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THE FOOD MOVEMENT, CULTURE, AND RELIGION

A Tale of Pigs, Christians, Jews, and Politics

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Jonathan Schorsch
University of Potsdam
Potsdam, Germany

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Abstract Schorsch gives a number of examples of Jewish foodies and their attraction to eating pig, which is forbidden by Jewish law. He then outlines the argument of this book, which attempts to understand this pattern. Jewish foodie talk about pig, as exemplified particularly in the work of Michael Pollan, on whom this book focuses, signifies more than a mere transgressive fetish, but rather a deep structure of contemporary foodie discourse, which might be identified as acculturation to dominant majority omnivory. This democratic conformism derives from a modernist, materialist, and rationalist lack of interest in and attention to culture and religion, an unfortunate irony, since the food movement depends on and glorifies so many particular cuisines, especially of non-Western origin.

Keywords Dan Barber • Michael Pollan • Pig meat • Food movement • Judaism

When Blue Hill Restaurant chef Dan Barber and author Michael Pollan, both Jewish, appeared together at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan in January 2008, they each gleefully opened their remarks before this heavily Jewish audience with a personal pig anecdote.[1] Ironic, to say the least, since eating pig is prohibited by the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic law. Barber began by welcoming the audience to "my shul" (Yiddish for synagogue),

[1] Audio recording available at https://soundcloud.com/92y/pollan-barber-dye-gussow.

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since he celebrated his bar mitzvah at the Y, joking that "like a good bar mitzvah boy I'm going to talk about pork." He launched into a tale of the agonizing decision regarding whether or not to castrate Boris, the aging boar of Stone Barns Farm, which supplies his restaurant, relating that he consulted with the pork-loving Rabbi Rabinowitz of the Reform Westchester Synagogue.[2] Pollan followed with a brief mention of his childhood pet pig named Kosher.

Cookbook author and food writer Sara Kate Gillingham-Ryan described the evening as including "many a joke about Jewish boys liking artisanal pork."[3] Indeed, but this goes beyond performative irony and self-mockery. Pollan devoted an entire chapter of his most recent major work on food, *Cooked* (2013)—more than a quarter of the book!—to whole-hog barbecue, reveling in details about learning from the pit masters of North Carolina, perfecting the technique of crackling (making crispy pig skin), and inaugurating his own now-annual Berkeley pig roast tradition in his front-yard fire pit. In his earlier, best-selling *Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006), Pollan described his revelatory first hunt for feral California pig.

Many of those involved in the growing food movement, including some of its leading figures, are Jewish—and love pig meat. In this book I connect this transgressive fetish or sheer disinterest with larger questions about the food movement and the politics of culture and what comes under the sign of "religion." Though I treat a number of figures, I focus on the writings of Michael Pollan; since he is a sophisticated journalist and his thought-provoking books contain a great deal of substance, he has become one of the leading public intellectuals of the food movement.[4]

Before I proceed I want to clarify how deeply I share many of the assumptions and conclusions of the food movement.[5] It was Pollan's work

[2] A video of a different rendition of this anecdote can be found at http://www.bluehillfarm.com/remembrance-boris-boar, beginning at 6:24.

[3] Sara Kate Gillingham-Ryan, "Michael Pollan, Joan Gussow and Dan Barber Speak," *The Kitchn*, 9 January 2008; http://www.thekitchn.com/michael-pollan-and-dan-barber-39965.

[4] I discuss *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013), *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011 [orig. 2009]), *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), and *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). As I will be referring to these works frequently, I cite them in the main body of the text parenthetically. Pollan declined to respond to a draft of my piece and my request for an interview.

[5] I use the term "food movement" for lack of a better alternative. I refer to the loose network of chefs, restaurateurs, home cooks, farmers, gardeners, activists, writers, and citizens,

itself that first taught me how to really think about food. Pollan ascribes most of our food-related crises to US-style capitalism, which favors efficiency, productivity, and profit above all else, barely restrained by moral considerations, if at all. Corporations, which now process most of the food products we eat, have shown, until very recently, little or no interest in nutrition, health, environment, family life, conservation of culture, or social costs/benefits. Government policy in the United States is not much better, for the main reason that those who govern for the most part subscribe to the tenets dictated by corporate self-interest, which is frequently taken to coincide with the general welfare. Pollan's whole message can be summed up in a conclusion he repeats in perhaps his most political text, *In Defense of Food*: "Our personal health cannot be divorced from the health of the entire food web," "the health of the soil, plant, animal, and eater are all connected" (*In Defense of Food*, 103, 167). I could not agree more.

A careful reading of food movement discourse reveals some interesting assumptions regarding culture, identity, and religion, however, which I find to be an ironic hindrance to the movement's very goals. In the following pages I lay out this argument. Many Jewish foodies fail to recognize Judaism as a religion and culture, as a set of foodways, that continues to have much to teach us about our relationship to food and to the land and ecosystems that grow it. They feel this way because they are overwhelmingly secular, modernist, and materialist or, contrarily, because they have become converts to other spiritual and/or ecological or political modalities which they no doubt imagine to oppose the values of Judaism. Despite his rhetoric, Pollan represents a particularly materialist approach to food issues, one that generally undervalues culture and religion as elements shaping people's worldviews. Hence his feeling, shared by many (Jewish) foodies, that refusing to eat pig meat is irrational, even superstitious, a vestige of pre-modern nonsense. This one example of a traditional food

as well as affiliated enterprises and institutions, concerned by the ecological, political, ethical, and health problems of the contemporary food system. Though many do not necessarily see themselves as part of a movement, they seek better alternatives, whether on a personal or systemic level. A variegated group, these tend to be people who define themselves as politically progressive and often culturally alternative, even counter-cultural. I use overlapping monikers like "foodies" (the term was coined in the 1980s by a handful of foodies themselves), "food activists," or "people concerned with food" as seems most appropriate. A discussion of the term "foodies" can be found in Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015 [orig. 2010]), 48–60. As Johnston and Baumann remind us, not all foodies share the above political motivations or goals; this is particularly true for the mainstream gourmet media (*Foodies*, Chap. 4, 205–206).

avoidance or food law might stand in for many cultural understandings regarding the place of individual and group choices. I use this Jewish example in order to widen the conversation to talk about what we lose when we ignore or erase cultural and culinary difference in the name of universalism and rationalism.

While many treatments of the pig as an identity marker have been written, I try to turn the discussion elsewhere, in order to produce a reading of omnivory. In response to dismissiveness about an ancient food choice, I try to show the vital contribution that traditional cultures, almost all indigenous to a particular place and particularistic life- and foodways, almost all with cosmological and holistic worldviews, offer to a world increasingly de-natured and de-cultured by global capitalism. I end by meditating on the political significance of omnivory, since Pollan describes modern Westerners as omnivores and seems to prescribe such an approach to food. I claim that this form of omnivory as a program or ideology is a post-Christian orientation (I explain post-Christianity below) whose often unacknowledged imperialism correlates all too comfortably with Western capitalism and globalization. I highlight instead the goals of the food movement that I admire, which seek to resist the industrial and globalizing erosion of local foodways and flavors, which understand the power of traditional cultures in combatting the agriculinary and ecological plagues wrought by techno-scientistic capitalism.[6] While I focus mainly on culture(s) with spiritual or cosmological connectedness, culture in general occupies central place. Food cannot be yielded to systems of production, consumption, and valuation that do not stem from real culture(s). If people concerned about food do not fight modern deculturation, the food movement will not achieve its mission. My treatment is analytical, but also unabashedly polemical.

Many Jewish foodies share a fixation with pig meat. In this, of course, they reflect a widespread Jewish reality, as will be discussed below. Locally famous half-hog butchering classes have been offered by The Meat Hook with The Brooklyn Kitchen Labs, which opened in 2009, co-founded and co-owned by Harry Rosenblum. When butchering guru Tom Mylan

[6] I use the term "scientistic" to refer to an orientation that dismisses non-scientific ways of knowing, describing, and responding to the world. I am not at all against science, which I see as one of the most important methodologies whose cooperation is necessary for addressing the dismal state of the planet. But science without sane politics and spirituality frightens me as dangerously imbalanced and reckless.

suggested starting with small animals and working up, Rosenblum "said, let's start with half a pig. Part of that was my own perverse curiosity … I want to see that. Don't other people?"[7] The perversity here merely might have pertained to his desire to watch the usually hidden and seemingly dark act of killing an animal and turning it into food, an admirable desire that seeks to make food preparation more "honest" and less impersonal, but it might have had something to do with his Jewishness and interest in non-kosher pig. It was from the author of a book named *Pig Perfect*, food and fly-fishing writer Peter Kaminsky, a New York Jew, that renowned African-American North Carolina barbecue pit master Ed Mitchell (with whom Pollan "apprenticed") learned about the traditional pig breeds nearly eliminated by commercial industrialization (*Cooked*, 78–79).[8] In his loving, obsessive rhapsody to things porcine, Kaminsky calls himself a "ham idolater" and owns his agent's description of him as a "professional 'hamthropologist.'"[9]

Jewish chef Jason Marcus co-founded a short-lived Williamsburg restaurant named Traif in 2010. (*Treyf* means unkosher in Hebrew and Yiddish.) It specialized "in pork and shellfish and global soul food." Holding a degree in philosophy, Marcus avowed on the restaurant blog that as someone "Jewish, although obviously not great at it. Traif … celebrates the foods that I love most, which just so happens to be the foods that I am not supposed to eat."[10] Aside from hosting many Latinos and a hipster population, Williamsburg is the residence of a large hasidic community. In 2013 amateur chef Wesley Klein founded Baconery, an Upper West Side bakery featuring bacon in every product (including sandwiches tastelessly named after actual media-fabricated pigs: Miss Piggy, the Wilbur, the Porky Pig, the Babe). On the store's wall hangs a placard of The Rules of Bacon, as if in mockery of another well-known set of rules. Number 4: "Even the pigs like bacon. That's a fact!" Oy. Number 3: "There are two kinds of people in the world: Those who love bacon and those who will be used as fodder in the case of a zombie

[7] "Meet Harry Rosenblum, Co-Founder of The Brooklyn Kitchen," *ScoutMob*, 14 April 2011; http://scoutmob.com/new-york/scoutfinds/1499.

[8] The full title: *Pig Perfect: Encounters with Remarkable Swine and Some Great Ways to Cook Them* (Hyperion, 2005).

[9] Kaminsky, *Pig Perfect*, 14, 5. His "traveling buddy" on his "pork pilgrimage" was Josh Feigenbaum (64, 27).

[10] Devra Ferst, "A Very Traif Passover," *Forward*, 2 April 2010; http://forward.com/food/127058/a-very-traif-passover; the Traif blog is at https://traifny.wordpress.com.

apocalypse." I hope the author of these rules is unaware of how uncomfortably much this sounds like what many Christians think will happen to Jews and other sinners at the End Time. Indeed, the recurrent cannibalism motif here, however humorous, seems to pinpoint a central psychological operation, a telling kind of self-consumption.

Ari Stern, owner of Culturefix, a bar and gallery on the Lower East Side (which closed in July 2014), for a while also hosted a hip monthly supper club, Dinnerfix, that in March 2014 offered a program called Passover for Goyim, A Very Traif Seder Plate. The traditional ritual centerpiece at this event, the seder plate, whose five foods recall the divine delivery of the Israelites from Egypt, boasted all-*treyf* foods, including varieties of pig meat. Advertising for the event featured a cartoon of a pig stamped on its side with a large six-pointed star and, toward the rump, the kosher certification symbol of the Orthodox Union, OU. This image of the pig-made-kosher comes straight out of the repertoire of anti-Jewish propaganda, the ultimate source for the Dinnerfix folks of the original image that they modernized (see Fig. 1.1). Perhaps they thought that they were reclaiming this intentionally offensive image, which derives ultimately from depictions that from the thirteenth-century onward showed Jews suckling at a sow, to represent alleged Jewish gluttony, sinfulness, and hypocrisy, the way American blacks have overturned the derisive term "nigger."[11]

[11] Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History* (London: Warburg Institute 1974), plates 13a and 58a seem thematically relevant. Granted the Dinnerfix event targeted an ecumenical audience, but it is easy to see how the idea of the non-kosher celebration of Jewish rituals carries an important psychological meaning for some of those who have broken away from an observant Jewish life. The January 2012 Dinnerfix event comprised "'Not Kosher, an Alaskan Jew Lands in NY' explor[ing] the challenges of a Jew in Alaska, and a Chef spoiled by the abundance of Alaska, relocated to NYC. Damon Cohen has been a chef for 15 years and has focused on the relationship between what is good to eat and what is sustainably available." A commenter to a blog post about eating chametz-free in New York on Passover (avoiding leavened bread products) notes with self-aware humor: "I've been dying to have a treif-centric seder but that might be missing (some of) the point of the holiday" (lazer_stone, http://newyork.seriouseats.com/2013/03/chametz-free-nyc-day-1-eating-well-in-new-yor.html).

Fig. 1.1 Th. Th. [Thomas Theodor] Heine, Die Große Fleischnot, no. 7, *Simplicissimus*, Karte Serie IV (München: Albert Langen, n.d. [1900?]) (The image, part of a satirical series, is titled "The Great Meat Emergency." The Hebrew on the pig's side says "Kosher." The rhyming couplet below reads: "Pig meat today can be afforded mostly only by the Jew." Image kindly provided by the Arthur Langerman Collection, Brussels.)

CHAPTER 2

Jews, Christians, and Pigs: A Brief History

Abstract This chapter offers an overview of the history of the pig as a marker of difference for Jews and Christians. Beginning in classical antiquity, "universalistic" cultures like the Greeks and Romans denigrated and mocked Jews for not consuming certain foods, particularly pig. Christianity adopted the Greco-Roman stance and continued to consider Jews (and Muslims) as uncivilized, irrational, and dangerous due to their avoidance of eating pig, with such denigration turning all too frequently into persecution. Jewish foodies either do not know or do not care about this tragic history. The will to assimilate modernist rebellion against and/or ignorance about Jewish subjects has led many Jewish foodies to indifference regarding or opposition to the observance of the kosher laws (*kashrut*), a position similar to, if not derivative of, Christianity.

Keywords Christianity • Anti-Judaism • Claudine Fabre-Vassas • Acculturation • Universalism • Jews for Bacon

As is well-known, the pig is the most taboo food in Jewish culture. Such is its abhorrence that even many non-religious Jews avoid it. Ancient rabbinic discourse already highlighted the pig's singularity, though by law pig is not any more unkosher than other forbidden animals. Hence the tale, related in the Talmud, that crystallizes so much of the meaning of Jewish difference and distinctiveness through the figure of the pig:

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> When the [hellenized Judaean] kings of the Hasmonean house fought one another, Hyrcanus was outside [Jerusalem, attacking it] and Aristobulus within. Each day they [the Jerusalemites] used to let down *dinarii* [coins] in a box and bring up [the] animals [they had bought from outside] for the continual sacrificial offerings [in the Temple]. There was an old man who was familiar with Greek wisdom. He spoke with [those outside] in Greek. He said slanderously, "As long as [the priests] carry on the Temple service, they will never fall to you." The next day [those inside] let down *dinarii* in the box and hauled up a pig [that had been placed there by those outside]. When it reached halfway up the wall, it stuck its hoofs [into the wall]. The land of Israel shook over a distance of four hundred parasangs. At that time they [the scholars] declared, "Cursed be the man who rears pigs and cursed be a man who teaches his son Greek wisdom!" (Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 49b)

Here already the pig comprises a battlefield between cultural and spiritual self-determination and domination by a universalizing theo-political imperialism inimical to traditional ethnic ways.[1]

Though sometimes couched in the lofty rhetoric of food politics, eating and enjoying this most forbidden food comprises an obvious turn-on for some Jews. Transgression's sweetness adds to the actual physical flavor. Kaminsky recounts the moment he "became conscious of my soul-to-soul

[1] For discussion of how the pig served as a symbolic marker of non-Jewish attitudes toward Jews and Judaism in the ancient world, see Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), Chap. 3 ("Abstinence from Pork"); Cristiano Grottanelli, "Avoiding Pork: Egyptians and Jews in Greek and Latin Texts," *Food and Identity in the Ancient World*, ed. Cristiano Grottanelli and Lucio Milano (Padova: S.A.R.G.O.N. Editrice e Librereria, 2004), 59–93; Jordan D. Rosenblum, "'Why Do You Refuse to Eat Pork?': Jews, Food, and Identity in Roman Palestine," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, 1 (Winter 2010): 95–110; idem, *The Jewish Dietary Laws in the Ancient World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), esp. Chap. 2; Misgav Har-Peled, "Le cochon comme problème: Grecs, Romains et l'interdit juif du porc/ The Pig as a Problem: Greeks, Romans and Jewish Pork Avoidance" (PhD dissertation, École des Haute Études en Sciences Sociales, 2011); idem, "'Avoiding the Most Legitimate Meat': Stoicism, Platonism and Jewish Pork Avoidance," a talk given at the conference "Neoplatonism in the East—*ex oriente lux*." The International Society of Neoplatonic Studies, Haifa University. Haifa, Israel, March 22–24, 2011. For the reverse rhetorical formation, see Har-Peled, "The Eternal Return of the Empire's End: Time, History and Practice of the Sages' Identification of Rome with the Pig," a paper presented at the conference "The Future of Rome: Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Perspectives," Tel Aviv University, 2–4 October, 2013; idem, "The Dialogical Beast: The Identification of Rome with the Pig in Early Rabbinic Literature" (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2013). Har-Peled's work is available at academia.edu.

pork connection."[2] In his writings and public appearances Pollan makes very clear that he loves pork, with the zeal of a convert, it might be said. "There *is* something life-altering about pork crackling" (*Cooked*, 45), he exclaims in language usually reserved for significant epiphanies.

How things change. In medieval Iberian cultures under the shadow of the Inquisitions, to refuse to eat pig was understood as a sure sign of being a Jew. Since many thousands of Jews had converted to Catholicism (mostly due to threats of or actual force), serving pig was an easy way to check their loyalty as Christians. Dire consequences usually hounded those found refusing to eat pig, leading many to eat pig simply to save their skin; the choice to eat pig might literally be a matter of life and death.

The denigration and exclusion of those who won't eat pig typified life in rural Europe until the early twentieth century, as outlined in a powerful, disturbing, and at times gruesome study, *The Singular Beast*, by French anthropologist Claudine Fabre-Vassas.[3] Pigs served both as anti-Jewish symbols, used denigratingly and offensively against Jews and Muslims, and as a conceptual border used to prove Jewish and Muslim difference and unworthiness. In the Christian view, Judaism's and Islam's obsolete, legalistic character fetishized certain animals as unpalatable, leading Jews and Muslims to refuse to eat with Christians. Such abstentions supposedly revealed for Christians the misguided, carnal letter of the "old law" in action; the allegedly more evolved spiritual approach of Christianity approved of an omnivorous diet because one's inner faith was what mattered most (see, for instance, Matt 15:11). A few examples from the fraught folklore Fabre-Vassas discusses: body parts of the pig were given Jewish names; Jews were called pigs; conversos were called porkchops; pigs were used as stand-ins for Jews in Easter processions; Judas in Passion plays was sprinkled with pig blood; children before baptism were considered piglets, devils, or little Jews and said to grow "pig's teeth" and "Jew hair"; ritual holiday meals featured a pig standing in for Christ. One Burgundian song went "The more we enjoy the piglet/The better Catholics we become." To these examples can be added early modern variants of the (false) blood libel and the equally persistent medieval image linking Jews and sows (the so-called *Judensau*), both wielded frequently against Jews. Often, a pig heart or pig milk, mistaken by a Jewish sorcerer

[2] Kaminsky, *Pig Perfect*, 5.

[3] Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

for the heart of a Christian that he desired for nefarious magical purposes served as a narrative means of demonizing the Jews as anti-Christian and unable to recognize the difference between good (Christ, humanity) and evil (animal nature).[4]

A telling indication of the symbolic power of the pig can be found in some odd moments in the odd history of the Sabbatians and Frankists, the controversial, heterodox Jewish movements founded by Shabtai Tzvi, a seventeenth-century Ottoman Jew, and Jacob Frank in eighteenth-century Poland, respectively. Like Tzvi, a messianic pretender who frequently subverted Jewish law and practice before eventually converting to Islam under pressure from the Sultan, his secret followers even after his conversion customarily "include[d] a piece of pork and a piece of cheese in [their] Shabbat meal," thus intentionally transgressing against two prohibitions at once (eating pig and mixing milk and meat).[5] Holding a syncretic faith combining Judaism, kabbalah, and Catholicism, Frank, in order to hold off attacks from Jewish authorities, negotiated the mass conversion of his group to Catholicism in 1759. Among the remarkable terms to which he got Catholic and Polish authorities to agree was that the Frankists would not be forced to eat pig meat.[6]

The pig as identity marker continues to this day in places like France, where Jews and Muslims remain seen as outsiders because they do not eat pig, as discussed by French political scientist Pierre Birnbaum in his *La République et le Cochon*.[7] English food writer Jane Grigson restates such

[4] Misgav Har-Peled, "The Pig Libel: A Ritual Crime Legend from the Era of the Spanish Expulsion of the Jews (15th–16th Centuries)," *Revue des Études Juives* 175, 1–2 (Janvier–Juin 2015): 107–133; Shachar, *Judensau*.

[5] Pawel Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 32, citing the words of an alleged Sabbatian, Joseph of Rohatyn, as quoted in Ya'akov Emden, *Sefer shimush* (1757), 5v, 6v.

[6] Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude*, 128–156; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Dorset Press, 1974), 298 and passim.

[7] *La République et le cochon* (Paris: Seuil, 2013). A March 2012 lecture by Birnbaum, "Eating Pork in Paris with Pierre Birnbaum," can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvbrCr9r_4E. Another excursus on the pig as an ambivalently laden symbol in Europe is Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), Chap. 1, while Jonathan Boyarin, "The Pig as *Poros*: On the Uses (and Loss) of a Swinish Symbolic Mediator," unpublished paper, wraps Fabre-Vassas' analysis into a larger anthropology of European Christian identity as grounded on a search for transcendence of (Jewish) genealogy; see the briefer French version, "Le Porc en dieu Pôros," *Penser/Rêver* 7 (2005): 151–176. Finally, see Misgav Har-Peled, "Configurations porcines: étiologies et jeux identitaires entre juifs, chrétiens et musulmans autour du cochon

othering when asserting, with rather un-self-consciously Pauline language, that "[i]t could be said that European civilization … [has] been founded on the pig. […] There has been prejudice against him, but those peoples … who have disliked the pig and insist he is unclean eating, are rationalizing their own descent and past history."[8] It clearly does not occur to Grigson that those who like the pig and insist that "he" is clean eating are rationalizing *their* own descent and past history. In this light it is not surprising that anti-immigrant parties in Europe wield pork as a cultural weapon. When the French right-wing National Front won local mayoral elections in 11 towns in April 2014, the party announced that public schools in those municipalities would cease offering students non-pork meal options, a component of anti-Muslim politics. Party leader Marine Le Pen told a radio interviewer, "We will not accept any religious demands in school menus. There is no reason for religion to enter the public sphere, that's the law."[9] Again, those who decline to eat pork manifest "religion," but those who insist on pork evidently do not. Similarly, in early 2016, the Danish town of Randers insisted that municipal institutions, such as nursery schools, serve "Danish food culture as a central part of the offering – including serving pork on an equal footing with other foods."[10]

Such swinish lack of self-awareness is now shared by Jewish pig-loving foodies and food activists, who have turned this whole history on its head. They now not only eat pig but advocate for and write books about the glories and wonders of pig and its meat; how nothing is quite like it, not lamb, not goat, not goose, nothing. Proud Jewish pig-eating comprises merely the latest chapter of modern Jews liberating themselves from what they see as the shackles of an irrational rabbinic tyranny based on outmoded laws. Eating pig proves better than just about anything that one belongs to the dominant (Christian) majority—or that one has left Judaism behind.

au Moyen Âge," *Byzance et l'Europe: L'héritage historiographique d'Évelyne Patlagean*, Actes de colloque international, Paris, 21–22 November 2011, ed. Claudine Delacroix-Besnier (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2016), 143–168.

[8] Jane Grigson, *Charcuterie and French Pork Cookery* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 7, quoted in Bob Ashley, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones and Ben Taylor, *Food and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2.

[9] "National Front Party Head: No Non-pork Options in School Menus," *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, 6 April 2014; http://www.jta.org/2014/04/06/news-opinion/world/national-front-party-head-no-non-pork-options-in-school-menus; also, more recently, http://news.yahoo.com/attacks-france-walks-narrow-line-islam-schools-155928863.html.

[10] "Danish Town Says Pork Must be Served at Public Institutions," *The Guardian*, 19 January 2016; http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/19/danish-town-says-pork-must-be-served-at-public-institutions?CMP=share_btn_link.

