



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Moderation or satisfaction? food ethics and food facts

Mol, A.

**Publication date**

2010

**Document Version**

Submitted manuscript

**Published in**

Whose weight is it anyway? Essays on ethics and eating

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Mol, A. (2010). Moderation or satisfaction? food ethics and food facts. In S. Vandamme, S. van de Vathorst, & I. de Beaufort (Eds.), *Whose weight is it anyway? Essays on ethics and eating* (pp. 121-132). Acco Academic.

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Gepubliceerd in: Vandamme, Sofie; van de Vathorst, Suzanne & de Beaufort, Inez:  
Whose Weight Is It Anyway? Essays on Ethics and Eating, Acco Academic Publishers,  
p 121-132

Annemarie Mol

### **Moderation or satisfaction?**

#### **Food ethics and food facts**

The morality incorporated in food advice, especially in food advice meant to prevent obesity, is that eaters should be moderate. What might one say about this, in ethical mode? Is being moderate to be defended on ethical terms, or is calling for moderation moralistic and intrusive and should eaters be liberated from health advisors? In my contribution to the discussion about this nagging question, I will not offer an answer, but argue that it may not be the right question. In doing so, I will draw out the facts incorporated similarly in calls for moderation and in the anti-moralist revolts against them. Why build on these particular facts and not others? There are ever so many facts to do with food and they tend to come with different values attached. The different repertoires that make up nutrition science, have different ways of framing reality and seeking interference. And while moderation (or thrift) is central to one repertoire of fact-values to do with food, satisfaction (following on from pleasure) is central to another. This difference is linked up with different understandings of what a human body is. In calls for 'moderation', the human body is cast a greedy beast. To tame this beast, Man's rational faculties, that is his will and his cognition, have to take control. In the repertoire where 'satisfaction' is appreciated as a good, bodies do not need to be controlled but deserve to be trained. As embodied beings, or such is the idea, we gradually develop our sensitivities in interaction with our surroundings. The art, then, is not to suppress our bodies, but to develop a good taste.

Using material from ethnographic observation, advisory websites and scientific literatures, I will develop my argument in three steps.<sup>1</sup> First, I will attend to a typical example of the call for moderation: dietary advice that tells us to restrict our ‘calorie intake’ by counting calories. Such advice is built on the fact that if a body grows if it absorbs more calories than it burns. I will contrast this with another fact, one that has to do with the difference in satisfaction provided by fluid, viscous and solid food. This latter fact casts doubt on the value of the advice to control and restrain oneself. Then I explore an additional advisory strategy: that of categorising food into three groups, to be eaten *preferably*, *sometimes* and only *as an exception*. Again I introduce doubt here, this time by offering a few facts that have to do with the way eaters evaluate their food. They suggest that making a three-fold categorisation of just-not quite forbidden foods might not be the best way of shaping people’s appraisals of what they eat. Third, I will widen my scope to the socio-material reality of the human body and the question what this may have to do with ethics and what ethics may have to do with it.

### **Calories versus taste**

A human body, or so the textbook *Metabolism and Nutrition* tells us, needs *nutrients* (vitamins, minerals, essential amino acids and essential fatty acids that it cannot itself synthesise) as material for its cellular structures and processes. And then it also needs *energy*: food that it may burn to stay alive and engage in activities. “*If energy intake is equal to energy expenditure, there is no change in body mass. Obesity results from an imbalance between the input, storage and expenditure of energy; that is, energy intake is greater than energy expenditure*”<sup>2</sup> (p. 146) In slightly less formal words these are also the first facts that the dietician Tessa de Groot (whose work I was allowed to observe) explains to clients who come to see her because they are overweight. Tessa is attached to a general practitioner’s surgery in a mixed neighbourhood of a medium size Dutch city for one day a week. People who visit her have been advised to do so by their general practitioner. Most of them do not just weigh more than the standards say is healthy, but are also bothered by it. They have diabetes and hope to counter that, or they would like to avoid a second heart attack. Susan Graft gets out of breath when climbing a staircase. Harry Bunders complains of his knees which hurt when he walks, and his back is also giving him trouble. It is their visits to their dietician that I will draw out here and attend to in more detail.

