

ARTICLE

Foucault and the Ethics of Eating

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ABSTRACT: In a 1983 interview, Michel Foucault contrasts our contemporary interest in sexual identity with the ancient Greek preoccupation with diet, arguing that sex has replaced food as the privileged medium of self-constitution in the modern West. In the same interview, Foucault argues that modern liberation movements should return to the ancient model of ethics, of which diet was a prime example, as aesthetics or self-transformative practice. In this paper I take up Foucault's argument with respect to the Animal Liberation Movement and the dietetics of ethical vegetarianism. Contra Foucault, I suggest that diet has not been replaced by sexuality in the modern West, and that food choices, along with and intertwined with sexuality, continue to function as practices of self-constitution in both disciplinary and aesthetic fashions. I then consider the implications of this argument for the Animal Liberation Movement, exploring ways in which it might (and to some degree already does) take on aesthetic rather than moral strategies in order to pursue what Foucault once described as "an ethics of acts and their pleasures which would be able to take into account the pleasure of the other."

Keywords: Michel Foucault, care of the self, dietetics, vegetarianism, Animal Liberation Movement.

"Je suis là pour recueillir des documents, les diffuser et éventuellement les provoquer. Simplement, je perçois l'intolérable."¹

Introduction

In his 1971 article, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Michel Foucault describes genealogy as "an analysis of descent," and argues that "descent attaches itself to the body. It inscribes itself in the nervous system, in temperament, in the digestive apparatus; it appears in faulty respiration, in improper diets, in the debilitated and prostrate bodies of those whose ancestors

¹ Michel Foucault, "Je perçois l'intolérable," in *Dits et écrits Tome I, 1954-1975* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001 [1971]), 1071-1073.

committed errors.”² Against the view that the body follows laws of instinct and physiology, Foucault insists in this essay that “The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holiday; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances.”³ “Effective history,” he writes, “...shortens its vision to those things nearest to it – the body, the nervous system, nutrition, digestion, and energies...”⁴ Diet, these citations suggest, is something to which Foucault thinks genealogy should attend.

In a 1983 interview, Foucault contrasts the ancient Greek preoccupation with controlling diet to the modern obsession with sex. “[S]ex is boring,” Foucault says, and notes that the contrary view is a relatively recent one:

[The Greeks] were not much interested in sex. [Sex] was not a great issue. Compare, for instance, what they say about the place of food and diet. I think it is very, very interesting to see the move, the very slow move, from the privileging of food which was overwhelming in Greece, to interest in sex. Food was still much more important during the early Christian days than sex. For instance, in the rules for monks, the problem was food, food, food. Then you can see a very slow shift during the Middle Ages when they were in a kind of equilibrium... and after the seventeenth century it was sex.⁵

Foucault devotes Part II of *The Use of Pleasure* to “Dietetics,” in which he explores the ancient Greek techniques of caring for the self through dietary regimes.⁶ Besides diet, techniques of the self that approach the self as an ethico-aesthetic project include writing, meditation, and controlling one’s relations to sexual pleasure.⁷ It seems that Foucault was interested in the example of diet in these writings largely because it demonstrated the contingency of our own interest in sex as locus for self-discovery. He repeatedly notes the Greeks’ greater interest in food than in sex.⁸ It is significant to Foucault that food was once the focus of a complex set of restrictions and inspired a greater discursive interest than did sexual activity since he thinks that this is in marked contrast to the modern West, in which sex rather than food became the privileged site of moral restriction, scientific inquiry, and individuating reflexivity.

In writings from this period Foucault describes “techniques of the self” both as an ethical relation to the self and as an aesthetics of one’s own life. Relations with others, Foucault claims, are the domain of power, which he had explored throughout his genealogical

² Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984 [1971]), 82-83.

³ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵ Michel Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,” in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 229.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume II. The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Vintage, 1985 [1984]), 127-183.

⁷ Michel Foucault, “L’écriture de soi,” in *Dits et écrits Tome II, 1976-1988* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001 [1983]), 1234-1249. See also volumes II and II of *The History of Sexuality*.

⁸ Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 97-98, 110, 114.

period, whereas ethics is the domain of how we relate to ourselves, or how we transform ourselves, and it is to this topic that he devotes his final books.⁹ To approach one's own life ethically through such techniques of the self is, for Foucault, to see one's existence as an aesthetic project or a work of art. This notion of the self as a work of art, or as something that the subject *makes*, was, for Foucault, refreshingly opposed to the modern, social science or psychoanalytic notion of the self as something inherent, to be discovered or deciphered.

In the same 1983 interview, Foucault suggests that we might take up the model of ethico-aesthetic practices provided by the Greeks, of which diet is an example, for our own political times: "nowadays," he says, "...most of us no longer believe that ethics is founded in religion, nor do we want a legal system to intervene in our moral, personal, private life. Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics."¹⁰ Foucault's suggestion is that contemporary liberation movements reactivate the Greek model of ethics – giving it a different content – in order to ground their politics in a self-transformative practice.

In this paper I will argue that the manner in which we regulate our food consumption has been revived as a means of ethical and aesthetic self-constitution in the West. Although we are disciplined in what we eat by our upbringings, media, agribusiness, and government-funded nutritional science expert discourses, we may resist these disciplines through counter-cuisines that are in fact a form of political resistance to disciplinary power. Moreover, I will suggest that this ethico-aesthetic alimentary self-constitution is not divorced from the constitution of sexual selves which Foucault describes. In particular, I will argue that ethical vegetarianism can be seen as a counter-discipline, a self-transformative practice, and an ethico-aesthetics of the self, and that vegetarianism and meat-eating are caught up with sexualities. Finally, I will take up Foucault's statement about liberation movements in order to explore the implications of these claims for the Animal Liberation Movement.

