

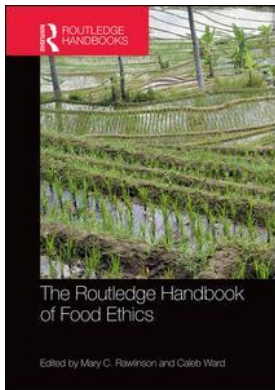
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Mary C. Rawlinson, Caleb Ward

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Ileana F. Szymanski

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PART I
The phenomenology of food

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1

WHAT IS FOOD?

Networks, not commodities

Ileana F. Szymanski

This study aims at providing an alternative avenue for our critical evaluation of moral actions with respect to food. It is based on a metaphysical account of food that takes it to be not a commodity but, rather, an active and multi-directional network.

Food is present in many aspects of our lives. Perhaps the first thing that comes to mind when we try to describe food is that it is what sustains us physically to go about our activities. Beyond this role, food is also in many ways a topic of national and international political debate. It is the lifeline of restaurants, chefs, waiters, food critics, farmers, supermarkets, and other food outlets, as well as that of cooking schools, food scientists, institutes of agricultural policy, many health institutions, and health professionals ranging from physicians and nutritionists to dieticians and counselors. Food is also a stronghold of practices that reaffirm and showcase the identities of specific cultures, religions, ethnicities, and other groups. It gives power to those who can prepare it skillfully; it also gives power to those who eat it or refuse to do so for a variety of reasons, such as political protesting, revenge, health, and abstinence. It is the subject of advertisements, films, television shows, photographs, paintings, and other media; it is an object of private and public trade and consumption. Food can be a lifeline, or a road to debt, illness, poverty, and hunger. It can be divisive of families and friendships; it can be the foothold of exploitation, extortion, and oppression of countless human and animal lives, or it can be their redemption.

The quasi-omnipresence of food in people's lives would have us believe that its paramount role is reinforced by a strong account of what food *is*, i.e., a strong metaphysics of food. However, this is not the case even though it seems that it should be. A generally accepted account of food is that it is what people eat. There are at least three significant problems with this account. The first is its centeredness on humans; the second is its emphasis on food as a thing, i.e., as radically separate and different from the person who eats it; the third (a consequence of the second) is its emphasis on food as food *items*, thus preventing a clear understanding of food beyond its role in feeding.

It is possible to think that the term "food" is human-centered because there is another term to describe animal food, namely, "feed." While this is true in many cases (e.g., when we speak of cattle feed and chicken feed, etc.) it is not always the case: the terms "dog food" and "cat food" are two salient examples. Perhaps we are comfortable with the category "dog food" (or any other type of pet food) and not "cattle food" because we ascribe human-like qualities to companion animals. Or perhaps it is because those companion animals are kept mostly in a human home, and, therefore, we may be inclined to think that their eating is vastly different from that of

other animals, many of whom humans (and our pets) also eat. There is, thus, a gradation of species (strongly influenced by their domestication and our particular appreciation of them) implicated in our understanding of food that can be used to justify our turning a blind eye to the suffering of many animals raised for consumption.¹

When food is viewed as a *thing*, i.e., a commodity, it becomes confusing to claim that at the same time, as it is commonly said, “we are what we eat.” Personal identity, indeed, is not reducible to things such as the items we consume; nevertheless, our identity is greatly affected by the processes that facilitate our eating what we eat (as well as when, where, how, and at what cost), and by the people, institutions, animals, products, and living conditions that enact, interrupt, alter, diversify, or stop those processes. The concept of food exceeds the limits of a commodity. The account of food as a commodity, while not patently false (we do indeed buy and sell food), is nevertheless reductive of what food *is*, because, on its own, it is unable to explain why food, beyond the necessity of feeding our physical bodies, is central in our lives and our development.

Underlying the above-mentioned problems is a metaphysical architecture that categorizes eater and eaten as separate and mostly unrelated entities: one is a person, the other a thing; one is rational, the other is not; one is special and unique, the other is repeatable and easily substituted by another of its kind. The only link between these entities is the activity of eating (and, perhaps, the preparation towards eating), which is impermanent, and not always significant for the subjects involved. In my view, this metaphysics does not address the richness of the relationships that join eater and eaten and, most importantly, it ignores that the eaten is not primarily a *thing*. It is rather an active and multi-directional *network* of forces, events, institutions, etc. It also ignores the relationships that, while being about food, do not always or primarily involve the act of eating.