There is Susan Graft. She is in her thirties, has a high-skilled office job and is eager to learn. So Tessa tells her about nutrients and calories. “An adult woman needs 2000 kilo calories a day, more or less,” Tessa says, “so you should stay seriously below that if you want to lose weight. But not too much, or you will put it all back on once you stop dieting. You have to make a new routine.” Tessa points at the information printed on packages: “Look, this tells you how many calories this stuff contains. You may want to count that”. She also tells that the calorie content of fresh food can be found on the web and starts to draw graphs and make calculations on a piece of paper. Mrs. Graft nods. Yes, she understands it alright. But how to do these calculations in practice? Discipline is hard. She says she has already been trying to eat less. For a while she skipped breakfast, she does not have time for it anyway as her work starts very early. But skipping breakfast wasn’t doing her much good, she got dizzy. So now (while still in bed waking up) she eats a few *Evergreens* – cookies with mixed grains and raisins that are advertised as being healthy. Tessa points out that, whatever the ads say, because there is sugar in them, each *Evergreen* contains as many calories as a slice of bread with, say, ham or cheese. Thus it might be wiser (never mind the time) to get up a bit earlier, sit down and have a proper breakfast. That would make her eat fewer ‘empty calories’ (energy without nutrients). Nutrients are important. Susan Grafts nods and says that she will try even if attending to nutrients while counting calories sounds complicated.

Dieticians give their clients a lot of information. But one cannot tell it all. Thus, some facts are carefully explained while others remain untold, not just in Tessa’s consulting room, but generally. As it happens, information to do with nutrients and energy gets priority.

Information to do with pleasure is left out.<sup>3</sup> Take, for example, the following fact. Building on earlier studies, Zijlstra et al. got volunteers to drink chocolate milk, thickened chocolate milk and chocolate pudding. Each of these contained the same number of calories per millilitre.

When asked to drink their fill, the volunteers drank more of the fluid than of the viscous drink and swallowed least of the almost solid pudding. A special experiment with a pump proved that this had nothing to do with the effort involved in sucking the pudding. What, then, might explain it? I quote: “*A liquid is eaten at a much higher rate and does not stay in the mouth for a long time, while a thick product is eaten more slowly and stays in the mouth much longer.*

*This could be an important factor in the explanation of differences in satiety responses between liquids and solids. When a product stays in the mouth for a longer time, the exposure time to sensory receptors in the oral cavity is longer and there is more opportunity for more exposure to taste, smell, texture and so on.*”<sup>4</sup> (p 7) Taste, smell, texture and so on: if these are

indeed ‘important explanatory factors’, then this suggests that bodies may stop eating and drinking, all by themselves, when their senses are satisfied. If invited to their fill, this ‘fill’ does not linearly depend on the amount of calories they absorb. More important is whether they have had enough pleasure.

When people are being advised to count calories, pleasure, if mentioned at all, is staged as a danger. The suggestion is that the desire for pleasure might make us go on eating endlessly. Restraint, therefore, has to be imposed on pleasure seeking bodies from the outside. This claim is not accidental: it was built into nutrition science from its very beginning. As Coveney puts it in *Food, Morals and Meaning*: “*The arrival of nutrition [science] (...) mapped on to earlier concerns, especially those of an ascetic Christianity. The need to be frugal, thrifty and economical with nature were all part of the application of nutrition. The justification of these habits was now based on science, supported by both rationalism and empiricism. Eating unwisely was at one and the same time irrational and morally questionable.*” (p 61)<sup>5</sup> While thriftiness first had to do with avoiding the waste of scarce resources, later, when resources were no longer scarce (or at least not in affluent societies), eating too much remained a bad thing to do. “*While nutrition concerns during the pre-war and war years were constructed by discourses of ‘enoughness’ and ‘adequacy’, post-war interests were focussed by discourses on ‘abundance’ and ‘excess’.*” (p 97) From the Christian appeal to avoid sin, through to the health advice to count calories, the call to moderation has stayed the same. Food is a matter of indispensable building blocks and functional energy. Pleasure is excessive, superfluous.