Alimentary Identities

According to anthropologists and sociologists, in every culture food is a crucial manner of self-constitution and alimentary choices are a means of expressing adherence to a social group. In the phrase that is often reiterated in this literature, "you are what you eat," or, as Brillat-Savarin puts it, "tell me what you eat: I will tell you what you are."¹¹ As Catherine Manton writes, "A cuisine... is a categorization that helps society's members define themselves. This sort of societal self-definition establishes who are insiders or outsiders to that group. Like language, a cuisine is a medium by which society establishes its special identity."¹² While anthropologists study eating as an expression of group or ethnic identity, other scholars have argued that food consumption is a key manner in which individuals define more fine-tuned identities within modern Western societies. In North America, for instance, because "Canadian cuisine" and "American cuisine" are considered either non-existent or are criticized as unsophisticated

⁹ Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," 237.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹¹ Cited in Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 11.

¹² Catherine Manton, *Fed Up: Women and Food in America* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), 62.

and unhealthy, diverse culinary counter-cultures have arisen to disassociate individual consumers from the undesirable cuisine or non-cuisine of their nation, resulting in a plethora of gastronomically-bound identities. American philosopher Cathryn Bailey describes the manners in which her vegetarian consumption defines her self-chosen identity as feminist and cosmopolitan, for instance, even while she recognizes that the foods she eats and the manners in which she eats them also mark her “special whiteness” and upper middle-class status. She describes the “processed, prepackaged fast-food world” of her childhood in a working-class white family, and the manners in which she redefined her identity as an adult through her gastronomical choices of “organic yogurt, fresh greens, tofu, and a passion for Indian food, usually eaten in measured quantities,” over the “slabs of processed cheese, white bread, and heaps of tuna casserole from [her] childhood.”¹³ If we associate North American food with junk food, those who eat it may themselves be identified with junk, as in the unfortunate expression “white trash.” In Foucault’s terms, Bailey’s alimentary self-constitution is an ongoing aesthetic practice of distancing herself from her childhood world through the choices of moderation, vegetarianism (which she associates with her feminism), and a cultivated connoisseurship of ethnic cuisines.

Other feminist thinkers have also argued for a vegetarian diet as expression of feminist identity, given the association of hunting, meat-eating and the butchering of human and non-human animals alike with masculinity, and the inter-related exploitations and abuses of women and non-human animals at the hands of men. Rejecting meat, along with fur, leather, and products tested on animals, is one way of rejecting masculine violence and thus of expressing a feminist identity. In *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England*, Coral Lansbury explores the manners in which nineteenth-century feminists identified the abuses of non-human animals with the oppression of women, and Adams demonstrates this historical point at length in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.¹⁴

Complicating matters, however, in *Neither Man nor Beast*, Adams, like Bailey, perceives that the ethical attitude towards animals which she advocates, and vegetarianism in particular, tends to be a marker of whiteness and middle-class status as well as a gendered politics.¹⁵ As Manton writes, “These food preferences at the end of the century... differentiate upscale eaters from members of lower social classes who persist in eating the same meat-and-fat-saturated diet that their parents ate a generation before.”¹⁶ While feminist vegetarians have wanted to attribute the greater prevalence of vegetarianism among women to women’s historical association with non-human animals and to an ethical superiority on the part of women – caring for animals and thus not eating them is, for instance, theorized within the feminist tradition of

¹³ Cathryn Bailey, “We Are What We Eat: Feminist Vegetarianism and the Reproduction of Racial Identity,” *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, volume 22, no. 2, (2007), 40.

¹⁴ Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York and London: Continuum, 2004 [1990]), 132-153.

¹⁵ Carol Adams, *Neither Man Nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (New York and London: Continuum, 1995), 71-84.

¹⁶ Manton, *Fed Up*, 77.

care ethics¹⁷ – these claims become problematic when we consider the fact that vegetarianism in the West tends also to be a dietary choice of a select group of middle class white people. African Americans also have a long history of being “animalized” within racist discourses and practices and this has not given rise to a particularly animal-friendly African American cuisine.¹⁸

Eating does not only participate in the constitution of intersecting racial, ethnic, gendered, and political identities, but even more fundamentally in our self-identifications as human, which can be understood in different ways. If we eat according to what we have been constructed to be or what we wish to be, one thing that many humans wish to be and have been raised to believe themselves to be is superior to non-human animals. It is not the case that we first determine that we are superior to non-human animals and then we conclude that we have the moral license to eat them. Rather, it is through our very eating of other animals that we constitute our superiority. According to this logic, we *must* be superior to other animals since we put them in cages and do horrible things to them. Human superiority is not a fact from which the permissibility of our practices is deduced; on the contrary, human superiority is something which we construct *through* our instrumentalization of other species.

For many individuals, then, the vegetarian diet is a forsaking of human privilege, a denial of human superiority over other animals. For some vegetarians this is exactly what is desired. For others, however, the vegetarian diet on the part of humans – who, unlike other vegetarian animals have a choice to eat other animals or not – is the true proof of humanity. Vegetarianism is “humane” and rational, whereas meat-eating humans are unreflective if not sadistic beasts. Vegetarianism, for some, demonstrates that we, unlike tigers, are moral agents who can choose what we eat, regardless of instinct or what may or may not be “natural.” Vegetarianism, like meat-eating, may therefore be understood as proof of human superiority.

Whether ethical vegetarianism is understood as a recognition of our common animality or as an assertion of a specifically human capacity to rise above our animality, it is always constitutive of the vegetarian’s identity. We do not say that we eat vegetarian but that we *are* vegetarian. Given the morally problematic nature of a meat-based diet, which, in addition to the vast misery that it inflicts on nonhuman animals, is a major environmental pollutant and cause of global warming, and obliges people in developing countries to grow cash crops to feed first world cattle rather than subsistence crops, a vegetarian diet functions as a counter-cuisine, indicating identification with an ethico-political counterculture, a desire to tread lightly on the earth and to not inflict needless suffering. According to Manton, “individuals who eat only organic natural food acquire the moral superiority already attributed to that category of food.”¹⁹ While types of food consumption serve as markers of ethnicity, gender, class, and race, categories into which we are disciplined,²⁰ this suggests that an ethical diet can also work as a political and aesthetic practice of counter-disciplinary self-constitution. Dietary choices

¹⁷ Josephine Donovan and Carol Adams (ed.), *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

¹⁸ Marvalene Hughes, “Soul, Black Women, and Food,” in Carol Coulihan (ed.), *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1977), 272-280.