In his article “Food and Memory,” Jon D. Holtzman (2006: 364) tells us, “food – like the family, gender, or religion – must be understood as a cultural construct in which categories rooted in Euro-American experience may prove inadequate.” These categories seem to be those responding to a binary logic of domination that finds its home in a substance-based metaphysics, where there is a sharp divide amongst entities based on the properties of their substance (person/thing, man/woman, native/foreign, culture/nature, etc.). The tradition of this kind of metaphysics is long and tortuous, and it has been challenged many a time. For example, in his work “Convivialism: A Philosophical Manifesto,” Raymond Boisvert (2010) proposes a theoretical framework for reinterpreting Western philosophy (particularly modern metaphysics)² through the use of the preposition “with.” His account is based on William James and Michel Serres, who propose a “rearranging” of philosophy and the categories it uses to explain the world through this very focus. Boisvert believes that in the area of metaphysics, if philosophy were to include the use of the particle “with” in its analyses of reality (that is to say, if it were to focus on the connections between entities as opposed to their separateness and autonomy), the examination of existence would move from being dominated by the category of autonomy into the category of *convivialism*, i.e., “accepting an orientation built around the slogan ‘to be is to always be with’” (2010: 60).

This approach to convivialism fuels a metaphysical analysis sharply focused on food, and a re-evaluation of specific categories that we use to address issues surrounding this topic. In *I Eat, Therefore I Think: Food and Philosophy*, Boisvert (2014) uses a metaphysical approach to reconsider the notion of “para-site”: “It literally means the one who eats [*sitos*] next to [*para*] another.” A “parasite” could then be considered a “tablemate,” a “co-eater,” even a “companion” (2014: 45). The nature of the parasite is, thus, to be with others – this is what its being is. It can be adopted as a “prototypical metaphysical figure” (2014: 50) that shows us that all beings are, at their very core, relational. When we allow for the intromission of another in our lives, there is potential for harmony: “A dinner table with no new guests is a safe place. It is also the place for redundancy and stagnation. The most vibrant system is hospitable to parasites” (2014: 51).

Boisvert's original idea about metaphysics is highlighted by Lisa Heldke in her article "An Alternative Ontology of Food: Beyond Meataphysics" (2012). Based on the work of Boisvert and Kelly Oliver, Heldke suggests, "we root our ethical decisions about our food *in* the tangle of relationships that, together, bring foodstuffs into existence" (2012: 79). She develops the metaphor of a *conceptual barn* where many different entities live under the same roof based on multiple relationships. The conceptual barn highlights that the decisions we make about what to eat (these being grounded on considerations beyond the biological categories in which we place different kinds of food, e.g., animal/not animal) are interconnected: "all the things we eat are the products of multiple relationships" (2012: 81).

In Heldke's view, a metaphysics based on relationships works particularly well with food:

[T]o *be* food is to be (defined as) something that can be eaten by something else, and eating is, of course, a relationship. But the relational character of food extends far beyond the stage at which it is actually consumed. To *become* food – to be rendered edible, palatable, delicious – means that a living thing has been part of scores of relationships, both natural and cultural: with the soil in which a plant is grown and the sun and rain that enables its growth; with the factory workers who process a raw material . . . with the heat and the metal pan that turn an ingredient into a "dish" in someone's home.
(2012: 82)

These relationships form the basis of Heldke's alternative ethical approach to food issues: "When it comes to making moral decisions about whether or not to purchase and eat some particular food, all of these 'withs' are (at least potentially) relevant, and all are operating in relation to each other" (2012: 84). The relationships that she considers are not only amongst eaters, but also amongst eaters and the food they eat, and those people, institutions, parts of environment, etc., that make that food possible. In "Food Politics, Political Food" (1992), Heldke focuses on the self as relational to draw attention to our connections with food. She develops an ontology of the self that she calls the "Coresponsible Option" (1992: 311). This ontology of the self includes awareness of the relationships that humans form not only with other humans "but also with other animals, plants, soil, air, and water" (1992: 314).

