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Picky Eating is a Moral Failing

Matthew Brown

Appetizer

Common wisdom includes expressions such as "there's no accounting for taste" that express a widely accepted subjectivism about taste. We commonly say things like "I cannot stand anything with onions in it" or "I would never eat sushi," and we accept such from others. It is the position of this essay that much of this language is actually quite unacceptable. Without appealing to complete objectivism about taste, I will argue that there are good reasons to think that tastes are sufficiently malleable and subject to bias that one should be cautious about saying, for example, that one does not like a certain type of food. On many matters of taste, there is reason to believe that your experienced judgments will not necessarily agree with inexperienced and unreflective opinions on the matter.

Radical subjectivism about aesthetic preference can be taken to justify the practice of picky eating (after all, who is better to say what I will enjoy than me?), while the position of this essay is that picky eating is a moral failing. To be a picky eater is to have a significant lack of openness to new experiences and to substantially hamper one's development. It involves an irresponsible level of fallibilism with respect to taste. Never venturing into new aesthetic landscapes leads to a sort of repetitiveness, which in turn leads to a life full of blandness and banality. And, as meals are perhaps the most pervasive of social experience, being a picky eater can violate your duties to others. I argue, not that everyone must attempt or pretend

to like what your friends or what expert gourmands like, but that there are significant obligations to openness, self-knowledge, accommodation, and gracefulness that should impact one's food preferences.

Certain cases may provide exceptions or excuses for picky eating. Vegetarianism is one example where moral justification is often given in favor of limiting the types of food one is willing to eat. Physiological, largely genetic conditions make some people more or less sensitive to certain tastes, so-called supertasters and non-tasters. Bitter foods taste far more bitter to supertasters, which may make them averse to these foods. In the former case, I will argue that vegetarianism is only morally correct when it comes out in the balance of reasons, and that the argument of this chapter provides reasons against it that may easily be left out of consideration. In the latter case, I argue that the supertaster has the same duties of openness and accommodation as everyone else, but that they may reasonably be expected to reach somewhat different preferences from normal tasters. These considerations will justify a new, more refined understanding of what picky eating is and why it is morally problematic.

Soup: Common-Sense Subjectivism Critiqued

I like Thai food best, but Andy prefers Mexican. Matt does not like Italian food. Amanda cannot bear to eat onions. Michael will not touch anything that has mustard in it. Joe would never eat sushi or any raw meat. For many people, these are just so many different preferences, of no moral weight or significance. So, you do not like Italian or onions or sushi. So what? Some people like some flavors, and some people hate them. If they think they do not like how something tastes, well, they obviously know best.

While received wisdom is not entirely consistent on this point (your parents say, "Oh, you'll learn to like peas," and we sometimes say, "You've just got to develop a taste for coffee"), taste is often considered to be a harmless matter of personal preference, and picky eating is just having a certain set of such preferences. This commonsense idea is, however, largely mistaken. While a complete objectivism about gustatory values is probably indefensible, it is also not the case that

you are always in the best position to know what foods you will like best. Humans are food generalists, having very few innate determinants of food preference.[1] Much of their food preference is left up to culture and experience, which can often even reverse reactions to foods that are initially and innately aversive.

While gustatory pleasures vary somewhat from person to person, there is nonetheless significant overlap in the tastes of cultured palates (people who have experience with a wide variety of foods). A gustatory experience is a complex interaction of factors: there are physiological elements, including the basic tastes,[2] other tongue-sensations like texture, temperature, piquancy (spicy-hotness), minty-coolness, astringency, fattiness, and numbness,[3] as well as associated sensory/physiological elements like smell, hunger/fullness, appearance, effects of caffeine and alcohol, and so on. Previous exposure and experience, as well as learned associations, biases, and social pressures also play a role. Prior experience has an important impact, especially driving reactions like neophobia and disgust. At a fine grain, these factors mean that no two taste experiences are exactly alike, but even at a coarse grain, we can see that any particular taste experience is a confluence of factors and that it is highly sensitive to idiosyncrasies of past experience.

It would be unduly radical to claim that you can be wrong about a particular taste-experience. It rightly seems like any taste-experience (including all the factors discussed above) you have is what it is: if you found the brussels sprouts you ate last night unpleasant, then you really had an unpleasant experience with them. What I dispute is the leap from there to the further claim that you do not like brussels sprouts, or to the claim that brussels sprouts taste bad, or to the future action of avoiding or refusing brussels sprouts. While you may not have enjoyed *those* brussels sprouts, and there may be many biases to break down and tastes to develop before you could ever like them, it may be that you could come to like brussels sprouts very much. Indeed, there are good reasons to think that many people could do so. And even if you never could like them all that much, there are reasons why refusing to eat them might still be the wrong choice.

