With Regard to Aesthetics: An Analysis of Aesthetic Qualities in Contemporary Food Systems and Their Contribution Toward Environmental Effect

By
Isaac Emanuel Singer
University of Colorado at Boulder

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Thesis Advisors:
Dale Miller, Environmental Studies
Daniel Sturgis, Philosophy, Committee Chair
Iskra Fileva, Philosophy

Abstract

This thesis aims to explore aesthetic qualities in contemporary food systems and how they may contribute to environmental change. By focusing on three areas of food consumption that are thought to be environmentally damaging (Meat, The Notion of Local, and Advertisement and Presentation) I discover that aesthetics seem to have a prominent role in shaping our dietary interests and motivating our behavior within these realms. Meat potentially serves as a cognitive aesthetic symbol and causes for conflicting senses of desire, the environmental positivity of local is more supported by aesthetic notions than environmental ones, and advertisement and presentation can cleverly use aesthetics to greenwash products and distance us from feelings of negativity. I also discover that it is by the power of aesthetic desire and the nature of aesthetic responses that aesthetics serve as a useful and salient tool in influencing our perceptions and changing our behavior. In addition, aesthetics are not strictly good or bad in nature, but are a rather a tool that can be utilized in a variety of ways. Potentially even, aesthetic desire may be able to serve the role of changing behavior without having to convince an individual that their behavior needs to change. It is as such that where the motivational gap exists, in food choice and its variety of forms, aesthetics may be a potential solution to fill it.

Preface

One of my favorite topics of interest has been the role of aesthetics in our daily lives. I believe that aesthetics occupies a part of human existence that is very close to home and will continue to have influence on current and future generations to come. Since I am also an environmental studies major, and as such concerned about environmental harm, one of my first thoughts for picking a thesis topic was incorporating aesthetics into environmental solutions.

I learned from many of my classes that those who do not study the environment can often find particular difficulty understanding and accepting the scientific and moral arguments regarding why environmental change is happening and why they should adjust their behavior. It seems to be the case that proposing moral and scientific incentive was only as good as the listeners ability to understand and relate. This is where the idea came into mind that we can potentially appeal to people's aesthetic motives and interests in a way that encourages environmentally positive behavior. I believe this topic is important because it is often overlooked, even though aesthetics occupy such substantial part of our lives- and in particular- our connections and behavior regarding food.

I would like to give thanks to my entire committee for helping me throughout this difficult process. Although vigorous and intellectually challenging, Dale Miller, Iskra Fileva, and Daniel Sturgis have made it all the more understandable and rewarding by guiding me along the way. I could not have completed this process without their valuable input and all their help.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Food systems in contemporary society are thought to be a major contributor to much of the environmental harm that we experience today. Agriculture is the largest human occupation of land use, and contributes up to 10% of our total greenhouse gas emissions. The supply chains involved within agriculture and food production continue to expand as society's demand for food exponentially increases. People are faced with the decision of what to eat every day, and this decision is made by more people as the population expands. In part, some of the responsibility appears to lie with the consumer, for food production and food consumption share a symbiotic relationship. It seems important then that if we want to change the nature and dynamics of food systems, we have to explore the dynamic of individual food choice.

While many scientists and environmentalists seek to fulfill this very purpose, it seems that we are often focused on morals and science. It is often talked about why we should be concerned and why people should change their behavior, but serious difficulties arise in actually getting a behavior to change. Indeed, when these issues do come up, it is often proposed that people should change their behavior *because* it is the environmentally or morally just option. When proposing that an individual should eat less meat, for example, we will often tell people that factory farming is ecologically and atmospherically destructive, in addition to discussing the moral implications of harming animals. This method of approach seems to be inefficient, as many people do not change their behavior simply because someone else told them what was right and wrong. People may know that climate change is damaging, but the last 20 years remain marked by large levels of inaction on various grounds. Levels of consumption are not declining, overall waste are increasing, methods of production are in many cases unsustainable, and food scarcity still exists for some populations. In addition to morals, scientific information is only as

useful as its ability to be understood and appreciated, something which not everyone is able to do. Therefore, the current methodology of popular approaches to changing people's environmentally-related food behavior seem to not give sufficient incentive for an individual to enact that choice.