In Heldke's Coresponsible Option theory it is emphasized that regardless of the challenges that accompany the relationships with humans, non-human animals, and the environment (e.g., their asymmetry, the fact that it may make us uncomfortable to know that we are complicit in the suffering of others, etc.) it is clear that being a part of those relationships is not a matter of choice: "it is not a matter of *deciding* to become involved with others' lives, but of recognizing the way in which I am inevitably a part of them – and of understanding how their problems are also my own" (1992: 319). According to Heldke, "[t]he interrelations in which food involves us provide powerful examples of the fact that our relations to others are not optional" (1992: 320). The point is underscored once more in her conclusion:

a food-focused coresponsible model for action challenges me to act in ways that will illuminate rather than mystify my relationality, that will highlight the many ways in which those relations involve food, and that will work toward the elimination of the pathological asymmetry that characterizes many of those relations.
(1992: 322)

Heldke's Coresponsible Option is very convincing. She is able to illuminate our inextricable link to others and to food. Boisvert's work goes in tandem with this and provides further support

to the idea that it is not only not optional to “be with” others but, also, being with others is a source of vitality and harmony. Much like these two projects, my proposal underscores a connection between metaphysics, ethics, and politics. There are, however, two key aspects that differentiate my view.

First, I am focusing on the metaphysics of food as opposed to making a larger metaphysical claim about other aspects of reality that can also be seen as relational. Second, I bring food and not the eater or even the activity of eating into the center of my discussion. My claim is that food can be understood in two ways: food *items* are tokens of a food insofar as it is a larger *network* of relationships (perhaps akin to Heldke’s “conceptual barn”). Conceived in this theoretical framework, food includes acts of not eating, both as the rejection of food and as actions existing outside of the sphere of ingestion or digestion (e.g., cultural heritage preservation); national and international trading policies; animal husbandry methodologies; the ethical treatment of animals, farm workers, and their surrounding communities; the environmental impact of growing certain kinds of foods using specific agricultural technologies; practices of disposing of food items, etc. Conceiving of food as having two related meanings offers clarity in that (a) food is sometimes a commodity and, at the same time, a marker of personal identity of the human eater; (b) the same process of carving our personal identities can occur when food items are not present (even if these are seen as more than just commodities); and (c) this provides yet another avenue for moral agents to consider the relationships of which they are already a part, and to which they need to offer an ethical response. In the case of Heldke, the ethical responses that she is looking to examine are those that answer the question, “How are we to eat?” (2012: 69). I wish to offer an approach that helps answer those questions and others, such as, who do I become when I eat in such-and-such way? What vision of the world do I perpetuate because of my actions? What use do I make of the democratic means available to me to create a vision of the world where my thoughts and actions cohere?

It may be surprising that I have chosen to conceive of food using the trope of an active, multi-directional *network*. I do not mean to be clever or to overcomplicate things. I rather see the need to create a new term to express my ideas. Much like Judith Butler,

[i]t’s not that I’m in favor of difficulty for difficulty’s sake; it’s that I think there is a lot in ordinary language and in received grammar that constrains our thinking . . . and that I’m not sure we’re going to be able to struggle effectively against those constraints or work within them in a productive way unless we see the ways in which grammar is both producing and constraining our sense of what the world is.

(2004: 327–328)

When privilege allows us to think about food as a commodity, then moral responsibility is eschewed; suffering ceases to be palpable; injustice seems illusory. The language of commoditization allows us to depersonalize our relationship to food; it paints a landscape where food items are static, replaceable, and the product of some process of mechanized activity that we imagine to be aseptic, regulated, and scientific. Our actions with respect to food (how we grow it, buy it, dispose of it, eat it, ban it, promote it, etc.), thus, are many times the result of an uncritical and indifferent thought process.

With the advent of information technologies and the relative abundance (compared to the past forty years or so) of books, academic and popular articles, films, undercover video footage, television shows, pamphlets, etc., that inform consumers about the physical, ethical, and political dangers that ensue in the status quo of food in the world, it is astonishing that a change towards a more responsible way of interacting with food has not been adopted more decisively by consumers. It thus seems that abundant information about the effects of our decisions is not the solution

for change towards the better. The types of media used to disseminate the information in question, and the frequency of dissemination, also do not seem to be the problem.

When food is seen exclusively as a commodity, moral obligations towards the different parts of the food system are, at best, relegated to being optional and, at worst, not even a part of the landscape of our interactions. This is plain when our thoughts about food and our behavior towards it are not coherently connected. Consider the following: (1) Loving animals and wishing to protect them, some people experience feelings of compassion when confronted with information about animal abuse; however, this information does not prevent them from eating meat from animals farmed in CAFOs, whose lives are the very expression of the suffering these people perceive as abominable; (2) Advocating verbally for the fundamental dignity of people does not seem to prevent some from purchasing products from companies with documented records of poor working conditions; (3) Claims expressing concern about personal health do not seem to illuminate how people's diets (usually based on aesthetic preferences rather than nutritional ones) connect them to unnecessary health risks that increase taxation and debt in their community, and how those same choices are examples of selfish and careless life practices.