Food ethics should concern itself with food facts, not because, as it is, false facts are imposed on us. It may well be *true* that a body gets obese if “energy intake is greater than energy expenditure”. And yet, even while it is true, this fact is still not *neutral*. For what tends to come with it, is the suggestion that restrictive rules should be imposed on naturally greedy bodies from the outside. Be rational, is the value incorporated. Count. Eat no more than 2000 kilo calories a day and considerably less when you are trying to lose weight, whatever your body tells you. Don’t even listen to your body! It tricks you, it seeks pleasure. Studies such as that of Zijlstra et al. quoted above, suggest a different way to go. They suggest that rather than imposing numerical rules on our bodies from the outside, we might as well learn more about when and how bodies stop eating and drinking all by themselves, from within. Zijlstra et al. carefully underline that many ‘explanatory factors’ may be involved in this. But they also suggest that *pleasure* may be among them.<sup>6</sup> The road from that fact to viable dietary practices

is obviously not direct or easy, but it deserves to be explored. Under what circumstances might granting our bodies more pleasure be a better way to avoid overfeeding them than imposing restrictions and taking pleasure away? Maybe it is wise to eat crunchy stuff that stays in the mouth for a long time. Maybe we should seek out strong tastes, interesting herbs, garlic or red pepper. Maybe we might learn to take more pleasure from the smell of food while we are cooking. Searching in these directions, escapes from the dichotomy between on the one hand calls for modesty and on the other appeals on freedom. Instead, it has to do with attentively crafting refined pleasure.<sup>7</sup> Theoretically a lot is tied up with this, but let me note for now that Susan Graft might be interested as well. Susan, after all, may not like discipline, but neither does she seek freedom. She would want to lose weight.

### **Exceptional and attractive**

Counting calories is difficult to do, it depends on fairly sophisticated literacy and arithmetic skills. An additional way of assuring modesty, meant to be easier, is to categorise food into three groups: food to be eaten *preferably*; *sometimes*; or only *as an exception*. The Dutch food advisory bureau has published an overview with lists of products under these three headings. This tells us for example that, *preferably* we should eat vegetables that are fresh, deep frozen and/or come from a jar or a can, with no additives. *Sometimes* it is fine to eat pureed vegetables. And only *as an exception* may we turn to vegetables with cream or a sauce on them. Cooked potatoes and pulses are to be eaten *preferably*; whole grain pasta, whole grain rice and couscous *sometimes*; while white pasta or white rice, just like fried potatoes and chips, should only be eaten *as an exception*.<sup>8</sup> And so on. On the internet more or less similar lists can be found in any European language. They have also been translated into colour codes, easy to print on food labels. *Preferably* eat things labelled in green, *sometimes* allow yourself orange, while only indulge in those coded red *as an exception*. Like counting, lists and colour codes are meant to help people limit their calorie intake. They are just easier to handle. Or might there be other differences too?

In the consulting room, the dietician tries to explain the three-tier division of food to Mr. Bunders. She did so last time, too, she tells me afterwards, but often such things need to be told again and again. Harry Bunders is a big man in his forties, who lives alone since his divorce a few years ago, and works as a truck driver. He is tall, is impressively muscular, and is also too fat. His knees hurt, and so does his back, and the doctor has said that he better lose

some weight. “And do you also eat fish, now and then?” the dietician asks somewhere along their conversation, encouragingly. On the list most fish can be found under ‘preferably’: fresh fish, deep frozen or canned fish, salt or sour herring, steamed mackerel, smoked salmon, muscles, shrimps. “Well, yes,” says Mr. Bunders, “I like fish. I like grabbing a good piece of deep fried fish if I get a chance.” Bad luck for him: along with fish fingers and fishcake, deep fried is listed under ‘as an exception’. So much for the encouraging tone. But Tessa is not planning to get grave. The lists, she later tells, are helpful in that respect: they forbid nothing. Rather than obliging people to completely abstain from their favourite foods, they say that these are only to be eaten occasionally. So Tessa says with a smile: “Very well, you like deep fried fish. Good for you. But you may want to eat deep fried fish just now and then, as a treat. Not too often. And then at other times, maybe more easily, more freely, you can have a herring when you find yourself at a fishmonger’s, or maybe buy another fish and cook it at home.” He has never done that, Mr. Bunders tells, cooking fish at home. How should it be done? He looks uncomfortable at the thought.