I believe that the role of aesthetics can potentially explain this phenomenon in part. Specifically, I believe that the various aesthetic qualities and connections that we have to food make it an extremely complex and integral part of contemporary society, that potentially has influence in other realms of thought. This leads me to my primary research question; What are the aesthetic responses, experiences, and processes within contemporary food systems? Even more so, how and why do they work this way, and how can this be used to support *positive* environmental change in the future? By focusing on three areas surrounding food that have strong environmental effect, I intend show how aesthetic qualities can drive both positive and negative behaviors towards these environmental issues. These areas are:

A. Meat

B. The Notion of Local

C. Advertisement and Presentation.

By looking at these areas, I intend to show how the dynamics of aesthetics play into individual food choice and serve such a prominent role in shaping much of our perceptions. In addition, I will also suggest how we can orient these aesthetic properties of food to influence people to make more environmentally positive food choices. This is to say that by appealing to people's interest and desire for aesthetic qualities, we can make the environmentally positive choice the better aesthetic choice, thus influencing people to make better choices without having to persuade them go against their desires.

Background

In this section, I will first cover the various effects of contemporary food systems on the environment and why they serve as a prominent environmental issue. Second, I will explain the effects that individual and consumer choice has within these food systems, showing why changes in dietary behavior can have substantial positive effects on the environment. After this I will discuss evidence and reasoning for why scientific and moral incentive seems to be inefficient at properly incentivizing people's behavior and how it does not fill the motivational gap. Next, I will explore how aesthetics potentially serve an integral function in human thought, mainly that they have a deep connection to our perceptions and preferences as a whole. Finally, I will discuss how the power of aesthetics has served a prominent and influential role in shaping societal interactions and behaviors both contemporarily and historically.

Food and Environmental Health

Food systems in contemporary society are thought to be a significant contributor to the rise of greenhouse gas [GHG] emissions and general pollution. Livestock alone is responsible for substantial contributions to rises in GHG emissions and is a predominant factor in natural habitat loss worldwide (Foley, 2011) (Herrero et al., 2016). Specifically, agriculture contributes up to 10% of GHG emissions, and is likely the largest contributor to loss of biodiversity. (Machinova et al., 2016) (Epa.gov, 2015). With society already farming roughly 38% of earth's land surface, agriculture is likely the biggest human use of land on the planet. Projected estimates also show that food consumption as a whole has increased dramatically over the past 60 years, including an expansion taking place of the vast supply chains involved within food systems This includes development in technology, industry, transportation, storage, distribution, and market, to name a few. This has resulted in a rapid expansion of ecological takeover, with agricultural beginning to

dominate various biological domains since the 1930's (Machinova et al., 2016) (Foley, 2011). In addition to the rise in levels of consumption, we also expect to see an increase in population. By 2050, the world's population is expected to increase by two-to-three billion, which will heavily impact levels of demand for food (Foley, 2011). When demand for food rises, this causes an additional effort to supply from the market, which results in further expansion of agricultural industries. Considering the large impact agriculture has and will continue to have on environmental health, there are many factors that must be addressed in order to make our current food systems more sustainable and less damaging.

Food Choice, Sustainability, and Environmental Impact

One of the many factors that goes into the sustainability and impact of food systems is the choice of the consumer. "What should we eat?" is currently a difficult and important question in the realm of environmental science in addressing many of the sustainability issues we have today. (Perullo, 2016) (Peters et al., 2016). As mentioned, livestock alone is one of the major contributors to land use, pollution, and biodiversity loss, with consumer choice being at the forefront of its progression (Peters et al. 2016) (Machinova et al., 2016). It is important to note that food production and food consumption share various relationships with each other, so changes to one will inherently have effect on the other. As such, many strategies for reducing environmental impacts of food systems focus on changing individuals' diets or general perceptions about food. Some even suppose that a change in dietary behavior is essential in meeting the demands of future human needs (Peters et al. 2016).