Jewish theologian and Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein describes growing up in the 1930s in a house where

> [h]am and bacon were deliberately included in our diet. My mother came from a traditional religious background. Her parents were very religious immigrants from Lithuania. Because of her background, she was incapable of eating meat and dairy products together or of eating pork products. She regarded this as neurotic and wanted to be sure that her children were "free" of such limitations.[11]

In her revealingly titled memoir, food writer Elissa Altman offers a delicious if sad portrait of her mostly assimilated Queens-based family of the 1960s and 1970s that combined some observant older members, observance in some fashion of major Jewish holidays and rituals, indulgence in aspects of Jewish culture, and frequent and flagrant consumption of non-kosher food.[12] Her Gaga (grandmother), "convinced that nonkosher meat would somehow kill us in our sleep, only shopped at the local kosher butcher," but for her father, "the religion of his birth translated into rage, frustration, and betrayal" (33). "[F]ed the promise of assimilation from everyone around me" (279), the now grown-up author, as related in the book's first chapter after the prologue, of course orders a half pig for the Christmas season and drives it home in her trunk as the Sabbath enters with the setting Friday sun, accompanied by childhood memories of Jewishness and yearning for piety. The psychological rewards of treyf were already appreciated by her father, now divorced, who "found respite and peace in his small [bachelor] kitchen, slow cooking the forbidden meat [smoked ham hock] for hours after returning home from dutifully visiting his Orthodox parents every Sunday, as though treyf itself could wash away the bitter memory of his violent childhood and the desperate yearning for his father's love, which my grandfather had reserved strictly for God" (44). The joyless, stifling negativity of Judaism is one of the few things that got transmitted successfully in the family, whose dysfunction may or may not have to do with all this. More recently, one Jewish food blogger summarized the Reform movement's scandalous 1883 "treyf banquet" in

[11] Rubenstein, "The Making of a Rabbi," reprinted in Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1966), 210.

[12] Elissa Altman, *Treyf: My Life as an Unorthodox Outlaw* (New York: NAL/Penguin Random House, 2016).

Cincinnati and the denominational divorce from Orthodoxy that it reflected by genuflecting with pointed irony: "We have the brave rabbis of the Treif Banquet to thank for making America safe for bacon-loving Jews."[13] The blogger accompanied her post with a relevant Jews for Bacon sticker, whose wording seems to riff on the Jews for Jesus slogan. Numerous items are sold online touting some variation of the pro-bacon-Jews idea (see Fig. 2.1).

To a non-believing Jew or one who chooses not to observe the laws of *kashrut*, of keeping kosher, eating pig might seem no more transgressive than flipping a light switch on Sabbath. After a few centuries of acculturation into the modern Western mainstream, many Jews ignore *halakha*, Jewish law, due to ignorance, disinterest, disapproval, or rebelliousness. A 2015 Pew poll found that 57% of American Jews eat pork.[14] Insisting

Fig. 2.1 Jews for Bacon design (reprinted with permission of Jason Hines, Clutch Tees)

[13] Gigabiting (the author's name), "The Rabbis' Banquet, or Why it's 'kosher' not to keep kosher," Blogher, Jewish thread, 7 August 2013; http://blogher400.rssing.com/chan-12591977/all_p1.html#item12. At the bottom of the story, the author announces her online presence, gigabiting.com, as the place "where food meets culture and technology." The above blog post also appeared the same day on the gigabiting.com site, with the author's name given as Janice, who seems to write every piece for the site. Gigibiting, which is based in Boston, is owned by Janice Gregg, who has written for *DiningOut Magazine*.

[14] http://www.jta.org/2015/11/03/life-religion/pew-survey-57-of-u-s-jews-eat-pork-and-torah-study-more-popular. In contrast, 90% of surveyed American Muslims say they abstain from pork and 67% of American Hindus from beef.

that even secular or so-called cultural Jews refrain from consuming pig is to harp on what is, from their perspective, either a non-issue or an intentional political act (I will return to the latter category below).

Furthermore, it is clear that Pollan and his peers cook and write and engage politically not as Jews but as Americans, as universalists, each an everyman. They rarely discuss their Jewish identity in their writing or public speaking, except when addressing Jewish audiences, that is, when finding advantage to be had from insider talk. Their stance implies that to engage as a Jew (whatever that might mean) would be to act from the position of a member of a (very small) minority, whose vantage point likely would be diminished precisely because of its alleged particularity and uncommonality. Jewish difference might be an especially grievous handicap in the omnivory-centric world of Western food.

Most pig-loving Jewish food people are not unaware of the prohibition, I assume; it simply means nothing to many of them. Max Falkowitz, editor of the *Serious Eats: New York* blog, characterizes himself by saying, "For 356 days of the year I'm a pretty lax Jew. The pork-and-cheeseburger kind. The 'damn it, I missed Purim again!' kind."[15] Kaminsky has "eaten and enjoyed pork [his] whole life." His grandma Lena would bring him "boiled ham from her grocery store."[16] Discussing *ibérico* hogs, he mentions how central pig meat is "to the Hispanic conception of self" and how during "the bloody and intolerant era of the Spanish Inquisition, the depth of faith of a convert was most easily tested by requiring the '*converso*' to eat a piece of pork." This xenophobic history (also directed at Muslims) elicits no comment from Kaminsky, who immediately moves on from the "layers of symbolic and cultural freight" Iberians applied to the pig, "their abstract meditations on pork," to their celebration of "its pure carnality, i.e., as a flesh that gives pleasure."[17] That suspected Jews were preyed upon because of Judaism's alleged carnality by Christians who

[15] Max Falkowitz, "Chametz-Free NYC, Day 1: Eating Well in New York During Passover," *Serious Eats: New York*, 21 March 2013; http://newyork.seriouseats.com/2013/03/chametz-free-nyc-day-1-eating-well-in-new-yor.html. Raising further complexities of contemporary Jewish identity, Falkowitz goes on to write: "But come Yom Kippur I fast. And during Passover it's matzo all the way. For a food-loving Jew, especially one committed to his carbs the way his parents taught him, keeping kosher for Passover is a commitment that's hard to ignore, and a challenge I've come to look forward to." Food thus serves both as a bond with the ways of one's culture and as a marker of autonomy from them.

[16] Kaminsky, *Pig Perfect*, 5. I do not know whether Lena was Jewish.

[17] Kaminsky, *Pig Perfect*, 66.

delighted in the carnality of pig flesh, is a delicious irony if you have a strong stomach for black humor, though it is not atypical European cultural fare. At any rate, the studies by Fabre-Vassas and Birnbaum give the lie to the idea that pig meat ceased to serve as a marker of belonging with very real consequences once the Inquisition was shut down (rather later than Kaminsky might imagine: in 1821 in Portuguese territories worldwide and in 1834 in Spanish territories worldwide). The Baconery's Klein says, half-jokingly, that his bacon obsession "only proves that Baconery welcomes customers of all faiths."[18] Call it porcine supersessionism.

Let me return to the Jews for Bacon sticker. It is one of many Jews for Bacon products sold at Cafepress.com, designed and produced by two different tee-shirt producers who specialize in funny slogans. Though not the makers of this image, many Jews for Bacon products sold through Cafepress.com are produced by a company called Jews for Bacon, run by Jonah Schulz, of Brooklyn.[19] The outfit's website, jews4bacon.com, pokes fun at the laws of kashrut ("Who made these rules anyway?"), urging consumers to "[s]how your support for bacon and it's deliciousness." There is a (related?) #jews4bacon hashtag at Twitter that was active between 2010 and 2014. I wondered whether any links between these individuals and companies and Christian missionizing exists, but could not find evidence one way or another. Jokingly or not, the Jews for Bacon Facebook page, not updated since 2014, lists the group as a religious organization.

The Jews for Bacon types seem to be part of a noticeable "coming out" among Jews. Jeffrey Yoskowitz, who has written about an Israeli kibbutz on which hogs are raised, also administers a blog devoted to what can only be called confessions of Jewish pig eaters.[20] As an intentional stance,

[18] Mitch Broder, "New in New York: At Baconery, Everyone's Taken with Bacon," *Mitch Broder's Vintage New York*, 19 February 2013; http://mbvintagenewyork.blogspot.com/2013/02/new-in-new-york-at-baconery-everyones.html.

[19] See Rocco Loosbrock, "More And More Jews Are Enjoying Our Gourmet Bacon!," The Student Operated Press, 4 September 2009; http://thesop.org/story/food/2009/09/04/more-and-more-jews-are-enjoying-our-gourmet-bacon.php. The author, who at the time operated a Bacon of the Month Club, insists that the growing trend of Jews loving bacon has nothing to do with their leaving their Judaism, but only with their being modern enough to question ancient practices. He cites a number of "Jewish friends" and reproduces their testimonies regarding their love of bacon. I could not find any information on Schulz.

[20] Jeffrey Yoskowitz, "On Israel's Only Jewish-Run Pig Farm, It's The Swine That Bring Home the Bacon: Letter From Kibbutz Lahav," *Jewish Daily Forward* 2 May 2008, http://forward.com/articles/13245/on-israel-s-only-jewish-run-pig-farm-it-s-the-/#ixzz2gLD6h0TU; idem, Pork Memoirs: Personal Stories About a Complicated Meat,

embracing pig meat seems to comprise a kind of campaign among a growing (?) movement of Jews, carried out with political, philosophical, ecological, and anti-religious arguments. A 2014 article in *Modern Farmer* discusses a number of pro-pig Jewish foodies from around the Northeastern United States and cites the pro-pig "manifesto" of Portland, Maine, chef-restaurateur David Levi.[21]

http://porkmemoirs.com. I thank Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus for making me aware of this blog. On pigs in Israel, see also Ronit Vered, "Prescribing Pork in Israel," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 10, 3 (Summer 2010): 19–22.

[21] Laura McCandlish, "Why Some Jews Don't Feel Guilty About Eating Pork," *Modern Farmer*, 11 March 2014, http://modernfarmer.com/2014/03/something-jews-eating-pork; "Chef, teacher, writer, activist, forager, and farmhand" David Levi, "My Kind of Kosher," *Chef Levi's Portland Food and Cooking Class*, 24 October 2011, http://davidscottlevi.blogspot.de/2011/10/my-kind-of-kosher.html.

CHAPTER 3

Jewish Foodies on Judaism

Abstract Though often torn between hedonism and ethics or politics when it comes to agricultural–culinary–ecological issues, the attitude of many Jewish foodies toward Judaism is noticeably negative. Examples from the thought of Dan Barber, Mark Bittman, and Michael Pollan serve to construct a discussion of the dismissal of Judaism as a motivation for activism for Jewish foodies. Some comments of Barber and Bittman concerning Jewish law's supposed concern only for how food animals are killed and not for their quality of life lead to a brief digression on Judaism and the treatment of animals.

Keywords Jewish law/*halakha* • Kashrut/kosher laws • Ethics • Factory farming • Animal rights • Mark Bittman

Not surprisingly, food activists take varying positions when it comes to deciding what should be eaten and why. Without clear traditional frameworks on which to draw, the specific grounds for ethical consumption remain subject to debate. Yet many Jewish foodies share a distaste for religious precepts, especially those from Judaism.

In one 2012 interview Barber, who in certain ways is highly political when it comes to food, made light of any ethical quotient involved: "If I become a rabbi, this will become about ethics." When the interviewer pointed out that Jewish tradition sees ethical value in choices about food,

J. Schorsch, *The Food Movement, Culture, and Religion*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71706-7_3

Barber conceded, but claimed, "I believe in something that, from A to Z, is rooted in Hedonism."[1] Quality is everything, the ultimate and, seemingly, only goal, even of factors such as sustainability; if it yields the best-tasting berries or greens, it's desirable. Barber even resisted the idea that the deep pleasures of conscious eating derive from anything called the "spiritual discipline" of conscious food preparation. Growing, cooking, and eating comprise a completely materialist endeavor for him.

When an audience member asked whether he ever connects ethical food preparation with kosher food regulations—the event was held at an Indianapolis synagogue, after all—Barber offered a bizarre anecdote. A non-Jewish farmer he knows grew spelt for matza, because of which a rabbi had to accompany the combine on foot through the fields. When the rabbi came across wild garlic growing in the field, he stopped the combine and removed the unwanted invader. So the farmer

> started researching both kosher laws. What was it? Why is wild garlic in the field, it's natural? Why is that considered treyf? What he discovered was that, from a biological point of view, wild garlic was an example of low sulfur content in the soil. He had an imbalance in the soil and […] he corrected the imbalance and got rid of the wild garlic. And he made more money because he could go faster on the combine with the rabbi, and the quality of his grain was improved dramatically. Now he's given me many examples – I think that's a really good one – of kosher laws that seemingly have no reason to them. But, of course, if you research them and think about it, they have to be grounded in agriculture, in the proper agriculture that produces the best food and the best nutrition.[2]

Obviously intending to defend the ecological groundedness of kashrut, Barber seems to have conflated laws about which animals are kosher to eat

[1] Even while wielding the language of belief, Barber's attitude parallels Pollan's repeated critique of nutritionism as a form of puritanical moralizing.

[2] Dan Barber, interviewed by Krista Tippett for American Public Media's *On Being*, 5 July 2012; http://www.onbeing.org/program/driven-flavor-dan-barber/transcript/4744. Barber expands on this tale in a recent op-ed for the *New York Times* that is surprisingly laudatory regarding kashrut, though he focuses on the strict version of laws pertaining to grain used for matza intended to be consumed for Passover, "Why Is This Matzo Different from All Other Matzos? An Unintended Side Effect of Kosher Law: Better Tasting Food," 15 April 2016; http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/opinion/sunday/why-is-this-matzo-different-from-all-other-matzos.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-top-region&region=opinion-c-col-top-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-top-region&_r=0.

with other biblical laws insisting that plants not be intercropped (*kilayim*), an easy error to make. According to his farmer friend, the appearance of wild garlic indicates soil not suited for wheat. The farmer himself suspected the kosher laws of being nonsensical, but discovered their true wisdom; though not Jewish, he bears witness to the notion that such laws must correlate to healthy farming and eating. The prohibition against intercropping even helps prevent the appearance of unsuited invasives.[3] This is a lovely anecdote and I would like to think that it reflects accurately on the agricultural knowledge of Israelite society and the rabbis who inherited it. I find it strange, however, that Barber can make such arguments while caring not a whit for religious observance. Perhaps he was merely catering to his audience. Barber's two Blue Hill restaurants use the non-kosher veal leftovers from a local organic veal farm run by a man with rabbinic ordination. Barber actually "prefers the tender hindquarters, forbidden under kosher law because of a preponderance of certain prohibited fats and tendons. 'Only the Jews would make it so complicated,'" he lamented in a 2006 interview.[4]

In the same conversation Barber rightly complains, "For all the time spent denying certain foods, why is there not more of an emphasis on where that food comes from?" By this Barber of course refers to current sustainability and animal rights concerns; most of today's kosher food comes from enormous farms, better known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and industrial processes. "Jewish law doesn't prohibit that. The

[3] Some such expressions appear in traditional sources. A midrash on Job 31:40 reads: "Rabbi Oshiya taught: Torah teaches the way of the world: A field that produces חוחים (variously translated as thistles, briers, thorns) is suitable for sowing wheat; that produces באושים (cockles, darnel, stinkweed) is good for sowing barley" (cited by Rashi on Job 31:40). Some of the explanations offered on Mishna Kilayim, which details the laws of separating crop species, by the medieval commentators such as Bartenora are functionalist. In mishna 2:8, planting mustard or חריע (saffron or turmeric) at the edge of a grain field is forbidden because the species "harm" grain. These same species do not seem to harm vegetables, however, and thus one may plant them at the edge of a vegetable field. How these species harm grain remains unclear. Is it because they are invasive or because they take elements from or add them to the soil that compete with or harm grain? One answer is that thistles prefer nitrogen-rich soil. Also plausible is that darnel (also known as tares), a weed, is poisonous, and thus care must be taken to ensure that grain harvests did not mistakenly include it (Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013], 31).

[4] Joshua Yaffa, "Food for Thought," *Jewish Daily Forward*, 22 September 2006; http://forward.com/articles/4682/food-for-thought.

respect and dignity given to an animal at the time of slaughter, why not give that throughout its life?'"[5] It is hard to disagree—and one could add some disturbing legal, financial, and ethical misdeeds that reveal the corruption of the kashrut industry.[6] The limits Barber discusses derive from the fact that the relevant Jewish laws (1) are not applied at the level of their maximal ideal articulation, in part out of practical consideration for the livelihood of farmers and producers, and (2) have not been updated adequately to deal with current realities because few have sought to do so, plausibly out of considered neglect. So I share Barber's lament. One historical reason for this oversight is summed up nicely by Dutch philosopher Hub Zwart, as paraphrased by Maria Diemling:

> [P]re-modern food ethics was mainly concerned with *consumption* of certain types of food (the laws of *kashrut* are a prime example of this) while modern food ethics is much more focused on the *production* of food. Similarly there has been a shift from a focus on private morality to the recognition of the social dimension of the ethics of food.[7]

In fact, Judaism stands very much as an exception to this generalization and Diemling's insertion of kashrut here is only correct if one segregates it from the remainder of the commandments concerned with agriculture and animals (the same mistake Barber makes—more on this later). But on the whole there is truth in Zwart's synopsis.

In theory, Jewish law prohibits unnecessary pain and suffering caused to animals (*tsa'ar ba'alei ḥayim*), but the principles generally have not

[5] Yaffa, "Food for Thought." Much has been written on the politics of kosher slaughtering: Michelle Hodkin, "When Ritual Slaughter Isn't Kosher: An Examination of Shechita and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act," *Journal of Animal Law* 1 (2005): 129–150; Temple Grandin, "Humanitarian Aspects of 'Shehitah' in the United States," *Judaism* 39, 4 (1990): 430–446; David Smith, "'Cruelty of the Worst Kind': Religious Slaughter, Xenophobia, and the German Greens," *Central European History* 40, 1 (Mar., 2007): 89–115; Robin Judd, "The Politics of Beef: Animal Advocacy and the Kosher Butchering Debates in Germany," *Jewish Social Studies* 10.1 (2003): 117–150; Eva Plach, "Ritual Slaughter and Animal Welfare in Interwar Poland," *East European Jewish Affairs* 45, 1 (2015): 1–25; Michael A. Metcalf, "Regulating Slaughter: Animal Protection and Antisemitism in Scandinavia, 1880–1941," *Patterns of Prejudice* 23 (1989): 32–48.

[6] See Jonathan Safran Foer's brief, also critical, but far more nuanced dissection of these issues (*Eating Animals* [New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2009], 68–70).

[7] Maria Diemling, "The Politics of Food: 'Kashrut,' Food Choices and Social Justice ('Tikkun Olam')," *Jewish Culture and History* 16, 2 (2015): 4, citing Hub Zwart, "A Short History of Food Ethics," *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 12 (2000): 114.

been applied to contemporary factory farming realities.[8] In 2000 the Conservative movement's rabbis declared that the shackling and hoisting of animals during the slaughtering process constitutes cruelty to animals and should not be used.[9] That same year, Conservative Rabbi Arthur Lavinsky argued that the animals raised for the kosher market had to be allotted humane conditions.[10] Rabbis Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Arthur Waskow pushed these issues as early as the 1970s (discussed below). Some modern rabbinic authorities, including Orthodox ones, have ruled that, for instance, producing veal and *foie gras* entails cruelty to animals and the two foods are therefore not kosher and are forbidden to Jews to produce or consume.[11] A prominent haredi (ultra-Orthodox) rabbi in Israel forbade the practice of starving chickens in order to prolong

[8] Aaron S. Gross, "Jewish Animal Ethics," *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Ethics and Morality*, ed. Elliot N. Dorff and Jonathan K. Crane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 419–432; John D. Rayner, "Judaism and Animal Welfare: Overview and Some Questions," *Environment in Jewish Law: Essays and Responsa*, ed. Walter Jacob and Moshe Zemer (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 56–72; Roberta Kalechofsky (ed.), *Judaism and Animal Rights: Classical and Contemporary Responses* (Marblehead, Mass.: Micah Publications, 1992); Noah J. Cohen, *Tsa'ar Ba'ale Hayim: The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Its Bases, Development and Legislation in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1976).

[9] Elliot N. Dorff and Joel Roth, "Shackling and Hoisting," *Responsa, The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement, 1991–2000*, ed. Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2002), 93–97.

[10] *JTS Magazine* 9.2 (Winter 2000): 10–11, 17.

[11] In 1982, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, one of the greatest Orthodox halakhic decisors in the United States, declared veal and *foie gras* to be unkosher, transgressions against the laws against cruelty to animals (*Igrot Moshe*, *Even Haezer* [Hebrew], Pt. 4 (Bnei Brak, 1985), responsum #92, pp. 164–165); David Golinkin, "Kashrut of Veal Taken from Factory Farmed Animals," *Responsa in a Moment: Halakhic Responses to Contemporary Issues* (Jerusalem: The Institute of Applied Halakhah at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2000), 73–77; first printed in *Moment Magazine* in February 1993; available online: "The Kashrut of Veal Raised on Factory Farms," Responsa for Today, Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, http://www.responsafortoday.com/moment/3_2.htm; Pamela Barmash, "Veal Calves," https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20052010/barmash_veal.pdf.; the Israeli Kneset followed suit, see Mariann Sullivan and David J. Wolfson, "What's Good for the Goose … the Israeli Supreme Court, Foie Gras, and the Future of Farmed Animals in the United States," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 70, 1 (2007): 139–173. Note, however, that Feinstein and others often rule that if a benefit for humans results from practices that are cruel to animals—better quality meat or lower cost, for instance—these practices are to be permitted (see Diemling, "Politics of Food," 7).

their egg-laying period.[12] Such pronouncements have had only limited impact on actual production practices and consumption behavior. In 2008 a laudable effort arose out of the Conservative movement to develop a kosher certification that would take into account some of the problems of factory farming. Called Magen Tzedek, the program unfortunately has been stymied by resistance from Orthodox kosher certifiers.[13] Nonetheless, like their non-Jewish foodie counterparts, many Jews, from all the denominations, have begun to look for and initiate possibilities to buy kosher meat from animals that are raised ethically on small farms.[14]

All this is not enough, I believe, but it is a belated start (below I discuss further Jewish stances regarding food and ethics). These Jewish responses precede legislation in the United States, it must be noted. Only in 2004 did the state of California ban the force-feeding of geese for *foie gras*, while Arizona residents voted in a referendum to forbid the confinement and isolation of veal calves only in 2006. It is somewhat laughable, therefore, that Barber decries kashrut's limitations when the overwhelming majority of the owners and workers of CAFOs and industrial slaughterhouses in the United States who ignore ethical, sustainable growing and processing are Christian (at least by birth). I have not come across Barber critiquing Canon Law or progressive Protestant denominational silence (which is not at all to imply that there have been no Christian voices opposed to industrial farming and food production; there have been many).[15]

Recently retired Jewish New York food writer Mark Bittman "rejects any notion that Jewish values motivate him," while crediting "his 'Peter, Paul and Mary-ish' Jewish upbringing with inspiring his progressive values." He recently questioned an interviewer from the Jewish Telegraph Agency, "How can Jews observe these kashrut laws which, with all due respect, I don't think make any sense from a health perspective or any

[12] Rabbi Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, *Responsa Shevet HaLevi* [Hebrew] (Bnei Brak, 2002), Yoreh De'ah, no. 7.

[13] See www.magentzedek.org; Seth Berkman, "Magen Tzedek, Ethical Kosher Seal, Stalled Amid Orthodox Opposition," *Forward*, 20 May 2013; http://forward.com/news/176814/magen-tzedek-ethical-kosher-seal-stalled-amid-orth; Diemling, "Politics of Food," 10–14.

[14] Providers include companies such as Grow and Behold (https://growandbehold.com), which was launched in 2010.

[15] On all this from various Jewish and historical perspectives, see Diemling, "The Politics of Food," 178–195.

other perspective? They're just some cool – or not cool, whatever – tradition. I get that, but why would you do that when there's evidence that says there's a smarter way to eat?"[16] Clearly Bittman assumes that kashrut and "good" eating mutually exclude one another, a groundless stance for which I would like to see some evidence.[17]

Not particularly well-versed in the details of kashrut,[18] Pollan seems to have a real beef against Judaism as a religious system. Both traits might have developed within his assimilated New York Jewish family. Pollan has frequently discussed the pet pig that his father gave him as a teen, with its "perverse name," Kosher, and written about how, much later, his kashrut-observing brother-in-law contributed a "hemispheric steel frame" to his annual pig roast (*Cooked*, 63, 410). This last fact clearly signifies a kind of triumph (triumphalism?): the mindful pig roast trumps superstitious religion, bringing people together rather than dividing them.[19]

Pollan's take on kashrut is simplistic and inaccurate. He has insisted that "most modern commentators on the Old Testament" and "most anthropologists" consider the rules of kashrut to be "more or less arbitrary." Not so fast. Lazy ethnographers and closed-minded critics dismiss

[16] Uriel Heilman, "Is Food Writer Mark Bittman Going Kosher?" JTA, 14 January 2014; http://www.jta.org/2014/01/14/life-religion/is-new-york-times-food-writer-mark-bittman-going-kosher.

[17] One of the more "Jewish" Jewish foodies is Mitchell Davis, chef, cookbook writer, self-styled "food-systems change advocate," and Vice-President of the James Beard Foundation. Open about his own religious non-observance when it comes to food, his *The Mensch Chef: Or Why Delicious Jewish Food Isn't an Oxymoron* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2002), is filled with Yiddish humor and advice, while also carefully noting when its recipes transgress kashrut and promoting healthy and ecologically concerned food sources (even if Davis had devoted an earlier book to *foie gras*).