When a moral agent faces conflicts such as the ones mentioned above, it is evident that thoughts and actions about food do not always dovetail. The reason for this is that those actions are strongly influenced by an understanding of food as a commodity, which does not address, but rather reduces, the richness of what food is. In highlighting a much richer understanding of food (namely, food conceived as an active, multi-directional network), we open alternative avenues of critical examination to those willing to change their relationship to food in a more responsible way. Also, awareness about the responsibilities that already exist in our relationship with food is underscored, as is the process of reciprocal shaping that exists between food and those who engage with it in a variety of ways.

I conceive of a network as a confluence of several "points," each of which can be an event, a person, a trend, a community, an institution, a practice, a memory, an artifact, a story, a commodity, a space, a living being, etc. The points have a relationship to each other, although not all points have to be necessarily related to all others in the same way or in the same direction. A community is a network of many points, connected in many different directions: the environment; the living beings that inhabit it; the institutions that govern their practices; the cultural artifacts they produce, reproduce, and record; the practices they encourage and discourage, etc.

The behavior of one of the points in the network can have an effect of varying degrees on other points. In a community, the environment shapes its inhabitants, and the inhabitants shape the environment; cultural artifacts shape those who created them and also the environment; institutions shape living beings and their artifacts, and, as a consequence, environments and institutions morph, are created, or cease to exist based on similar relationships. The behavior of one point produces an effect on all others.

What I call food is this very kind of network. It is not only part of a network as one of its points; it is a network unto itself. Food items are part of this network. Other parts include, to name a few, animals and humans who eat food items, who refuse to eat them, and who cannot eat them; inanimate objects, animals (and, yes, in some cases, humans) who are used as food items; the practice of agriculture; the political institutions at local and global levels that regulate the practice of agriculture; the academic area of food science; the religious institutions and practices that regulate the preparation and consumption of food items; the economic structures of global and local food markets; advertising and media; professionals and institutions regulating the relationship of food and health; cultural practices about the acquisition, preparation, consumption, and disposal of food items, as well as their preservation and transmission; international organizations that oversee food aid. All of these are the participants of the network, and they include past, present, and,

in some cases, also future participants (e.g., when we consider the future environmental impact of specific agricultural practices).

All of the above points of the network *are* food or, in other words, they are participants in the network of food. This means that to be *in* the network is to be the network – in other words, there is no network outside of the points, and the points achieve their full significance when seen in their mutual connection. The relationship between the points of the network and the network itself is one of active and multiple directions. Not one of the points ever remains static and unchanging: food items rot and become stale; species become extinct; varieties of vegetables and other agricultural products get introduced or die out; cultural practices are modified; religions fragment into sects; rules and their applications get diluted or strengthened; crops fail or succeed; companies cease to exist, or they are created, or they are sold; the environment is polluted, or it is improved, or it is modified for specific purposes; regulatory bodies develop more or less of a foothold in society; advocacy groups arise or disperse, etc. Each one of these points in the network affects the others, and further variation of relationships is being constantly generated. If the points of the network are not static, then the network itself is also not static; as a result of the many variables and their volatility, there is a certain degree of unpredictability in the network. When we conceive of our moral response to food, we benefit from framing our actions in this changing landscape because the widespread consequences of our practices become more palpable.

My preference that the name *food* should apply to the network as opposed to only the food items within the network expresses my concern with the idea that food items owe their identity to other points in the network. Indeed, food items are not a natural kind; nothing just *happens to be* food. Food items are taken from the world and chosen as something to be eaten, and, thus, they are made into food items. Food is *made to be* an object of consumption, trade, affection, oppression, etc. Food is made to be what it is by those who eat it, trade it, exchange it, gift it, reject it, etc., and by the policies and mechanisms that underlie and oversee those events, be they social, political, ethical, aesthetic, etc. Whatever items fall into the category of food, they are there because they have been brought into it. Thus, we can identify agency on the part of all whose lives intersect food in different ways; this agency provides food with some of its identity. It is evident that not everyone eats the same things, and that not everyone considers certain items to be edible. Indeed, not everything that is considered food by specific groups or individuals needs to be nutritious, or have caloric value, or be healthy, or be natural.³ A few examples of foodstuffs that are not always accepted as food are insects, junk food, animal flesh, meal-replacement bars and shakes, and artificially produced food substitutes (e.g., “fake” dairy products, “lab-grown” meat, etc.). The participants of the network collaborate in carving the identity of such items by making them into “food,” and, as will be shown below, this relationship is reciprocal, and food items (as well as other points in the network of food) help our identities develop.