The Issues of Moral and Scientific Incentive

One of the primary issues facing the environment in contemporary society is convincing people that environmental damage is occurring and that it is indeed something that needs to be

addressed. According to a survey by Jeffrey M. Jones distributed to a random sample of 1,000 people throughout the U.S, general concern about the environment is fairly modest and generally limited to issues that are perceived to directly affect individuals (Jones, 2015). Another study by Kval et al. shows that environmental harm, specifically global warming, is considered a very important issue amongst scientists, but the scientific basis for the issue is too difficult to understand for those who are not educated (Kval et al, 2012) or interested. This is a big reason that getting people to change a behavior that affects the environment is particularly hard, because most people do not understand or care enough to make that change. The primary reason for people's general lack of concern regarding the environment can be attributed to perceptions about risk and harm. Emotional responses to risk which do not immediately show personal damage are generally modest in nature, so things like global warming or loss of biodiversity are often not seen as high-risk (Rogers, 2017). This idea can be referenced as impersonal risk, a threat that has effects on the environment but not direct effects on an individual, but can potentially lead to consequences for an individual. The difference between personal and impersonal risk generally comes down to individual and environmental circumstances. For example, one who lives in an area greatly affected by floods may have greater concern for environmental harm that raises water levels. On the contrary, those who live in a very dry climate may be less concerned about raising water levels than they would increases in temperature. Concern for the environment is as such, highly variable, and can partially attributed to people who are concerned about direct personal harm and people who believe that environmental change will lead to harm (Rogers, 2017).

Indeed, risk perceptions become even more complicated when direct and prior experiences are brought into the matter. It is presumed by many that seeing the direct effect of

environmental harm would be greater in influencing behavior than potential hazard information (Rogers, 2017). A study on pollution in Great Britain found that individuals who experienced health problems from air pollution had a much higher risk perception and were more likely to take action (Rogers, 2017) (Whitmarsh, 2008). It appears then that direct experience and risk perception have a positive correlation, but there also appear to be certain cases where this correlation is less obvious. For example, people living in endangered areas sometimes show lower risk perceptions than people who farther away from such risks (Heitz et al., 2009). There are also examples of individuals who previously experienced a hazardous event, but did not experience personal damage, which consequently reduced their risk perceptions (Rogers, 2017). In Rebecca Rogers' article on why people take action, she notes, "This raises the question of proximity of the risk source and the importance of personal damage or at least the possibility to perceive nature change in proximity" (Rogers, 2017). In addition, this also raises the question of how observation of a changing environment in close proximity will affect risk perception, even if the experience does not harm the individual.

Specifically, regarding food, there are many environmental, moral, and health risks, but many of them are not as immediately apparent or observable as a direct harm (Machinova et al.,2016; Peters et al., 2016). As previously mentioned, farming meat is known to consume far larger amounts of water than growing crops like grains, the effect of this is tremendous on large agricultural scales. The damage may not be immediately apparent, so despite knowledge about the matter, risk perceptions may be fairly modest. In addition, diets high in saturated fat tend to contribute to cardiovascular diseases in later life, but despite knowing this information, its effect is not immediately apparent (Peters et al., 2016). Because these issues tend to show up later in life, people are often only prone to take action when the damage starts to be visible. It can be

noted then that risk perceptions regarding food fall along the same lines of environmental risk perceptions, due to the nature of prior experience and proximity to the hazard.

When it comes to the matter of changing food behavior, people often have unique ties and reasons for eating the food of their choice (Perullo, 2016). Health, taste, culture, ceremony, religion, atmosphere, and visual qualities are all potential reasons that people choose to eat what they eat. By convincing an individual what is right to eat and what is wrong to eat, there may not be enough incentive to actually cause change. Regardless of what is right and what is wrong, the risk perception of the individual will most likely rely on their prior experiences and personal preferences (Rogers, 2017).

For the reasons above, the approach of trying to tell people what is right and what is wrong when it comes to the environment and food choice may not be the best method for bringing real change. Risk perceptions tend to influence behavior, but prior experience also tends to influence risk perceptions. It is therefore extremely complicated to convince someone what risks are most important, as they will naturally move towards their risk perceptions and prior experiences (Rogers, 2017). It is also difficult to ask someone to go against their personal assessments of risk, as you are expecting people to reliably behave contrary to their priorities and desires. Indeed, even when such a task is possible, it takes mental energy and resources to control themselves and continue making decisions that are contrary to their desires, priorities, and perceptions regarding risk. It is for these reasons that I believe that making the environmentally positive choice more aesthetically appealing is a better way to proceed, rather than objectively stating moral or scientific facts.