[18] Speaking as a guest on NPR's Leonard Lopate show, Pollan is unsure whether goat is kosher or not ("Michael Pollan on Cooking," 23 April 2013; http://www.wnyc.org/shows/lopate/2013/apr/23/michael-pollan-cooking, at 20:25).

[19] Fascinatingly, the prominent nineteenth-century Reform leader Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, though he observed the laws of kashrut (other than eating oysters), maintained two pigs on his farm to eat food waste, one named Kosher and the other Treyf (Carole B. Balin, "Making Every Forkful Count: Reform Jews, Kashrut, and Mindful Eating, 1840–2010," *The Sacred Table: Creating a Jewish Food Ethic*, ed. Mary L. Zamore [New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2001], 8). I do not know if this was the inspiration for Pollan's father's gift, but the "joke" in both cases exhibits a modernist sense of irony based on the obvious contradiction between two supposedly incompatible types of categorization yoked together.

cultural systems as lacking sense.[20] This is not to say that one must *agree* with said systems, but *understanding* them requires at least momentary empathy, enough perhaps that some recoil in fear that understanding will turn into justification. According to Pollan, the laws of kashrut "are probably designed more to enforce group identity than to protect health" (*Omivore's Dilemma*, 296). The norms of other traditional cultures, goes the implication, aim to or successfully do protect health.[21]

Pollan insists, correctly, that non-Western and un-industrialized cultures bear great wisdom about community and healthy eating. Not Judaism, evidently. This is a common dynamic, in which politicized "first"-world individuals valorize "third"-world cultures while denigrating anything Judeo-Christian. Despite the history of its persecution and marginalization under Christianity, Judaism here becomes a component of the problematic dominant majority, mostly because Christianity based itself on it.

[20] Anthropologist Jack Goody, author of a classic work on food, seems to think dietary prohibitions do little but construct and reinforce group boundaries. A close reading of the book, however, reveals that he never brings evidence for this conclusion but merely asserts it, repeatedly. Toward the book's end, he even acknowledges that in his own analysis "too little attention has been paid to the ritual, symbolic and cosmological aspects of food" (*Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], 214). Reviewing the anthropological literature, French sociologist Claude Fischler dismantles the notion that cultural culinary codes are arbitrary. He shows that as investigative methodologies grew more sophisticated they revealed immense cultural wisdom behind seemingly strange agriculinary beliefs and practices. He concludes that we must recognize a bio-socio-cultural complex that co-evolves (*El [H]omnívoro: El gusto, la cocina y el cuerpo*, trans. Mario Merlino [Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1995], Chap. 2). A similar co-evolutionary hypothesis has been reached by the now controversial German historian Rolf Peter Sieferle, "Cultural Evolution and Social Metabolism," *Geografiska Annaler*, Series B, Human Geography 93, 4 (December 2011): 315–324.

[21] After reading Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* Pollan went temporarily vegetarian, reluctantly. One of his main objections to vegetarianism, though, is that it places him in a tiny minority. Meat-eating is thus "more sociable," while being part of a small group "alienates me from other people and, odd as this might sound, from a whole dimension of human experience"; "other people now have to accommodate me, and I find this uncomfortable" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 313–314; Foer, *Eating Animals*, 55–56, sees through Pollan's thin rationalization). This argument eerily resembles a well-known Jewish self-consciousness about being different and critiques of Jewish separatism leveled both from within and without, which similarly prioritize "popularity" and the herd mentality (pun very much intended) rather than the meaning and goals of the distinctions in life-ways. Being a vegetarian alienated Pollan from "family traditions like my mother's beef brisket at Passover" (ibid.). Yet another irony; suddenly the recent and regionally specific Jewish fondness for brisket rises in importance above age-old national laws and attitudes.

One of the only positive mentions Pollan makes regarding kashrut comes as he discusses how soaking meat in a saltwater bath cleanses it. This leads him to characterize the kosher laws as "one culture's way of coming to terms with the killing and eating of animals," the reason why these laws "insist on the salting of meat" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 264). But salting meat for Jews aims not just vaguely to clean the animal's body but to aid the draining of blood through the salt's power of absorption, since consuming the blood of any creature is absolutely and repeatedly forbidden by the Bible, an approach that is hardly universal, despite Emmanuel Levinas' naive invocation of a rabbinic opinion that wishfully invokes "a natural loathing" toward consuming blood.[22]

Pollan admits to some reluctance when cooking "an ancient Roman dish called *maiale al latte* – pork braised in milk," in part "because it was so radically unkosher," as if there existed gradations to non-kosher violations, which rabbinic thought would deny. Leave it to the Romans, the ancient Judaeans' nemesis—who denuded North Africa of large animals for their spectacles and circuses, who loved watching torturous punishments in public, who decimated the lands of their enemies—to ignore culinary boundary-making, except those between the wealthy and the plebeians. "There does seem something slightly perverse about cooking [pork] in milk," Pollan confesses, but seems appeased by the fact that even the rabbis themselves categorized the taboo on mixing milk and meat as a law "for which there is no obvious explanation." To the rabbis this inexplicability meant one should obey the commandment out of reverence and humility in the face of that which escapes our understanding; for Pollan it meant dispensing with the commandment since one should never do anything that does not accord with one's reason, as anything our reason doesn't currently grasp must be empty, nonsensical, and problematic. Pollan surmises, along with many other scholars, beginning with Philo the Alexandrian, that the prohibition segregates symbols of life (milk) and death (blood, slaughter, carcasses) from one another. But since this ban of mixing dairy and meat lacks a known biochemical or ecological hazard,

[22] Emmanuel Levinas, "On the Jewish Reading of Scriptures," *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 106, commenting on Babylonian Talmud (hereafter BT), Makkot 23b.

Pollan, unimpressed, tosses it aside as obsolete. Reverence for life forces? "Well, not today" (*Cooked*, 175).[23]

In April 2014, as a guest on National Public Radio's Leonard Lopate show, Pollan discussed whole-hog barbecuing, opining that because the various cuts of the pig are mixed together in the resulting sandwich, the process is "very democratic." Perhaps thinking of his multiethnic New York audience, Lopate pointed out that not everyone eats pig; that is, that whole-hog pit-roasting may not be as democratic as Pollan thinks. Pollan took this as an opportunity to suggest that "we need to rethink the kosher rules and I think there is a place for pork in the kosher rules."[24] His argument? "To the extent that the kosher rules are about eating ethically, I think eating pig can be a very ethical kind of eating." Lopate replied with understatement: "Only two or three thousand years of tradition out the window." Pollan: "I need to acknowledge the importance of that." But he confessed to being of two minds. First, he returned to his conclusion, which he stated to be a fact, that rules about food "are not rational" but about "knitting a culture together," though at least this is a more positive way of putting it than he does elsewhere. Unfortunately, the conversation proceeded in a direction that caused Pollan to neglect to lay out his second perspective, which, I assume, might have acknowledged some meaningfulness to dietary systems such as kashrut.

[23] As he often does, Pollan ignores the complexity raised by his own sources. He cites Irving Welfeld, "You Shall Not Boil a Kid in Its Mother's Milk: Beyond Exodus 23:19," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 32, 2 (April–June 2004): 84–90. But Welfeld lays out cogent interpretations of the prohibition by several prominent sages and scholars.

[24] "Michael Pollan on Cooking," discussion beginning around 20:50.

CHAPTER 4

Pollan on Culture and Religion

Abstract In this chapter the analysis places Jewish foodie hostility toward Judaism within a wider dismissal of religion and even culture as realms offering useful values and practices. In his approach to food politics, Pollan holds strongly modernist, materialist, and rationalistic views, along with, though perhaps more than, other thinkers about food and food systems, and despite his rhetoric promoting alternatives to the Western industrial–agriculinary complex. In tandem with his self-contradictory dismissal of culture and cultural traditions, Pollan's neoliberal stance leads him to prioritize individual choice when it comes to foodways and then only when based on "rationalist" political or scientific criteria. Metaphysics and spirituality are denied, found seemingly only in and around food itself, though seemingly only when detached from any specific, concrete traditions.

Keywords Michael Pollan • Tradition • Ritual • Conversion experience • Materialism

The ironies of Jewish foodie porcinity run deep and connect to larger issues in the food movement around the place of culture. Pollan, one of the leading public intellectuals of the movement, argues that the main problem of the contemporary American diet—unhealthy for both people and the planet—comprises essentially a problem of culture. Yet the spot-on

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critique that Pollan delivers of the corporate "science" that deconstructs food for the purpose of concocting profitable edible food-like substances, as he calls them—isolating single ingredients, artificially overstimulating natural cravings, and so on—can be aimed back at his own rather American, libertarian, and bourgeois selection of isolated palatable elements of cultures.[1]

He acknowledges that "as the sway of tradition in our eating decisions weakens," for instance "the cultural norms and rituals that used to allow people to eat meat without agonizing about it," "habits we once took for granted are thrown up in the air" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 306). He seeks to bring about a return to what industrialization and commercialization have nearly destroyed: "deeply rooted traditions surrounding food and eating" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 2). But while Pollan and other Jewish food people with some justification romanticize "traditional" consumption patterns, they turn their backs on the approaches of the culture from which they come, Judaism.

The appearance of religious vocabulary in Pollan's writing reveals that eating (right) is believing. Stories of conversion experiences are sprinkled throughout his books: non-cooks turned into cooks by eating a single, wondrous meal, white-flour bakers made whole-grain zealots after biting into a single loaf of great whole-wheat bread. The first line of *Cooked* and its first section on pig barbecue evokes "[t]he divine scent of wood smoke and roasting pig" (*Cooked*, 27). Pollan witnesses the innovative way Polyface Farms uses pigs to aerate the cow-barn bed of manure and other ingredients into rich compost—by placing corn among the mix so that the pigs delightedly root around for it, opening up and stirring the whole shebang. He describes this as "a miracle of transubstantiation" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 219). The farm's compost pile of unused chicken parts carries "redemptive promise" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 237). Pollan calls monoculture "the original sin from which almost every other problem of our food system flows" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 258). To brew your own beer every once in a while "becomes, among other things, a form of observance, a weekend ritual of remembrance" of interconnectedness (*Cooked*, 408). Such language rhetorically transforms sagacious agriculture and mindful consumption into divine wonder-working, at the same time

[1] On Pollan's politics, see Chad Lavin, "Pollanated Politics, or, the Neoliberal's Dilemma," 3 November 2009, http://www.politicsandculture.org/2009/11/03/chad-lavin-pollanated-politics-or-the-neoliberal%E2%80%99s-dilemma.

subtly deflating organized religion's claims to methodological uniqueness and efficacy. Indeed, if we understand Pollan, along with so many other foodies, as having undergone a conversion experience in his discovery of mindful eating, his rhetoric takes on a new light. History provides innumerable examples of the new convert needing psychologically to attack and undermine his or her former religion.[2]

Actual traditional religions and ritual spark deep ambivalence for Pollan and often arise as a negative model. He yearns for traditional food cultures, but he reflects the collective repulsion of so many moderns toward tradition.[3] Pollan lambasts the transcendentalist, utopian, anti-naturalist "Puritanism" (Pollan's word) resting in certain animal rights arguments that predation among living creatures in nature is an "intrinsic evil" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 321–322), a view that goes back at least to Isaiah 11: 6–7. "Nutritionism," which obsesses about "invisible and therefore slightly mysterious" entities rather than food, "is a quasi-religious idea, suggesting the visible world is not the one that really matters, which implies the need for a priesthood" (*In Defense of Food*, 28). Pollan attacks the religion of nutritionism as a moralizing pseudo-theology believing that "*[b]ad things happen to people who eat bad things*" (*In Defense of Food*, 67; emphasis in the original). I find this critique ironic given that Pollan's oeuvre, and much of the discourse of the food movement, moralizes implicitly (and not so implicitly) against personal food ignorance, laziness, insensitivity, and political erring, however much we are victimized by the food industry.[4] Pollan himself is engaged in unveiling to readers what is invisible to their naked eye in a peach, wrapped slab of beef, box of breakfast cereal, or sitting together to dine. Nonetheless, Pollan says he is "inclined to agree with the French, who gaze upon any personal dietary prohibition as bad manners" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 314). While lamenting repeatedly the decline of eaters' gratitude and the saying of

[2] I follow here the compelling analysis of Benjamin E. Zeller, "Quasi-Religious American Foodways: The Cases of Vegetarianism and Locavorism," *Religion, Food, and Eating in North America*, ed. Benjamin E. Zeller, Marie W. Dallam, Reid L. Neilson and Nora L. Rubel (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 294–312.

[3] Understanding Pollan as an avowed secularist gains solidity from critiques of the excesses and aporias of secularist programs, for instance, that of William E. Connoly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[4] Julie Guthman notes Pollan's Manichean polarizations in an excellent and wide-ranging critique, "Commentary on Teaching Food: Why I Am Fed up with Michael Pollan et al.," *Agriculture and Human Values* 24, 2 (June 2007): 261–264.

grace or similar blessings at meals, Pollan never seems to make any blessings, even at the "perfect meal" with which *Omnivore's Dilemma* culminates, prepared with extreme arduousness and so laden with consciousness that he calls it a ritual (407, 410).

Despite borrowing spiritual vocabulary, the potpourri of concerns that move food activists such as Pollan often reveals a thoroughly materialistic and scientistic orientation. By materialistic I mean a philosophical orientation that denies the existence or importance of what is not physical. By this I do not seek to re-inscribe agriculture, cooking, and food as "lower" and bodily in contrast to "more important," "higher" faculties, but to avoid a new, equally unhealthy overcompensation for historical (male) denigration of the material.[5] When Pollan, Barber, and Gussow appeared together at the 92nd Street Y in 2008, the program was named "Hedonistic, Healthy and Green: Can We Have it All?" In their oft-quoted manifesto the founders of the influential Slow Food movement dedicate their collective efforts to "a firm defense of quiet *material pleasure*" as "the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life" (emphasis added). Slow Food's political materialism is not surprising given chief instigator Carlo Petrini's past as a Catholic convert to Communism. For Pollan, "shared meals are about much more than fueling bodies; they are uniquely human institutions where our species developed language and this thing we call culture. Do I need to go on?" (*In Defense of Food*, 189). Culture emerged from eating together, evidently, a plausible enough speculation, but a rather shrill insistence on a singular, universal factor where multiple influences are more likely. Perhaps the most telling example of such sacralized materialism is the title and ethos, not necessarily tongue in cheek, of food writers Ann Barr and Paul Levy's book, *The Official Foodie Handbook: Be Modern—Worship Food*.[6] Here food is substituted for the combination of physical–natural and cosmological entities that enable its existence.

Pollan of course values social life, culture, and a healthy environment, but, ultimately, it seems chemistry is everything. In the final section of *Cooked*, on fermentation and alcohol, he can only imagine imagination, consciousness alteration, and higher consciousness as materialist.

[5] On this binarism, which Pollan, among others, rightfully wants to challenge, see Janet A. Flammang, *The Taste for Civilization: Food, Politics, and Civil Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), esp. Chaps. 7 and 8.

[6] New York: Timber House, 1984.

Consciousness might well be affected by "meditation, fasting, risk, or extreme physical exertion," but inspiration of any sort repeatedly circles back for Pollan to intoxication by means of imbibing. "Whether by means of a flowering plant or a microbe invisible to the naked eye, letting nature overpower us is a way to break down stale perspectives and open up fresh ones" (400, 401, 402). Pollan seems unable to imagine non-materialist sources for our mental life; "nature" cannot, it seems, contain anything immaterial. Perhaps he does not realize how much he is infected by the very scientism he lambasts in "the father of modern nutritional science" Justus von Liebig, pioneer of organic chemistry, developer of the first meat extract and first baby formula (which turned out to be ineffective), who "explained life strictly in terms of a handful of chemical nutrients, without recourse to metaphysical forces" (*In Defense of Food*, 20–21). In this regard, Pollan hews closely to the historical trajectory of food ethics proposed by Hub Zwart, who sees modern food ethics as quintessentially scientific, unlike its pre-modern predecessors.[7] For Pollan, the antidote to bad food science is new, better science. Yet Pollan advises us that "while it is true that most of us unthinkingly place the authority of science above culture in all matters having to do with our health, that prejudice should at least be examined" (*In Defense of Food*, 134). He seems to be trying to convince himself, not entirely successfully.

I would argue that all of the things Pollan professes to value—community, ecological sustainability, mindfulness, compassion toward animals, patience, self-sufficiency—are metaphysical, ethical quanta emergent from consciousness and self-consciousness, themselves emergent from physical "nature," and that they derive from what should be called, not at all disparagingly, a kind of faith.[8] However vital, the social and ecological relationships built and strengthened through and around food still leave something missing. Almost every cuisine Pollan lauds developed as a strand within the holistic web of a traditional nature-culture that included supernature: mind, wisdom, spirit, or cosmology. Practice emanated from this holism, yet Pollan and his peers have internalized the general Western

[7] Zwart, "Short History of Food Ethics," 120.

[8] See, inter alia, Terrence Deacon, *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

distaste for and denial of it. Their disaffection can be read as itself part of the very processes of modernization that many of them decry, Pollan more than others. Such an approach can well be described as doing what global capitalism as a new imperialism does when it "works to 'admit different cultures into the realm of capital only to break them down and to remake them in accordance with' the cultural, political and economic needs of the dominant culture."[9]

[9] Kelly Donati, "The Pleasure of Diversity in Slow Food's Ethics of Taste," *Food, Culture and Society* 8, 2 (Fall 2005): 230, quoting Arik Dirlik, "The Global in the Local," *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. R. Wilson and W. Dissanayake (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 32.

CHAPTER 5

Cosmological Cultures as Forms of Resistance

Abstract A review is offered of why cuisines cannot be detached from the cultures that generate and cradle them. As most anthropologists think, culture should be seen as an integrated whole. The traditional cuisines that Pollan and others admire as healthy, balanced, and ecologically sensitive originate in cultures that possess rich cosmologies and spiritualities. These "metaphysical" elements cannot be ignored or jettisoned without damaging the whole that makes the subset of foodways possible, meaningful, and effective. Commercial, industrial, and techno-scientific forces of modernism have decimated traditional foodways—precisely because they have decimated traditional societies and cultures in general. Cosmological cultures offer alternative life- and foodways from which modern Westerners still have much to learn. Judaism is one of these surviving cosmological cultures, despite its own history of reformation and modernization. Judaism's ecological wisdom and environmentally oriented practices, like those of other cosmological cultures, continue to stand as potential models for us today. Examples are given of relevant fruitful approaches from a variety of traditional cultures, including Judaism.

Keywords Michael Pollan • Culture • Modernization • Neoliberalism • Cosmology • Traditional ecological knowledge

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Pollan may want his culture "rational," but culture is not modern science, nor should it be. As Wittgenstein understood, meaning is *made* by people and cultures, rather than *found* through some kind of objective measurement. The various diets Pollan upholds as beneficial—Inuit, Samoan, and so on—arise out of, are steeped in complex and rich culturally specific worldviews, cosmologies, practices, and beliefs, some of which may well seem "not rational." This stew of elements can be disentangled, but at great cost precisely to the forces of cohesiveness that can make traditions of wisdom powerful and beneficial. Just as the frequent combination of eating tomatoes with olive oil has now been understood by science as a way to ease digestion of the lycopene so prevalent in tomatoes because it is oil soluble—as Pollan himself learned and reminds us—cultures, too, come to us subtly and tightly interwoven in ways that "rationalism" continues to miss.

Given his ambivalence about traditions that appear to him to be irrational, it is ironic that Pollan reproduces some of their ethical and salutary guidance when it comes to food, as I discuss in this chapter. "To make food choices more scientific is to empty them of their ethnic content and history" (*In Defense of Food*, 58), Pollan writes, but while he wants us to eat more ethnically, learn our culinary history, and erase the worst of modernist agricide, he proceeds as if one can extract the effective ingredients from a particular culture—kimchi, herring, tofu, gratitude, and so on—and not erase or destroy its overall efficacy. Pollan acknowledges that "food cultures are embedded in societies and economies and ecologies," and that "[t]raditional diets are more than the sum of their food parts" (*Food Rules*, 131, 134), but he does not accord the same respect to cultures as whole entities. He insists in an interview that "culture often gives us good advice before science has figured it out," but when the interviewer called this "ancient wisdom," Pollan winces: "Ancient wisdom, yeah basically. I hate the term 'ancient wisdom' because it's always made to sound so loopy and New Age."[1] He understands that American food corporations are "systematically and deliberately undermining traditional food cultures everywhere" (*In Defense of Food*, 133), but does not take his analysis to the next level: Industrial capitalism undermines traditional *cultures* everywhere, and this is why these traditional food cultures collapse.

[1] Jason Mark, "Conversation: Michael Pollan," *Earth Island Journal* 28, 4 (Winter 2014): 44.

The idea that cultures are systems in which "every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfills some vital function, has some task to accomplish, represents an indispensable part within a working whole" has been called the functional view or functional analysis in anthropology and goes back at least to Bronislaw Malinowski.[2] This view continues to be debated.[3] I do not believe that *every* aspect of a culture is necessarily sacrosanct, nor that *all* cultures—keeping in mind that there are national cultures, ethnic cultures, religious cultures, hybrid cultures, organizational cultures, and so on—are equivalent in terms of their complexity, depth, healthfulness, and so on.

Pollan ignores the cogent advice of philosopher and food writer Lisa Heldke, who, wary of the neo-colonialism of Westerners assuming that all cuisines are available to them for consumption, lauds "the impulse to respect the integrity and authority of a given culture, and to extend that respect to its food." For Heldke cuisines come from cultures, not the other way around, as Pollan sometimes seems to imagine. Heldke's sensitive caution derives from her awareness that "cuisine *is* the sort of thing that can be harmed, in ways that bring harm to a culture." In any significant sense cuisines and cultures come in tandem.[4] In contrast to Pollan, Slow Food, according to Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig, "seeks both to highlight the value of the existing traditions of particular food cultures while also introducing cultural values and discourses to enhance those traditional food cultures," recognizing that "the networks of the global agro-food industry are annihilating the very places, communities and cultures that Slow Food wants to protect."[5] For Pollan the excellence of traditional ingredients or cuisines seems to inhere in their benefits *for us Westerners*, not in the integrity or authority of the society which produces them for itself. Pollan, strangely averse to politics, proffers a vision of

[2] "Anthropology," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 13th ed., supplement 1 (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1926), 131–140.

[3] See, for example, Michael Bérubé, "The 'Cultures' of Cultural Studies," *Redefining Culture: Perspectives Across the Disciplines*, ed. John R. Baldwin, et al. (London Routledge, 2005): 77–82; W. Penn Handwerker, "The Construct Validity of Cultures: Cultural Diversity, Culture Theory, and a Method for Ethnography," *American Anthropologist* 104, 1 (2002): 106–122.

[4] Lisa M. Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 41, 46.

[5] Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig, "Culture and the Politics of Alternative Food Networks," *Food, Culture and Society* 12, 1 (Spring 2009): 87–88.

consumer-driven societal change, a voluntarist, individualist evolutionary model, the effectiveness of which remains much debated, while its assumptions of individual responsibility align conveniently with the view of the very corporations whose behavior Pollan seeks to change.[6]

Food movement thinkers do not all agree on diagnoses or strategies, of course. Pollan himself appears to have mixed feelings about what an ethical agriculinary approach should look like. In many ways the food revolution really does not promote omnivory, or what one scholar calls borderless gastronomic antinomianism.[7] People concerned with food impose their own, contemporary version of ethical rules closer than one might imagine to a system like kashrut than to a Pauline disinterest in the material as morally laden. "Food choices are something fundamental you can control about yourself: what you take into your body," says Pollan, sitting together at a restaurant to talk food for *Smithsonian* magazine with *Gourmet* editor Ruth Reichl. She muses back with a similarly axiological conundrum, "That's the interesting thing about meat-eating. At what point do you stop worrying about life?"[8]

Like traditional cultures that holistically connect the metaphysical and physical, and as discussed in a vast body of literature, concerned consumers now consider whether food is local or not, whether the conditions in which it was raised are environmentally sustainable and as free from suffering as possible, its nutritional value, whether it was produced by people working for themselves in a healthful manner (artisanal production) or by means of the mechanized callousness of a power- and profit-hungry

[6] See Antoinette Pole and Margaret Gray, "Farming Alone? What's up with the 'C' in Community Supported Agriculture" *Agriculture and Human Values* 30, 1 (March 2013): 85–100; Meghan Barrier, "Can Community Values Reinvent the American Food System? We Cannot Shop Our Way out of This," *Food Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 1, 2 (November 2012): 33–46; Samantha Kwan, "Individual versus Corporate Responsibility," *Food, Culture and Society* 12, 4 (December 2009): 477–495; Robin Jane Roff, "Shopping for change? Neoliberalizing activism and the limits to eating non-GMO," *Agriculture and Human Values* 24, 4 (December 2007): 511–522; Guthman, "Commentary." Michiel Korthals offers a more sanguine view of consumer power in *Before Dinner: Philosophy and Ethics of Food* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004), Chap. 10.