I have had very different experiences from a Japanese man the same age, and this in part accounts for our tastes inevitably being quite different. I can never gain his perspective, because of all this

accumulated experience. Nevertheless, I can expand my horizon in order to come to appreciate more of what he appreciates, allowing our horizons to partially overlap. That this process is possible we know from countless examples in our own lives: seven or eight years ago there would have been very little Japanese food that I would enjoy. Today, while there is surely much Japanese food that I still would not like, I take pleasure in many kinds of Japanese cuisine. (Though, I still have not accumulated the gumption to develop a taste for *uni* (sea urchin), I am sorry to say. But I feel rather bad about it.) The amount of overlap that is possible may be subject to certain constraints, but these constraints do not account for the morally objectionable cases of picky eating.

The considerable degree of overlap that exists between experts, at least at a coarse-grained level, is also evidence that cultivated taste experiences will overlap. While it is possible that among a community of experts, unwarranted biases may accrue, a large, lively, and critical community of experts can minimize these effects. Areas of wide overlap provide reliable tips about food experiences that one should learn to accommodate. For example, sauces that do not have enough salt in them will taste too bland. A certain type of red wine goes better with red meat than a white wine, while the reverse is true for dishes of a more delicate flavor. These old culinary saws are general rules that tell you how to find a better culinary experience. Each of them can be explained, either in more basic culinary terms, or even in psychological and physiological terms. Violations of these rules are met with skepticism, and there are routes for certifying the validity of a claim to an exception, ideally, both in theoretical explanation and experimental testing (tasting).

We must be careful with the role given to experts, however. It would defeat the arguments of this essay if we exchanged an untutored version of picky eating for the picky eating of a snobby gourmand. Indeed, it is quite imaginable that someone with a gourmet palate might themselves be exceedingly picky, that they might reject certain kinds of foods, not because they taste bad, but because of their association with status, refinement, sophistication, and so on. Culinary experts can be helpful when they pave the way for us to find new and more enjoyable gustatory experiences. They are vicious when they work to close us off to experiences that we would have otherwise found valuable.

Pickiness is the practical side of the belief that matters of taste are entirely subjective. The picky eater is not open-minded to new taste experiences, and they see no reason to be fallible about their own preferences or try to understand their reactions to food. They see no reason they should have to accommodate food they do not like, and they often react to food in a way that lacks grace and respect. Picky eating is thus not so much a matter of which foods you eat, but your approach to eating, a matter of attitude and behavior. We have seen reasons to believe that one does not always know what is best for oneself with respect to gustatory experiences, which would make these attitudes a mistake. But how does all this tie into ethics? In the next three sections, I will provide three foundations for the ethical evaluation of picky eating.

First Course: Openness to New Experience and Duties to Self

The first foundation of an ethical evaluation of picky eating is the duties you have to yourself.[4] Picky eating is a violation of your duties you have to yourself because of the way that it closes you off to new experiences and because of the habits it produces in you that tend to decrease your capacity to have further experiences. It violates the duty you have to develop you own capacities and excellence. Picky eating is by no means a *special* moral concern in this area, but it is both an instance and a symptom of a larger problem.

Before defending the kinds of duties you have to yourself and the importance of new experiences therein, I will talk a little about how picky eating closes you off from new experiences. At this point, you may want to say, "Look, I do not want to eat this thing, so what? It has very little effect on my life or my capacities." But not so fast! Let us look at some examples of the sort of effects I am concerned about, meant to be exemplary of the effects of being picky or not. Hopefully, these stories will suggest very similar experiences of your own.

Most people find piquant food aversive at first,[5] though for some, that experience might be so long ago or at so young an age that its memory has dimmed. Suppose you have a few bad experiences with

spicy-hot food, and you formulate a couple of maxims for yourself: "I do not like piquant food" and "I am not going to eat anything with chiles." Now, you may well go through life not eating piquant food, and there will be a few cuisines, where piquancy is a major component, that you never learn to like.