What goes into food choice?

In order to address the question of what we should eat, it is important to look at the various inputs that go into food choice. People eat for a variety of reasons and hold various standards regarding what they decide to eat. Nutrition, health, morals, culture, religion, personal psychology, and many other inputs have substantial effect on what a person decides is acceptable for consumption (P. Gardner et al., 2011). As such, when discussing a proposal to change dietary behavior, it is important that these various qualities are looked at first.

Aesthetics and Food

Amongst the various inputs that affect food choice, aesthetic concepts seem to have significant importance. Taste, quality, atmosphere, and states of mind, are all examples of aesthetic qualities that surround food, and I will argue even that morals are connected as well. As such, aesthetics in food is related to the aesthetic experience, which seems to have substantial impact on aesthetic perceptions as a whole. (Perullo, 2016). There are many qualities to the aesthetic experience, which can appropriately be defined within the realm of food as the combination of aesthetic qualities and considerations that give rise to the experience as a whole. It is as such that aesthetics of food are not simply visual qualities or those of taste, but are also extended to include any factors that affect the aesthetic experience (Perullo, 2016). This includes the aesthetic qualities of the food itself and the aesthetic considerations of the individual.

Because the aesthetic experience includes a multitude of aesthetic qualities, analyzing these qualities and determining their role in food choice is a necessary component to understanding how aesthetics can influence food decisions. As an example, the aesthetic process of purchasing food gives rise to the question of how food can be presented to us and how that affects our food

choice (Perullo, 2016). In addition, it is important to look at how aesthetics plays into other considerations such as morals and religion to better understand its effect and relevance.

Aesthetic Responses to Food

Aesthetics relies on various aesthetic responses that people use to attribute value. These responses range from specific responses to meta responses, all of which affect an individual's aesthetic assertions. Therefore, the type of response that a person has is a strong influence on an individual's aesthetic experience (Carlson, 2007). Single responses consist of the initial response someone receives from an aesthetic, focusing on things such as taste and immediate pleasure. Second order responses or meta responses, focus on the response to the response and how that affects an individual's aesthetic assertion (Carlson, 2007). When applied to food, meta responses may include the pleasure that one gains from eating healthy, the pleasure of fulfilling a diet, or the pleasure of eating in line with one's moral beliefs. It is as such that these various responses contribute to the end aesthetic experience. When looking at aesthetics of food, it is important to consider both the single response and meta response to determine attributions of aesthetic value and quality.

Power of Aesthetics to Influence Behavior

Aesthetic considerations and judgments have substantial influence on the way people perceive and interact with their environment. This seems to be particularly true within the environmental realm and the natural world, and some philosophers argue that aesthetic considerations are more influential in affecting our behavior towards the natural environment than ethical considerations (Callicott, 2013).

Nature itself can be regarded as a piece of artwork that holds aesthetic value and is open to interpretation (Carlson, 2000; Carlson, Berleant, 2007). Human-environmental relationships

ultimately rely on the exploitation and preservation of nature. This makes assertions of value and beauty crucial to the way a society treats the environment. (*Bioscience,* 2013). Individual and cultural taste shapes these notions, and have a strong effect on the way societies consider the value of nature. Ethical considerations of nature vary according to aesthetic theory, as can be shown by the widespread differences in cultural beliefs and the effect it has on perceptions of the environment. (Shirane, 2013; Drenthen, Keulartz, 2014). How we consider nature, be it in ethics or aesthetics, greatly affects the way notions of value are asserted towards the environment. What we consider valuable is greatly embedded into our history, identity, goals, interactions, and communication; the environment is no exception to this rule (Theal, 1973) (Stewart, 2012) (*Bioscience*, 2013).