Information about food does not always fit easily into the daily lives of people who seek advice from a dietician. In that respect classifications are not as easy as they may seem to be. Here, however, handling daily life is not my issue. Instead, I would like to introduce another food fact. It has to do with fat. One calorie is not quite like another. Above we saw that fluid calories provide less *satisfaction* than solid calories. There is also research that suggests that with some calories one remains *satiated* for longer than with others. The research is not unequivocal, but it may well be that people are satisfied for a lot longer after eating fat than after eating the same amount of calories in the form of carbohydrates. If this is right, then it may well be that Harry Bunders would find it easier to resist buying a Snickers or a Mars bar in a gas station after having enjoyed deep fried fish, than after a less filling snack.<sup>9</sup> Either that, or something else, is needed to explain the following intriguing fact about the prevalence of obesity: “(...) within the United States, a substantial decline in the percentage of energy from fat during the last 2 decades has corresponded with a massive increase in the prevalence of obesity.”<sup>10</sup> The same goes in other countries where the population has been vigorously warned against eating fat. What does this uncomfortable fact imply for standard dietary advice? For as it happens, the most prominent difference between foods listed as *preferably*, *sometimes* or *as an exception*, is the amount of fat they contain.<sup>11</sup>

Another fact may be even more problematic for marking food as green, orange or red. It is this: labelling something as special, hard to get, is likely to make it more attractive. In one of

its science programs the BBC showed an experiment with a class of five year old children. Two huge bowls were put in the class room, one with raisins, the other with pieces of dried mango. On day number one the children were asked to taste fruit from both bowls. Most of them said raisins and mangoes tasted equally good. Given the opportunity, they finished all available fruit. Then their teacher imposed a rule. From tomorrow, she said, everyone is allowed to eat pieces of mango as soon as the break starts. However, raisins may only be eaten when a signal is given, later on in the break. Within days, most of the kids preferred raisins. They ran for them when they heard the signal, bumping into each other in their eagerness. Between them they finished the raisins in no time at all, while a lot of the pieces of mango were still there at the end of the break. When interviewed again, everyone, except for one brave mango-loving girl, claimed that raisins simply taste better. The lesson seems to be that the more something is singled out as special, the more attractive it becomes. What might this fact imply for the practice of dividing food into categories and marking these as *preferable*, *sometimes* or *as an exception only*? It is possible that such lists unwittingly teach us which kinds of food ‘simply taste better’.

### **Training bodies**

Lest there be no misunderstanding: I am not trying to criticise Tessa de Groot, or dieticians like her. So far as I can tell, Tessa is a good professional, who does not simply offer her clients information about food, but also helps them to think through all kinds of practical issues in their daily lives. Where do you eat lunch and with whom? What are the social pressures involved? How about dinner? Who cooks it and where do the ingredients come from? What seduces you into eating too much and how might you avoid this? Partying is fine, but how, afterwards, to pick up your routines again? Sometimes Tessa goes out of her office and joins a client to the supermarket where they practice the art of shopping. She is patient and inventive. So my point is not to undermine professionals like Tessa, but to address the repertoires available to the profession.<sup>12</sup> These are also the repertoires that the Dutch food advisory bureau (like other such bureaus) draws upon in its leaflets and on its website. In these repertoires food is primarily defined as a matter of *nutrients* and *energy*. What, I wonder, about *satiety* and *satisfaction*? What if repertoires for dieting were less obsessed with calories and more interested in pleasure?