The problem here is not so much in the end results by themselves, but on what has been given up. My own case has some representative features: I was slow to warm up to piquant foods, and I came to enjoy them through some foods that I enjoyed independently of how hot they were: Mexican, Tex-Mex, and barbecue. After a while, and partly due to eating with people who already liked piquant food, I developed quite a taste for heat. This opened up new avenues of experience. For instance, I used to have little taste for Thai food; it seemed unremarkable and not as good as Chinese. Then I started going out for Thai with friends who liked their Thai food hot, learned about the spiciness conventions, and started to see it as a distinct and interesting cuisine. What piqued my interest is that Thai food, especially curry, is served extremely piquant, and many of the flavors in Thai food are much more appreciable when the food is spicy-hot. Served very mild, a red curry seemed fairly unremarkable. Turn up the piquancy, and the whole flavor landscape changes for the better.

I had a similar experience with Vietnamese food. I found my first tastes of phó to be quite jarring and initially a little bit unpleasant, due to the unfamiliar combination of flavors. Finally, I decided to go crazy with the Sriracha (a piquant sauce) and the lime. In addition to making the taste a bit more familiar (the mix of spiciness and lime is common in many cuisines, including Mexican), I also sweated my way through the meal, which itself can be a pleasant experience. Now I enjoy phó quite a bit, and I do not make it nearly as piquant as I had to at first. Now I experiment with the different combinations of the condiments they give you, and generally enjoy the mix of flavors.

And it does not just stop with new food experiences! Food is a natural entreé into curiosity about a culture at large. To take a minor example, contrary to what some Americans think, most Thai food is not traditionally eaten with chopsticks. Most food is eaten with a spoon, while a fork is used like Westerners might use a knife. Sticking a fork in your mouth in Thailand is a lot like sticking your

knife in your mouth in Maryland! In Thailand, chopsticks are only used for a few dishes like noodles and noodle soups and dishes imported from China. Interestingly, their use of chopsticks has increased with commerce with China. In this way, one can move from food to eating customs, to cultural and political interactions in the Southeast Asian region. The particulars of the example are somewhat idiosyncratic, but the phenomenon it exemplifies – the way that food opens up new possibilities for experience – is quite general. Open-mindedness and curiosity about food can go hand-in-hand with open-mindedness and curiosity about culture generally.

Food can encourage not only an interest in gaining general knowledge of other cultures, but also with new personal experience. An interest in the cuisine of the region might beget an interest in traveling there. It would be a barrier to having a meaningful interaction with someone of another culture if you refused to sit down to a traditional meal from their society's cuisine with an open mind. It would be difficult indeed for someone to integrate well into a society, to get the flavor of the people and their customs, without developing a taste for their food.

Furthermore, the more often you balk at new and unfamiliar food, or food that you do not expect to like, the more you ingrain a habit of avoiding these types of new experiences. A conscious decision to turn down something unfamiliar and thus a bit frightening at one time becomes a habitual refusal. Decisions become a pattern, and a pattern becomes a habit, and habitual behavior is done without considering the consequences, and can be quite difficult to overcome. And why think that this habit will confine itself to food preference?

Could many of the good experiences that go beyond food be gotten in other ways? Can I compensate for the loss of pleasure from good foods with finding pleasure elsewhere? That this is possible there should be no doubt. But cutting oneself off from new culinary experiences closes one such avenue, making it that much less likely and that much more difficult.

Current experience is connected with future experience in such a way that current activities can widen or restrict the potentialities for future experience. Pickiness in one case can contribute to a general habit of pickiness, which in turn restricts your ability to enjoy new experiences in the future.[6] It can cut off opportunities for expanding your horizons. In turn, it can make you a more parochial, less

open, less democratic, and ultimately less valuable person. It prevents you from developing and reaching a greater state of human excellence and self-realization. The harms you can cause towards your future self in this manner are no less serious, no less ethically poignant, than such harms done unto others.

Open-mindedness is a morally valuable attitude to have when approaching unfamiliar situations, or situations in which your natural reaction is quite different from those around you. It is natural for many people to react to such situations with distrust, fear, or distaste. Neophobia *and* xenophobia are altogether too common. They make sense as general tendencies on an evolutionary scale – in a dangerous world, stick with habits that you know work, and avoid the unfamiliar. But today, these tendencies are easily taken to the point of parochialism and irrationality.

Being open-minded towards new things, exploring them, and trying to understand them are good means to finding what value there might be in things. Coming across an unfamiliar group of people, you may initially find things about their way of life distasteful, or perhaps even morally objectionable. It would be wrong to leave matters at the level of this immediate reaction. An open-minded exploration of the practice, its effects, and its internal justification might show you that it has real values that your way of life is missing.