One need not look further than the renaissance period in European history to see the tremendous effect that art and aesthetics had on society. The renaissance period, a time of artistic expression and freedom, ultimately lead to drastic changes in perceptions regarding the mind, body, physiology, and psychology. Advancements in science, art, nature, and environmental-human relationships, all gave way through the advancement of artistic expression and value (Ginn, Lorusso, 2008). As such, aesthetics are not only tied with assertions of beauty and interpretations of nature, but also with the social dynamics and processes that exist amongst varying societies (Ikegami, 2005; Stewart, 2012; Cubit, 1998). In *Bonds of Civility* by Eiko Ikegami, Ikegami argues that various social networks created in Japan incorporated elements from the realm of beauty. Politics, social dynamics, and class hierarchy all had notions of aesthetics that shaped influence within Japanese culture. Aesthetics in this sense, played a large role in shaping the identity and social networks of the Japanese people (Ikegami, 2005). Indeed,

Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* argues that aesthetic concerns are one of the distinctive marks of an advanced civilization (Freud, 1929).

Simon Stewart in his article on aesthetics and sociology, argues that sociology has played an important role in evaluating objects in the external world as well (Stewart, 2012). Aesthetics are shaped by, and have the ability to shape, the various factors that influence social dynamics and politics (Theal, 1973; Hinderliter, 2009). As such, observing the nature of aesthetics requires a context of anthropological history, cultural and media studies, methods of communication, politics, and art. All of these factors influence the way aesthetic theory is formed and the effect it has on human interaction (Born, 2010). Ultimately, what we consider as beautiful, valuable, and aesthetically pleasing, has great effect on the way society chooses to communicate, represent itself, define itself, and shape its citizens (Stewart, 2012).

Literature Review

Analyzing Aesthetics

Aesthetic theory, ultimately, is tied to the aesthetic process. The aesthetic process is relatable to everyone, and comes from contemplating objects in the external world, attributing value, determining beauty, and passing judgments. The aesthetic process is shaped by our feelings, social interactions, and sensory experiences, and in no particular order, has great effect on the way aesthetic value is established (Ulianov Montano, 2013; Huhn, Thomas, Lambert, 1999; Santayana, 1936). Aesthetic theory can also change throughout a society's or person's existence.

Humans have the innate ability to recognize and assess qualities of objects within the external world. This ability is imperative in the attribution of aesthetic properties, and the way people define their assessments is what we know as taste. Taste in this sense is the qualities that

define aesthetic pleasure for an individual (J.Benovsky, 2013; Santayana,1936). Ultimately, preferences for taste apply to works of art, pieces of nature, architecture, literature, and anything that requires aesthetic evaluation (Bychkov, 2013; Huston, 2015; Carlson, Berleant, 2007).

Environmental Aesthetics

Environmental aesthetics looks to explore the multiple facets of aesthetic judgment in relation to the human-environment relationship. While traditional practices of aesthetics focus on art in its variety of forms, environmental aesthetics broadens its scope to include the everyday experiences which influence our environmental perception. (Carlson, 2007). Aesthetic judgment and experience is constantly delivered and fulfilled as one takes part in daily experiences, and many aesthetic considerations take place. Environmental aesthetics is not limited to considerations such as how things look or how beautiful they are, but can be extended to anything such morals, health aspects, and cognitive perceptions within the human-environmental relationship (Saito, 2001). In Yuriko Saito's paper on everyday aesthetics, she notes that traditional 'art-centered' or 'special experience-based' aesthetics do not fully accommodate our everyday aesthetic experiences. Rather,

> *"Most non-art objects and activities concern our everyday experiences of eating, clothing, dwelling, cleaning, and dealing with natural elements. Unlike the institutionalized art world, these are shared universally."* (Saito, 2001)

According to Saito, limiting ourselves to artistic aspects of aesthetics limits the range of aesthetic issues by implying that only those that are related to art and beauty are worth aesthetic analysis. As previously mentioned, this hinders our ability to appreciate and analyze the aesthetic experiences of our everyday lives (Saito, 2001).