For now, I bracket the dietary side of that question, as here we are talking ethics. Satiety and satisfaction, I want to underline, are ethically interesting, but they are *not* a matter of choice. In the liberal tradition, ethics, one way or another, always has to do with choice.<sup>13</sup> Let me give a (necessarily schematic) overview of the debate. A first ethical trope is to say that, as preventive medicine has it, people should indeed be encouraged to make ‘healthy food choices’. They should mobilise their well informed, rational minds against their greedy, pleasure seeking bodies.<sup>14</sup> There are two kinds of critical comment on this. Some critics point out that making a ‘healthy food choice’ is not as easy as it sounds. While our minds are busy processing information, our bodies are being bombarded with images, smells and other signs, cleverly designed to rouse our appetite. Thus, ethicists should not simply address individual ‘consumers’, but also attend to their surroundings: shops, advertisements, size of portions, ingredients used. In relation to these we have a collective responsibility, as producers, but also as retailers and governments.<sup>15</sup> Other critics go in a different direction. Rather than wondering whether the mind *can* be expected to overrule the body they ask whether it *should*. Isn’t the pleasure that food provides relatively harmless? It may harm our own personal health, but it does not harm others. Then why would liberals ethically back up health advisors when they moralise those who enjoy their food? Giving information is fine, but please, let everyone ‘choose for themselves’. Even if pleasure is not morally good, if it is what people opt for, there are no good reasons to interfere and preach against it.<sup>16</sup>

The debate may get fierce. But it rests upon the undisputed idea that the body is a natural, pleasure seeking beast. Its pleasures may be cast as bad, as forgivable, or as fine, but there they are: innate and not quite moral. This is in contrast with what nutrition science starts to find when it opens itself up to the question when bodies stop eating and drinking all by themselves.<sup>17</sup> Once this question is being asked, it emerges that bodies are not insatiably. At some point they are satisfied. This point is not naturally given. As they interact with their surroundings, bodies learn. Even researchers like Zijlstra et al. who confine themselves to a laboratory where only a few variables can be studied at any one time, are open to that possibility. Talking about the fact that mother’s milk contains less calories when it is thin than when it is thick, they write: “This could mean that the difference in satiety responses between liquids and solids is based on learned behavior.” (p. 8) But if bodies learn, they do not passively respond to triggers from the outside as if these were causal factors, determining their effects all by themselves. Instead of being *caused* by their surroundings, cultured bodies *interact with* their surroundings.<sup>18</sup> Such interaction is physical as well as social. Take the

experiment with the school class: as the children learned that raisins were more special than dried mango, they did not just change their minds. Their physical eagerness to eat and the pleasure provided by both fruits also changed. The *cultured body* (or the *embodied person*) is not split between ‘rational judgement’ and ‘bodily effects’. Instead, there is appreciation. In appreciation, cultural appraisal (raisins are special) and physical taste (raisins taste great) are intertwined.<sup>19</sup>

Appreciation, then, is a fascinating term. Rather than excluding the body from ethics by being suspicious of it, making excuses for it, or hoping to liberate it from moralism, it suggests the possibility of an ethics that involves the body. In an ethics that involves the body, being attentive to ‘the good’ is not imposed on the body by a mind that is rational, but cultivated as a personal capability that is as physical as it is mental. Obviously, in the history of philosophy this is not a new idea. Caring for the embodied self and cultivating one’s tastes were practiced and discussed long before liberal ethics (with its celebration of ‘choice’) was invented.<sup>20</sup> So why is it that in food ethics these tunes are so rarely heard and self care traditions are left undeveloped?<sup>21</sup> Nutrition science should not be blamed, not as it whole. For besides research that defines food in terms of nutrients and energy alone, it also contains repertoires where satisfaction, pleasure and taste are inventively addressed as objects of investigation. The social sciences also have a lot to say about ways in which people come to individually and jointly appreciate their food and drink.<sup>22</sup> Why do ethicists hardly relate to these lines of research? Is that because dieticians and public health advisors never mention them? Or is it the other way around, and do dieticians and public health advisors hesitate to talk about ‘satisfaction’, ‘pleasure’ and ‘taste’ because somewhere along the way ethics has marked bodily joys as immoral? It is hard to tell. Either way, it is time to shake things up. There is nothing immoral about pleasure.