There are obviously limits to open-mindedness. I will not explore a cultural practice that involves killing humans for fun. Not only does it violate reactions of disgust probably too fundamental for me to overcome, but I think I have considered this thoroughly enough to know roughly the value involved. Likewise, I would not explore a cuisine that served up fresh human fecal matter. Again, there is extreme disgust, and I have also sufficiently thought through the consequences to know that it is probably not worth it (in this case, the risk of contracting a terrible disease is quite salient).

One of the most important families of duties you have to yourself is to self-development or growth.[7] A lack of openness to new experience frustrates this duty. Your actions ought to be evaluated in part in terms of whether they further your development, helping you realize greater excellence. These excellences include both intellectual and aesthetic excellence. On the one hand, being closed-minded can decrease your ability to appreciate many aesthetic experiences,

and it can also decrease the number of pleasing experiences you actually have. Your capacities for pleasure and appreciation remain underdeveloped. Your intellectual capacities suffer as well: a closed-minded person is less curious and inquisitive. They have less drive for and will tend to attain less knowledge about themselves and the structure of their preferences, as well as knowledge about other foods, other cultures, and other people. And, as we will see below, their capacities for social relationships are hampered as well.

Another way in which your intellectual capacities are hampered by picky eating is the attitude towards knowledge and judgment that it involves. A picky eater does not consider their judgments of taste to be open to revision. If taste is not completely subjective, if there are things to get wrong about it, then picky eating amounts to a kind of unbending and inappropriate dogmatism. It is like saying, "I know this to be true, and nothing could ever convince me otherwise." That such an approach to knowledge is problematic and epistemically irresponsible is perhaps too obvious to merit much attention. This kind of inflexibility and infallibilism tends to frustrates progress with respect to *any* kind of judgment or knowledge.

Because of the continuity of experience, the sorts of experience one has now affect the kind of experience you can have later. We grow and develop when we gain access to a wider range of experience, when we are able to engineer a wider variety of situations to our benefit. The importance of growth is most obvious in education: it is the duty of the teacher to see to the growth of their students. The paradigm example of retarded growth is the spoiled child, who demands from others that they cater to his desires, who seeks out situations in which he can do whatever he feels like at the time, and who fails to cope in situations that require effort and intelligence in the face of difficulty. The spoiled child is unable to take responsibility for his life, to be the author of his own fate. The child's development and self-realization have suffered. Just as parents or teachers that spoil children have failed them by retarding their growth, you fail yourself when you act in way that is detrimental to the realization of your own capacities.

Instead of being distrustful of new taste experiences or deciding to permanently cut yourself off from them, you should approach unfamiliar foods and foods that you have yet to develop a taste for with open-mindedness. You should explore the food, trying to understand

why others enjoy it and why you might be reacting to it in the way that you are. You should try new approaches that can make it easier at first, like using a sauce that you know you like, or by beginning with dishes in the cuisine that are not as far out. It may be that, after approaching some food with an open mind, learning about it, learning about yourself, and trying different ways of enjoying it, you still just do not like it. As we know, not everyone is capable of exactly the same taste experiences, so we should expect some disagreements. But this differs from picky eating, which is characterized by neophobia, quick judgment, and willful ignorance.

Second Course: Picky Eating in Social Situations

An important part of ethics concerns your relationships with other people. It should be no surprise, then, that the impact that picky eating might have on others gives us further reason to see it as a moral concern. In several ways, large and small, picky eating is harmful to others and to your relationships with them, and thus is a morally problematic way of behaving.

Picky eating harms others by inconveniencing them. When trying to coordinate meals with other people, whether you are going out or cooking together, a picky eater constrains the choices and makes the decision that much more difficult. Sometimes the inconvenience is small: for example, if Amanda is picky about onions, it is pretty easy to go somewhere she can order something without onions, or to prepare a meal without onions in it (though it may make some meals less enjoyable for others). Sometimes it is more difficult, as when someone is picky about a great many foods or rules out entire cuisines. When your pickiness is known, it means that anyone cooking you a meal will have to compensate for it, or make special exceptions when preparing your food. When it is not known, you host may feel the need to do something at the last minute to compensate.

In cases in which someone is serving you a meal, being picky is an inappropriate response, as it is whenever someone gives you a gift. When someone does something nice for you, you ought to accept it with grace, you appreciate what there is to appreciate in it, and you

accommodate the ways in which it might differ from your ideals. To do less, to complain or be picky, is hurtful and disrespectful to the gift-giver. Thus, if someone serves you a meal, you do not turn up your nose at it, or tell them that you do not like onions, or ask them to make special exceptions for you, unless you have a very good reason. It would be appropriate for someone who is lactose intolerant to politely refuse ice cream. It is inappropriate to sneer at a carefully prepared meal because it has something in it that you have not particularly enjoyed in the past. That does not mean that you have to be disingenuous, or pretend to like it. But you should try it, appreciate it, and be gracious about it, even if you cannot find a way to enjoy it.