¹⁹ Manton, *Fed Up*, 8.

²⁰ Ellen Feder, *Family Bonds: Genealogies of Race and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

may do more than simply reflect who we are as products of unchosen disciplinary practices that precede us, but may actively and self-consciously transform that being that we are.

What this indicates is that, in the contemporary North American context in particular, where gastronomic identities or what Elspeth Probyn has called “alimentary subjectivities” proliferate in a manner that was perhaps unparalleled in Foucault’s France, the ancient Greek example of diet as technology for ethico-aesthetically constituting the self is not so alien as Foucault assumed. Foucault thinks that identity today is produced primarily through relations to our sex, and yet many people identify as belonging to a racial or ethnic group, a nationality, a political movement or sub-culture, and not only according to their sexual orientation. Food, marking for gender, race, ethnicity, class, and politics, is a significant expression of each of these sites of identification, and thus functions as an important means of self-constitution. As Probyn writes, “we need to pay attention to how food and eating have now become a central site of intensity for public and popular questions about who we are.”²¹

The New Sex

According to Probyn, and contra Foucault, food is in fact a *more* significant marker of subjectivity than sex in the modern West since, as she puts it, “bodies that eat connect us more explicitly with limits of class, gender and ethnicity than do the copulating bodies so prominently displayed in popular culture.”²² If this suggests that Foucault was overhasty in thinking that sex had supplanted food as ethical and aesthetic focus of self-constitution some centuries ago, several authors have argued that food is in fact the new sex. Put otherwise, it is not so much that food has replaced sex as our privileged form of self-constitution, or the other way around, but that gastronomy and eroticism have become intertwined. In particular, several authors have explored the connections between meat-eating and social constructions of heterosexuality. In works such as *The Pornography of Meat*, Adams and other feminist scholars have provided exhaustive examples of non-human animal bodies presented in manners which self-consciously invoke heterosexual pornographic representations of women.²³ Such images and the captions that go with them are to be found in mundane venues ranging from advertisements to food magazines to cookbooks. Similarly, these authors have shown that women are frequently described as meat that heterosexually virile men consume. We may think of the so-called “meat shots” in heterosexual porn or jokes about whether a man prefers legs or breasts (when he eats chicken-meat). The upshot is that both women’s and non-human animal bodies are conceived of as intended for heterosexual male consumption, while species-domination is eroticized. The flip side of this trope is that men who do not eat meat are seen as effeminate, abnormal and homosexual. A man on an airplane assured me that there are only two reasons that a man would say he is vegetarian: either he is trying to impress a vegetarian woman or he is gay. Food choices – especially meat – versus plant-based diets - are seen to be bound up with identities, and with sexual identities in particular.

²¹ Elspeth Probyn, “An Ethos with a Bite: Queer Appetites from Sex to Food,” *Sexualities*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1999), 422.

²² *Ibid.*, 423.

²³ Carol Adams, *The Pornography of Meat* (London: Continuum, 2003).

While Adams explores images of meat in relation to heterosexual porn consumed by men, other authors suggest that cultural representations of food may serve as a quasi-pornographic medium *for women*. In her cookbook, *The CanLit Foodbook*, Margaret Atwood writes that “One man’s cookbook is another woman’s soft porn,” and describes the presence of food in fiction as “Sort of like sex.”²⁴ Ros Coward has argued that the gourmet sections in women’s magazines serve as “food porn,” “seduc[ing] women in the same way that conventional pornography tempts men.”²⁵ In *Last Chance To Eat: The Fate of Taste in a Fast Food World*, Gina Mallet recounts just such an experience, describing her encounter with Elizabeth David’s Mediterranean cookbook in postwar London in distinctly sexual terms:

The fact that you couldn’t buy olive oil easily, if at all, only made Elizabeth David’s book more alluring. It was... erotic, like Charles Ryder’s dinner in Paris in *Brideshead Revisited*. Evelyn Waugh’s description of the food made the deprived eater lust for blinis dripping with globules of butter, sour and frothy sorrel soup, the sound of duck juices being pressed from the carcass. ...A Dionysian strain and an enticing sensuality runs through [David’s] book.²⁶

In *Carnal Appetites*, Probyn describes the mostly male chefs on television cooking shows as a breed of porn stars, and discusses the many manifestations of “gastroporn” in British and Australian culture. In Québec, a young media chef, Ricardo, was recently to be seen on a television talk show advising men to shave their pubic hair, his expertise in the kitchen apparently qualifying him as a sexual lifestyle expert as well. Ricardo’s website lauds his “quasi-visceral passion” for cooking and temporarily featured a photo of the chef sitting on a counter, gripping a glass bowl between his thighs while breaking eggs with one hand, a grin on his face as he does so.

Interestingly, like many other television chefs, Ricardo advocates that families take the time to eat together, and hosts his cooking show from his family’s kitchen as if to establish himself as exemplar of family values as well as gastroporn star and sexual lifestyle expert. As Iggers writes, “Food... has become eroticized, politicized, fetishized,” but also “invested with symbolism and moral power as never before in [North] American society.”²⁷ If food is the new sex, this means that eating, like sex, is a manner in which our consumption habits identify us, and this brings all the moral baggage to our food choices that once resided in sex. As Iggers writes, “if it is remarkable how riddled with guilt our relationship with food has become, it is even more noteworthy how much our morality has become centered on food.” Iggers continues: “At the heart of this new food guilt is a migration of both our eroticism and our moral focus from our groins to our guts.”²⁸ As Ricardo ecstatically grips his bowl of eggs

²⁴ Margaret Atwood, *The CanLit Foodbook: From pen to palate – a collection of tasty literary fare* (Toronto: Totem Books, 1987), 1-2.

²⁵ Cited in Probyn, “An Ethos with a Bite,” 424.

²⁶ Gina Mallet, *Last Chance to Eat: The Fate of Taste in a Fast Food World* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2004), 107-8.