[7] Lance J. Sussman, "The Myth of the *T'reifah* Banquet: American Culinary Culture and the Radicalization of Food Policy in American Reform Judaism," Zamore (ed.), *Sacred Table*, 40.

[8] Ruth Reichl, "Michael Pollan and Ruth Reichl Hash out the Food Revolution," *Smithsonian* magazine, June 2013; http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Michael-Pollan-and-Ruth-Reichl-Hash-out-the-Food-Revolution-208357921.html.

corporation (industrial production), whether eating it accords with their ethical and/or spiritual worldview. One must clarify for oneself: Am I permitted to kill plants for food, domesticate animals to use their by-products such as milk, eat animals themselves? The recent rise of foods marketed as "ethical" shows that econometric value alone leaves an increasing number of producers and consumers deeply unsatisfied. Some scholars have linked the mechanisms for certifying environmentally sound and/or fair trade foods with those used far earlier for kosher and ḥalal foods.[9] Others attempt to transform the religious concept of sin to accord with current exigencies. Michiel Korthals suggests that gluttony involves not "the alleged vertical relationship with a supreme being" but "the faulty, non-respectful, horizontal relationship with our fellow human beings and other living beings. The sin of gluttony lies in our ignorance, in not wanting to know, in not wanting to get involved, in the lack of interest in food production."[10] Some see this shift in consumer attitudes and behavior as itself essentially "religious," since it is often "motivated by fundamental concerns about human physiological and moral health, the treatment of nonhuman animals, and/or planetary survival."[11] Despite Pollan's assertions to the contrary, both traditional and modern consumption etiquette concern themselves with what appears to be invisible in food itself: its conditions of production, its moral significance, the social and ecological consequences of its life cycle.

Pollan himself penned a book entitled *Food Rules*, in which he offers 83 "personal policies," though he insists they "are not commandments" (25, 33).[12] The final section of *Food Rules*, "How to Eat," would amuse or depress any observant Jew or individual living in a traditional culture. After having informed readers of what to eat, and what not to eat, Pollan gives suggestions regarding "something a bit more elusive […] the set of manners,

[9] See Hugh Campbell, Anne Murcott and Angela MacKenzie, "Kosher in New York City, Halal in Aquitaine: Challenging the Relationship between Neoliberalism and Food Auditing," *Agriculture and Human Values* 28, 1 (February 2011): 67–79; Benjamin N. Gutman, "Ethical Eating: Applying the Kosher Food Regulatory Regime to Organic Food," *The Yale Law Journal* 108, 8 (Jun., 1999): 2351–2384.

[10] Korthals, *Before Dinner*, 171–172.

[11] Martha L. Finch, "Food, Taste, and American Religions," *Religion Compass* 4, 1 (2010): 45. On the other hand, Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, 142, found in their analysis of foodie discourse a general omission of concerns regarding "social justice, hunger, food security, national food sovereignty, and labor exploitation."

[12] This material originally made up Section 3 of *In Defense of Food*.

eating habits, taboos, and unspoken guidelines that together govern a person's (and a culture's) relationship to food and eating" (146). Some of his suggestions include eating only at a table, eating only with other people, taking a moment to meditate on where your food comes from before consuming it, or eating treats only on weekends. Pollan, writing for an audience he assumes is very much like himself, people who are secular and disaffected from their backgrounds or any particular tradition, attempts to add a dash of mindfulness and ritualization to the materiality of their food.[13] I would call Pollan's suggestions efforts to achieve some kind of transcendence, since each aims for a degree of self-consciousness about food and eating (below I explain what I mean by transcendence).

I am reminded precisely of Pollan's complaints about refined white flour. He laments about how humans have taken a nutritious natural product and processed it to the point that it is not only non-nutritious but downright hazardous to health. The industrial solution is to toss back in a few of the eliminated nutrients on the production line in a minimal gesture whose efficaciousness remains doubtful. This is essentially what Pollan does with culture.

Modernity, especially in the United States, has decimated traditional cultures, made them undesirable and distasteful. Faced with the intentional and concomitantly passive erosion of mindfulness and wisdom embodied in ritualizing practices, substances, and time, Pollan tosses back in a reconstituted sliver, hoping this will somehow restore living in balance.[14] Pollan complains that to bake great bread with whole-wheat flour in the face of the near-total monopoly of white flour and the industrial, commercial apparatus that supports it, he needs not just a "better recipe," but "a whole different civilization" (*Cooked*, 278). How very true, but not merely in regard to baking ingredients.

Not all of those alternative civilizations have been strangled out of existence. Some continue to exist, on the margins, tenuously. Every one of the traditional groups lauded by Pollan as living without the Western diet and its diseases believed and believes, in one form or another, in some version

[13] Likewise, reporter Uriel Heilman desperately tries to convert Mark Bittman's VB6 diet, in which he recommends one eat vegan before 6 pm, into a path of self-regulation akin to kashrut ("Is Food Writer Mark Bittman Going Kosher?")

[14] To me, living in balance is not something achieved "back then," in some perfect earlier way of life produced by wishful thinking and nostalgia, but an always-tentative attainment by a few individuals and (generally small) societies by means not of slavish devotion to unchanging norms but rather through wise allostasis, a constant series of microadjustments.

of what moderns consider a mythological cosmos, one that is animated, divine. Their relationship to food reflects, exists within their holistic worldviews.[15] Members of these cultures likely do things like take their seeds to a priest to be blessed, ritually propitiate gods and/or cosmos before planting, or conduct around harvest time first fruit thanksgiving ceremonies. They might, as in Mexico, tie corn husk "ears" to the handles of their *zaporeras*, steaming pots, to ensure that the tamales within do not "hear fighting or disagreement," get angry, "and won't cook right."[16]

These cultures resist, have not succumbed or have succumbed less to rationalism, to the "logic" of industrialism and global markets.[17] While many factors determine the fate of a civilization and culture, likely there is a correlation between the cohesiveness, depth, and vitality of a way of life based on a holism that includes cosmology and the ability to resist scientistic, corporate modernity: think of various Native American peoples, different "indigenous" and "tribal" peoples worldwide, the Amish, Hasidim, hippies, the Zapatista movement, and so many more. One recent analysis aptly summarized the food counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s: "Here, the validation of natural and wholefoods, often linked to 'folk' culinary traditions, was part of a trend to see the body as a temple that should not be polluted by the artificial products of corporate capitalism."[18]

[15] Treatments of modernity's disjunction, intentional and not, apparent or actual, from such holistic worldviews and life-ways are numerous, including Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Mark A. Schneider, *Culture and Enchantment* (Berkeley: University Of Chicago Press, 1993); Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, Reprint ed. (HarperSanFrancisco, 1990 [orig. 1980]).

[16] Marie Elisa Christie, *Kitchenspace: Women, Fiestas, and Everyday Life in Central Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), xxii. Some of the women Christie studied and interviewed raise other fascinating ways in which the emotions and intentions of the cook transfer to her food, determining its character (158, 209, 218).

[17] Sad portraits of such succumbing can be seen in the correlation between conversion to evangelical Protestantism, neo-colonialist capitalism, and diminished food health—buying packaged and canned food instead of consuming "traditional" foods—found by Amber O'Connor, "Conversion in Central Quintana Roo: Changes in Religion, Community, Economy and Nutrition in a Maya Village," *Food, Culture and Society* 15, 1 (March 2012): 77–91; Christie, *Kitchenspace*, corroborates this. A similar denigration of local ways among the Gogodala of Papua New Guinea followed the arrival of Christian missionaries and national independence; see Alison Dundon, "Tea and Tinned Fish: Christianity, Consumption and the Nation in Papua New Guinea," *Oceania* 75, 2 (Dec. 2004): 73–88.

[18] Ashley et al., *Food and Cultural Studies*, 190.

Of course, even living non-Western cultures have trouble staving off the seductive powers of modernity when colonized, militarily or culturally, by its empire. One

> critic of the imitative ways of westernized Indians, noted with disgust the conduct of his fellow students at Hindu College in Calcutta in the 1840s: "Open defiance of Hindu social conventions in matters of food and drink was then considered almost *de rigeur* [sic] by the *avant garde* students of the College. To be reckoned a civilized person, one had to eat beef and consume alcohol."[19]

Obviously, since the eighteenth century, if not before, many people have sought to escape the constrictions of traditional life and religion, which certainly bear their own problems, excesses, blind spots, and reprehensible practices. Not all spiritual worldviews overlap with "progressive" or humanist politics, to say the least, and they should not be romanticized or essentialized as automatically "beneficial."[20] The problem for the food movement is how to make use of the best of rationalism and the best of traditional ways, the latter hardly static and timeless. Surely, no ideal single approach exists.

One problem Pollan and other foodies seem to have with traditional cultures comes down to the latter's often metaphysical orientation. I am well aware of the problems, philosophical as well as political, attributed to the idea of metaphysics. Addressing, much less responding to, them would take me far afield. Transcendence to me, however, resonates not as an ultimate and totalizing move toward metaphysics as an escape to some "beyond," but rather as an eternally recurring "horizontal" reality of emotional and intellectual growth, for individuals as well as collectives (as articulated, for instance, in J. K. Gibson-Graham's book, *A Postcapitalist Politics*).[21] One source for such a view of transcendence might be

[19] Roy, *Alimentary Tracts*, 8. Roy's work comprises an outstanding case study of how "advanced" cultures denigrate and condemn the foodways of cultures they deem backward and unpalatable.

[20] See the fascinating piece by Laura Sayre, "The Politics of Organic Farming: Populists, Evangelicals, and the Agriculture of the Middle," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 11, 2 (Summer 2011): 38–47. Kevin Murphy, "Christians and the New Food Movement," *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 11, 3 (2011): 455–465, essentially attacks the food movement as a form of godless paganism.

[21] Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. And see Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, 52 and 103, n. 8.

Kierkegaard, whose text, *Repetition* asks "'of freedom to see constantly a new side of repetition.' Each new side is a 'breaking forth,' a 'transition' or 'becoming,' and therefore a concept of happening, and not of being."[22]

From another perspective, Pollan and his colleagues seem surprisingly unable to fathom what some scholars understand to be the postsecular reality in which much of the Western world lives today. On the one hand, many people find great meaning away from religion, seeking and valuing sacredness, wholeness, mystery, depth, or, as William James put it, "a more" in the world without resorting to formal, organized religion. At times Pollan himself seems to fall into this category. On the other hand, the materialist worldview seems unwilling to consider that even "Western" religions, despite their self-mythologization, sky gods, and official doctrines, actually manifest a deeply immanentist orientation, concerning themselves deeply with this-worldly matters, dealing caringly with the basic stuff of people's lives and daily behavior, desiring to nurture a better here-and-now.[23] Closer to the food movement's conceptual home, postsecular thought overlaps with thinking about our new anthropocene era, where entanglements between the human and the more-than-human are only growing, whether the latter are taken to be biochemical, made of energy, informational or immaterial.[24]

[22] Harold Bloom, *The Breaking of the Vessels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 44.

[23] William James, *The Variety of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Cambridge, 1902). Among recent works, Graham Harvey, *Food, Sex and Strangers: Understanding Religion as Everyday Life* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2013), constructs a sly portrait of religion as etiquette for living in the world. On postsecularism, in addition to Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, see Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (eds.), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006); Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Fred Dallmayr, "Rethinking Secularism (with Raimon Panikkar)," *The Review of Politics* 61.4 (1999): 715–735; Robert Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Phillip Hammond (ed.), *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[24] The work of Bruno Latour provides a main example, but see also Bronislaw Szerszynski, "Gods of the Anthropocene: Geo-Spiritual Formations in the Earth's New Epoch," *Theory, Culture and Society* (forthcoming), currently available online; idem, *Nature, Technology and the Sacred* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward*

As is the case in the wider environmental movement, many people and organizations concerned with agriculinary questions understand metaphysical or spiritual matters to be part of the holism they address and in which they live. Indeed, a good part of the impetus for early environmentalism in the United States came from religion (Emerson, John Muir, Congregationalist and Presbyterian conservationists from the Progressive era, etc.).[25] Today, the avowedly Christian thinking of Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson makes a prime example of a holistic orientation. Educator, chef and restaurateur Alice Waters includes the spiritual when describing her own discovery of good, healthy food and eating, their benefits, and the results of her own efforts and offshoots of her projects (while carefully distinguishing these multiform sensual pleasures from mere hedonism). "How you eat, and how you choose your food, is an act that combines the political, your place in the world of other people, with the most intensely personal, the way you use your mind and your senses, together, for the gratification of your soul." The San Francisco County Jail's Garden Project, with which Waters is involved, "gives [disadvantaged] people skills to nourish themselves physically and spiritually." Her Edible Schoolyard at a local Berkeley junior high school contributes to a holistic curriculum: "From the garden, and the kitchen, and the table, you learn empathy – for each other and for all of creation." While "pop culture […] teaches redemption through buying things. School gardens […] teach redemption through a deep appreciation for the real."[26] Chef and educator Bhavani Jaroff's iEat Green non-profit outfit and website advertises itself with the slogan "for mind, body, spirit and planet." Biodynamic farming grew out of the explicitly spiritual work of Rudolph Steiner (who, alas, held some anti-Jewish sentiments that were all too common in German "naturalist" discourse) and spiritual, cosmological language thus comes quite readily to biodynamic farmers. Some of the opposition to genetically modified organisms (GMOs) takes the form of religious arguments skeptical about whether private companies consider the unanticipated long-term and public–societal consequences of their technologies.

an Anthropology Beyond the Human (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Karsten Paerregaard, "Bare Rocks and Fallen Angels: Environmental Change, Climate Perceptions and Ritual Practice in the Peruvian Andes," *Religions* 4, 2 (May 2013): 290–305.

[25] See Mark R. Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[26] Quoted in Flammang, *Taste for Civilization*, 181, 198, 200.

The editors of *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* seem intriguingly fond of topics that touch on religion.[27]

In Russia "'natural foods' philosophies represent the natural environment as a source of sociability and spirituality," and Russians feel nature "not only produces but also nourishes and protects the Russian nation." Personal gardening is considered "an activity done 'for the soul.'"[28] While the Spanish conquerors of Mexico valued wheat above indigenous maize, Mayans favored maize. The cultural, nutritional, and economic centrality of this crop, along with the tortillas made from it and the panoply of mostly women's skills and chores involved in producing them, are deeply embedded in the Nahuatl language and Mayan mythology.[29] Conservation of nutritionally and ecologically beneficial native rice varieties, and therefore of rice diversity, in Nepal is aided by the fact, as reported by Nepalese farmers, that some rice "landraces have identifiable socio-cultural and religious use values i.e., landraces used to make special dishes for offering to deities," while modern varieties, the only kind promoted by the government, "are considered 'impure' for socio-cultural and religious ceremonies."[30] Researchers focusing on Zimbabwe also find that "traditional [indigenous] cultural attitudes toward crop diversity […] usually place a high value on diversity," something threatened by the scientistic, monocropping-obsessed Western approach aiming for maximum "productivity."[31]

[27] See also Daphne Miller, *Farmacology: What Innovative Family Farming Can Teach Us about Health and Healing* (New York: William Morrow, 2013), Chap. 6.

[28] Melissa L. Caldwell, "Feeding the Body and Nourishing the Soul; Natural Foods in Postsocialist Russia," *Food, Culture and Society* 10, 1 (Spring 2007): 46, 62.

[29] David Lind and Elizabeth Barham, "The Social Life of the Tortilla: Food, Cultural Politics, and Contested Commodification," *Agriculture and Human Values* 21, 1 (March 2004): 47–60. Christie, *Kitchenspace*, 240: "When cooking with corn and making tamales, the sacred food *par excellence*, people must be especially careful to observe certain rituals that reflect traditional [prehispanic] beliefs." Examples of culturally determinist, racist denigration of corn and corn-eating Native Americans are offered in Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 269.

[30] Ram Bahadur Rana, Chris Garforth, Bhuwon Sthapit and Devra Jarvis, "Influence of Socio-economic and Cultural Factors in Rice Varietal Diversity Management On-Farm in Nepal," *Agriculture and Human Values* 24, 4 (December 2007): 467; see also Tirso A. Gonzales, "The Cultures of the Seed in the Peruvian Andes," Stephen B. Brush (ed.), *Genes in the Field: On-Farm Conservation of Crop Diversity* (Boca Raton: Lewis Publishers/International Development Research Centre/International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, 2000), 193–216.

[31] Elizabeth Cromwell and Saskia van Oosterhout, "On-farm Conservation of Crop Diversity: Policy and Institutional Lessons from Zimbabwe," ibid., 234.

Faced with a soaring rate of diabetes caused by the abandonment of traditional foods for "white" food products, the Tohono O'odham of the Sonora Desert in Mexico and the US Southwest have organized by means of communal institutions to support a return to their nearly extinct 1000-year-old former diet. This so far successful process, an exemplary case study of the kind of resistance to the Western diet that Pollan no doubt admires if he knows of it, inevitably includes a reclamation of their culture, which

> connects the emotional and spiritual lives of the O'odham with the landscape they maintain, the spirits they worship, and the foods they gather and grow. The [traditional way] teaches the songs O'odham sing to inspire their beans and corn to grow. It gives directions for the saguaro wine ceremony, the O'odham's new-year ritual that "sings down the rain."[32]

The pastoral Toda people, who live near the southern tip of India, have long practiced vegetarianism, and their thorough knowledge of the local flora and ecology continues to go together with their intense devotion to preserving biological diversity, all the result (and perhaps a cause) of their deeply rooted spiritual ways.[33] In a 2003 lecture, even the thoroughly materialist Carlo Petrini acknowledged trans-physical factors: "The rural community with its rituals, its celebrations, its social relationships, its agronomic practices, and its beliefs is not only a good topic for an anthropological analysis, it can also have a real impact on politics, economics, and science."[34] A final example of the potential symbiosis of a religious orientation and instrumental rationalism is the recently developed System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method of growing rice, worked out by a Jesuit priest, Fr. Henri de Laulanié, and his peasant co-conspirators in rural Madagascar.

[32] Marcello di Cintio, "Farming the Monsoon: A Return to Traditional Tohono O'odham Foods," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 12, 2 (Summer 2012): 14–17.

[33] GBSNP Varma, "An Ancient Vegetarian Tribe Struggles to Keep Its Traditions Alive," *Earth Island Journal*, 20 February 2015; http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/an_ancient_vegetarian_tribe_struggles_to_keep_its_traditions_alive. Toda lands have been declared a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site. See also Tarun Chhabram, "How Traditional Ecological Knowledge Addresses Global Climate Change: The Perspective of the Todas—the Indigenous People of the Nilgiri hills of South India," Proceedings of the Earth in Transition: First World Conference (2005); www.ser.org/iprn/earth-in-transition/eit-conference-proceedings.

[34] Carlo Petrini and Gigi Padovani, *Slow Food Revolution: A New Culture for Eating and Living* (New York: Rizzoli, 2006), 130.

This low-tech, system-oriented approach requires so much less water and chemical inputs that now even the World Bank promotes it.[35]

In many of these cases religious beliefs drive or correlate to practices with personal and collective benefits that turn out to be ascertainable by science. Numerous further examples exist but I suspect that the reason scholars rarely discuss cultural, spiritual, or metaphysical values is because, like Pollan, many researchers devalue them and hence cannot see them as a factor. This attitude is hardly new, and ties into racial, ethnic, and political forms of dismissiveness. One reason for the severity of the outbreak of blight that caused the Irish potato famine, according to some scholars, is that Europeans had ignored traditional indigenous American wisdom and practices around potatoes. Beyond the absence of critical elements of their original natural setting—genetic diversity, biological partners such as particular fungi or pollinators—writes Rob Dunn,

> [t]he potato plants in Europe came ashore 'naked,' that is, without any of the traditional knowledge farmers in the Andes had acquired regarding planting, growing, storing and preparing them over the course of centuries. "The complexity of Andean cropping systems had no precedent in Europe," says James Lang, author of *Notes of a Potato Watcher*. It was "geared to every nuance of altitude and rainfall."[36]

Of course, all of the above instances cannot be collapsed into some homogenous thing called "spirituality," "metaphysics," or "religion"; as

[35] See, among other sources, http://sri.ciifad.cornell.edu; http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/WBIPROGRAMS/WBIWATER/0contentMDK:21953509~pagePK:64156158~piPK:64152884~theSitePK:443986,00.html; Dan Charles, "Unraveling The Mystery of a Rice Revolution," 3 May 2013, http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2013/05/03/180821486/unraveling-the-mystery-of-a-rice-revolution.

[36] Rob Dunn, *Never Out of Season: How Having the Food We Want When We Want It Threatens Our Food Supply and Our Future* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2017), Chap. 3. Additional literature on traditional knowledge: Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012); Charles R. Menzies (ed.), *Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Natural Resource Management* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); *Best Practices Using Indigenous Knowledge*, ed. K. Boven and J. Morohashi (The Hague: Nuffic and UNESCO, 2002); *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, ed. D. A. Posey (London: Intermediate Technology Publications and United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 1999); *Conserving the Sacred for Biodiversity Management*, ed. P. S. Ramakrishnan, K. G. Saxena and U. M. Chandrasheekara (New Delhi and Calcutta: Oxford and IHB Publishing, 1998).

always, the assessment of religious traditions and metaphysical worldviews constitutes an essentially political question.[37]

A food movement that is solely materialistic and that shares the modern proclivity to dispense with anything cultural it does not understand likely does not understand what it is destroying.[38] Paradoxically, in being quick to eschew powerful imperatives like sacred prohibitions or ritual, it would also be ignoring the urgings of one of its own sources of inspiration, ecology, as in Aldo Leopold's oft-quoted dictum: "To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering." Italian sociologist and psychologist Alberto Melucci exhorts with greater explicitness against thinking that tinkering even offers much hope. Our global ecological crises, he maintains, show "that the key to survival is no longer the system of means founded on purposive rationality. Our salvation lies in the system of ends, that is, in the cultural models which orient our behavior."[39] Wendell Berry often repeats the same, woefully ignored mantra, the very one I think Pollan believes he propounds: "The answers to the human problems of ecology are to be found in economy. And the answers to the problems of economy are to be found in culture and in character."[40]

[37] See, for instance, Arun Agrawal and C. C. Gibson, "Enchantment and Disenchantment: The Role of Community in Natural Resource Conservation," *World Development* 27.4 (April 1999): 629–649. A model of attentive, sensitive, and reflexive analysis can be found in Allison Goebel's treatment of conflicts over forest resources among Christianized Shona peasants in Zimbabwe: Allison Frances Wanda Goebel, "'No Spirits Control the Trees': History, Culture and Gender in the Social Forest in a Zimbabwean Resettlement Area" (PhD dissertation: University of Alberta, 1997), esp. Chap. 4 ("Pervasive Ideologies: Defining 'Tradition' at the Interface of Christianity and Modernity"). As if to prove my point, the published version jettisoned religion and culture from the book and chapter titles, though the content remained substantially similar (*Gender and Land Reform: The Zimbabwe Experience* [Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005], now Chap. 6 "Local Institutions, Land, and Environment"). See also Maris Boyd Gillette, "Children's Food and Islamic Dietary Restrictions in Xi'an," *Feeding China's Little Emperors: Food, Children, and Social Change*, ed. Jun Jing (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 71–93.

[38] Clearly, the food movement as a whole is not only materialistic. Vegetarianism comprises one instance of a deeply ethical stance.

[39] Alberto Melucci, *The Playing Self: Person and Meaning in the Planetary Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 59.

[40] Wendell Berry, "Word and Flesh," *What Are People For?: Essays* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010 [orig. 1990]), 198. Or see his "The Conservation of Nature and the Preservation of Humanity," *Another Turn of the Crank* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1995), 73–74. Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22, reminds readers that "sound agricultural practice depends upon knowledge that is at one and the same time chemical, biological, economic,

Judaism is one of the surviving ancient cultures, even if many of its members and some of its modern denominations have eschewed its traditionalist outlook in ways minor and major. While most readers will be familiar with this rationalist, modernizing Judaism forged in nineteenth-century Central Europe, it should not be overlooked that biblical culture constructed community as a multispecies entity, Israelite and early rabbinic religiosity revolved around ritualized indigenous landedness, rabbinic thought possessed a strong animist strain, and even today many Jews continue believing and living in a holistic, trans-material universe.[41] Pollan and his peers should know that Judaism insists that one express thanks for all foods consumed; eat while sitting; turn meals with other people into more than just individual ingesting (by talking Torah); celebrate the first fruits of each crop; tithe all agricultural produce, directing a portion of it to the poor and powerless (the rest went to the priests and Levites when the temple stood in Jerusalem); let agricultural land in Israel lay unworked every seventh year, while making its produce publicly available (from private land!); remove a small portion of any dough to be burned up as a kind of domestic sacrificial offering; reserve special meals or feasts with meat for special occasions, that is, Sabbath and festivals. Hasidic masters recommended stopping to eat before you are full, just as Pollan learned from other cultures.