This can be looked at in a variety of ways. For example, we can take the idea of a tire factory being aesthetically unappealing, both because of its visual aspects and perhaps because of the environmental damage that it causes. The fuming smokes and burning rubber can cause a negative sensory experience which in turn causes the idea that tire-making is bad for the environment. In addition, one who already believes that tire-making is bad for the environment may be particularly disgusted by the smell of burning rubber because they associate it with environmental damage. One may also find the factory aesthetically appealing because they know of the potential health effects that the factory brings. On the other hand, the owner of this factory may associate the sensory experiences that it brings with income and security, creating a positive aesthetic notion. Moral values, visual qualities, environmental properties, economic interests, and social properties, all are included within the scope of environmental aesthetics.

It is as such that anything that has potential for causing aesthetic judgment and experience in regard to the human-environmental relationship is within the realm of environmental aesthetics (Carlson, 2007). Subliminal and conscious interpretations of a variety of aspects around us influence our perceptions and opinions of aesthetic qualities, which some argue can extend to influencing other qualities such as values or morals (Saito, 2001) (Forsey, 2013).

Chapter One: The Carnivores Appeal

In the United States and many other developed countries, meat occupies a significant part of our diet, attributing up to 15% of daily energy intake on average. Trends of meat eating are also seen to be on the rise, especially in the United States, where meat consumption is three times the global average (Daniel et al., 2010; Haslam et al., 2014). It seems then that meat is fairly pervasive in developed countries, but this raises the question of why meat is so appealing. Is it the taste that fills us with gustatory pleasure, or is it the primal nature of man and women to consume other life? Perhaps it is the process of cooking the meat, hunting the animal, or presenting a visually appealing meal? In this section, I intend to explore the various paradigms surrounding meat consumption in developed countries to further understand why people eat meat and how this behavior can be motivated to change by aesthetic qualities.

1.0 Historical and Contemporary Connections to Meat

Indeed, human beings seem to have an innate connection to the idea of eating another animal, and it seems to be fairly pervasive in both history and contemporary society. In hunter-gatherer times, meat was a primary part of people's diets (65% of energy) because of its high calorie intake and high lipid concentrations (Cordain et al., 2002). All hunter gatherer tribes had to kill in order to eat, much of which was experienced and done by multiple members of the tribe. This is very unlike contemporary meat consumption, as a majority of people who buy meat never actually have to kill an animal. This is not to say that society has lost its connection to eating meat in modern day times. In a 2015 study by the Department of Food and Nutrition at Umea University, fifty-nine students and five teachers from different schools were observed and recorded during their lectures where meat consumption was discussed. The study found that meat was so well regarded to home and consumer studies that meat was seen as central to nutritional

health, sensory experience, culture and social relationships (Ingela, 2015). For example, most students when asked questions like, “Do you think this would be better with meat?”, answered almost always that it would. In addition, those who did not like meat were often singled out and made fun of as “vegetarians”, contributing to the perception that meat is a central part of the culture. (Ingela, 2015). As such, this idea can extend into the realm relationships, for meat is seen in this case as a normal and expected part of life. If you do not take place in the consumption of meat, you may be regarded as “not normal”. Of course, these perceptions are bound to be different across different cultures and countries, but in most developed countries, meat is a central part of human life. It appears then that meat can be regarded as far more than just food; it is an opportunity for a range of experiences.

1.1 The Meat Paradox

There appears to be then, many motivators for eating meat. However, the dynamic is more complex than “Want” and “Do not Want”. There is something commonly referred to as “The Meat Paradox,” the idea that an individual has care for animals, but still has a desire to eat meat (Haslam et al., 2014). While it may be assumed that our levels of consumptions imply a lack of care for animals, this does not seem to be the case. Most people tend to find animal suffering morally repugnant and disturbing (Halsam et al., 2014), yet we still find enjoyment in the process of eating meat.