²⁷ Cited in Manton, 83.

²⁸ Cited in Manton, 82.

against his groin as another shell bursts, he exemplifies the manner in which the groin and gut are in fact not kept separate. Manton, similarly, argues that

The previously vast realm of guilt-provoking areas in life has shrunk to a 'beleaguered enclave' dominated by our morally problematic interaction with food ...Perhaps the essence of personal identity has shifted from how one is connected to the social world, typical of Victorian times when sex was loaded with expectation and responsibility, to a more modern world in which individualism and privacy are valued greatly, one in which an individual is defined by what is consumed rather than by connections.²⁹

Fat and unhealthy eating are associated with immorality and give rise to guilt, and even a vegan dessert cookbook is given the tongue-in-cheek title, *Sinfully Vegan*. While eating unhealthy foods can result in genuine guilt and shame, eating fattening foods like chocolate is presented as an exquisite, transgressive and quasi-erotic pleasure, frequently described as orgasmic.

While many writers stress the morality of our food choices, or the manners in which food is bound up with lists of dos and don't – don't eat fat, don't over-eat, don't eat sugar, don't eat carbs, don't eat meat, eat local, eat health foods, eat seasonal, eat organic, eat in moderation (while similarly moralizing lists of sexual do's and don'ts recede from view) – I am suggesting that eating can also be aesthetic or ethical, in Foucault's sense of these terms as he opposes them to Judeo-Christian and Kantian morality, and as he finds to have been the case in ancient Greece. Diet can function as a care of the self and self-transformative activity, and not exclusively as disciplinary and moral. Eating is moral in so far as we feel bound to generalizable alimentary rules and feel guilty at their transgression. Eating is disciplinary in so far as we are inculcated with specific eating habits or are corporeally constituted to eat in certain ways that are highly difficult to get away from because they have become our habitual means of relating to our bodies, emotions, and selves. The complex manners in which food is bound up with affect, and can thus be compulsive and apparently beyond our control, is well-known from studies of over-eating, anorexia, and bulimia. Over-eating to compensate for lack or loss of love, and to cope with stress, is a common phenomenon. Like Proust with his madeleine, Gina Mallet vividly describes taste as memory, writing nostalgically of the egg, dairy, and meat-based foods of her childhood while lamenting the manners in which modern food science has added fear and inhibition to this emotional mix.³⁰ Eating habits, like sexual habits, are affective, as well as a key part of our involuntary corporeal constitution by others. Nevertheless, I am arguing that diet, like sex, can also be a technology of self-appropriation, self-transformation, or an ethico-aesthetics of the self.

Within the Foucauldian-feminist tradition, weight-loss dieting has been described as disciplinary by Sandra Bartky and Susan Bordo, while anorexia has been discussed as an aesthetics of the self by Liz Eckermann.³¹ Bringing these perspectives together, Cressida

²⁹ Manton, 83.

³⁰ Mallet, *Last Chance to Eat*.

³¹ Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990); Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley

Heyes analyzes weight-loss dieting as a complex interaction between disciplinary regimes and technologies of self-care.³² Although she focuses on Weight Watchers, Heyes mentions the manner in which we in the West are disciplined to consume an animal-based diet.³³ In *Carnal Appetites*, Probyn, like Heyes, draws on *The Use of Pleasure* in order to discuss eating, identity and Foucault's final works on care of the self, but, unlike other feminist Foucauldians, she has not restricted herself to thinking about weight-loss dieting. Instead, Probyn analyzes the culture of eating more generally, and privileges the sensuous pleasures of eating over the feminine deprivations of weight-loss regimes.

Unfortunately, Probyn quickly dismisses ethical vegetarianism as a rule-bound dogmatism that strictly dictates what everyone should and should not eat, thus placing vegetarianism on the side of the Kantian or Judeo-Christian morality which Foucault opposed in his writings on the care of the self. In contrast to ethical vegetarians, in exploring the ethico-erotics of cooking, Probyn does not limit herself to "stuffing zucchini flowers: with batons of cheese, rub alongside the full, bursting stamen, and enfold the flower's organ, cheese with petals twisted," but also describes such questionable erotic pleasures as "thrusting [her] hands, covered in buttery crumbs, up the open orifice" of a chicken's cadaver.³⁴ This "queer" erotics that Probyn describes thus resonates with both bestiality and necrophilia, with the dead chicken serving as unwilling partner to post-mortem anal rape, after which the corpse is consumed. "'This was life being enjoyed,'" Probyn approvingly cites an obituary of aggressively anti-vegetarian British gastroporn-star Jennifer Paterson, and concludes: "The point is to make of eating sex a multiplication of all the ways in which life is enjoyed."³⁵

Probyn situates this "multiplication of pleasures" within the Foucauldian counter-attack against disciplinary power, or as an ethico-aesthetics of the self. I do not want to deny that this case can be made, and yet Foucault himself stated that the content of ancient Greek ethics was "disgusting" and not-to-be-emulated because it focused solely on the virile and active male self and his pleasures while failing to consider the pleasures of others. The Greek dietetics that Foucault describes is typical of this feature of Greek ethics, in so far as it is solely concerned with the effects of foods on the eating subject, and not at all with where that food came from. Recoiling from this feature of Greek ethics, Foucault asked, "Are we able to have an ethics of acts and their pleasures which would be able to take into account the pleasure of the other? Is the pleasure of the other something which can be integrated in[to] our pleasure...?"³⁶ I am sure that Foucault never anticipated (and may not have approved of) his suggestion being extended to poultry, and yet I would argue that what Probyn forgets in her alimentary aesthetic is that one way in which life is enjoyed is the way in which chickens enjoy

and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003 [1993]); Liz Eckermann, "Foucault, Embodiment, and Gendered Subjectivities: The Case of Voluntary Self-Starvation," in Alan Peterson and Bryan S. Turner (eds.), *Foucault, Health, and Medicine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 151-172.

³² Cressida Heyes, *Self-Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 63-88.

³³ *Ibid.*, 76.