Certainly, if we want go this way a lot of questions present themselves. What more can we learn about satiety and satisfaction and the human ability to appreciate food and drink? How does ‘taste’ move between objects tasted and subjects tasting, what is the role of ‘good food’ in training our sensitivities, and what do daily practices and ‘talk’ have to do with it? And what about ‘feeling well’: how does that shift between feeling satisfied and feeling healthy? What is individual about all of this and what do we share as a collective; what is in our bodies, what in our worlds and what moves between them? And then, as a next and crucial step, how to understand and theorise the link between the ability to appreciate what is good for one’s own body and what is good elsewhere: for other people and for the ecosystem on

which our food and drink depends? Maybe bodies can learn to *literally* feel wider goods ‘in their guts’, maybe eating bodies just offer an interesting *model* for an embodied ethics that delves below and moves beyond the skin. But one thing is hopefully clear by now: we should not stay stuck in the question whether to restrict food pleasure or to indulge in it. Both these clashing ethical positions are built on the same, limited fact – that bodies grow from eating calories that they do not burn. There are a lot more food facts around and some of these suggest other, more promising, courses of action. As bodily beings, we might as well train our sensitivities and satisfy our senses.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the general practitioner and the dietician of the city practice in the Netherlands where I was allowed to do a first, explorative round of field work and to their patients and clients, most of whom had no problem with an enquiring visitor. In line with the ethnographic tradition, I have re-invented names for them and disguised their identities. Thanks for their intellectual support to Mieke Aerts, Jeannette Pols, Geertje Mak, Amade M'Charek, Nick Bingham and John Law (twice, for he also corrected my English). The editors be thanked for inviting me into this volume and Sofie van Damme for generously sending me relevant literatures.

<sup>2</sup> This quote comes out of: Roach, J. & Benyon, S. *Metabolism and Nutrition*, second edition, Edinburgh: Mosby, 2003, p. 146

<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, this is not just the case in contexts where overweight people are warned against eating too much, but also in that of elderly people who risk malnutrition. For the argument that there, too, taste is undervalued in ethical as well as biomedical repertoires, while nurses and other carers attend to it, see: Harbers, H., Mol A. & Stollmeijer, A. (2002) *Food Matters. Arguments for an Ethnography of Daily Care*, in *Theory, Culture and Society* vol 19 (5/6) 207-226

<sup>4</sup> Zijlstra, N, Mars, M, Wijk R. de, Westerterp-Plantenga, N & Graaf, C. de, The effect of viscosity on ad libitum food intake, in: *International Journal of Obesity* (2007) 1–8

<sup>5</sup> Coveney, J. *Food, Morals and Meaning. The pleasure and anxiety of eating*. London: Routledge, 2000

<sup>6</sup> There are a lot of studies that point in a similar direction. See e.g. Hetherington, M. Sensory-specific satiety and its importance in meal termination. in: *Neurosci Behav Rev*, 1996;20(1):113-7

<sup>7</sup> As it is, the crafting of food that gives pleasure and is good in other ways, too (healthy, durable, not too hard on the creatures being consumed, etc.) is going on in a variety of ways and registers. For an inspiring example, that also takes distance for the nutrient/energy repertoire in nutrition research, see: Pollan, M., *In Defence of Food*, London: Allen Lane, 2008. In the slow food movement, too, the ideal is not just to develop a good physical ability to taste, but also to care for the environments that one's food comes from. See e.g.: Miele, M. & Murdoch, J. *The Practical Aesthetics of Traditional Cuisines: Slow Food in Tuscany*, in: *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol 42, 4, 312-328

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.voedingscentrum.nl/EtenEnGezondheid/Gezond+eten/Keuzetabel/>

<sup>9</sup> Of course having or foregoing treats is not only related to bodily feelings of satiety. On the fascinating ways in which people may negotiate with treats and take it that foregoing one may imply that they 'deserve' another, see Willson, M. (2005) 'Indulgence', in Kulick, D. and Meneley, A. 'Fat. The anthropology of an obsession', New York: Penguin. The other essays in this collection are also highly recommended.