At the beginning of this article it was mentioned that a generally accepted account of food is that it is what we eat. From this perspective, there is no eating unless there are food items to be consumed. The reverse, however, need not be true. Food items may exist, but eating does not have to ensue. Indeed, there are phenomena in the network of food whose existence depends on the very absence of food items, and this absence is as powerful (and sometimes even more powerful) than the actual presence of food items.

Where hunger exists (that is, where food items are scarce or not plainly present), food as a network is still present and palpable in its *failure* to deliver a basic human need. It is also present in the memories of items that do not exist anymore (e.g., extinct varieties of fruits and vegetables; items not produced anymore because of the closure of a company, or because the way to obtain such products was harmful); in their companion items (e.g., their packaging, transportation, and preservation technologies, the instruments used to serve them, etc.); in their

artistic representations; in their representatives, advocates, detractors, etc. Food items need not be abundant for the continuous activity of food as a network. Eating does not need to occur frequently or at all for food as a network to unfold at least partially. The following example will help clarify what I mean.

In the Terezin World War II concentration camp, some women prisoners engaged in what they called “cooking with the mouth”: after long days of work they would gather at night to discuss recipes; they had no ingredients, no way of cooking, perhaps not even the hope of one day cooking again, and they were very hungry. Despite all of this, they continued cooking by verbalizing the recipes, writing them down wherever and whenever they could, thus reaffirming their identity as cooks, as members of a family, as members of a religion, as born in a certain region where a specific dish is done in a certain way, as preservers of traditions, as story-tellers, etc. (Szymanski 2014).⁴ In the absence of food items and the activity of eating them, food still allowed those women to develop a sense of self. If we are what we eat, we also are what we do not eat. This is not a word game. The absence of edible items may allow for the reaffirming of personal identity, as it did for those women in Terezin. We are what we eat only if “what we eat” really means “what we eat even when we are not eating it.” The statement should not be read as a contradiction: personal identity is underscored, carved, and molded because of many factors, among them, what, why, where, and how we do *not* eat. The refusal of food is what makes a hunger-striker; it is what can make someone a victim of suicide; it is what can cancel, modify, and challenge a marker such as *prisoner*, and exchange it for *survivor*, *cook*, *creator*, *archivist*, etc.

Indeed, we speak of food as possessing certain qualities or properties with which we connect as both agents and patients. The network of food does something to us as much as we do something to it, and this reciprocal affection goes beyond physical and chemical changes in the food consumed and in the body of the eater. To be what one eats implies not only that the nutrients (or lack thereof) of a foodstuff allow one’s body to extract energy and vital substance in order to live. To be what one eats implies, further, that a specific identity is carved for the eater: vegan, vegetarian, pescatarian, lacto-ovo vegetarian, carnivore, omnivore. It implies also that one may be, perhaps, a discerning eater, allergic to certain things, and observant of certain rules, be these of etiquette, law, morality, or religion – even on pain of death. That is to say, the identity we seek to preserve by eating can also be preserved by *not* eating. This point is illustrated in the story of the survival of Jonathan Safran Foer’s grandmother in World War II (Foer 2009). This is the dialogue they had when she told him the story:

“The worst it got was near the end. A lot of people died right at the end, and I didn’t know if I could make it another day. A farmer, a Russian, God bless him, he saw my condition, and he went into his house and came out with a piece of meat for me.”

“He saved your life.”

“I didn’t eat it.”

“You didn’t eat it?”

“It was pork, I couldn’t eat pork.”

“Why?”

“What do you mean why?”

“What, because it wasn’t kosher?”

“Of course.”

“But not even to save your life?”

“If nothing matters, there is nothing to save.”

(16–17)

Further, to be what one is in and through food (or its absence) also implies that one's practices engage with categories such as picky, voracious, convivial, etc. And, whether one is aware of this or not, it also implies that one supports certain types of agriculture, certain living wages and conditions for farm workers and their neighbors (domestic and global), certain ecological impact on the environment (due, for example, to transportation costs, air and water pollution, etc.), certain companies that sell their products, certain methodologies and goals for science, and the politicians who stand behind the policies and procedures used to arrive at, market, and sell the final product ("food").