According to a theory known as the motivational gap, people can have awareness and consideration towards issues like environmental harm, but there is often not sufficient motivation for taking action and changing behavior (Peeters, 2015). I believe this is very similar (if not analogous) to the concept of the meat paradox; people may know that they don’t want to hurt animals or eat something that has been killed, but people continue to eat meat. The answer to

why the motivational gap exists is a heavily explored topic amongst philosophers and scientists alike, but I believe there is one explanation of the motivational gap that very-well explains the dynamics of the meat paradox. A philosopher by the name of Stephen Gardiner posits that the motivational gap exists because the moral complexities involved in certain issues cause us to skew our moral judgments to rationalize our inaction (Gardiner, 2011). This is to say that rather than being motivated to change one's behavior when morally complex issues arise, people may adjust their moral considerations and parameters to reflect more positively on their current actions. For example, If I believe that my individual responsibility to climate change is minimal and therefore I do not need to help mitigate it, I am adjusting my moral considerations to rationalize my inaction. I would like to put forward then that due the analogous nature of the motivational gap and the meat paradox, Gardiners theory may probably explain the dynamic of the paradox. This is to say that people may go through internal negotiations regarding their moral perceptions to reduce the irrationality of eating meat despite not wanting animals to die.

One example of Gardiners theory being put into play is the idea of reducing attributions towards animals--attempting to further them from humans as much possible. In some of these cases, the justification of eating meat is legitimized by considering animals to be of lesser value, intelligence, and purpose (Halsam et. al 2014). For example, I may adjust my belief to be that animals are lesser than humans, stupider, not as important, or not as conscious. This creates the notion that animals are in some way separate from us and not subject to the same moral considerations, which reduces the irrationality felt by the meat paradox. If animals are less than me morally, I don't have to feel as repulsed when eating them (Halsam et. al 2014).

1.2 The Aesthetic Drive

While much focus tends to be on morality when it comes to motivators for not eating meat, I would like to argue that aesthetics are actually a primary driver that causes these decisions. It is important to note that I am not saying that the morals are separate from the aesthetic, but rather that the aesthetic plays a driving role in shaping the moral choice and end behavior. The main driver that I believe is affecting internal negotiations in regard to the meat paradox is the idea of moral repulsion. To be repulsed by a moral statement is in-fact an aesthetic response, and this response is what leads to behavior (Graca, 2015). In a data driven analysis of what drives consumer willingness to eat plant based diets by Joaco Graca, one researcher notes, “disgust is an emotional aversion and a critical factor in determining people's willingness to ingest a given food” (Graca, 2015). To further explain this claim, it could the idea of an animal being treated immorally that is repugnant and repulsive, where repulsiveness and repugnance are elements of aesthetics (Carlson, 2007). While aesthetics is often more than just beauty and ugliness, this does not negate the influence that these qualities can have regarding perception. When it comes to the meat paradox, we can see that people are repulsed by the idea of killing an animal, eating a dead animal, and the concept of death in general (Halsam et al., 2014; Graca, 2013). In order to repress this repulsion, one may adopt new perceptions regarding animals so that the aesthetic response is not as strong. One great example of this is the perception surrounding dog-eating in certain countries and cultures. In many ways, pigs are just as intelligent and morally equal to dogs, but we tend to find dog-eating as the more repulsive act. Many developed countries factory farm pigs, but if we were to factory farm dogs, the repulsion response would be extremely high. In this case, if I believe that pigs are lesser than dogs and not subject to the same moral consideration, then I will not be as *repulsed* by the idea of the pig dying. The pig and the dog

seem to be morally equal, but the dog is a lot "cuter" and aesthetically appealing. It is as such that I believe the element of repulsion is what is the deciding factor that changes behavior, which appears to indeed be an aesthetic quality (Graca, 2013).

Therefore, we can see certain cases where people try to adjust their response to repulsion by changing their attitudes regarding animals. However, I believe similar mental processes can be attributed to reasons we like to eat meat. Eating is, for most of the developed world, an opportunity to experience a cognitive and sensory response that is pleasing (Graca, 2013; Ingela, 2015). This idea of the aesthetic response is what drives many of the notions that we associate with food today, ranging from things like the atmosphere of restaurant to the artisanal qualities of fine dining. As such, there are several aesthetic notions that are attached to the idea of food that are not limited to the food itself (P. Gardner et al., 2011; Saito, 2017). I posit that it is the combination of these aesthetic qualities that influence us in part to consume meat the way we do. For example, a large cut of meat is often placed as the centerpiece of a dinner, signifying centrality and importance (Ingela, 2015). But this not purely attributed to its monetary worth or caloric intake; it is the idea of placing the most aesthetically responsive item in the middle of table. So why do we have such strong aesthetic responses to meat in particular?