<sup>10</sup> Willett, W. 'Dietary fat is not a major determinant of body fat'. *The American Journal of Medicine*, Volume 113, Issue 9, Pages 47-59

<sup>11</sup> As the fish-list makes clear, however, fat is not the *only* relevant characteristic that goes into these categorisations. For instance, the difference between 'good fats' (unsaturated) and 'bad fats' (saturated) is also included.

<sup>12</sup> One of the recent developments among dieticians is to shift attention from information (and the cognitive side of taking control of one's body) to motivation (the shaping of the will). Even if the focus of the consulting room conversation thus moves from food to person, it still excludes pleasure.

<sup>13</sup> In large parts of the ethics of care, rather than pleasure, the vulnerability of the body is mobilised to doubt the wonders of choice. For a recent example that attends to daily life with a chronic disease (i.e.

---

diabetes) and the technicalities involved in that, see Mol, A. (2008) *The Logic of Care. Health and the Problem of Patient Choice*, London: Routledge.

<sup>14</sup> The amount of work that fits this trope is so huge, that disentangling from it seems to require some rhetorical force. For a good, moderate, example of the genre, see: Holm, S. Obesity interventions and ethics, in: *Obesity Reviews* (2007), 8 (Supple. 1), 207-210

<sup>15</sup> A good example of this can be found, in between other ethical genres, in the interesting report of the Nuffic council on bioethics: Public Health Ethics, see: <http://www.nuffieldbioethics.org>. For a spirited overview of the various ways in which bodies are incited to eat by present day surroundings, see Cohen, D.A. Neurophysiological Pathways to Obesity: Below Awareness and Beyond Individual Control, in: *Diabetes* 57:1768-1773, 2008

<sup>16</sup> Beaufort, I. de 'Ethiek en obesitas: Lof der matigheid?'

<http://www.lofdergeneeskunst.nl/jaargangen/2007/>

<sup>17</sup> For reading scientific work while asking to what kind of issues it 'opens itself up' and in which ways the researchers concerned allow themselves to be surprised (or not), see e.g.: Despret, V. 'The Body We Care For: Figures of Anthro-zoo genesis', in: *Body & Society*, vol 10, number 2/3, 2004, 111-134

<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, one of the better popular books on food and eating that attends to ways in which bodies learn and are 'cultured', is written by a geneticist. See: Nabhan, G. (2004) 'Why some like it hot. Food, genes and cultural diversity', Washington: Island Press.

<sup>19</sup> Here, ethics and aesthetics get so close as to (almost?) intertwine. But aesthetics is not ready to make up for the ethical suspicion of food pleasure. In the history of aesthetics tasting (due to its ephemeral and necessarily fleshy character) was lowest in the hierarchy of the senses. Thus, like in ethics, in aesthetics, too, taste deserves to be revalued and rethought. See for this: Korsmeyer, C. (1999) *Making Sense of Taste. Food and Philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

<sup>20</sup> A lot has been written about (various versions of) the ethos of self care and self refinement. Exemplary among this: Foucault, M. *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure & The History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self*; London: Penguin, 1998 (2 edition)

<sup>21</sup> For one of the rare exceptions, see: Weele, C. van der (2006) 'Food metaphors and ethics: towards more attention for bodily experience' in: *Journal of agricultural and environmental ethics*, vol 19, n 3, 313-324

<sup>22</sup> See for instance: Teil, G. & Hennion A. (2004) 'Discovering quality or performing taste?', in M. Harvey, e.a. (eds.), *Qualities of food*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, p.19-37; or, in a different register, Wiggins, S, *Talking With Your Mouth Full: Gustatory Mmms and the Embodiment of Pleasure*, in: *Research on language and social interaction*, Volume 35, Issue 3, July 2002, pages 311-336.