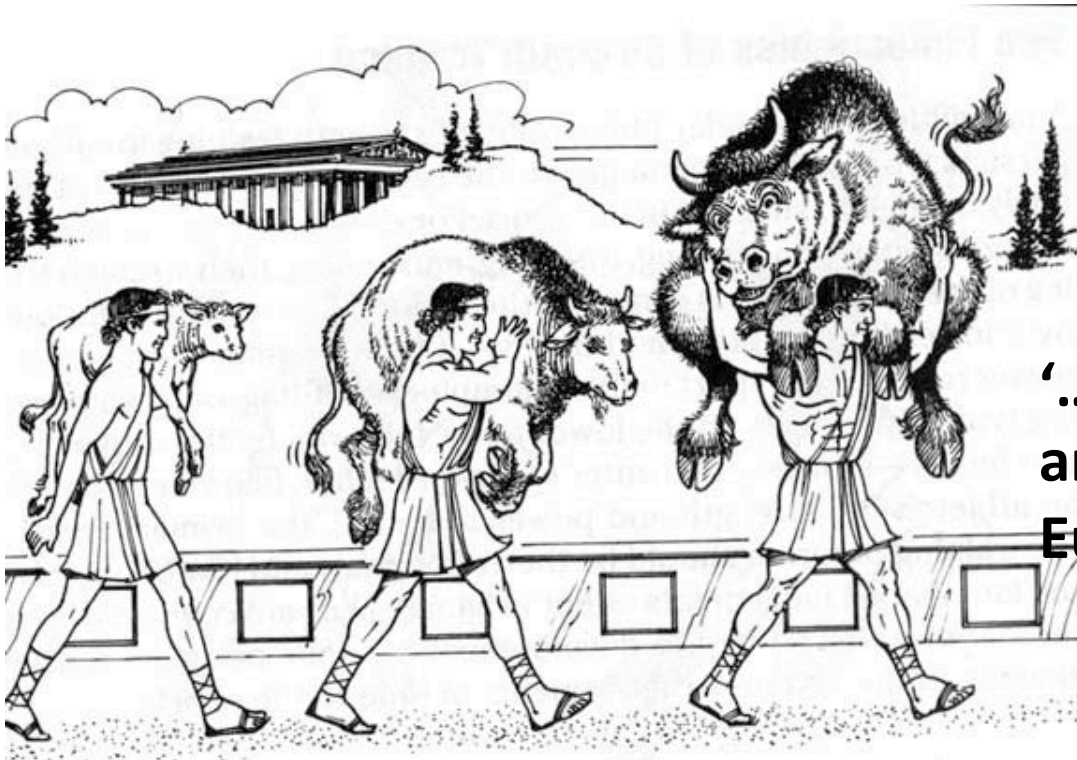
Boxers

Wrestlers



Milo of Croton

Milo of Croton used to eat twenty pounds of meat and as many of bread, and he drank three pitchers of wine... At Olympia he put a four year old bull on his shoulders and carried it around the stadium; after which he cut it up and ate it all alone in a single day (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 10.412E-F).



**‘...the slaves of their jaws
and the victims of their bellies..’
Euripides**



But if you win?

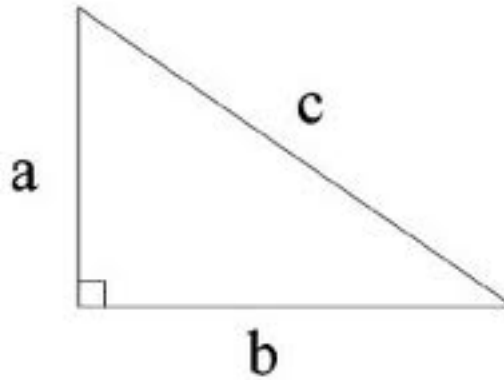
Great kleos (fame);
In Athens, *xenia*, for life,
in the Prytaneion

Pythagoras

6th century BC



$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$



Pythagoreans



Pythagoreans



**Secret societies cannot exist,
because once we know about a society
it is no longer a secret.**



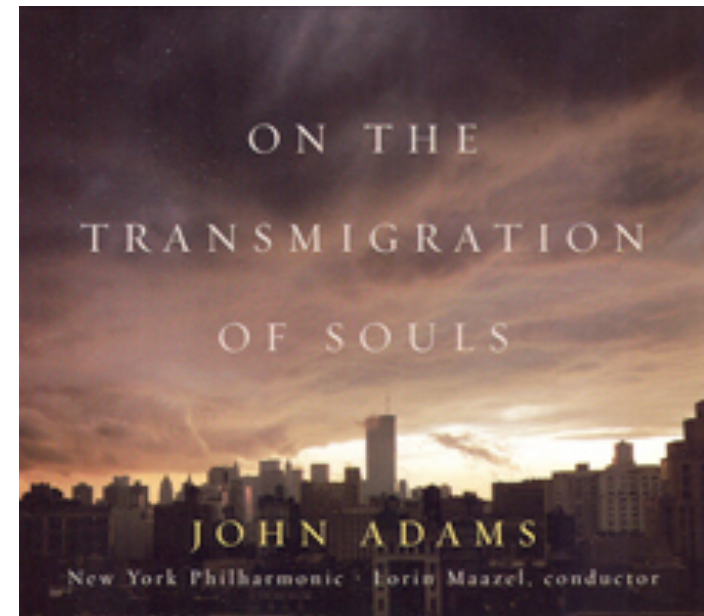
Pythagorean food taboos

Anti-blood letting, anti-meat consumption

Transmigration of the soul

Taboo =

**A ban or an inhibition resulting from social custom
or emotional aversion**



Pythagorean 'symbola' (pithy teaching):

'Abstain from the broad bean'

***Vicia faba*, a legume**





Why no beans?