³⁴ Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*, 59.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁶ Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 233.

life – or in which they *would* enjoy life if the vast majority of them were not condemned to factory farms and factory slaughter. In the virile pleasures of eating chickens, cows, ducks, turkeys and lambs, we do not think about the pleasure of the other – the pleasure of non-human animals. While I do not deny that, as Probyn describes, a carnivorous regime *can* be an ethico-aesthetic technology of the self on Foucault's terms, I am suggesting that it would be as "disgusting" an ethics as the self-constituting practices of the ancient Greeks, dependent as they were on slavery and misogyny, oppressions to which the non-human flesh industry has often been compared.³⁷

The consumption of what we call meat is an overly virile aesthetics of the self that does not account for the pleasures of the other and is also a product of discipline. In contrast, a vegetarian diet can be theorized as an aesthetics and ethics of the self, a resistance to discipline, or a self-transformational re-disciplining. We are disciplined to eat meat by (among others) our families and organizations such as the FDA as these are manipulated by the financial interests of agribusiness,³⁸ in manners which become inscribed on our identities, and so choosing a vegetarian diet, contra Probyn, is a difficult practice of self-overcoming and self-transformation, of undisciplining and redisciplining ourselves, and it is, moreover, a practice which integrates the pleasure of the other into our own. Eating vegetarian food can be thought of as an *askēsis*, which, as Heyes points out, differs crucially from later Christian practices of asceticism or self-renunciation. A vegetarian *askēsis* involves the exploration of novel sensuous pleasures for the self, obliging the consumer to experiment with new cuisines and foods. As Heyes writes,

For someone who, for example never ate vegetables, discovering the subtle sweetness of a crisp carrot instead of the hyper-greasiness of fast-food fries may indeed expand horizons. There can be plenty of joy in eating the 'healthy' foods that are too often consumed out of a sense of duty, and the ubiquity of (and pressures to consume) poor quality food in the oversupplied Western countries represent their own challenge to cultural, economic, and social practices.³⁹

At the same time this exploration of new culinary pleasures takes into account the pleasures of human and non-human others alike. Of course, by choosing a vegetarian diet we do not directly give these non-human and human animals pleasure, but we at least boycott, resist and refuse to participate in the production of their misery, slaughter, and starvation, and we strive through our micropolitical practices for a different world.

³⁷ Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* (New York: Lantern Books, 2002); Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1996); Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan (eds.), *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006 [1995]).

³⁸ Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (University of California Press, 2003).

³⁹ Heyes, 86.

Strategies for the Animal Liberation Movement

While animal ethicists have long advocated a vegetarian diet through moral argumentation, and, as seen, Foucauldian philosopher Elspeth Probyn has criticized vegetarianism on precisely these grounds, I have suggested that we may take on the vegetarian diet for aesthetic purposes, or as part of our ethico-aesthetics of the self. I would now like to consider the tactical significance of this claim for the Animal Liberation Movement.

In his influential book, *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer describes the pleasures gained by eating animal cadavers rather than vegetarian foods as trivial in comparison to the suffering this practice causes to animals, including human animals.⁴⁰ Today, when the taste of animal flesh and dairy products can often be simulated by soy, coconut and other natural products, the loss of sensuous pleasure for the consumer is small indeed. According to a utilitarian calculus, the choice of vegetarianism is for most of us or under most circumstances both easy and obvious. Nevertheless, Singer notes that many of his philosopher acquaintances grant the rationality of his arguments and yet continue to consume meat, suggesting that the choice of animal flesh is not about reason at all and may not even be about pleasure. Other philosophers writing in this area also note the discrepancy between the rational convictions and actual practices of those who have been exposed to the philosophical arguments for vegetarianism. As Gaverick Matheny writes:

There are remarkably few contemporary defenses of our traditional treatment of animals. This may suggest that the principal obstacles to improving the treatment of animals are not philosophical uncertainties about their proper treatment but, rather, our ignorance about their current abuse and our reluctance to change deeply ingrained habits. Even the most reasonable among us is not invulnerable to the pressures of habit. Many moral philosophers who believe that eating animals is unethical continue to eat meat. This reflects the limits of reasoned argument in changing behavior.⁴¹

Such observations may strike us as cause for despair: if even moral philosophers who are convinced by rational arguments for vegetarianism do not change their diets, what hope is there for the rest of the population, for the environment, for the future of humans, or for the billions of factory farm animals bred each year?

When the topic of animal-eating is discussed at all, a common defense is that this practice is part of the individual animal-eater's culture, and that by raising the issue of cruelty to animals one is asking the animal-eater to abandon her culture or is imposing one's own values on her. Ethical vegetarianism is thus positioned as a threat to cultural diversity, and animal rights activists' disapprobation for Halal and Kosher methods of slaughter have been particularly criticized on these grounds. A Frenchman, upon learning that I was vegetarian, promptly informed me that my food choices undermined his identity and were an attack on the entire culture of France. A Turkish acquaintance argued that becoming vegetarian, in his

⁴⁰ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (London: Pimlico, 1995 [1975]).

⁴¹ Gaverick Matheny, "Utilitarianism and Animals," in Peter Singer (ed.), *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 25.

culture and for his family, would signal madness and emasculation. After a brief attempt to be vegetarian he returned to his animal-eating ways after a single incident in which a male friend asked him if he was “crazy” for ordering a veggie burger. Another Turkish man expressed concerns that vegetarianism resulted in sexual dysfunctions for men while replacing dairy with soy would lead to excessive amounts of estrogen in his body. In contrast, female Turkish friends encountered little resistance from their families when they became vegetarian. These cases, again, reflect the manners in which ethnic, cultural, and gendered belonging are constituted in part through alimentary choices that are thus disciplinary and affective rather than moral.