When someone shares a meal with you, they are often sharing an important part of their lives. Sometimes they are sharing a favorite meal, one that they enjoy and want to share. Sometimes it is an experiment, trying a new recipe. They hope to do well, and they want someone to go on this adventure with them. Even when the meal is simple, they are still sharing food with you, seeking some communion with you. When you refuse, you make it difficult for them to share this part of their lives with you. It makes things difficult for you with your friends, and it can be hurtful to the person trying to share something with you. Again, you do not have to pretend to like it, but you should not approach the situation with a picky attitude.

Picky eating also cuts you off from avenues for shared experience with others, and thus makes it more difficult, perhaps impossible, to fully understand other people and other cultures. We have seen the different ways in which food forms an important part of culture and social life, and how it is one way of gaining new experiences, even ones that go far beyond food. Perhaps one of the most important types of experience, both morally and in terms of personal meaningfulness, is the experience we share with others. When you refuse to share food with others and make it a positive experience, you close off one of the most central ways of connecting with other people in everyday life.

Being a picky eater does not just violate etiquette and custom. While violating customary, polite norms of behavior can indeed be insulting or shocking to those around you, and is itself to be avoided, picky eating consists of more than just conventional rudeness. Meals are a universal social event, and their gravitas is nearly ubiquitous. Picky

eating really hurts other people, though admittedly the hurt is often small: an inconvenience, or hurting someone's feelings. Furthermore, it hurts your relationships with those people, straining personal relationships, closing you off to shared experience, preventing you from widening your social horizons. A small harm is still a harm. While you need not like every food that others try to get you to eat, it is important to approach shared meals with an open mind, self-knowledge, grace and respect, and to try to accommodate the circumstances as best you can.

Salad: Vegetarians, Supertasters, and Other Hard Cases

A few problematic cases present themselves against the claim that picky eating is immoral. I will deal in-depth with two: vegetarianism and supertasting.

Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism is the practice of restricting one's diet by not consuming any meat or fish.[8] This almost always takes the form of a strict maxim; the dietary restriction is adhered to in all circumstances.

Vegetarianism is often undertaken for ethical reasons, whether they are primarily related to animal rights, environmental issues, or religious ideals. What sometimes gets left out of the picture when someone is considering vegetarianism is that there are moral reasons *against* being vegetarian. Most people will admit that there are costs: vegetarianism (especially strict varieties) tends to be inconvenient, and they may lose some pleasure when denied meat products. But these personal, egoistic, or hedonistic reasons would be usually recognized to be superseded by moral reasons.[9]

On the other hand, thanks to the arguments of this chapter, we can now recognize that there are moral reasons that tell against vegetarianism. Vegetarianism has the problematic features of picky eating. Vegetarians (with some exceptions) categorically refuse to eat meat. They will spurn restaurants and cuisines that have poor or no vegetarian options. They will refuse food with meat in almost any

situation. They are not willing to try new foods with meat in them. Once committed to vegetarianism, they will not approach meat dishes with an open mind, they will not explore them, and they will not make an effort to appreciate what is being offered. The extreme few will not even be gracious about it, unapologetically asking to be accommodated and ungraciously rejecting anything that does not fit their food preferences.

As such, there are a number of moral reasons that tell against vegetarianism. It cuts you off from new experiences, standing in the way of your development and self-realization. It cuts off avenues of broadening one's horizons and gaining new understanding. It is an inconvenience to others. It can involve the rejection of a meaningful gift that makes it difficult for others to share parts of their lives with you, and it can make it difficult to have shared experiences with others, cutting you off from one avenue of understanding with other people and cultures. In the worst case, it may make it difficult for you to get along with others who do not share your food preferences, leading to an increase in the parochialism of your life.

For all their weight, however, these reasons against vegetarianism are merely *pro tanto* reasons, reasons that could be outweighed by more important considerations against them. Vegetarianism might well be the best option, but that judgment must come from a balanced consideration of the reasons on either side. But the necessary sort of consideration cannot be undergone unless the significant weight on both sides of the equation has been addressed. I will not take a stance on the substantive question of whether vegetarianism is the right choice or not, as this goes beyond the bounds of this essay, but I do wish to underscore the importance of some often ignored considerations. Vegetarianism may be the right choice; rather than being an objection to the view of this essay, my view can better explain the proper way to arrive at it.