Food conceived as an active and multi-directional network allows us to engage with all of these issues and provide a foothold for further examination of our ethical relationship with each of them. We are already involved in these relationships expressed in the network of food; what is now required is a critical response to them. This critical response can indeed include a re-definition of food such as the one I have attempted in this project.

In 2008, Michael Pollan published in *The New York Times Magazine* a letter addressed to the President-Elect of the United States. In that letter he provides a series of recommendations. One of them is the creation of a federal definition of food. The context of this recommendation was that many items are federally counted as food – and therefore able to be purchased with food stamps and eligible for exemption of local sales tax – when they are in fact harmful to consumers. Pollan states, "We need to stop flattering nutritionally worthless food like substances by calling them "junk food" – and instead make clear that such products are not in fact food of any kind." In 2009, in his piece "Rules to Eat By," also published in *The New York Times Magazine*, Pollan revives the question of what counts as food, and he suggests that "it is not easy" to know what counts as food and what does not in an environment where the food industry makes tantalizing claims about new products.

I find Pollan's prompts to consider a new definition of food quite provocative. His strategy, as well as the present study, faces several challenges. First, searching for a federal definition of food *might* seem like a pursuit that has fewer immediate consequences for the foodscape than, say, instituting laws that would more closely regulate the food industry. In other words, it seems like a definition of food would be ineffective at producing rapid – and much-needed – change in the network of food. The second reason is that answering the question "What is food?" seems to be intuitively accessible to some individuals, and, consequently, its further consideration seems like a futile and elitist exercise. Thirdly, even when one is willing to entertain the question, this seems to be a rather unassailable topic, because its answer may be relative to an individual's culture. Moreover, it is possible that only a dominant culture's voice may be taken as representative of everyone.⁵

From this perspective, looking for a definition of food seems like an exercise in abstraction that can easily appear superfluous, presumptuous, and possibly exclusive of certain groups, whether ideological, ethnic, religious, etc. As I mentioned above, this perspective can also be applied to the appeal for a metaphysics of food. While the intention of the metaphysics I propose is to seep into the ethical deliberation of moral agents, it can nevertheless be perceived as ineffective. As I have endeavored to show, moral agents espouse an underlying commitment to some account of food that, while perhaps tacit, is there and guides our behavior in the relationships we sustain in multiple networks of food. Promoting critical awareness of the putative account of food may not be *enough* to achieve political change at a federal level, yet this does not mean that it cannot produce *any* change and, thus, there is no reason why it should not be attempted.

Pollan's suggestion is that whatever receives the name *food* should be "an edible substance [that] must contain a certain minimum ratio of micronutrients per calorie of energy" (2008). Certainly, the meanings of "edible" and "certain minimum ratio" would be subject to interpretation, and it would be fair to ask questions about the source of the funding for the science that would oversee

the studies to determine it. Moreover, it would be fair to ask whether a federal definition of food is only a definition about food *items* or whether it should include (as perhaps it already, tacitly, does) aspects related to cultural preservation and development. My proposal is, in a way, modest compared to Pollan's, because the outcome he desires is very specific. I am operating on the assumption that those who will contemplate my proposal for a new metaphysics of food will consider it as yet another avenue for evaluating their individual moral behavior, and that the impact of one person's change will be reflected in and examined throughout the community – resulting, potentially, in incremental changes in ethical practices concerning food. One such outcome could be engaging with what a federal definition of food might be in the United States, and what it might be globally, as a fundamental human right.

Notes

- 1 In *Eating Animals* Jonathan Safran Foer (2009: 21–29) offers a compelling discussion on the special treatment of companion animals.
- 2 “For a variety of cultural, historical and personal reasons, Modern metaphysics, the generic description of what things are, focused on a particular starting point: self-standing, nondependent, non-needy entities. . . . The ‘with’ dimension got relegated to cold storage. Relations, interconnections, conjunctions, and spatial and temporal locations were not defining ingredients of entities” (Boisvert 2010: 58).
- 3 In *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, Barbara Kingsolver recalls a touching anecdote where her husband Steven showed one of the neighborhood kids that carrots came from the earth. When other children gathered around to see, he asked if they knew other vegetables that could also be roots; their final answer was spaghetti (2007: 12).
- 4 The story is told in full in Cara de Silva's *In Memory's Kitchen* (1996).
- 5 The question remains, is it at all possible to determine what is food regardless of cultural associations? Or, more pointedly, *should* one do this? And, if one does, have we in fact erased a valuable trait of food? Moreover, what aspects about food are left out of its definition when it does not transcend the act of eating?

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