Similarly, for many alimentary subjects it is an aesthetic rather than an ethical recoiling from meat and eggs that brought on vegetarianism. In 1893, Lady Walb Paget wrote: “I have all my life thought that meat-eating was objectionable from the aesthetic point of view. Even as a child the fashion of handing around a huge *grosse pièce* on an enormous dish revolted my sense of beauty.”⁴² A doctor writing in 1907 ascribes revulsion for meat in girls to an “artistic” sensitivity:

There is the common illustration which everyone meets a thousand times in a lifetime, of the girl whose stomach rebels at the very thought of fat meat. The mother tries persuasion and entreaty and threats and penalties. But nothing can overcome the artistic development in the girl’s nature which makes her revolt at the bare idea of putting the fat piece of a dead animal between her lips.⁴³

All of these responses suggest that what is at issue with food choices may be neither reason nor alimentary pleasure and is not trivial. Not eating meat or eating it, although apparently a simple ethical choice, is, for many, a momentous symbolic act, enacting a self-transformation into a different kind of subject – a subject position which, for many, does not have positive connotations at all. While for some the choice of a vegetarian diet symbolizes a positive difference, purity, an ethical stance of non-violence, femininity, moral superiority, and political resistance to the dominant culture, for others the choice of vegetarianism spells ethnic annihilation, Western assimilation, castration, squeamishness, weakness, eccentricity, sexual abnormality, madness. For these people, animal activists are crazy and hysterical, vegetarians are abnormal, anti-social, effeminate and opposed to pleasure, while meat-eating is normal, virile, life-affirming and healthy. In *Abnormal*, Foucault cites Magnan, “one of the big names in psychiatry at the end of the nineteenth century,” who “discovers a syndrome: the antivivisection syndrome.”⁴⁴ As Foucault explains, antivivisectionism, which was “discovered” around the same time as agoraphobia, claustrophobia, kleptomania, homosexuality, and masochism, “is a syndrome, that is to say, a partial and unstable configuration referring to a general condition of abnormality.”⁴⁵ Paul Auster’s *The Brooklyn Follies* provides an illustration of this image of the vegetarian (and especially the vegetarian male) as abnormal, parti-

⁴² Cited in Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 174.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975* (New York: Picador, 2003 [1999]), 311.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

cularly as he contrasts with the meat-eating man.⁴⁶ The manly, sensual, women-loving, life-loving men in this novel bond over steaks and beer, while the lone male vegetarian is strange, effeminate, anti-social, asexual, and lives with his adult sister. Declining to eat meat is to become a different kind of person, and, as far as many people are concerned, to become an undesirable person at that.

What vegetarianism means, clearly, differs according to context, even within a single individual's life. A philosopher friend became vegetarian when growing up in the Canadian prairies in order to feel different from her family, who ate meat while she prepared herself "special" meals. She began to eat meat again in the Yukon, where eating locally-hunted animals symbolized belonging to a community that she had chosen, whereas a vegetarian diet would have marked her as an urban outsider. In her case, not eating animals and then eating them again were aesthetic choices having more to do with the type of person that she wanted to become than with the animals who would be impacted by these choices. Now living in the southern United States and vegetarian again, she is aware of the manners in which her gastronomical identity marks a simultaneously desired and uncomfortable allegiance to middle-class, academic, white femininity, since the only other vegetarians she knows in her community are other white women professors and graduate students. If, as I have been arguing, eating is affective as well as an effect of discipline, and changing one's diet entails a non-trivial loss or change of identity as well as resistance to disciplinary power, this explains why so many people who are convinced by the ethical claims of a vegetarian diet nonetheless fail to eat accordingly. Whatever the difficulties, however, with a certain amount of corporeal practice, making novel food choices is possible and can be a self-conscious self-transformation, thus entailing a self-disciplined relation to the self that could plausibly be described as aesthetic and ethical from a Foucauldian perspective. To borrow from and expand on Probyn, it is not only that we are what we eat, but, more actively, we may eat what we wish to become.

Given these points, the Animal Liberation Movement would be well-advised to follow Foucault's suggestion that liberation movements in general should take on ethico-aesthetic tactics, rather than relying solely on utilitarian or deontological moral argumentation. To some extent animal activists already use aesthetic tactics, for instance by de-aestheticizing meat and fur and beauty products tested on animals in their campaigns, showing the blood-and-guts ugliness as well as cruelty behind these products – smearing fake blood on what are meant to be aesthetic window displays in fashionable boutiques selling fur, for instance. Vegetarians often insist on calling meat by unaesthetic terms such as road-kill, corpses, or cadavers, which stress the disgusting aspect of eating flesh, while rejecting sophisticating and aestheticizing names such as *cordons bleu* and *magret de canard*, or euphemisms such as beef, pork, and veal.

Writers on animal ethics also point out the aesthetic self-deceptions involved in imagining the animal-based diet as normal, masculine, strong, and virile. Given that current North American quantities of meat-consumption are historically and globally unprecedented and could only function under the conditions of modern factory farms and concentration camp-style slaughter – conditions that are environmentally unsustainable and disastrous to

⁴⁶ Paul Auster, *The Brooklyn Follies* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2005).

human health – meat-eating as we know it is not normal at all but is in fact pathological. Given the relation between meat-eating diets and high cholesterol, cancer, and other health concerns, the meat-eating diet is not a healthy one either. Eating factory-farmed animals also means eating mostly female animals and what Carol Adams has called “feminized protein,” and so this diet is also not a consumption of masculinity but, in some sense, of femaleness. Moreover eating animals in the West mainly entails eating animals who are themselves vegetarians (omnivorous pigs being the exception), and so if we believe that eating meat makes one strong, these animals must be weak. But how can eating weak animals make us strong? Indeed these animals *are* weak, but not because they are vegetarian and female but because of the factory farm conditions in which they live and the genetic modifications which they have undergone to become more financially profitable egg-, milk-, and meat-producing units. These conditions and modifications entail that factory-farmed animals go to their deaths debilitated, mutilated, sick, tumbling and dragged out of trucks because they can no longer stand, debeaked, nearly featherless, with broken wings, broken limbs, and blood blisters on their feet from standing on wire mesh caging or concrete all their lives. These animals stand no chance, they are absolute victims, so how can eating them be a sign of masculine prowess? The aesthetic self-constructions of meat-eaters as normal, healthy, virile, pleasure-loving and strong, and of vegetarians as weak, effeminate, anti-pleasure and hysterical, are in fact illogical. Affect and self-deception underlie the meat-eating diet, as well as an emotional aversion to knowing the intolerable (to use Foucault’s term) facts about food production, while rationality is on the side of vegetarianism. Through arguments such as these, animal activists expose the bad faith underpinning the meat-eater’s aesthetic sense of self.