When discussing the ethics and politics of the inevitably unpleasant task of chicken slaughtering, Polyface Farms' Christian owner Salatin offers Pollan a surprising analogy reflecting traditional organizational wisdom: "In the Bible the priests drew lots to determine who would conduct the ritual slaughter, and they rotated the job every month. Slaughter is dehumanizing work if you have to do it every day" (*Omnivore's Dilemma*, 233). From the perspective of animal rights, obviously, Israelite reliance on animal sacrifice cannot be justified and must be acknowledged to prevent facile glorification of biblical religion. But ritual offerings of animal and plant resources, a practice shared by numerous cultures, comes with

cultural, philosophical, and (following the understanding of most farmers in most places and times) religious. Agriculture involves questions of value and therefore of moral choice, whether or not we care to admit it."

[41] Inter alia, see Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*; Jo Ann Gardner, *Understanding the Hebrew Bible Through Plants* (Mount Vernon, NY: Decalogue Books, 2014); Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); David Mevorach Seidenberg, *Kabbalah and Ecology: God's Image in the More-Than-Human World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

its own nuances and contexts; in some ways it is hardly as wanton and heartless as industrial treatment of animals. "Many Mediterranean villages" boast "communal ovens" (*Cooked*, 182), writes Pollan, a practice, it might interest him to know, that ancient Jewish women shared, along with gathering together to knead bread while conversing, all discussed in the classical Jewish literature (Talmud and midrash). In a recent essay Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus expands on mystical Jewish contributions to mindful eating.[42] One could go on easily in this vein, but I hope I have made my point. By now the literature on Judaism's ecological conscience has grown considerably.[43]

In recent decades Western Jews have been generating their own version of the food movement. Many of the leaders and activists working on behalf of animal rights, vegetarianism, and veganism have been Jews, while other Jews have become back-to-the-land farmers, artisanal producers, and promulgators of a new approach to kashrut inspired by environmentalism known as eco-kashrut. It should not cause surprise that among the heroes of Jonathan Safran Foer's pro-vegetarian treatise, *Eating Animals*, stand Kafka, Derrida, and "vegan theology professor" Aaron Gross.[44] A Jewish woman in Vilna (Vilnius, Lithuania), Fania Levando, ran a popular vegetarian restaurant before World War II, publishing a cookbook in 1938.[45] The main disciple of Chief Rabbi of Israel Abraham Kook, David Cohen, assembled excerpts from

[42] "Kabbalah, Food, and Sustainability," *The Mountains Shall Drip Wine: Jews and the Environment*, Studies in Jewish Civilization, vol. 20, Proceedings of the 20th annual symposium of the Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization and the Harris Center for Judaic Studies, Oct. 27–28, 2007 (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2009), 37–47. I came across this essay only when finishing my piece. Brumberg-Kraus makes many of the same points I do, with somewhat different inflection and purpose. See also Joel Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals: Eating and Embodiment in Medieval Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005).

[43] In addition to the sources cited already: Jeremy Benstein, *The Way into Judaism and the Environment* (Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006); Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (ed.), *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Martin D. Yaffe (ed.), *Judaism and Environmental Ethics: A Reader* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001); Arthur Waskow (ed.), *Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4000 Years of Ecology in Jewish Thought*, 2 vols. (Woodstock, Vt: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000).

[44] As noted by Elizabeth Kolbert in her review of the book in *The New Yorker*, 9 November 2009.

[45] Recently republished as Fania Levando, *The Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook: Garden-Fresh Recipes Rediscovered and Adapted for Today's Kitchen*, trans. Eve Jochnowitz and with a foreword by Joan Nathan (New York: Schocken, 2015).

Kook's writings from the first decade of the twentieth century into a treatise of vegetarianism that he presented in 1961 at a conference of religious vegetarians.[46] That same decade English Jews founded the British Jewish Vegetarian Society.[47] The term eco-kosher was coined in the 1970s by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. Eco-kashrut imbibed strongly from the American reaction in the 1960s and thereafter against overreaching rationalism, and the concomitant turn, or return, to ethnicity, ritual, and holism.[48] The Jewish food movement is evident in the work of outfits like Isabella Freedman and its Adamah Farm, The Pearlstone Center, its farm and CSA (Community Supported Agriculture, usually subscription-based purchasing arrangements with specific farms), both of which operate educational/training arms, Hazon, The Jewish Farm School, and, most recently, The Yiddish Farm. As is to be expected, widely different relationships with Judaism and Jewishness characterize the involved individuals and organizations. Yet it is clear that Judaism itself inspired many of these agriculinary re-evaluations.

To be clear: Most Jews today who are religiously inclined (to whatever degree) do not in fact think about or live their Jewishness ecologically or with the kind of mindfulness about food that Pollan and others recommend. I would argue that this is a collective misunderstanding of Judaism, one that has been fostered by the history of the Jews in Europe. Even if these Jews have not missed something in Judaism, however, it is imperative, given our current global crises, that they realize or resurrect their tradition's wishes for personal and collective health and well-being, which must include true local and planetary sustainability. The same imperative faces everyone today who comes from any culture and tradition.

[46] Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook, *Chazon HaTsimchonut vHashalom*, ed. David Cohen (Jerusalem, 1983); trans. Jonathan Rubenstein, as *A Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace*, available at www.jewishveg.com/AVisionofVegetarianismandPeace.pdf.

[47] Diemling, "Politics of Food," 7.

[48] On eco-kashrut, see Waskow, *Down-to-Earth Judaism: Food, Money, Sex, and the Rest of Life* (New York: William Morrow, 1995), pt. 1; Arthur Green, "A Kabbalah for the Environmental Age," *Tikkun* 14, 5 (1999): 33–40.

CHAPTER 6

Back to Those Pesky Dietary Laws

Abstract Here we return directly to kashrut, the traditional dietary laws. Pollan thinks they are arbitrary, merely a means to enforce group identity. Many scholars, from anthropologists to textual experts, have suggested explanations for the cluster of laws pertaining to the consumption of animals: construction of biological norms for sky, land, and sea creatures and the prohibition of those that fail to meet these norms (Mary Douglas); leaving alone most "wild" animals (Douglas, Jacob Milgrom); prohibited animals consume blood or excrement (Eugene N. Anderson, Jr.); development of personal self-restraint and mindfulness (the classical rabbis), among others. Pollan ignores all of these theories, as well as the fact that the laws of kashrut come alongside numerous other laws relating to the social justice, theo-ethics, and ecology of agriculture, food distribution, and consumption in general. Even if kashrut comprises a means of collective identity formation, for vulnerable minority groups such boundary-making can be important, even necessary for group survival.

Keywords Kashrut • Collective identity • Reformist movements in Judaism • Post-Christianity

Pollan just doesn't know the literature about kashrut or care enough to explore it. In the notes of *Cooked* he cites Robert Alter on Leviticus from his translation *The Five Books of Moses* (2004), the Conservative Movement's

J. Schorsch, *The Food Movement, Culture, and Religion*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71706-7_6

commentary *Etz Hayim* (2001), and, as in *Omnivore's Dilemma*, anthropologist Marvin Harris. Harris' conclusion regarding kashrut directly contradicts Pollan's. So does the essay in *Etz Hayim* on the dietary laws by Edward L. Greenstein, who notes in his opening paragraph that, as in all societies, "these rules encode cultural meaning" and "carry ethical, cultural, and/or theological significance."[1] Though admitting that the origin of the taboos on particular animals "is somewhat obscure" (1461), Greenstein opposed the perception that "the system may appear artificial and arbitrary" (1463).[2] Numerous scholars have offered sophisticated, creative, and cogent interpretations, among them Marvin Harris, Frederick Simoons, Mary Douglas, Jacob Milgrom, Jean Soler, and, perhaps most speculatively, Julia Kristeva.[3] In the face of a panoply of interpretations,

[1] *Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary*, the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, ed. David L. Lieber (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 1460.

[2] Pollan cites Gordon Tucker's essay on sacrifice from the same volume; I cannot imagine that Pollan failed to note Greenstein's essay on the dietary laws. Biblical scholar Jacob Milgrom dismisses the traditional rabbinic view that the laws of kashrut are arbitrary, proposing instead that the ancient sages themselves did not understand them. He unpacked the "definite and ascertainable reasons" behind the laws ("Ethics and Ritual: The Foundations of the Biblical Dietary Laws," *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. E. R. Firmage et al. [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns], 1990), 175–191. The multiple meanings of the laws of kashrut reiterated in Deuteronomy are discussed by biblical scholar Jeffrey H. Tigay in the Conservative movement's *JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1996), ad. loc. Deut. 14:3–21. Pollan dismisses biblical laws regarding sacrifice as similarly "mak[ing] little sense," and prefers to sum up both sets of regulations as "forms of social glue." Since he had just referenced Detienne and Vernant's *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* at length, his refusal to accord parallel complexity and nuance to Israelite practice can only hail from non-intellectual factors.

[3] Marvin Harris, *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), Chap. 6. Pollan cites the re-issue, *The Sacred Cow and the Abominable Pig: Riddles of Food and Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987). Harris had already presented his theories in *Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures* (New York: Random House, 1977). In the most often cited survey of meat-eating regulation, Frederick J. Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh; Food Avoidances from Prehistory to the Present*, 2nd. rev. ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994 [orig. 1961]), Chap. 2, which Pollan surprisingly does not reference, the author emphasizes the ubiquity of claims to maintaining ritual purity, good health, and well-being. In over 300 pages of text, nowhere does Simoons dismiss the various kinds of cultural dietary choices as arbitrary. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); idem, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. Chaps. 7 and 8. Milgrom, "Ethics and Ritual"; see also J. Milgrom, "The Biblical Diet Laws as an Ethical System," *Interpretation* 17 (1963): 288–301, one of his earlier

Pollan has decided, rather insultingly, that the "rules of barbecue […] are as arbitrary as the kashrut [sic], rules for the sake of rules, with no rational purpose except to define one's community by underscoring its differences from another. We are the people who cook only shoulders over hickory wood and put mustard in our barbecue sauce" (*Cooked*, 98).[4] Pollan denies that religions generally share many traits, especially deep structures, with

presentations; idem, *Leviticus: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 2 vols., The Anchor Bible, 3-3a (New York: Doubleday, 1991); idem, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics: a Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004). David Bryan, *Cosmos, Chaos and the Kosher Mentality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), reading several Hellenistic-era texts against the backdrop of kashrut laws, suggests that mixed creatures represent a radical break with the divine order of creation. The explorations of Douglas and Milgrom are contextualized and re-presented by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), esp. Chaps. 5, 6, and 9. Jean Soler, "The Dietary Prohibitions of the Hebrews," trans. Elborg Forster, *The New York Review of Books* (14 June 1979): 14–17; http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1979/jun/14/the-dietary-prohibitions-of-the-hebrews/?pagination=false; also reprinted as Jean Soler, "The Semiotics of Food in the Bible," *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 1997), 55–66; Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, "Jewish Food Rituals," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 23, 1 (1995): 7–17. Needless to say, the above interpretations have all received their fair share of criticism.

[4] While Harris' economic–environmental hypothesis for Israelite/Jewish pig avoidance has been demolished by anthropologists Marshall Sahlins and Simoons, Kaminsky, in a chapter on the Jewish pig prohibition, interviewed various archeologists who concurred with Harris' ecological/economic arguments, adding supporting evidence that even Kaminsky accepted, despite his "always" having found this "to be an irksome taboo" (*Pig Perfect*, Chap. 11). At least he is honest about the divergence between his personal preferences and a deep cultural tradition. One wonders why Pollan ignores such explicit statements. Does he disagree with functionalist explanations of culture? He himself seems to use them when it comes to culinary traditions. Or perhaps only certain traditions. On the Leonard Lopate Show Pollan complained that he was told that the reason Jews don't eat pig is to avoid trichinosis, a theory he dismissed, along with many others. Many rabbis over the centuries worried that such attempts to offer functionalist explanations to the commandments would lead inevitably to disappointed disaffection when the "proofs" do not hold up. Some evolutionary anthropologists, however, have surmised that meat taboos reflect evolved psychological and cultural dispositions aiming to prevent biological threats; see Daniel M. T. Fessler and Carlos David Navarrete, "Meat Is Good to Taboo: Dietary Proscriptions as a Product of the Interaction of Psychological Mechanisms and Social Processes," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 3, 1 (2003): 1–40. Mitchell Davis, who cares not a whit about observing kashrut, at least understands, generously, that its laws "have evolved as a result of changing customs, technology, and social imperatives, and they were likely created in the same fluid environment." To observe these laws, for Davis, "is an expression of faith" (*The Mensch Chef*, xiv).

neighboring religions, and that patterns within religions and differences erected between other religions almost always have a well-thought-out logic behind them, whether or not we like or agree with that logic.

Kashrut entails a complex of different biblical, but especially rabbinic laws pertaining to different aspects of eating. These may be grouped as laws concerning (1) which animals may and may not be consumed, (2) which parts of permitted animals may and may not be consumed, (3) how permitted land animals must be killed, and (4) the required separation of dairy and meat comestibles. When it came to species, in the most general sense, the pastoral, agricultural Israelites and Judeans sacralized the nature-culture environment on which they depended, including a limited set of domesticated animals; for the most part, these alone were what one ate. *You eat what you are.* Animals that fell afoul of inferred norms for each elemental ecological niche were to be avoided—water-dwellers lacking fins or scales, land animals that crawled, airborne creatures that were not birds, for example. Kashrut deemed animals out of their conceptual place to be unsuitable, sources of ritual impurity, and thus threats to individual and collective holiness. *You are what you eat.* Following Durkheim's insight that a society's customs, rituals, and taxonomies reflect its values, Mary Douglas first proposed such a reading of the Torah's system of permitted and prohibited animals in her seminal book *Purity and Danger* (1966). In response to criticism she modified and nuanced her interpretation in *Leviticus as Literature* (1999), while other scholars also took up and honed her theory.

Whether intentionally or not, kashrut prevented Israelites and prevents Jews from eating most of the world's creatures, thereby preserving them from predation (by Israelites/Jews).[5] A further consequence of the vast number of prohibited animals is that Israelites overwhelmingly ate and Jews eat only a small set of domesticated mammals. Their predominant food source comprised and comprises therefore animals that they themselves raise and care for. In other words, kashrut established a regime of control and tending for a limited number of species that already had been domesticated by that point in human history. This severe self-restraint might have been connected with a negative view of wildness and wilderness—the Bible evinces a noticeably ambivalent take on the wild—or with

[5] Both Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, and Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, argue that this preservation was an intention of Leviticus. Douglas repeats her argument in "The Compassionate God of Leviticus and His Animal Creation," *Borders, Boundaries and the Bible*, ed. Martin O'Kane (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 61–73.

a negative perspective on hunting as a form of cruel aggression. In other cultures, species that are hunted are left in their wildness and culled when necessary. The form of knowledge about them and their ways and the form of relationship with them differs greatly. One can argue whether the agricultural method induces a relationship of affection or exploitation, or both, and whether the method of hunting generates a relationship of granting freedom and gratitude, and what different forms of domination, cruelty, and, importantly for our times, ecological destruction each method arouses.

Anthropologist Eugene N. Anderson, Jr., speculates that the animals prohibited by the Torah consume either blood or excrement, both seen as morally reprehensible.[6] Talmudic statements (BT Berakhot 15a and 25a) support this view when it comes to the pig, as do medieval Jewish commentators.[7] Historian Rachel Laudan, probably based on Harris, wonders whether pigs were banned because "being difficult to herd, [they] were not popular with peoples of nomadic origin."[8] Another common explanation of the ban on pig is that the animal was consumed and worshipped by those the Israelites/Judeans despised, though scholars such as Milgrom dispute this view. It is easy to disparage much of the above as imposed identity boundary creation and maintenance, but it should be kept in mind that those erecting such boundaries considered, with some justification, Egypt as a cruel and barbaric empire of hypocritical elites and abhorrent licentiousness, and Canaanite society as thoroughly immoral from its forms of sexuality to religiosity. We do not have to share these perspectives, but as motivations for a culture, they are hardly arbitrary or isolated.[9]

[6] Response to Paul Diener and Eugene E. Robkin, "Ecology, Evolution, and the Search for Cultural Origins: The Question of Islamic Pig Prohibition," *Current Anthropology* 19, 3 (1978): 509.

[7] Ancient Babylonians, though they ate pig, considered them to be a source of dirtiness (Jean Bottero, *The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004], 35). In one sign of Christian ambivalence regarding dietary laws (discussed below), popular televangelist Joel Osteen, a lay preacher, follows this line of argument, linking the prohibition to medical problems stemming from the pig's quick and poor digestion. Shellfish and other bottom-dwelling creatures also draw Osteen's ire. He insists Christians give up all these foods (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJrJkFBEt_c).

[8] Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 61.

[9] A good review of some of the above theories, and others, can be found in Seth Daniel Kunin, *We Think What We Eat: Neo-structuralist Analysis of Israelite Food Rules and Other Cultural and Textual Practices* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), Chap. 2. Simoons, *Eat Not*

The Babylonian Talmud (Yoma 67b) cites an earlier (Tana'itic) teaching that the nations of the world accuse the Jews of irrationalism by pointing to "incomprehensible" regulations such as the prohibition against eating swine. This clearly indicates that some ancient critics had already failed to comprehend the sense of the law. It might indicate as well that by the rabbinic era the original intention of the biblical law had been lost to the rabbis themselves. But it does not mean that various rabbinic authorities did not assign meaning to the prohibition.

Pollan ignores probably the most often cited explanation for the prohibition of certain animals, one not aimed at distancing other peoples but aiming to keep aligned the individual self and its relationship to the divine. Thinkers and rabbis of all eras insist that self-restraint makes up one of the most vital lessons of the laws of kashrut (of most of the commandments, in fact), regardless of the seemingly arbitrary choice of forbidden entity.[10] Similarly, psychologist Paul Rozin notes that in Hindu thought, "[t]he body is viewed as the temple for the soul, and eating is seen as a moral transaction in which food can serve as a fundamental link between humans and gods."[11] Pollan cites Rozin's work frequently for the purpose

This Flesh, Chap. 2, offered a fascinating history of Israelite/Jewish and numerous other peoples' restrictions concerning pig meat, while also reviewing the hypothesized explanations for these practices. Michael Beer, *Taste or Taboo: Dietary Choices in Antiquity* (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2010), Chap. 5, surveyed the topic from the perspective of the Jewish Greco-Roman diaspora. Most recently, see the thorough and sophisticated treatment by Rosenblum, *Jewish Dietary Laws*.

[10] The Hellenistic-era Letter of Aristeas, lines 128–171, places a defense of kashrut in the mouth of the High Priest, whose words neatly presented many of the above themes in philosophical allegorical terms. The permitted birds evince positive qualities such as docility and cleanliness, while the forbidden ones are wild, carnivorous and tyrannize over other species. The central emphasis is that the law leads to the moral training of its followers. These concerns are hardly unique to Judaism. One medieval Buddhist text can serve as an example of typical religious analogical–pedagogical reasoning: "The skins of ordinary predators are unworthy, bad substances and shouldn't be handled. Ordinarily, however, they do possess the qualities desired by worldly people. […] But it is inconsistent with the Buddha's teachings to wear those skins that are always associated with the vicious mind of those wild animals. […] some of that fierceness carries over to the owner" (*Machik's Complete Explanation: Clarifying the Meaning of Chöd, a Complete Explanation of Casting Out the Body as Food*, trans. and ed. Sarah Harding [Boston; Snow Lion, 2013], 210). A good review of Hellenistic Jewish and Rabbinic explications of the (to them rational) laws of kashrut is Rosenblum, *Jewish Dietary Laws*, Chaps. 3 and 6.

[11] Paul Rozin, "Sociocultural Influences on Human Food Selection," *Why We Eat What We Eat: The Psychology of Eating*, ed. Elizabeth C. Capaldi (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1996), 246.

of dismissing cultural predilections as arbitrary (not at all Rozin's actual attitude), yet won't accept Rozin's basic comprehension of how religious cultures work, much less extend it to Judaism.

Pollan no doubt does not want to offend too greatly by stating outright his repulsion regarding laws insisting on Jewish separateness from other peoples, though I suspect he feels repelled, and he would hardly be alone in feeling so. Yes, one of the purposes of kashrut is the maintenance of distance between Jews and others. Separatism indeed comprises the problematic side of self-preservation. Pollan also clearly has no use for a culture that places certain food sources off limits for non-ecological–biological–chemical reasons, but "only" for pedagogical–moral–theological purposes. He reaches the illogical and methodologically strange conclusion that because experts do not agree on a single reason for the prohibition of certain animals, no such reason exists. Sophisticated scholars have long abandoned the idea that such a complex cultural phenomenon should have a unitary *raison d'être*. Pollan also ignores the fact that kashrut and its prohibited animals comes within a much wider set of laws regulating the production and consumption of food.

Influenced by some of the interpretations of kashrut that I mentioned, progressive Jewish thinkers from all the denominations since the 1960s have seen kashrut as a worthy basis for ethical eating.[12] Perhaps surprisingly, many of the authors of essays in the Reform movement's 2011 anthology, *The Sacred Table*, while often sharing a distaste for the specific traditional laws of kashrut, understand and acknowledge that their dense and interlaced cultural and spiritual significance should lead Reform Jews to rethink knee-jerk rejection.

Many of the above sources on kashrut were available to Pollan, usually the assiduous researcher. My point in all this is not to prove the superiority of kashrut, much less Judaism, but to suggest that, first, those such as Pollan need to provide substantive arguments for dismissing it and, second, that kashrut is hardly the only complex traditional dietary system whose holism they ignore (Muslim *ḥalal*, Buddhist and Hindu vegetarianism, and Hindu avoidance of cow meat, for instance). The final and perhaps

[12] For particularly compelling readings of kashrut as an ethical and potentially ecologically sensitive system, see Arthur Waskow, *Down-to-Earth Judaism: Food, Money, Sex, and the Rest of Life*, esp. Part 1; Rabbi David Seidenberg, "Kashroots: Noah, Leviticus, and an Eco-History of the Kosher Laws," n.d. (after 2008), http://www.neohasid.org/torah/kashroots.

greatest irony to their dismissal of kashrut is that Jews through the ages have adopted the local cuisines and food cultures of all of their homelands—whether Persia, Greece, Morocco, Poland, France, India, or Mexico, among others—and adapted them all quite adequately to function within the framework of kashrut.[13] Do Jewish foodies think the eco-culinary wisdom of these cuisines diminishes or disappears when done within the parameters of kashrut?

And what if kashrut actually *were* mainly about group identity formation and maintenance? Following the conclusion of some anthropologists and historians that particular customs and beliefs often are not about substance but rather group boundary creation and sustaining,[14] Pollan assumes that for peoples and cultures to maintain their particular life-ways or beliefs is unimportant or downright undesirable—not, by the way, a conclusion to which any of the above anthropologists would subscribe. For minority peoples and cultures, self-preservation differs vastly from the expansionism of dominant groups, though the line between dominant and minority societies is relative and can change over time.[15] Yes, like most traditional cuisines, then, one of kashrut's aims is the maintenance of group identity, but that is

[13] As Arthur Schwartz notes: "Jewish food is, really, any food that follows the kosher dietary laws" (*Jewish Home Cooking: Yiddish Recipes Revisited* [Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2008], ix); "There really is no such thing as Jewish food. Jews eat the same foods as the culture in which they live, except that they make the food adhere to Jewish dietary laws, the laws of kashruth" ("The Food Maven Diary," 19 December 2006; http://www.thefoodmaven.com/diary/00000526.html?searched=kosher&advsearch=oneword&highlight=ajaxSearch_highlight+ajaxSearch_highlight1). This *contra* Paul Levy's surprisingly ignorant assertion—surprising because he knows something about Judaism, but perhaps it is merely a reflection of his Reform anti-ritual bias—that *kashrut* "makes most European cooking wildly difficult" and "oriental food out of the question" (*Out to Lunch* [New York: Harper & Row, 1986], 43). In a column reviewing food in Israel, Levy urges visitors to skip all of the kosher "ethnic" restaurants—Chinese, Italian, French, Indian, and so on—because by definition none of them can offer authentic fare. But this completely misses the point of concocting kosher variations (ibid., 133–134). Levy himself, in another column, cites a Hebrew-language kosher-version edition of Claudia Rosen's popular *A Book of Middle Eastern Food* (ibid., 192).

[14] Both Douglas and Soler understand that this was an intention of kashrut; see also, on rabbinic Judaism's commensal regulations and Jewish identity, Rosenblum, *Jewish Dietary Laws*, Chap. 5; idem, *Food and Identity*, esp. Chap. 2; on kashrut, 68–73. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, 5, reads the biblical laws of prohibited animals as only an "indirect and latent" identity marker. He notes, for instance, that the Bible does not forbid Israelites to eat the meat of permitted animals killed by non-Israelites (22). Over time, the rabbis make these laws into a hedge against foreign influences (Chaps. 2–5).