Aristotle says, in his work On the Pythagoreans, that Pythagoras enjoined abstention from beans either because they are like the privy parts (testicles), or because they are like the gates of Hades (for this is the only plant that has no joints), or because they are destructive, or because they are like the nature of the universe, or because of oligarchy (as they are used in the lot)

(Diogenes Laertius 8.34-35)



Why no beans?

**Eating broad beans was thought
'to amount to the same thing as gnawing on the
heads of one's parents...**

(Athenaeus 65f)



Why no beans?

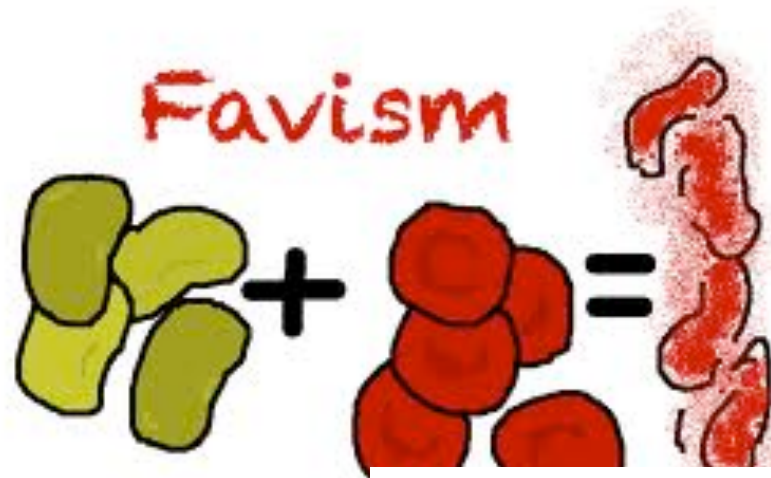


‘The reason he (Pythagoras) proscribed them is as follows. In the beginning, the creation of the universe and the making of living things was in a state of disorder, and many seeds were brought together and sowed in the ground. They rotted together, and little by little birth resulted, and there came about the distinction between animals that were born and plants that were germinated. So, men were born from the same stock whence beans flourished. And he adduced irrefutable proof. Split a bean, and once you have broken it with your teeth, expose it for a while to the sun. If you go away and return a little later, you will discover a smell of human semen. Or, when a healthy bean has flowered, take a little of the flower when it is growing black. Place this in an earthenware pot, seal it and bury it for ninety days. When you dig the pot up again and open it, in place of the bean you will find either the well formed head of a child, or female genitalia’ (Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 44).

Why no beans?



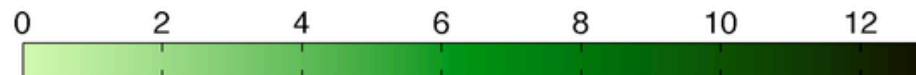
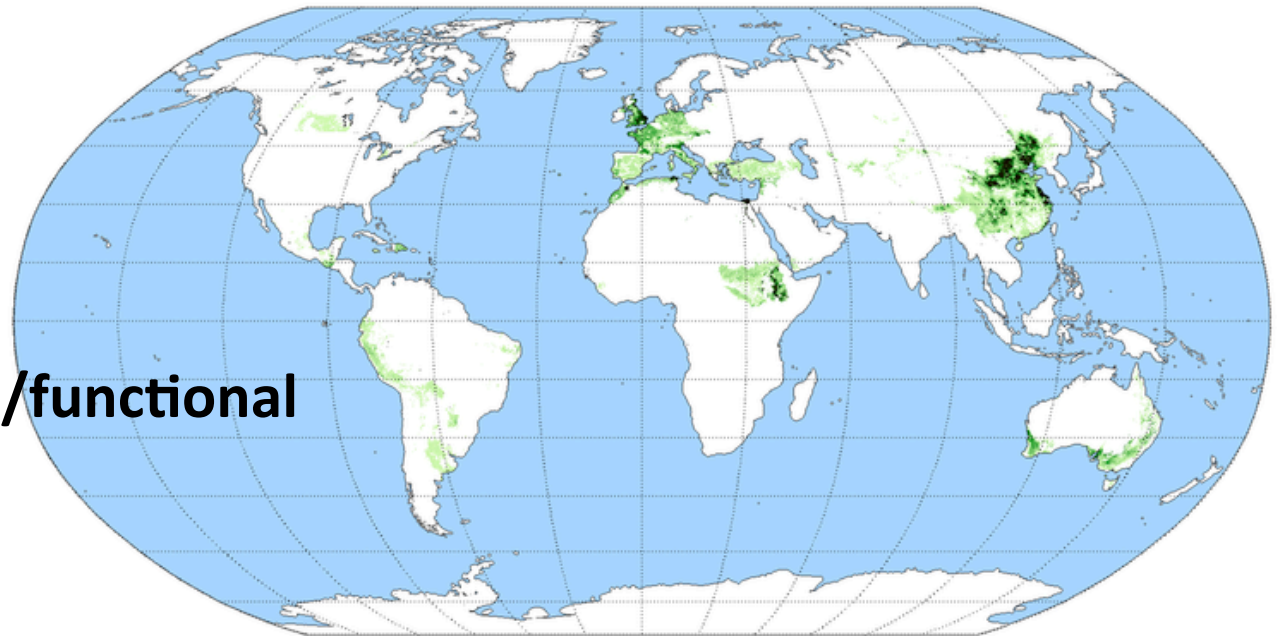
Blazing Saddles (1974)



Favism

hemolytic crisis

jaundice



Average regional broadbean output (kg/ha)

Medical/practical/functional
or
Symbolic
Explanations...



But it looks so pretty...

Why do we eat what we eat?



**Medical/practical/functional
or
Symbolic
Explanations... Or both?**