The largest international animal activist group, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), has also resorted to the flip side of this technique, not only showing the ugliness of meat but promoting the vegetarian body as beautiful and erotic. PETA frequently calls upon members to vote for the “sexiest vegetarian,” and advertises the vegan diet as a weight-loss regime. Celebrity personalities such as Anna Nicole Smith and Pamela Anderson serve as PETA spokespeople, attributing their slim and desirable bodies to their refusal to eat meat. Pornstar Jenna Jamieson promotes the use of pleather rather than leather as sexual fetish, while other pornstars for PETA, wearing nothing but lettuce leaves, serve veggie-dogs on a busy city street to mostly male passersby. For PETA’s “I’d rather go naked than wear fur” campaign, porn stars, divas, and actresses pose nude for advertisements. In a commercial produced for Superbowl Sunday but rejected on the grounds of its sexual explicitness, PETA counters the trope of meat-eating as pornographic pleasure with its own version of food-porn: against a soundtrack of heavy breathing and erotic sighs, lingerie-clad women lick, rub their bodies against and take whirlpool baths with vegetables, all but masturbating with pumpkins, broccoli and asparagus, while a caption reads: “Studies show vegetarians have better sex.” In another PETA ad, reasons for becoming vegetarian are enumerated orally by attractive women against backdrop images of suffering animals and grossly bleeding packages of meat. One reason alone is not spoken aloud but is given to us as a (not-so) “subliminal” message: “eating meat causes impotence.” A woman with attitude interpolates the suddenly masculinized viewer: “did you get that?” While the largest demographic for vegetarianism in countries like the U.S. and the U.K. is single women – a statistic that indicates that women often go back to

eating (and preparing) meat once they are in stable relationships with men – the PETA ad suggests that modern, sexually-demanding women may insist that their lovers forsake meat-eating, if only to avoid erectile dysfunction. If it is any compensation for these men, PETA thongs are imprinted with the slogan, “Vegans taste better.” Linking vegetables with porn and sexiness, and meat with emasculation and impotence, these ads subvert the association of meat with virility and vegetarianism with a denial of life’s sensual pleasures.

These advertisements nevertheless remain problematic, even at a tactical level: for one thing, they perpetuate the association of vegetarianism with women since the erotic vegetarian body remains in almost all cases female. A related worry is that these are heteronormatively feminine bodies offered to the pornographic male gaze. Indeed, one response to PETA’s advertisements is that they are participating in one meat market in order to combat another, trafficking in human flesh in order to save the flesh of non-human animals, although this is not to say that the so called “meat market” of women can compare in brutality to the market of factory-farmed meat. Nevertheless, it is clear that PETA, discouraged by the failure of moral arguments to bring about change in actual consumption habits, uses aesthetic strategies that may in fact be more effective than moral ones. It seems to be the case that we care more about the beauty of our bodies and lives than about the suffering of others, and thus we may have more success in changing the lives of non-human animals if we demonstrate the ugliness of meat-eating and the aesthetics of the vegetarian self than if we stress the immorality of eating non-human animals by deontological or utilitarian standards.

A case in point is religious dietary restrictions. Religions have effectively convinced generations of believers to respect alimentary restrictions, not for moral reasons, but in order to express adherence to a group or as an expression of religious identity, as well as by inculcating the view that eating certain animals is impure for the eater. Some kinds of animal flesh are successfully banned by major world religions, not out of any moral consideration for those animals, but for aesthetic reasons that are entirely concerned with the identity that the believer wishes to manifest with her fork. The example of religious alimentary subjectivities indicates that people are willing to seriously curtail what they eat if it is about their identity and an aesthetic sense of purity, in a way that they are not willing to limit themselves when it is a matter of environmental accountability or preventing needless suffering to sentient creatures. Religious alimentary restrictions have been more effective than utilitarian and deontological arguments for ethical vegetarianism because they have accurately targeted what culinary choices are usually about, which is not rationality or morality towards others but an ethico-aesthetics of ourselves.

In his discussion of “Dietetics” in *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault makes clear that moral reasoning is important to rather than opposed to an ethics of the self: *first* one needs to rationally consent to a rational ideal, and *then* one needs to practice it until it re-shapes one’s existence:

In order to follow the right regimen, it was of course necessary to listen to those who knew, but this relationship was supposed to take the form of persuasion. If it was to be reasonable, properly adjusting itself to time and circumstances, the diet of the body had also to be a matter of thought, deliberation, and prudence. Whereas medications and operations acted

upon the body, and the body submitted to that action, regimen addressed itself to the soul, and inculcated principles in the soul. Thus, in the *Laws*, Plato distinguishes between two kinds of doctors: those who are good for slaves (they are usually slaves themselves) and who confine themselves to giving prescriptions without offering any explanation; and the freeborn doctors who attend to free men. Not contenting themselves with prescriptions, they enter into conversation with the patient and gather information from him and his friends; they instruct him, exhort him, and persuade him with arguments that, once he is convinced, are likely to cause him to lead the right kind of life. From the expert doctor, the free man could expect more than the means for a cure in the strict sense of the term; he ought to receive a rational framework for the whole of his existence.⁴⁷

Rational reflection and moral persuasion are thus not sufficient for self-transformation, but they may be a crucial first step. Although philosophers such as Singer and Regan, unlike the Greek doctors of whom Foucault writes, are hoping to prescribe an ethics of eating *for everyone* – or are seeking to justify interdictions rather than to stylize freedoms⁴⁸ – the moral arguments that they present need not be entirely divorced from the ethico-aesthetic approach to vegetarianism that I am describing. Rather, as with the attempts at persuasion on the part of Greek doctors, the moral arguments of these philosophers have frequently convinced readers to undertake ethico-aesthetic transformations of their lives and selves. Vegetarianism, contra Probyn, can be an ethico-aesthetic technology of the self, and many vegetarians are first persuaded by moral arguments, but henceforth they are *as* concerned with the self that they are cultivating through their diet as they are with the factory-farmed animals, the environment, or the humans impacted by their alimentary choices. This explains why many vegetarians will not use cutting boards, barbeques, utensils and pots that have been used to cut and cook meat, or will not eat meat that will otherwise go to waste: no animal is saved through these practices and what is at stake is, rather, the purity of the vegetarian's own body. Once one has successfully redisciplined oneself to be vegetarian as a deeply-experienced identity, eating animals becomes almost viscerally impossible, even in cases where, arguably, nothing moral is at stake.