[15] Among other treatments, see Peter Daniel, *Zaun. Normen als Zaun um das jüdische Volk. Zum phänomen der Zeitüberdauer des Judentums* (Vienna: Edition Splitter, 1995), who

only one side of a two-sided coin. The implication of Pollan's dismissal is that "universalist" life-ways and beliefs alone can be justified. Perhaps he is unable to see just how these supposedly universalist stances emanate from a particular dominant majority culture (in this case Christianity, the secular Christian movement of the Enlightenment, and [post-]Christian American global hegemony) that seeks to erase other particularist stances in order to enfold them into its own supposedly universal group. In other words, imperialistic universalism as a stance demands exclusion and is itself particularistic in outlawing other, "lower" forms of particularism. The question of dietary restrictions and omnivory comprises, thus, a secular reiteration of this theo-politics.[16]

Pollan, Barber, Bittman, and other Jewish foodies understand themselves to be speaking as everymen, as secularists, as universalists, but, without realizing it, they speak essentially as post-Christians, that is, as people who have absorbed a secularized version of the Christian worldview.[17] The psychologist Rozin, one of Pollan's favorite sources, would, I believe, readily designate their disavowal of social–moral–spiritual significance to food as an instance of status aspiration through acculturation into the mores of the dominant techno-bureaucratic classes even while they critique them with their own methods. Further, as Gillian Crowther reminds us, Rozin, who originated the concept of the "omnivore's dilemma" on which Pollan draws—what to eat if one can theoretically eat

attributes Jewish self-perpetuation to the ritual boundaries erected between itself and other cultures.

[16] This point is repeatedly highlighted by Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. Roy, *Alimentary Tracts*, Chaps. 1 and 2, depicts the politics of a culinary clash of cultures in the admittedly more acute situation of India under English rule and Gandhi's revolt, often dietary, against it, featuring, among other divides, imperialist carnivores versus native vegetarians—and English ones as well, as Gandhi discovered while living in London. Similar denigration of Japan as a nation of weak, superstitious vegetarians—inspired by Buddhist-Shinto restrictions on the killing of animals—was common in the late nineteenth century (Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 256–257).

[17] See, inter alia, Marc Shell, *Children of the Earth: Literature, Politics, and Nationhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. Chap. 2 ("From Coexistence to Toleration or Marranos [Pigs] in Spain"); Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); idem, "Blood," *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon* 1 (2011), http://www.politicalconcepts.org/issue1; idem, "Christians and Money (The Economic Enemy)," *Ethical Perspective: Journal of the European Ethics Network* 12, 4 (2005): 497–519. Anidjar's lecture at the London Graduate School, "On the Christian Question (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud)," 28 October 2013, can be found online, http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2013/10/gil-anidjar-on-the-christian-question-marx-nietzsche-freud.

everything?—solved the dilemma by pointing to the crucial interplay between "three sources of information or experience: first, biological heritage – omnivorousness, ancestry, and individual genes, such as the quantity of taste buds; second, unique individual experiences – such as a lifelong dislike of shellfish after one bad oyster; and third, culture, mediated by age, gender, and social standing."[18] Post-Christian Jewish foodies ironically (and dangerously) weaken one of the three pillars of human wisdom about food choice—the one Crowther calls "humans' further adaptive advantage"—by eliminating traditional culture in favor of modern scientism.

Finally, it must be noted, despite attacks against "unbending" Jewish legalism, that rabbis—even highly religious ones—have always modified Jewish laws as circumstances require. This does not mean that all of the laws are changeable or that there are no limits, to be sure. In the more traditional communities, such adaptation is of course conservative, cautious, and often couched in efforts to prove that the change merely makes operative the original intent of the law or resurrects a minority opinion. But change happens nonetheless.[19] In the Conservative movement, halakhic modification is frequent, yet still carried out within a halakhic process that attempts to follow accepted, age-old juridical logic. (The Reform movement jettisoned halakha as a practice, logic, and binding discourse.) Hence, one can point to various efforts that have arisen to come up with new ways to return to or achieve anew the "spirit" of the kashrut laws, such as the previously mentioned Conservative ethical kosher certification Magen Tzedek.[20] Discursive and practical efforts to change attitudes and

[18] Gillian Crowther, *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 8.

[19] Some of the halakhic changes have been technical in nature. Not all bear "progressive" valence. For example, due to advances in scientific knowledge and powers of microscopic sight, some *haredi* ("ultra-Orthodox") rabbis recently declared wild salmon to be not kosher, as it may host the anasakis parasitic worm. Religiously observant consumers should instead purchase farmed salmon. See Elie Dolgin, "A (Kosher) Can of Worms," *Forward*, 14 August 2012, http://forward.com/culture/160736/a-kosher-can-of-worms/; Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, "Worms in Fish – the Recent Tumult," *Halachically Speaking* 6, 9 (2010): 1–14; available at http://www.shemayisrael.com/parsha/halacha/Issue9.pdf; also available at http://www.kashrut.com/articles/WormsInFish/.

[20] See the official website http://www.magentzedek.org; Rebecca Z. Hornstein, "When Kashrut Is Not 'Kosher': The Post Postville Struggle Over Eating, Ethics and American Jewish Identity" (2013), Religious Studies Honors Projects, Paper 11, http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/reli_honors/11.

behavior have been sprouting for some time now (I cited some above), particularly within the more reformist denominations, but no longer limited to those domains. In other words, even for those immersed in or engaged with Jewish tradition, a demand of "all or nothing" is no longer obligatory. Those who pretend that Judaism insists on an all-or-nothing commitment and cite this coerciveness as grounds for dispensing with the tradition present a false argument.

CHAPTER 7

Omnivory as a Universal Ideal

Abstract Pollan and other (Jewish) foodies seem to insist that avoiding eating certain species or foodstuffs constitutes an irrational superstition unless such avoidance is done for materialist reasons, thus setting up a program that draws on and replicates Eurocentric Christian and post-Christian imperialist modernism. While European scholars long have fixated on what are still sometimes called "food prejudices," little attention has been paid to omnivory. In this chapter, omnivory itself finally receives some analysis. A historical glance links omnivory as a cultural program (rather than as a biological fact) with empire, though few societies or cultures have been truly or fully omnivorous. Even Christianity, highly ambivalent regarding Jewish or other particularistic dietary restrictions, often observed in its various forms its own rules about permitted species, foodstuffs, or modes of consumption. The rationalist post-Christian theoretical omnivory of Pollan and his colleagues thus comes across as even more antagonistic to perceived traditional particularisms than actual Christianity.

Keywords Omnivory • Particularism • Empire • Christianity and food rules • Food ethics • Taste

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What role does omnivory play in the discourse of foodies, Jewish and otherwise? What do they mean when they use this term? In this chapter I turn my attention to such questions, providing a history of omnivory and analysis of its cultural meanings. This is not an easy task, as scholarship has generally ignored such topics, a revealing oversight that I contextualize.

One of the reasons writers like Pollan needed to rediscover or invent food culture is that most Westerners, Americans in particular, don't take culture itself seriously enough or, if they do, see it mostly as a danger. Some in the food movement continue to suffer from this same myopia, a common American antagonism toward history, tradition, and anything that curtails their seemingly sacred autonomy. A utopian yearning for self-making, for psychic borderlessness, for absolute freedom leads Pollan, Barber, Bittman, and others to believe that in some respect food choices should only be personal, made in a socio-cultural vacuum. Hence the inclination of some in the food movement toward omnivory. This stance has two facets. First, food choices should only be made based on ecological/political/ethical reason (obviously subjective terms), that is, materialistic facts. Second, on a perceived moral level omnivory parallels or emulates universalism: If we all eat everything this reflects mutual toleration and respect and we can all live together.

Understanding Omnivory

Defining omnivory is not as easy as it seems. One anthropologist insists that, contrary to a reasonable terminological assumption, modern "omnivorousness does not mean indiscriminate eating; instead it implies openness to eating a wide range of foodstuffs."[1] Sociologists Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann resist defining omnivorousness biologically and use the term only in the sense of cultural omnivory.[2] These two meanings—openness and cosmopolitanism—correlate strongly with the usage of Pollan and his peers. But conscientious foodies mean something more specific. They generally believe that no species or ingredient should be avoided, except for materialist reasons. Despite the fact that humans as a species are omnivorous, then, omnivory as a culinary program is a cultural choice, in this case post-Christian. I say "in this case" because obviously omnivory and the concept of omnivory predate Christianity and existed in cultures that had no or little

[1] Crowther, *Eating Culture*, 7.
[2] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, 33.

contact with Christianity. The theoretical and programmatic omnivory that (Jewish) foodies espouse comes straight from a Western world that overwhelmingly believes in and practices secularized—though often still religious—variants of Christian assumptions. As Alan Henkin insightfully notes: "When it comes to eating, we are choosing within competing rule systems about food. […] The proper question is: Which community's rules about eating do you wish to accept?"[3] We grapple with this question when we consider whose foodways the food movement holds out to us.

Unfortunately, little research has been done about the contexts, meanings, and cost/benefits of omnivory in cultures past and present. Of obvious ecological advantage—omnivory allowed humans to access the nutritional benefits offered by animal meat and to adapt to a wide range of natural habitats. But questions abound: Does it produce more rapacious consumption? Can localized cultures afford to ignore entire kinds of food sources? Do limited diets eradicate favored species more quickly or lead to their concerned preservation, in addition to the intentional or unintentional preservation of avoided species? Are species that are not eaten used in other manners? Do societies that eat from all food sources ever come without their own rituals and regulations of hunting/gathering, growing, and/or consumption? How rare is total omnivory? What cultures have actually acted in this manner? I could find few answers to such questions in the literature.

The investigations of omnivory that I was able to find focus on the perhaps more easily graspable and less overdetermined matter of individual dietary choice, on the personal–cultural construction of taste.[4] One meta-study pertaining to modern first-world individuals concludes that "vegetarians were less likely than omnivores to endorse hierarchical domination" and that omnivores

> may be more prone to objectification, and one effect – or, at a minimum, co-variation – of objectification is increased emotional distance similar to that shown by omnivores. Emotional distance, in turn, would enable the continued domination. Therefore, emotional distance is congruent with the endorsement of hierarchical domination and could be subsumed under a

[3] Alan Henkin, "Kashrut and Autonomy," Zamore (ed.), *Sacred Table*, 102.

[4] The pertinent work of French sociologist Claude Fischler anticipated Pollan in many respects, though the latter never cites him; see "Food, Self and Identity," *Social Science Information* 27, 2 (June 1988):275–293; and "Food Habits, Social Change and the Nature/Culture Dilemma," *Social Science Information* 19, 6 (December 1980): 937–953.

> meat-dominance ideology in which emotional distance, anti-intellectualism, as well as other features, are but some of meat's many conceptual and representational frames.[5]

An intriguing, if rather sweeping conclusion. It does suggest, once again, how ways of eating come together with other ways of being.

Many groups that eat a variety of plants, fruit, nuts, grasses, insects, amphibians, reptiles, fish, birds, and mammals do not necessarily eat *all* of the plants and animals accessible to them, because of cultural food restrictions of one kind or another. Therefore we must distinguish omnivory as eclectic food intake from the literal consumption of any and all species and ingredients without any restriction (total or absolute omnivory) from a programmatic or theoretical omnivory that is only rhetorical. Many groups impose restrictions on consumption in terms of time, quantity, or manner of eating, even if they will eat, in theory, from all species (some Christians, for instance). Environmentally conscious people and politically concerned foodies restrict foods based on values that seek to avoid certain production and distribution methods (harmful or cruel to the animals, environment, or human workers involved), resource, or cultural impact (food sources that don't "belong" to us or are limited or endangered). This means that they might not eat certain species or ingredients (tuna, because dolphins are often killed when tuna are netted). Total omnivory would seem to be rather rare, perhaps even non-existent.

While humans might be omnivorous biologically or ecologically, as are most primates, omnivory as a program seems to be always-already cultural, perhaps even political. It stands more as an ideological construct than as a historical fact, since cuisines seem to have been always-already marked by distinctions, whether based on class, morals, the actual availability of foodstuffs, and so on. Evidence for early historical practice is sparse and inconsistent. The earliest cities and states, generated by and dependent on grains, appear to have developed "subcuisines for powerful and poor, town and

[5] Michael W. Allen, Marc Wilson, Sik Hung Ng and Michael Dunne, "Values and Beliefs of Vegetarians and Omnivores," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 140, 4 (2000): 405–422; see also the similar findings of Malcolm Hamilton, "Eating Death; Vegetarians, Meat and Violence," *Food, Culture and Society* 9, 2 (Summer 2006): 155–177. For a popular, mass-media version, see "Ex-PETA VP: Omnivores Are Like Racists or Something," *Center for Consumer Freedom*, 23 March 2012, http://www.consumerfreedom.com/2012/03/ex-peta-vp-omnivores-are-like-racists-or-something.

country, settled populations and nomads."[6] The Mesopotamians before the first millennium BCE did not eat horse, dog, or snake.[7] In contrast, Indians in the Vedic era (roughly 1500–500 BCE) "ate everything."[8] The rulers and upper classes could afford omnivory—processed foods and exotic foodstuffs from afar—while the lower classes were limited by economics and policy to certain humble staples (which the upper classes shunned).

Omnivory as a positive culinary ideal and program—as opposed to a mere opportunistic practice—parallels cosmopolitanism and, though I cannot point to clear evidence, I suspect that it stems from empire, that is, from non-local, imperialistic, missionizing cultures composed by smaller societal units that were incorporated (willingly or not) within and inclined to incorporate more such local societies. Sociologists link more general cultural omnivory to globalization and the socio-economic success that enables and encourages the consumption of the products of Others.[9] While political empire seemed and seems to prefer the incorporation of foreign foodways, non-state religions, typically, were the source of food rules.[10] Concomitantly, we see in some cases the rise of legal insistence by rulers that *all* members of the imperial group eschew dietary restrictions. Alexander the Great's conquests gave rise to Hellenism and the previous local cuisine of Greeks now incorporated Persian, Indian, and Egyptian foodways.[11] With the rise of its own empire, expanding Roman foodways "displaced existing cuisines […] In the provinces, Romans replaced local kinds of apple trees with ones they preferred."[12] They considered as barbarians anyone who ate their meat raw. The Romans sought to inculcate appreciation for Roman culture, including foodways, so that people "would be easier to incorporate into the empire's governing class"

[6] Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 16. Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture*, 35, claims that Greece had a democratic cuisine where "everyone ate the same modest meals," "at least until the fifth century" BCE.

[7] Linda Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 11; Bottero, *Oldest Cuisine in the World*, 35.

[8] Raja Deekshitar and Ria Kloppenborg, "Hinduism and Buddhism," *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, 1:612.

[9] Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. Kern, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore," *American Sociological Review* 61, 5 (Oct., 1996): 906.

[10] Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 103.

[11] Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture*, 38. Not everyone was happy with this. One Antiphanes complained about what he considered to be unhealthy innovations (*Apud Athenaeum*, 370e).

[12] Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture*, 42.

and mocked "separatist" food "taboos" such as those followed by the Jews.[13] Linda Civitello calls Romans "true omnivores."[14] Here, too, however, class distinctions seem to have undermined idealized elite omnivory.

In Asia, in contrast to the Roman ruling class, the ancient Chinese emperor "never touch[ed] foreign foods (at least in formal meals), and never [ate] with visiting foreigners."[15] In the medieval era, Genghis Khan and the Yuan emperors who ruled after him forbade Muslim and Jewish slaughtering practices:

> Among all the [subject] alien peoples only the Hui-hui say "we do not eat Mongol food." [Cinggis Qa'an replied:] "By the aid of heaven we have pacified you; you are our slaves. Yet you do not eat our food or drink. How can this be right?" He thereupon made them eat. "If you slaughter sheep, you will be considered guilty of a crime." He issued a regulation to that effect […] [In 1279/1280 under Qubilai] all the Muslims say: "if someone else slaughters [the animal] we do not eat." Because the poor people are upset by this, from now on, Muscleman [Muslim] Huihui and Zhuhai [Jewish] Huihui, no matter who kills [the animal] will eat [it] and must cease slaughtering sheep themselves.[16]

The absorption of Others into the newly expanded society's ways is scripted as fighting dangerous resistance to "our" correct, preferable, and inclusive culture in the name of unity.

When it comes to the Inka, Maya, and Aztecs, I have come across no mention of restrictions that would impinge on omnivory. Certainly they had food rules. The Inka, for instance, forbade the peeling of potatoes, which meant that everyone had to eat the nutritious skin.[17] But no species seem to have been prohibited.

[13] David S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay: AD 180–395*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 21.

[14] Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture*, 49.

[15] Laudan, *Empire and Cuisine*, 38.

[16] Quote from Donald Daniel Leslie, "The Integration of Religious Minorities in China: The Case of Chinese Muslims," The Fifty-Ninth George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology (Canberra: Australian National University, 1998), 12. A fuller version is given in Johan Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road*, illustrated ed. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 228–229; Michael Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sects* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999), 24. I thank my student Josh Weiner for bringing this example to my attention.

[17] Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture*, 96.

Today's omnivory correlates to a globalizing program that dismisses local cultures unless they offer something to be packaged and marketed, sees borders as an obstacle to "free" corporate trade, and understands the world as a series of technocratic problems and solutions. Contemporary omnivores are first-world citizens who want to be able to eat anything that they fancy, from anywhere, regardless of the costs to the relevant local peoples or environment (avocado, quinoa, baobab fruit, etc.). Our global late-industrial/virtual capitalist system—what better reflects omnivorous appetite?—has driven numerous species to extinction and is close to depleting all too many others, potentially literally eating away at the ground of our own species existence.[18]

Many scholarly works treat food taboos or avoidance customs, but I have found nothing that explores omnivory as a positive value, as a program—a rather astounding lack. Christian theological discourse comprises one of the few exceptions, and even here the discussion is disappointingly thin. Let me now turn to this discourse, which is vast and complex, and can only be treated here inadequately. A brief digression on the complexity of actual Christian foodways will be helpful as a pre-history of post-Christian omnivory and modern secular imperialistic universalism, that is, of dominant majority insularity and endogeny-centrism. This will help us better define what is meant when foodies use the term omnivory. First I will offer a history of Christian culinary practice.

Christians Have Food Rules, Too

Despite the eventual Christian eschewal of Jewish dietary laws and restrictions, Christians were never absolute omnivores. They erected their own set of religiously or culturally forbidden or discouraged manners of eating and species. According to various early Christian authorities, this meant one should avoid upper-class food, wine, too much meat, or gluttonous consumption, especially for monastics and clerics. Some scholars argue that early Christians, following Jesus' example, opted to avoid meat and made a vegetarian meal, the Eucharist, central to their spiritual life.[19]

[18] Israeli educator Ilan Gur Ze'ev calls our current situation "the post-modern cannibalistic feast" (*Diasporic Philosophy and Counter-Education* [Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2010], 12).

[19] See, for instance, Michael S. Northcott, "Eucharistic Eating, and Why many Early Christians Preferred Fish," *Policy* 15 (2005): 301–327; reprinted in Rachel Muers and David Grummet (eds.), *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and*

At different historical times and in different places with some variation insects, horses, dogs, and cats were or are not consumed by Christians.[20] In addition, Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity designated certain periods of the year or week when specific foods could not be consumed (meat on Fridays, pork and other foods during Lent, etc.), which varied by region and culture and were often highly detailed.[21]

Many early Christians followed biblical and customary Jewish prohibitions. Jesus himself and his closest followers seem not to have eaten with non-Jews and to have observed the dietary regulations.[22] Acts of the Apostles (ca. 80–90 CE) 15:20, describing a synod in Jerusalem from around 45 CE, presented the text of a letter sent to non-Jewish Christians in Antioch (Syria) and Cilicia (Asia Minor) that they should abstain from food "polluted" by idols, the meat of strangled animals, and blood, in accord with biblical and rabbinic prohibitions for Israelites.[23] (Strangling obviously does not remove the blood from the animal the way cutting its throat, hanging it upside down, and allowing the blood to drain out does—standard Jewish practice according to kashrut.) The prohibition on eating blood and unslaughtered animals was repeated in the Councils of Gangrene (325 CE), Orleans (536), Constance (692) and by Pope Leo VI (886) and Calixtus II (1120).[24] The Roman Catholic Church seems to have stopped insisting on

Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 232–246. Following Christian understandings, Northcott thinks that eating fish does not remove one from the category of vegetarian. The Bulgarian priest Bogomil (tenth century) encouraged his followers, who became known as the Bogomils, to abstain from eating meat (Stamenka E. Antonova, "Bulgaria, Patriarchal Orthodox Church of," *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, ed. John Anthony McGuckin, 2 vols. [Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011], 1:82).

[20] On medieval bans against eating horse meat, including one by Pope Gregory III (reigned from 731 to 741), who called it "a filthy and abominable custom," see Alexandra Sanmark, "Dietary Regulations in Early Christian Norway," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 1 (2005): 208–210, 212–216.

[21] Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 169–170, 191; David Grummet and Rachel Muers, *Theology on the Menu: Asceticism, Meat and Christian Diet* (London: Routledge, 2010); Vernika E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes Toward Food in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1996). In medieval and modern Catalonia onions and lentils were avoided during Lent because they were associated with Jewish cooking (Fabre-Vassas, *Singular Beast*, 240).

[22] Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, 88.

[23] There is debate about whether the blood here refers to food issues or the general spilling of blood as a moral warning; see Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, 94–96.

[24] See Karl Böckenhoff, *Das apostolische Speisegesetz in den ersten fünf Jahrhunderten* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1903); idem, *Speisesatzungen mosaischer Art in*

these prohibitions only in the twelfth century.[25] The Eastern Orthodox Church maintained the restriction on consumption of blood and continues to do so.[26] Such perspectives distinguished Christians from both Jews and Greeks (i.e., gentiles).

Christian writers attacked pagan cruelty and hypocrisy by pointing to Christian ethical eating habits, showing that the minimal food restrictions were not merely official pronouncements that went unheeded. Minucius Felix, in his *Octavius*, 30:6 (ca. 150), lauds Christians for refusing to eat the blood of animals. Tertullian, in his *Apology for the Christians*, 9:14 (ca. 200), asserts that Christians will not eat the blood of any animal and abstain from eating animals that are strangled or die on their own.[27] As late as 346, the Persian king Sapur II, persecuting Christians in his realm for their perceived denigration of Zoroastrianism, ordered some imprisoned Christians, including St. Aithilahas, to eat animal blood, which they refused to do.[28] John Chrysostom (347–407) asserts that the command in Gen. 9:4 not to eat the blood of animals but only their flesh refers to avoiding animals that are strangled, perhaps implying that one must not avoid eating animal blood in general (Homilies on Genesis, 27, Sec. 13). Yet in Sec. 16 Crysostom praises the command not to eat animal blood and claims that it is no burden to observe, while in Sec. 18 he urges his audience to heed God's commands. Whether he is exhorting Christians to avoid eating all animal blood or only the blood of strangled animals remains uncertain.[29] According to the *Apostolic Constitutions* (bk. 7),

mittelalterlichen Kirchenrechtsquellen des Morgen- und Abendlandes (Münster: Aschendorffsche Buchhandlung, 1907).

[25] Thomas Schirrmacher, "The Biblical Prohibition to Eat Blood," *Chalcedon Report* 355 (Feb. 1995): 34–35.

[26] Böckenhoff, *Speisesatzungen*, 37–40; Schirrmacher, "The Biblical Prohibition to Eat Blood."

[27] Elsewhere, he insists on the commensality that Christians share with everyone else, "for we are not Brahmins or naked Indian sages living in the woods, exiled from life" (*Apology*, 42:1–5; quoted in Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, 106).

[28] S. E. Assemani, *Acta Sanctorum: Martyrum Orientalium et Occidentalium* (Rome, 1748), 1:204, 188; H. Delehaye, *Les versiones grecques des actes des martyres persans sous Sapor II*, 512–513, reprinted from *Patrologia orientalis* (Paris, Firmin-Didot) 2 (1907): 405–560; Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Primitive Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: J. Moir, 1798), 2:167.

[29] My thanks to Hans Hafner for these references and, for the one concerning Sapur II, Christoph Markschies and Emmanouela Grypeou. Other early references can be found in Michael Cahill, "Drinking Blood at a Kosher Eucharist?: The Sound of Scholarly Silence," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32, 4 (2002): 168–181.

compiled in Antioch (ca. 380), important evidence of actual practice, clergy who eat the blood of an animal or meat from an animal killed by another animal or that died naturally are to be deprived of office and lay offenders suspended (on animals killed by other animals or that die naturally: Lev. 7:24, 22:8; Deut. 14:21).[30]

Some Christians maintained even more extensive food regulations, avoiding not just blood, a foodstuff heavily laden with symbolic moral significance, but some entire species of animals. The *Didache* (ca. late first or early second century CE) exhorts Christians to follow biblical dietary restrictions if they are able (6:2–3). According to some sources, the Nestorian Church (one of the two branches of the Syrian Church) continued to observe the biblical dietary laws into late modernity.[31] The monastic rules composed by St. Benedict in Italy (ca. 530, but based on earlier compilations) forbade the eating of quadrupeds. Prohibitions on the consumption of blood or animals killed by dogs, hawks, or other animals, as well as the forbidding of the eating of animals that had died on their own, entailed a part of a number of ecclesiastical and monarchic laws after the eleventh century in newly Christianized European lands, such as in Scandinavia.[32] Irish monks, meanwhile, also seem to have observed various

[30] J. W. Rogerson, *According to the Scriptures?: The Challenge of Using the Bible in Social, Moral and Political Questions* (London: Routledge, 2007), 35. Not many years later, Augustine (*Against Faustus*) offers an unprecedented positive reading of the Jews and their laws, arguing that in following all of the details of biblical law—including those pertaining to foods—they fulfill God's will and testified to divine truth. Augustine, perhaps the most generous toward the Jews and Jewish law of the early Christian thinkers, sees this law as a divine benefit and privilege. See, for instance, Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), Chaps. 10 and 12.