Supertasters

One physiological axis of variation of taste has to do with the number of taste buds. Supertasters are (roughly) the quarter of the population who have the highest concentration of taste buds. The

extra taste buds mean that supertasters have an unusually strong sense of taste. Supertasters will be far more sensitive to the basic flavors that are perceived through taste buds (sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami), especially bitter flavors. This makes supertasters far more sensitive to some foods, which they will probably not come to like. Supertasting is probably responsible for a lot of picky eating. Supertasters (and their opposite, non-tasters, who have an uncommonly weak sense of taste) may seem to pose a significant challenge to the arguments of this essay. After all, if there is that much variation in taste, and it is genetic, does not that work in favor of taste-subjectivism?

At first blush, the existence of supertasters might make it seem like the hope for making taste out to be anything but subjective is misplaced. But remember, we were not asking for universalism in the first place! All along, I have admitted that there are variations in the way people taste, some of which are due to innate factors. And, in the case of taste-bud concentration, we can see the variation as smooth and nearly linear. Supertasters may, on consideration, come to different conclusions than the majority, but that is okay, so long as they have adequate self-knowledge about their tastes and their condition, have given a fair chance to certain foods, and have striven to understand them.

The treatment of supertasters should make an important feature of picky eating, as I have been using it in this essay, clearer. Picky eating is not so much about what foods you eat as the way you approach eating. I have argued for four gustatory obligations: openness, self-knowledge, accommodation, and grace. You should be open-minded about new taste experiences. You should try to understand the food you are eating and the reasons for your current preferences. (Are you a supertaster, or do you just need to get used to bitter foods?) You should attempt to accommodate new experiences and the gustatory needs and desires of others, and you should do so with grace and respect.

Other hard cases can be treated in much the same way as vegetarianism and supertasting. Perhaps you have moral, health, or safety reasons that lead you to avoid certain foods. This is okay, so long as you have considered all the sides of the issue, and so long as you decline the food with respect and grace.

Dessert: Food and Morality

It has probably occurred to you in reading this essay that none of the points it makes are particular to food. There is no *special* ethics of food, no additional obligations that accrue by way of culinary experience. But the consideration of food nonetheless has considerable value for ethics. On the one hand, picky eating has allowed for the exemplification of some important moral principles, showing certain moral values at work. Furthermore, the case of picky eating, the reactions we have to it, and the things we learn when we look at its details, help us to *interrogate* the structure of morality in a new way. I hope we have learned more about ethics by looking at eating, especially the way that ethics and aesthetics intersect, rather than just having learned about eating by looking at its ethics.

Notes

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1 See Rozin, P., "Food Preference," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 2001: 5719–22.
2 Most often four are listed: saltiness, sourness, sweetness, and bitterness. A fifth basic taste is now gaining recognition: savoriness or umami, which has long played an important role in Japanese and Chinese cuisine in particular.
3 A tingly-numbness sensation is the main sensation provided by the Sichuan (or Szechuan) pepper.
4 Duties to self are a controversial category. Some ethicists would only recognize moral concerns in interpersonal matters.
5 See Logue, A. W., *The Psychology of Eating and Drinking: An Introduction*. New York: W. H. Freeman, 1991.
6 Such experiences are what John Dewey called mis-educative. See *Experience and Education* in *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 13, ed. Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. They retard growth in the sense used below.

7 The duties discussed here rely on a form of Moral Perfectionism, which emphasizes development, perfection, or self-realization. See Hurka, Thomas, *Perfectionism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. A similar concern with growth is a central concern of Dewey's ethical and educational thinking. See *Experience and Education*, especially ch. 3.

8 There are many variations: vegans also do not consume any animal products, while pescetarians will eat fish. A fruitarian will not eat anything, plants included, that kills the organism. Vegetarians who do consume dairy or eggs are sometimes called lacto-vegetarians, ovo-vegetarians, or lacto-ovo-vegetarians.

9 That does not mean that everyone who thought about it would choose vegetarianism. It only means that, given moral reasons of significant weight, eating meat would be the morally wrong thing to do. But moral reasons are not the only considerations that actually determine action, probably no one is a total moral saint and, if Susan Wolf is right, it is probably best that no one is, See Wolf, Susan, "Moral Saints." *Journal of Philosophy* 79/8 (August 1982): 419–39.