Conclusions

When I have discussed *The History of Sexuality* with students, one objection that has been raised is that Foucault only realized that sexuality was central to subjectivity in the modern West because he was gay. Foucault was always seen as a gay man, a gay philosopher, a gay political activist, and so he would have been acutely aware of how identity was sexualized in the modern West. For those who are closer to the sexual "norm," however, my students have argued that sexuality may be experienced as less significant, and other aspects of identity, such as religion, race, class, and ethnicity – and, I am arguing, diet – may be experienced as more important. Perhaps Foucault stressed the significance of sexuality rather than race, class or diet because he was marginalized in the former respect but not in the latter.

I am not claiming that sexual orientation and the decision to not eat dead animals are comparable in very many ways; the issue of nature versus nurture does not even arise in the

⁴⁷ Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 107.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

latter case, for instance, and there has been no discussion of “the vegetarian gene.” More importantly, there has been no serious history of oppressing vegetarians. Nevertheless, one similarity is of interest for the current paper. Like my heterosexual students objecting to Foucault’s claims about sexuality, animal-eaters have objected to the arguments of this paper by saying that they simply do not feel that their alimentary choices are constitutive of who they are. However, while Foucault objects to the manners in which every aspect of a homosexual’s life comes to be interpreted through the lens of his sexuality, he thinks this is true of all of us, not just of gays and lesbians. Heterosexuals simply do not *notice* the ways that their sexuality is taken to be central to who they are in the same way that whites do not think about the significance of race to their lives as much as people of color. Similarly, I would argue, members of a dominant alimentary group do not recognize their food choices as practices of subjectification in the way that members of an alimentary subculture do. In contrast to animal-eaters, vegetarians recognize that their food choices are central to their identities, and the arguments in this paper have been much clearer to them. For vegetarians, finding food that one can eat and needing to explain why one won’t eat what others are eating makes one constantly self-reflective and attentive to one’s body as one is constituting it differently from the alimentary norm. Vegetarianism is thus an ongoing practice that differentiates oneself from others and from the norm. Just as Foucault would want to say that heterosexuals are also identified by their sexuality, so I want to say that all of us, and not only members of alimentary subcultures, constitute our identities through what we eat.

While most everyone is rationally convinced by the philosophical arguments for ethical vegetarianism if they have taken the time to consider them, I have suggested that the reason that only a fraction of those convinced transform this conviction into a practice does not correspond to the moral superiority of some or the weakness of will of others, but with the sort of selves that the individuals in question wish to be: Do they identify as conformists or as part of the counter-culture? Do they want to be “normal” or “special”? Do they want to fit in or rebel? Do they identify as masculine or feminine? Do they identify with a meat-eating ethnic group or do they want to assert their difference from where they came? Do they wish to feel “pure” or “virile”? The way different groups answer these questions may go some way towards explaining why more women than men and more whites than non-whites choose to identify with ethical vegetarianism in Western countries today. Members of the dominant racial group may have the luxury and desire to disassociate with their culture to a degree that oppressed racial and ethnic groups do not. Manton describes the early twentieth-century campaign to assimilate immigrants into the American diet:

After the turn of the century, food reformers... realized that if the older female head of the household was too “difficult” or “slow” to change her food behavior, then assimilation might best be served by molding the food preferences of her daughters still in school. Public school cooking lessons (what came to be known as “home economics” classes) were the vehicle for this change. In addition to teaching different food preferences and cooking methods, home economics classes also tried to change table manners and food shopping behavior in their efforts to “Americanize” immigrant groups. Even though older immigrant

women often were resistant to these changes, food reformers usually won out with the second generation of immigrant women's daughters.⁴⁹

Given this history of normalization, it is a different thing for a white middle-class American such as Bailey to look down on and give up the typical white American diet of fatty meat and potatoes and processed foods in order to eat "ethnic food" than it is for a Hispanic American to disassociate herself from her meat-eating culture in order to embrace what may be understood as a Caucasian fad. Similarly, around the world, in times of food shortages, men and boys get the majority share of meat, while women and girls are thought to be able to make do with a vegetable-based diet, making it a different thing for a man to give up meat than for a woman to do so. While men traditionally do the hunting and butchering, women are the traditional gatherers of non-animal foods. Since, for these reasons, meat-eating is associated with masculinity and a vegetable diet is associated with femininity, women will find it easier than men to take on the identity of vegetarian.

Food choices, I have argued, are based on our affective investments in specific identities, including the intersecting categories of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and socio-economic class, as well as the different aesthetic connotations that these have for us. This is not to say that moral arguments are useless or strictly divorced from ethics, as some have claimed, but only that such arguments serve primarily as instigators for the decision to take on what is best theorized along Foucauldian lines as a practice of self-discipline and self-transformation, the choosing and becoming of new selves. Some people will be more disposed than others to be so-instigated, for reasons that I have argued are largely extra-moral. While I have stressed the ability for alimentary agency or the possibility of refashioning who we are through our culinary choices, I have also suggested the limitations that disciplined identities place on us, and the fact that people who want to disassociate themselves from who they have been gastronomically disciplined to be are the groups most willing to embrace the particular self-transformations entailed by the vegetarian diet. As Foucault understood, we are simultaneously disciplined and self-fashioning subjectivities, and, I have argued, our alimentary choices are a manifestation of this.

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⁴⁹ Manton, *Fed Up*, 49.