[31] Asahel Grant, a missionary and first-hand witness, but not an entirely reliable source, states that Nestorians priests informed him "that formerly their people would not so much as touch, and much less eat, the flesh of swine, or other animals regarded as unclean by the ceremonial law. It is one of the accusations which the Nestorians bring against their Christian neighbours, that they eat unclean or forbidden food" (*The Nestorians; or, The Lost Tribes: Containing Evidence of Their Identity; an Account of Their Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies; Together with Sketches of Travel in Ancient Assyria, Armenia, Media, and Mesopotamia*) (London: John Murray, 1841), 189. Various nineteenth-century sources agree that the Nestorian high clergy avoided meat.

[32] Sanmark, "Dietary Regulations," 210–211. The Older Gulathing Law (10th century?) requires that animals killed by trees or by falling off a cliff must be "hung up till the blood dries up," and, in other law codes, that such animals be sprinkled with consecrated water and salt (217), revealing a curious mixture of knowledge and adoption of not only biblical law

Old Testament laws.[33] The Old Believers, who broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century, "maintain strict taboos regarding food […], often keeping separate dishes for use by outsiders."[34]

Ironically, even pigs came under moral suasion by Christians. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215 CE) recommends that those devoting themselves to the development of their soul avoid pork, giving the same reason as his fellow Alexandrian, the Jewish philosopher Philo (*De specialibus legibus*, bk. 4, Chaps. 17 and 18): pigs are lazy scavengers and the embodiment of vice, even willing to eat the flesh of human corpses. The Syrian Orthodox Church, the Coptic Church, Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and the Nestorian Church, or some members of these bodies, continued and continue to abstain from pig, though variation exists.[35] Local culture often impacted and continues to shape official Christian policy regarding pig meat. In the Gondar province of Ethiopia, Christians refuse even today to eat pig, just like their Muslim, Jewish, and even pagan neighbors. They also avoid camel because they consider its consumption a Muslim practice. In the Balkans as well, Muslim influence led Christians to abstain from pork.[36] Many Protestants today around the world avoid foods associated with local pagan or tribal ceremonial life.

An opposing strand of Christian thought rejected food prohibitions based on species or physical grounds, what some call ingredient-based restrictions, from early on. Jesus (Mark 7:19) declares food from all animals to be "clean" and permissible for consumption. But the real change in attitude seems to have begun with Paul, who urged missioning to non-Jews and the creation of a pan-ethnic community in and of Christ. He beseeches followers of Jesus to "[e]at everything that is sold in the

but also Jewish practice, alongside unconcern for biblical law, if these are not coincidental parallels.

[33] David Grumett, "Mosaic Food Rules in Celtic Spirituality in Ireland," *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology*, ed. Rachel Muers and David Grumett (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 31–43.

[34] Irina Paert, "Old Believers," *Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 2:420.

[35] On Syrian and Armenian Christians, see Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian [Jacobite] Church of Mesopotamia* (New York/Philadelphia: D. Appleton & Co./Geo S. Appleton, 1844), 126–127. On the Nestorians, see Grant, *Nestorians*, 189. Southgate, in contrast to Grant, claims the Nestorians of his day do not avoid eating pig. Interestingly, "[t]he Armenian and other Orthodox rituals of slaughter display obvious links with shechitah, Jewish kosher slaughter" (Grumett and Muers, *Theology on the Menu*, 121).

[36] Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh*, xiii, 41, 342 n. 204.

market-place, asking nothing" (1 Cor. 10:25), that is, to refrain from querying vendors about the kashrut of an animal (see also Rom. 14:14–15, 20–21).[37] The apostle Peter had a vision in which a heavenly voice insisted that no creature is "impure" and therefore forbidden to eat (Acts 10). In the second century CE the anonymous Letter of Barnabas (10:3) spiritualizes the Torah's ban on eating pig to mean avoiding "swinish" people who live in luxury.[38] A century later Novatian (ca. 200–258) similarly allegorizes away all of the Jewish dietary laws, arguing, for instance, that the requirement for land animals to have split hooves and chew their cud really refers to people who neither walk firmly in virtue nor ruminate on the true (spiritual) meaning of the law.[39]

In general, Christianity seems to draw on Hellenistic and Roman Republican moralizing, rather than on Israelite cosmology. According to Hub Zwart, "Nowhere [in ancient Greek discourse] do we find it indicated that certain food products are to be regarded as illicit in and by themselves. Everything is allowed – as long as one's food practices remain within the limits of temperance."[40] Unlike the Greeks, Romans did not offer sacrifices when eating meat,[41] an approach that also probably influ-

[37] In the latter verses he seems to argue that Jews, and members of all ethnic groups, should observe the traditional dietary laws of their group, but insists that all foods are permitted and that therefore no non-Jew need think that in order to follow Christ he or she must take on the Jewish restrictions. On Paul and food, see Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, 88–100. Justin Martyr, Augustine, and others argue, through Paul, that Jewish law per se was not problematic, but only the Jews' false beliefs about the law, such as that it was necessary for salvation.

[38] I thank Hans Hafner for telling me of this reference.

[39] Novatian, *On Jewish Foods*, Chap. 3. Yet in Chap. 6 he asserts that none have ruled as strictly against gluttony as Jesus and in Chap. 7 he inveighs against Christians eating what is offered to idols.

[40] Zwart, "Short History of Food Ethics," 116. Zwart, disappointingly limiting himself to an artificial, schematic, binaristic opposition between Athens and Jerusalem, agrees with Pollan on the essentially arbitrary nature of the Hebraic dietary prohibitions. The Greek stance turns into the Christian one, which offers an alternative to the Jewish/pagan fixation on the importance of what one eats. In other words, Zwart, in an admittedly brief survey, recapitulates the circularity of (post-)Christian omnivory with a disconcerting lack of critical penetration into the abstract cultural difference he constructs, in accord with the self-construction of the cultures he treats, and troubling lack of interest in wider comparative analysis (no mention of Euro-American Muslims or Hindus or any non-Europeans even when he tackles modernity!). As I try to show here, Christian does not always mean opposition to distinctions in food sources, and Jewish/"pagan" cannot be limited to ethno-national distinction-making for its own sake. A review of early Christian readings of the Jewish food laws can be found in Rosenblum, *Jewish Dietary Laws*, Chaps. 4 and 7; Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, Chap. 6.

[41] Civitello, *Cuisines and Culture*, 43.

enced Christians. It is not coincidental that Christian authorities dropped their repeated warnings against eating the meat or food of "idolatrous" sacrifices in the late fourth century, after the Roman Empire had become officially Christian and banned sacrifices altogether.[42] The next few centuries witnessed more frequent bans on commensality with Jews, however.[43]

Rachel Laudan suggests that with the Reformation attacks on Catholic ritual, outward routine, and hierarchy, Protestants dispensed even with Catholic notions of a moralized, ascetic diet, arguing that "all believers had equal access to the divine regardless of what they ate."[44] Martin Luther insisted that "our Lord God regards not what we eat, drink, or how we clothe ourselves."[45] Theological universalism (among Christians) coalesced with the consequences of European overseas expansion and the rising physical sciences: "In the infinite universe, there were no correspondences between location, rank, age, gender, humors, and colors delimiting what people should eat."[46] Yet Protestants came up with their own forms of moral culinary distinction. Many, particularly those of radical orientation, aghast at the lifestyles of the upper class, turned against "luxury" and "depravity" in consumption. Dutch Calvinist clergy preached against sauces, which "disguised food as the equally dubious wigs and cosmetics disguised women."[47] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a wave of theologically-grounded vegetarianism swept various Christian communities in the United States, connected in part to faddish diet reforms of different stripes, which, in their Christian versions, warned people away from many specific foods.[48] Indeed, a culinary history of Protestantism shows that theo-political moralizing about kinds of foods and ways of eating them never completely disappeared.

[42] Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, 107–108.

[43] Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food*, Chap. 8.

[44] Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 207.

[45] *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, ed. William Hazlitt and Alexander Chalmers (London: H. G. Bohn, 1857), 706; quoted in Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 210.

[46] Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 215.

[47] Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 223, 229.

[48] David Grumett, "Dynamics of Christian Dietary Abstinence," *Religion, Food, and Eating in North America*, ed. Benjamin E. Zeller et al., 5–8; Jeremy Rapport, "'Join Us! Come, Eat!' Vegetarianism in the Formative Period of the Seventh-Day Adventists and the Unity School of Christianity," *Religion, Food, and Eating in North America*, ed. Benjamin E. Zeller et al., 23–40; Margaret Puskar-Pasewicz, "Kitchen Sisters and Disagreeable Boys: Debates over Meatless Diets in Nineteenth-Century Shaker Communities," *Eating in Eden: Food and American Utopias*, ed. Etta M. Madden and Martha L. Finch (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 109–124; Daniel Sack, *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 187–197.

Toward Post-Christian Omnivory

Theoretically, Christian imperialistic theological omnivory might be understood through Bronislaw Szerszynski's evocation of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and Bataille's *Theory of Religion*:

> With the territorialised geo-social formation of the tribe comes Bataille's "first representation" of the sacred, in which the divine is sensuous, material, and ambivalent, both light and dark […] With the formation of empire, and the despot as socius [a "clothed, full body" to which is attributed all powers of production], the ambivalence internal to the divine is recoded onto a new dualism between Heaven and Earth, between an absolute, moralised and deterritorialised divine beyond the world and a sensuous "real" world deprived of the periodic immersion in immanence and immediacy.[49]

With Christ as earthly "despot" reigning over a flattened, unitary world, and God relegated to the beyond, spiritual immanence and immediacy (light or dark) no longer needed to or could be allowed no longer to inhere in particular animal species or organic food sources. Theological omnivory levels the meaningfulness of the earthly (to) out of existence in response to the perceived threat of "humans engaged in particular situated patterns of interaction with animals, spirits and other beings."[50] We see, however, that, in practice, Christianity did not always live up to its own ideology.

In theory Christian omnivory sought and seeks to remove "Jewish" worries about contamination by things of the world ("materialism"), leaving only concern for morally problematic attitudes. On another level it aimed and aims to eliminate particularistic ethnic practices as a means of forging a unified humanity. Unfortunately, it did and does not acknowledge that it merely replaced multiple ethnic particularisms with a wider religious particularism. One "post-Christian" justification for European omnivorousness can be found in Jean-François Revel's attempt, in *Culture and Cuisine*, to distinguish between popular/regional and erudite/international cuisines, the former stuck in a kind of choicelessness regarding ingredients and methods dictated by tradition, averse to and incapable of creativity ("executed unconsciously and mechanically"), always only local

[49] Bronislaw Szerszynski, "Gods of the Anthropocene: Geo-spiritual Formations in the Earth's New Epoch," draft paper, December 2015, 4, published in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 10 February 2017; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1977); George Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1989).

[50] Szerszynski, "Gods of the Anthropocene," 14.

and particularistic ("exclusive," refusing "to take into consideration any other register of flavors than its own").[51] Traif restaurant's self-description as a place serving "pork and shellfish and *global soul food*" (emphasis added) partakes of a similar logic. Soul food was originally a term for African-American cooking, but here, it is turned (by a Jewish restaurateur) into something universal, something possible only if the fact that millions upon millions of people do not eat pork or shellfish is suppressed.

Scholarly interest in taboos and avoidance customs no doubt reflects a fascination and incredulity born of the Christian environment of European rationalism, in which alleged omnivory was considered "normal." Simoons confesses as much, noting that his interest in dietary prohibitions against meat goes back to a year of field research in Ethiopia. As late as his 1993 Preface (the original edition of *Eat Not This Flesh* dates back to 1961), Simoons calls these dietary choices "prejudices."[52]

To repeat, actual Christians observed and innovated various food rules.[53] Despite this history, idealized, often sacralized omnivory—the idea that no animal or ingredient was inherently impure or problematic to eat—bolstered in the modern era by science, became a justification for Christians and post-Christians to exclude and denigrate those who don't or won't eat everything. The by-now nearly two millennia-old culture of anti-Jewish pig traditions should not be a problem for Jews to grapple with, a "Jewish question" (all this goes for Muslims and others as well, of course). It is a Christian and now post-Christian question.[54] Jewish food activists' pro-pig stance fits in disturbingly snugly with the finding by Frederick J. Simoons of "a curious unwillingness on the part of Westerners to accept the rejection of pork by Moslems, Jews, and Hindus, and an eagerness to get them to eat pork." Simoons goes on to discuss several actual campaigns to "convert" their attitude.[55] It seems obvious that the omnivorousness of the pig correlates with its prohibition by Jews and others who eat a restricted diet while also correlating with its centrality for Christians and others who eat (supposedly) everything.

[51] *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey Through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (New York: Doubleday, 1982). Heldke politely but expertly skewers Revel in *Exotic Appetites*, 96–100, whence my quotations.

[52] *Eat Not This Flesh*, xiii–xiv.

[53] My conclusion is supported by other scholars such as Grumett, "Dynamics of Christian Dietary Abstinence," 13, 17–18.

[54] Birnbaum, *République et le Cochon*, covers many aspects of these arguments in the French context.

[55] Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh*, 101.

Wittingly or not, the omnivory followed by Jewish foodies falls into this post-Christian lineage. Pollan has provocatively suggested that the pig's unkosher status should be reconsidered. While so far he has not fleshed out this recommendation, others have (such as Portland foodie David Levi, cited earlier). Among other arguments, pigs eat just about anything, convert plant energy to animal comestibility with great efficiency, breed easily and rapidly, and require relatively little management.[56] Raised the right way, they offer enormous benefits to small-scale farms as biological systems.[57]

Within the food movement a confusion reigns between total omnivory in terms of species (biology as a value-free realm) and avoidance of specific food sources based on assessed concerns—personal health, seasonality, the environmental dangers of production, scarcity, and so on (natural–cultural ecology as a moral–political arena). On one level, Pollan and other foodies construct omnivory as a prescription, an ideal, not merely a description of human nature; being willing to eat pig, any, or, rather, *every* species if ethically raised and killed becomes the ethical path.[58] Some Jewish foodies seem to object mostly (only?) to religious or traditional regulations, particularly Jewish ones. In a manner similar to Paul and Augustine, Pollan and his peers seek a new (a)theological rationalism that inscribes them—and all of us—in a new supposedly all-inclusive polity.

Other foodies have come up with forms of omnivory that parallel Pollan's. Daniel Vitalis, producer of the ReWild Yourself podcast series, calls himself a "conscientious omnivore," a stance that eschews both factory farming and veganism.[59] Others call themselves "ethical omnivores," similarly positioning themselves against vegetarianism and veganism.[60]

[56] Kaminsky, *Pig Perfect*, 62.

[57] Diener and Robkin, "Ecology, Evolution, and the Search for Cultural Origins," details many of these benefits.

[58] Some in the Jewish Reform movement share this perspective, seeing, for instance, "eating free-range pork raised by workers who are fairly compensated" as an ethical *Jewish* choice (Balin, "Making Every Forkful Count," 13). Omnivory can produce its own anxieties; see Jayne Davis, "Have Christians Become Opportunistic Omnivores?" *The ABP [Associated Baptist Press] News Blog*, 16 May 2013, http://www.abpnews.com/blog/faithful-living/have-christians-become-opportunistic-omnivores-2013-05-16/#.UiC8VT-Luu4.

[59] http://www.danielvitalis.com/rewild-yourself-podcast/why-im-a-conscientious-omnivore-daniel-vitalis-arthur-haines-100.

[60] A movement or at least a website named the Ethical Omnivore Movement developed in recent years; see http://www.ethicalomnivore.org; Emily Monaco, "Why It's More

These self-qualifying omnivores establish self-limitations on absolute omnivory in their search for sustainable food systems and eating practices, while insisting on the biologically omnivorous nature of humans, something they see anti-animal-exploitation vegetarians and vegans as unrealistically and unhealthily denying. As with so many foodie stances, such programs are "characterized by a tension between ideologies of consumerism (that maximize individual choice and pleasure) and citizenship (that emphasize responsibility to a larger social and ecological collective)," yet choose "to minimize it, emphasizing a 'win-win' approach where ethical eating is positioned as an easy way to protect the earth *and* satisfy one's palate."[61]

The social and cultural politics of even theoretical omnivory remain fraught for concerned consumers. Heldke cites an editorialist from the 1990s advocating that we "stop running helter-skelter down the road to diversity […] we gain much from a shared cuisine. It helps to bind us together in a time when we are constantly being urged to pull apart by expressing our individuality."[62] Contrarily, cookbook author Madhur Jaffrey, an Indian woman who learned and began cooking only after moving to the United States, feels, "rather strongly, that children should be exposed […] to foods of as many different countries as possible. Culinary insularity is really nothing more than a set of stubborn taste habits."[63]

Important To Be an Ethical Omnivore Than a Vegetarian," *Rodale's Organic Life*, 27 April 2017: https://www.rodalesorganiclife.com/food/what-diet-is-best-for-the-environment; Joanna Chineme Abaraoha, "The Ethical Omnivore Movement," *Odyssey*, 9 May 2016: https://www.theodysseyonline.com/ethical-omnivore-movement

[61] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, 113.

[62] Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, 160.

[63] Quoted in Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, 167. In a different, first-world, scholarly context, Elaine Showalter marks Jewishness as openness to food and the sensory, in opposition to uptight and disembodied WASPiness (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant): "My Jewish family in Boston were not gourmets, but we had waded in pickled herring. I had to get used to the idea that an interest in food was crass and anti-intellectual" ("Food: My Dinner with Derrida," *The American Prospect*, 3 January 2002: http://prospect.org/article/food-my-dinner-derrida). Traditional Judaism holds both positive and negative attitudes toward the enjoyment of worldly things, but that is a discussion too lengthy for here. A different angle on the meaning of food and group boundaries for Jews can be glimpsed in Elissa Altman's recollection of how her father, who had temporarily left her mother, returned and cooked for himself and his daughter a meal of Spam and eggs. Coming back to this scene, her mother threw out the can, scraped the meal into the garbage, and attempted to rinse the abhorrent stuff off the dishes, saying rebukingly, "We're Jews, […] We don't leave our children. And

The coded implications of these statements are readily noted, while obviously the meaning of "inclusive" and "exclusive" changes depending on context.

Slow Food's recognition of cultural relativity in food consumption, consistent with the group's support for localism, regionalism, and the preservation of unique foodways and diverse agriculinary approaches, impresses by its sensitivity: Expecting "Muslims to appreciate *sanguinaccio* (sausage made from pork blood)," for instance, is unrealistic and unfair, the group announced at its 4th Salone del Gusto in 2002.[64] In other words, at least in this instance, Slow Food not only emphasizes "integration, diversification and localization" as antidotes to the corporate food industry's "alienation, homogenization and globalization," but models it.[65] Unlike Pollan's nod to culinary diversity because of its benefit for relatively well-off first-world consumers, whom it can "save" from their own destructive system, sincere cosmopolitanism (if one can use such a label) recognizes culinary difference within the modern, consuming West itself as a right of those within that system and as a boon to all.

Localism and cultural isolationism raise their own set of questions, of course. Pierre Bourdieu labels culinary cosmopolitanism, experimenting with new foods, an insistence on a "taste of freedom," as a distinctly middle-class habitus, quite offset from the working-class preference for what is familiar and "theirs," even when members of the working class can afford to eat otherwise.[66] Sometimes, the relationship between "tradition" and "cosmopolitanism" can grow paradoxical, even amusing. Asian Buddhists are not generally vegetarian, while Western Buddhists tend to be, leading Buddhist restaurateurs in Tibet who are not vegetarian themselves to operate vegetarian restaurants in order to cater to Western Buddhist tourists.[67] Their romanticization by many Westerners notwithstanding, nearly all indigenous or first

we don't eat dog food" (Altman, *Treyf*, 65). Here the industrialized, processed food of dominant modernity stands for a kind of insensitive inhumaneness that "we," as a minority that aims for "menshlichkeit" (Yiddish spelling), should avoid.

[64] Petrini and Padovani, *Slow Food Revolution*, 123.

[65] Daisy Tam, "Slow Journeys: What Does It Mean to Go Slow?," *Food, Culture and Society* 11, 2 (June 2008): 216. See also the nuanced and not uncritical consideration of Slow Food's improving support of culinary and cultural diversity offered by Donati, "Pleasure of Diversity."

[66] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 194–199.

[67] Mentioned in Ellen Posman, "Veggieburger in Paradise: Food as World Transformer in Contemporary American Buddhism and Judaism," *Eating in Eden*, ed. Madden and Finch, 250.

peoples consume animals. Somewhat similarly, in what is likely a typical dynamic, many of the mostly middle- or upper-class white Christian volunteers at one Atlanta food pantry are vegetarian, while the majority of their lower-class black "guests" "want meat-based dishes."[68]

When agriculinary mores are steeped in a dominant culture's ethnocentrism or xenophobia, as Fabre-Vassas shows in the case of the Jew-hating and Jew-obsessed pig culture of rural Europe, the necessary task of segregating what is useful from what is problematic becomes a challenge. Contemporary foodie discourse is not immune to such historical dynamics. London-based food writer, cook, and beekeeper Jojo Tulloh suggestively titled her exploration of the evolving artisanal food landscape *The Modern Peasant*.[69] Many scholars have identified one of the goals of the food movement as strengthening rural farmers and local food networks in the face of global capital and centralizing standardization.[70] Seeking to reclaim or at least rethink this often-pejorative term, peasant, in the context of the kind of mindful, small, DIY (do-it-yourself) agriculture that the food movement seeks to foster, Tulloh and other thinkers unwittingly make an opening for anxieties regarding the sorts of ignorance and intolerance that the combination of local insularity and endogeny-centric ideology can produce. I do not intend to impugn local individuals or structures as such, but merely want to note that one cannot assume a "progressive" orientation on their part.[71]

At worst, as part of nationalist agrarian programs, agriculture has come under the sway of ethno-politics. After coming to power, the National Socialists obliged elite members of the Hitler Youth to do a nine-month stint working in the agricultural sector. Through a curriculum designed by the National Socialist Ministry of Science, Education, and Culture, this *Landjahr* aimed on the one hand to reconnect urban residents with the earth in order to counteract modern trends that the National Socialists

[68] Sack, *Whitebread Protestants*, 130.

[69] Jojo Tulloh, *The Modern Peasant: Adventures in City Food* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2013).

[70] Affection toward and concern for preserving the foods and ways of "ordinary" farmers, local food producers, and rural life characterize the discourse of Slow Food. See, for example, Petrini and Padovani, *Slow Food Revolution*; David Goodman, "Rural Europe Redux? Reflections on Alternative Agro-Food Networks and Paradigm Change," *Sociologia Ruralis* 44, 1 (January 2004): 3–16, on "repeasantization"; Donati, "Pleasure of Diversity," 233–237.

[71] Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, 212–213, raises some of these same issues.

despised, while on the other hand it sought to forge young militants steeped in the party's social and racial worldview. Hence an important component of the training these 14 and 15 year olds received entailed learning and singing, at mealtimes and while traveling, German folk songs and political songs of the Hitler Youth.[72] Zionist agriculture, an offshoot of the same nineteenth-century "blood and soil" romantic nationalism that gave rise to Nazism, also generated ethnocentric perspectives. Just after the founding of the State of Israel, for instance, Zionist policy-makers banned the black goats favored by Palestinians and Bedouin, seeing them as a threat to the (Jewish) mission of re-forestation of the land.[73] Danger lurks at the formation and maintenance of all communities, even if most cannot be equated with those at the extremes of intolerance. The contradiction that Pollan and his like-minded colleagues, and by extension others in the food movement, must face is that their ostensibly universalist program seems to exclude many.

In some sense, Pollan and his post-Christian Jewish foodie colleagues have determined to be more universalist than the Christian program of theological omnivory, basing their food decisions on scientific and political (i.e., materialist) facts alone, and not on "superstition." Of course, *contra* Pollan et al., traditional or religious individuals and cultures also assert that they operate based only on facts, but for them this includes cosmological, spiritual, and ethical considerations. Yet even concerned foodies like Pollan do not really aspire to total omnivory, since they also follow a set of self-limitations in their diet based on materialist considerations. Again, like Paul and Augustine, they want regulations established only for the "right" reasons: personal inner orientation and not an external system, choices made freely, decisions that do not imagine a "magical" cosmology that necessitates dos and don'ts. The tensions within their ideology leave post-Christian foodies such as Pollan as representing not post-Augustinians so much as post-laissez-faire Protestants, however, opposed to perceived superstition and even metaphysics, but really "Christian" only in their obsession with permitting foods forbidden by Judaism. Despite the fact that commerce, industrialism, and technocracy have

[72] See the sources provided in Heinz Schreckenberg, *Erziehung, Lebenswelt und Kriegseinsatz der deutschen Jugend unter Hitler: Anmerkungen zur Literatur*, Geschichte der Jugend, 25 (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2001), Chap. 10.

[73] Tamar Novick, "Milk and Honey: Technologies of Plenty in the Making of a Holy Land, 1880–1960," (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2014), Chap. 4.

destroyed healthy traditional foodways, for Pollan and his peers science and democratic universalism serve to legitimate a denigration of restrictive culinary guidelines rooted in "superstitiously" ritualized cultures (as practiced by billions of people across the globe).

It seems clear to me that we all participate in an endless dance between forms of distinction, between the universal and the particular, neither of which can exist without the other. Some lines are always being drawn. The most recent serious scholarly investigation, based on a review of a vast body of literature, found that "[f]ood taboos [sic] are known from virtually all human societies."[74] It remains unclear whether the food movement's diverse and mostly unwritten rules offer benefits and solutions better suited to contemporary crises than traditional food norms. Only time will tell.[75] Ironically, as David Freidenreich pointed out to me, the kind of "ethical omnivory" that Pollan and his peers desire is not at all incompatible with any ethnic or traditional cuisine, not even Judaism.[76] The presumptuous, imperialist universalism in their program occupies the heart of the next and final chapter.

[74] Victor Benno Meyer-Rochow, "Food Taboos: Their Origins and Purposes," *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 5 (2009) 18.

[75] See Flammang's investigation, along just these lines, of how the "delicious revolution" of Alice Waters compares with "our mother's cookbooks or oral food traditions? Ethnic food traditions?" and the like (*Taste for Civilization*, 175, Chaps. 9 and 10); Martin Palmer, "Religion, Culture and Diet," *The Meat Crisis: Developing More Sustainable Production and Consumption*, ed. Joyce D'Silva and John Webster (London: Earthscan, 2010), 227–235; Katerina O. Sarri, Siobhan Higgins and Anthony G. Kafatos, "Are Religions 'Healthy'? A Review on Religious Recommendations on Diet and Lifestyle," *Human Ecology* 14 (2006): 7–20.

[76] Personal conversation, July 2017.

CHAPTER 8

When Eco-Kosher Pigs Fly

Abstract By way of conclusion this chapter revisits some of the fundamental questions raised so far. What count as cogent reasons for food-related decisions? Who gets to decide: individuals, societies, or certain classes within societies? What are the consequences of drawing boundaries when it comes to food? Such issues are discussed comparatively in connection with Judaism and Jewishness from the perspective of methodological lenses such as sociological treatments of authenticity, postcolonialism, anti-globalization discourse, and personal psychology and identity formation. Modernist biases against tradition, culture, and religion continue to be interrogated as part of an argument against voracious universalisms that cannot tolerate exceptions.

Keywords Authenticity • Food choices • Jewish cuisine • Intersubjectivity

Jewish tradition itself acknowledges anxieties over the purpose of law and behavior restricted by guidelines external to the self. A punning rabbinic passage is often cited by medieval commentators to suggest that after the coming of the messiah, the pig will change its nature—it will start to chew its cud—and become kosher: "Why is its name called *chazir*? Because the

J. Schorsch, *The Food Movement, Culture, and Religion*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71706-7_8

Holy Name Blessed Be He will return (*yachzir*) it to Israel."[1] In a perfected world, commandments, prohibitions, and rituals may well not be needed, but for the rabbis, reality-based as they generally were, this utopia is endlessly, if disappointingly, deferred.[2] It could be, as well, that this passage slyly critiques, in the context of increasingly hostile Christian–Jewish debates, what the builders of Christianity, after the coming of their messiah, had already decreed regarding pigs.[3]

I want to stress that my point is not to berate anyone for not being Jewish "enough" or in the "proper" way. I do not give a fig if some Jews choose not to keep kosher. But given that a leading figure of the food movement like Pollan has been named by *Time* magazine as one of the world's 100 most influential people, his views about Judaism and kashrut disseminate widely. On NPR's Leonard Lopate Show he indicated that he recently gave "a little sermon on kosher" [sic] at New York's Reform Central Synagogue in which he repeated his comparison of the many rules of barbecuing with those in Leviticus (still not knowing whether goat was kosher

[1] This statement, which is cited in several permutations, does not seem to appear in any extant texts, though it is sometimes referenced as coming from Midrash Tanḥuma or Bereshit Rabbah by, among others, R. Yom Tov ben Avraham Asevilli (1250–1330), Commentary to the Bablyonian Talmud, on Kiddushin 49a; R. Menaḥem Recanati (1250–1310), Commentary to the Torah, on parshat Shmini; R. Baḥye ben Asher ibn Halawa (mid-14th century), Commentary to the Torah, on Shmini 11:7; Yitzḥak Abravanel (1437–1508), *Rosh Amanah*, Chap. 13; R. David ben Shlomo ibn Abi Zimra (ca. 1479–1589), *Responsa*, pt. 2, responsum #828. The idea that the forbidden animals in general will be permitted in messianic times is raised in Midrash Tehilim (also known as Midrash Shocher Tov), ad. loc. Psalms 146:7. Parts of this text may well derive from Palestinian rabbis of the classical period, though its final redaction was much later.

[2] Consider, for instance, the parallel deep interweaving of awareness, ethics, and ritual in the medieval Japanese Zen master Dōgen's meal-time regulations for monasteries; "Fushuku-Hampō (Meal-Time Regulations)," Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke, *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 153–163.

[3] As noted by Milgrom, "Ethics and Ritual," 183. The passage about the pig in messianic times is quoted on a website touting a book called *The Kosher Pig* (http://www.kosherpig.org), sponsored by Ahavat Ammi Ministries, an outfit of Messianic Jews, that is, "Jews" who believe in Jesus. Ahavat Ammi's main intellectual and marketing device is the idea that Jesus is the pig that in the future will be considered kosher. One of the website's pages shows a logo featuring a pig surrounded by a border that reads "Yeshua, the kosher pig * Certified organic *" According to the classical rabbis, the pig self-presents falsely: It shows its split hooves, pretending to be kosher, but its internal non-ruminating biology proves it to be unkosher (Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 22:13, among other sources). False self-presentation continues to be an operative method in some Christian efforts to convert Jews.

when later interviewed by Lopate). Oy. I wish those who otherwise stand for such commendable ideals and values would show more self-awareness, know their own backgrounds better, but also know better the contexts and consequences of their own positions. Fabre-Vassas' eye-opening and often stomach-turning book *The Singular Beast* should be assigned reading for all pig-meat lovers, Jewish and Christian.

I have yet to hear substantive arguments about why pig should be considered kosher. One might be able to eat it ethically, but that doesn't make it kosher. I am not convinced by any of the supposed benefits of pigs as a food source that this means one *should* eat pig meat even if one prefers otherwise.

Another way of approaching this is to ask whether pig meat could ever comprise part of authentic Jewish cooking, a most complicated question.[4] Sociologists Johnston and Baumann argue that "food is legitimized for omnivorous foodies when it can be framed as authentic or exotic. […T]hrough these two frames, cultural consumption allows foodies to negotiate a fundamental ideological tension between democracy and distinction."[5] The frames of authenticity and exoticism offer an insightful way of understanding the power and threat kashrut poses for modern Jews (and others). On the one hand, the sense that kashrut provides an authentically Jewish way to eat (and live) confirms the assumptions of traditional or religious Jews and attracts many other kinds of Jews yearning for grounding for their identity and way of life. On the other hand, the exoticism of this ancient and strange diet bestows an ostensibly opposite legitimacy on kashrut as a panacea for the ills of modernity. Yet authenticity and exoticism hold decidedly negative connotations for others, who reject the perceived straitjacket of authorized, "correct" tradition and practice, and seek egalitarianism in cultural conformity with their peers, rather than the separating difference produced by Otherness.

How, in any case, is culinary authenticity to be measured? While all cuisines change over time or even absorb outside elements, does the question of pig fall under the category of mere culinary fusion? Is it an example of a kind of neutral adaptation or evolution of some group members to physical immigration to new lands or cultural adoption or even conversion to the ways of surrounding host populations? It depends on whom one

[4] I follow the meditations of Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, Chap. 2 ("The Pursuit of Authenticity"), 112–118, 194–202.

[5] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, 35, and Chaps. 2 and 3.

asks. Given differing definitions in modernity of what it means to "be Jewish"—religiously observant, religious but not halakhic, secular, by birth, by self-ascription, and so on—which members of the group get to determine what "authentic" Jewish cooking entails? According to what standards? What if some group members insist on cooking and eating dishes that intentionally fly in the face of the group's traditional definitions and calling this Jewish? How many other group members would continue seeing them as members of the group? Would this matter? Can the family recipes of anti-halakhic Reform Jews that feature, say, lobster, be considered authentically Jewish cooking?[6] Jewish cuisine differs from country to country, region to region. Is the rise of Jews who eat non-kosher a question of values' conflict or mere sociological change? Something more than just the assimilationist absurdity of "kosher-style" food arises, a category which at least nods to the traditional legal enclosure while avoiding egregious transgression of it (in fact the transgressions are significant, just not always discernible to the naked eye or most palates).

Indeed, due to technological as well as culinary changes, there has been a noticeable increase in the production of foods that are technically kosher that emulate the taste, look, and texture of non-kosher foods. Observant Jews continue to debate the phenomenon. Different angles appeal to and offend different people. For some, kashrut is a question of ontology; certain animals are unkosher and any food containing only kosher ingredients is kosher even if it looks like unkosher food. Others argue that the question is more epistemological; the idea of imitating, producing, and eating kosher foods that resemble non-kosher foods—tofu "shrimp," surimi "crab," beef, lamb, or turkey "bacon," and so on—results in public confusion. Yet others find the main objection to be moral; does it defeat the purpose of kashrut, its "spirit," if one "cheats" by dedicating resources and mental energy to chasing after foods that are forbidden, even if they are produced in a way that makes them legalistically permissible?[7]

[6] Various contributors to Zamore, *The Sacred Table*, answer in the affirmative.

[7] A few years ago, a student of mine wrote an insightful study of this trend, Justin Fine, "Imitation Crab and Infested Lettuce: Kashrut for the 21st Century American-Jew" (MA thesis, Columbia University, Dept. of Religion, 2011); see also Eric Ofgang, "Bacon Goes Kosher," *Tablet Magazine*, 23 December 2015, http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/196036/bacon-goes-kosher; Jenna Weissman Joselit, "Why Isn't There More of a Hoohah About Kosher Bacon?" Forward.com, 15 February 2016, http://forward.com/culture/333229/why-isnt-there-more-of-a-hoohah-about-kosher-bacon/?attribution=tag-article-listing-1-headline. The topic deserves further investigation.

Would all real pig-meat dishes promoted by Jews as Jewish stand equivalent to the Treif Seder described at this book's beginning in terms of (post)modern lability of identity, category-bending, and self-conscious irreverence? How far *can* a category stretch while remaining meaningful? In this sense, are the pig dishes of Jews an example of a colonized people appropriating the colonizers' foodways or of members of a less powerful culture yielding to the pressures of the more powerful culture? My own feeling is that not everything that individual Jews do is *Jewish*. Any Jew has a right to think or do as he or she pleases, but to claim that any act or stance he or she takes is therefore *Jewish* seems to be overreaching. In his non-kosher Jewish cookbook, David Mitchell quotes anthropologist Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett as saying "Jewish is as Jewish does,"[8] but such a stance confuses a description of a state of affairs with a prescription for how to achieve a desired, ideally optimal state of affairs. Jewishness may be a matter of neutral description, but Judaism, even in its variegated forms, is a prescription for a hopefully optimal society. Culture may germinate and develop best when relativism rules in general (democracy), but each agent and movement within the cultural ferment expresses what it subjectively deems best and most important (hierarchy).

While from a sociological perspective individual Jews eating pig is a fact and therefore a preference of a certain number of Jews, this does not make it a value of Judaism as a tradition. That some forms of secular Jewishness and the Reform movement sought and seek to elevate omnivory to a positive value is again a sociological fact, but I have tried to show why I consider it a costly, regrettable, and ultimately mistaken path. While I favor experimentation and adaptation in Judaism, on both the individual and the collective level, and fully support cultural or secular Jewishness, and appreciate the important gains made in struggling against coercive religion and religiosity, I am pained by what I see as embarrassment or repulsion by traditional ways, often based on ignorance or knee-jerk modernism. Not all traditions must be maintained, of course, but I fear that throwing away so many produces a cumulative loss whose price we have not fully comprehended.

Let me widen the discussion into a comparative mode. Not once does religion or cosmology arise in Johnston and Baumann's penetrating account of foodie discourse in the United States; the closest one gets is the

[8] Davis, *The Mensch Chef*, x.

vague authenticating frame of "history and tradition."[9] Only twice in her entire book on culinary colonialism does Heldke discuss religious dietary choices or evaluations of a culture's foods as being anything other than a question of taste.[10] She approvingly cites feminist scholar Uma Narayan, who discusses growing up within the caste rules of India: "In a context where food was intimately connected to caste status and various regimes of 'purity,' it is 'food parochialism' that tends to strike me as dangerous, while a willingness to eat the food of Others seems to indicate at least a growing democracy of the palate." Heldke continues by noting that "we have too many examples of the ways that rigid adherence to traditions harms its practitioners to think that authenticity can be liberatory when it becomes essentialized."[11] For a group member who feels oppressed, omnivory becomes liberating. Elissa Altman depicts her family members who ate non-kosher food: "All of us broke our culture's commandments and frayed the tether to convention, as a path towards transcendence."[12] Yet even such an anti-traditionalist stance, not far from that of Pollan, I would argue, poses the same questions I raised earlier. Are all traditional or religious "food parochialisms" harmful and in the same way? Is kashrut, say, equivalent to the caste dietary rules of India? Does segregation by class or status differ from segregation by a culture against outsiders? I would argue that it does. Who gets to decide whether a practice is oppressive or a cultural prerogative, particularly when members of the group itself do not agree with one another on such matters? Who deems which forms of separatism are permissible and why? Whose say determines such matters, in what contexts; what are the effects of such determinations and on whom? I do not argue for coercive community—I am generally against it—but those who can only focus on personal freedoms may not know or care about their unwitting collusion with the voracious, tyrannical modernist complex that erodes traditions and cultures along with human and natural ecosystems.

Heldke argues against "cultural separatism," but even while admitting that it can exist in varying degrees seems to treat it as an all-or-nothing force. Coming within thoroughgoing anti-colonialist analyses, why do Heldke and Narayan lose tolerance when other cultures choose to draw

[9] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*.
[10] Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*.
[11] Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, 200.
[12] Altman, *Treyf*, 279.

lines differently than the way "we" modern cosmopolitans think correct and best? Isn't this exactly the kind of assumed colonialist superiority they seek to question and eradicate? Adherence to tradition must be "rigid," it seems, while Narayan's rejection Heldke characterizes as "principled." Isn't this attitude itself rather "essentializing"? In light of all the above, I still fail to see how cultural decisions to avoid certain food(s) of outsiders causes any actual damage to anyone other than restriction and inconvenience for insiders, inconvenience to outsiders, and the generation of questionable, imperious resentment from outsiders. I infer from the work of Pollan, Barber, Bittman, and others that they believe traditional food choices such as kashrut are not only groundless and unreasonable, but pernicious.

I confess that Heldke's voicings are difficult to decipher. Ultimately she seems as if she might agree with my questions. Her second mention of religious choices comes two pages later, although in a seemingly different non-colonial, individualist context: Even within the non-stop abundance and potential omnivory of the US food market, some find their own cultural–social–political place by being "religiously committed to preparing foods according to specific ritual requirements."[13] Elissa Altman puts this self-location in less abstract sociological language, bringing to the fore the psychic struggle that identity formation so often entails. The same pig and milk dish that even Pollan won't prepare, *brasato de maiale al latte*, struck Altman as a revelatory blow when she tried to cook it, maturely middle-aged and long disconnected from her family:

> [H]ot Levitical fury pants down the back of my neck; I close my eyes and hear strains of my grandfather davening [praying] all those years ago, at the tiny, stuffy shul [synagogue] in Coney Island […]
>
> I weep silently over the sink […] I am no longer saddled with an impractical, demanding piety five thousand years old; I am the one who lives and eats – unfettered by my family history of death, longing, guilt, shame, and the relentless desire to belong – like a Gentile living in a Gentile world. Am I *not* who they struggled to be? Am I *not* who they wanted me to become?
>
> Belonging everywhere, I now belong nowhere.
>
> […] I am safe – *finally* safe – even as I yearn for him, and for Gaga, and for Grandpa Henry, and for all who came before me.
>
> To know who I am; to remember where I came from.[14]

[13] Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, 203.
[14] Altman, *Treyf*, 283.

This passage marks the end of Altman's moving memoir and thus the (reconstructed) beginning of her subsequent memory work. Following Altman, we should acknowledge that identity formation is personal, processural, intersubjective, and thus often agonistic and painful. Cuisine, like so many areas of our lives, comprises both a personal and a collective matter, never just the one or the other. Though discussing entirely different aspects of contemporary food discourse than those on which I focus here, Johnston and Baumann take an admirably nuanced stance, concluding that "an omnivorous food culture" is neither "straightforwardly democratic [n]or straightforwardly hierarchical."[15]

We all wrestle with ghosts or angels specific to us. Some want to escape their past and some can. Others want to but cannot. Still others want their personal lives to continue their collective past. Measuring the proper degree of self-transformation, of self-positioning vis-à-vis one's family and cultural background is a delicate matter, perhaps necessarily always in flux. Determining for oneself the degree of desired (r)evolution that these family and cultural traditions need comprises a similarly sensitive endeavor. Though I do not minimize personal freedoms, I feel that radical individualism often fails to help us connect us to communities and identities larger than ourselves, which can be no less vital for our self-construction than our own innovations. How we can belong to such larger entities without denigrating and attacking other forms of belonging and those who belong to other entities is in our days a particularly vexing question. Religious/cultural intolerance of culinary difference (among other differences) continues to plague us. Witness the recent brutal attacks on and murders of cow-killing and cow-eating Muslims by Indian Hindus protective of their sacred cows.[16] Religious forces within traditionalist Judaism certainly are not above reproach. For such outbursts and intolerance to be used by secularists to invalidate any or all religious and cultural traditional standards would be hypocritical, however, given the many atrocities perpetrated historically and today by secularists around the globe.

The numerous personal struggles and programmatic conflicts regarding eating or not eating pig—and its wider culinary–cultural parallels—that I have cited might be understood by means of a plethora of explanatory

[15] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, 36.

[16] Michael Safi, "Muslim Man Dies in India After Attack by Hindu 'Cow Protectors,'" *The Guardian*, 5 April 2017; https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/05/muslim-man-dies-in-india-after-attack-by-hindu-cow-protectors

models: religious change, modernization, intergenerational dynamics, acculturation, postcolonialism, and the like. I recognize the reality but also the value of cultural and personal multiplicity, hybridity, fluidity, improvisation, and self-construction. But these are not always and only positive, while their supposed opposites, tradition, cultural conventions, stability, and limits are not always and only negative. Implying or arguing on a programmatic level that religious or cultural norms are anathema when determining our food ethics or politics strikes me as imperialistic, condescending, and mistaken. After his careful tracing of the Jewish dietary laws in the ancient world, Jordan D. Rosenblum addresses some of the same questions I have just tackled, prompted by the question of his students: Should Jews keep kosher? He writes that "hiding behind […] appeals to 'traditional' food practices are various agendas – whether polemical, hierarchical, theological, etc." He points to the fact that foodways change over time, argues against engaging in "culinary nostalgia," and insists that "we must always remember to interrogate the historical assumptions and authoritative claims behind such discourse." All of his arguments have validity, yet as a critical scholar in the modernist mode (despite his citing the postmodern Bruno Latour) he seems implicitly unwilling to apply the same rigorous criticism, unmasking, and interrogation to non-religious modernist discourse.[17]

Are the post-Christian Jewish foodies whom I have treated here suggesting, as they seem to, that Muslims and Jews who choose not to eat pig sin against the omnivorous wisdom of the new food movement? What, if anything, is at stake when we prohibit or permit pig, or any animal? Many now argue that Westerners should eat insects for ecological reasons; others want to process horses for meat, something common in France and elsewhere. What is at stake when it is implied that *everybody must* eat pig, that is, essentially that no one should avoid any particular kind of animal? Or that such avoidance must only be motivated by ecology or biochemistry or rationalistic ethics? If, as many suggest, promoting ethnic and cultural diversity within the Western agriculinary world comprises one of the goals of the food movement, we must learn to deal better with diverse foodways even when they challenge dominant approaches. In my opinion, individual ethical consumerism and techno-science alone will not provide the leverage to halt our planetary self-destruction. Intersubjective human developments such as ritual and tradition-encoded wisdom possess unparalleled capacity

[17] Rosenblum, *Jewish Dietary Laws*, Conclusion, 161–162.

to forge in individuals and groups deep and long-lasting commitment to collective goals, making them necessary and effective solutions to address and confront the characterological and cultural causes of our health, ecological, and other crises.[18] Along with other thinkers, physician, biologist, and philosopher Henri Atlan rightfully concludes that

> [s]peaking and writing about how we ought to live demands a style in which diverse languages – scientific and technical, legal and philosophical, poetic – can coexist without being confounded; where the perception of reality is always pregnant with, but never supplanted by, the contributions of the imagination; where the rationalities of science and myth can subsist side by side, without being confused, and can criticize each other.[19]

I suggest that people concerned about our health, ecological, and other crises find ways to relocate food systems and foodways within a larger self–collective–place–cosmos whole. This whole is always simultaneously local, culturally specific, real, imagined, diverse, plural, and shared—but never "universal"; it is always both political and cosmological.

I have raised here a host of familiar questions, then. What should we eat and why? Whether to avoid pig or to avoid avoiding it falls within the myriad decisions we need to keep making as we consider how we might survive the active and passive threats posed by the industrial, commercial, and corporate predation of our food sources that we have permitted and encouraged, knowingly or not. Such decisions, to my mind, come always folded into larger discussions about who we are, what it is we want, and where we are going.[20]

[18] See, for instance: Richard Sosis, "Psalms for Safety: Magico-Religious Responses to Threats of Terror," *Current Anthropology* 48, 6 (2007): 903–911; Candace S. Alcorta and Richard Sosis, "Ritual, Emotion, and Sacred Symbols: The Evolution of Religion as an Adaptive Complex," *Human Nature* 16, 4 (Winter 2005): 323–359. More directly relating to ecological questions are Stephen Cave and Sarah Darwin, "It's Not Easy Being Green," *Aeon* 15 March 2016; https://aeon.co/essays/rituals-and-guilt-can-these-save-environmentalism; Ronald Grimes, "Ritual Theory and the Environment," *The Sociological Review* 51/2 (2003): 31–45.

[19] Henri Atlan, *The Sparks of Randomness*, Vol. 1: *Spermatic Knowledge*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011 [orig. 1999]), 2.

[20] I take these three questions from a tale related by retired Israeli judge Shlomo Shoham, head of the Commission for Future Generations established in 2002 by the Israeli Knesset, in a 2012 TED talk, "Paradigm Shift in Leadership"; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR01Dcxxr78

As this book was entering the publication process, an extensive *New York Times* front-page story showed how wealthy and powerful corporations that sell processed and junk food, such as Nestlé, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and General Mills, "as their growth slows in the wealthiest countries," stalk new target populations around the world, "upending traditional diets from Brazil to Ghana to India […]," pushing "high-calorie, nutrient-poor foods […] generating a new type of malnutrition, one in which a growing number of people are both overweight and undernourished," "transforming local agriculture, spurring farmers to abandon subsistence crops in favor of cash commodities, like sugar cane, corn and soybeans – the building blocks for many industrial food products," dismissing the science that proves the unhealthiness of their products, and pressuring for the alteration of public policies that seek to protect citizens' health.[21] As the majority of the world's population now lives in big cities, uprooted and disconnected from their past and from real community, increasingly fed by corporations and restaurant chains rather than family members or neighbors, dependent for socialization, information, and values on commercial entities and the internet rather than their family, tribe, or tradition, the cultural forces that might restrain or combat destructive capitalism (whether private or state-sponsored) lose their appeal and strength, wither, and, all too often, disappear.

I have spoken throughout this text mostly about spiritual and religious cultures, but they comprise merely a subset of culture in general. One of the antidotes to the illnesses of modernity is to be found in real cultures: life-ways rooted in a specific, beloved place and in the past; rich, deep, vibrant, and living traditions whose goal is long-term well-being and not immediate profit, promotion of the general welfare and not the short-sighted pursuit of advantage; communities that (according to my preferences) in search of the good tolerate debate and evolve thoughtfully. Ultimately, we must more successfully confront the many factors that underlie the modern systemic predation that we face, our own strange form of self-consumption. The relevant insights of concerned food activists such as Michael Pollan and those of cultural traditions are not at odds with one another. They are powerful potential partners.

[21] Andrew Jacobs and Matt Richtel, "How Big Business Got Brazil Hooked on Junk Food," *NYTimes*, 17 September 2017, 1; https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/09/16/health/brazil-obesity-nestle.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=photo-spot-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=0. A second, related article continues the investigation: Dionne Searcey and Matt Richtel, "Obesity Was Rising as Ghana Embraced Fast Food. Then Came KFC," *NYTimes*, 2 October 2017; https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/02/health/ghana-kfc-obesity.html

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