1.3 Meat as a Cognitive Aesthetic Symbol

One potential avenue of approach is that meat serves as an aesthetic symbol for cognitive, social, or emotional qualities. As previously mentioned, humans have innate connections to animals and food stemming all the way back to hunter-gatherer times. Because of this, I believe it possible that our aesthetic preferences of today may indeed be affected by our prehistoric roots (Davies, 2012). Perhaps, meat can be associated as a symbol of success, wealth, status, community, or security, due to our contemporary connections and historical connections to meat (Davies, 2012).

As mentioned before, meat occupied up to 65% on average of the energy needs of hunter-gatherer societies (Daniel et al., 2010). Because of the importance meat had in this society, I believe it can be assumed that the visual image of meat would lead to a sense of comfort, security, and excitement. In addition, having to go through the process of killing the animal or seeing the corpse in its raw form would cause a strong aesthetic response. In contemporary society, I believe there are also similar attitudes that can be seen regarding meat. For example, meat may be seen as a symbol of wealth or status, as it is often far more expensive and takes more resources than produce (Smil, 2013). It may also serve as a symbol for community and gathering, as many people in developed countries tend to celebrate holidays and communal events with meat (Graca, 2013). It seems possible then that the centrality of meat in modern culture seems to be so significant that its very mention may evoke aesthetic responses, many of which are more than just taste or visual qualities (Ingela, 2015; Smil, 2013; Perullo, 2016; Graca, 2013). I believe then that one potential reason people may have such strong aesthetic responses to meat is because it evokes certain cognitive qualities such as security, wealth, comfort, success or community. I do not mean to say that these qualities of themselves are necessarily aesthetic, but that it is the aesthetic symbol of meat that represents these qualities. These cognitive qualities can give way to other types of judgments, specifically moral ones, that inevitably have effects on an individual's perceptions and behavioral decision (Callicott, 2013; Saito, 2017). It is as such that I believe that the cognitive aesthetic qualities and symbolism associated with meat is what drives at least a part of the meat consumption that we see in developed countries.

Chapter Two: The Locavores Aesthetic

Another one of the main issues of concern among environmental activists is whether eating local food contributes to more sustainable agriculture (Born and Purcell, 2006; Coley, Howard, Winter, 2011). Many people choose to eat local because they believe it to be more ecologically sustainable and socially just, as well as perceptions that eating local tends to be healthier (Born and Purcell, 2006; Desrochers and Shimizu, 2012). While many environmentalists share this view, there is substantial evidence to show that scale of operation and distance from purchasing sites is often not determinant of more sustainable agriculture or socially just food options. A quote from Born and Purcells article on local agriculture notes, "The theory argues that scale is socially produced: scales (and their interrelations) are not independent entities with inherent qualities but strategies pursued by social actors with a particular agenda. It is the content of that agenda, not the scales themselves, that produces outcomes such as sustainability or justice" (Born and Purcell, 2006). This is to say that the scale of the operation really says nothing about the agenda or intentions of the project, which tend to be the most influential in creating a sustainable agricultural system. Another study by Weber and Matthews on the impact of food choices found that 83% of the carbon footprint from food is in the production process and transportation accounts for only 11% of life-cycle GHG emissions, of which final delivery from producer to retail contributes only 4% (Weber and Matthews, 2008). It is as such that falling into the belief that local food is inherently better is deemed, "The Local Trap", and is considered by many scientists something that needs to be avoided. This is not to say that local is never a sustainable or just choice, but rather that buying local does not always mean sustainability or justness. Since it seems to be the case that buying local does always indicate socially just purchasing or a contribution to sustainable agriculture, one may wonder why people choose to

hold this belief and why it is adopted in the first place. In this section, I intend to analyze how aesthetics and aesthetic notions may drive the incentive to eat local, and how it may contribute to the perception that local is better.

2.0 The appeal of the narrative and Impersonal risk

As mentioned in the background section, impersonal risk is risk that is not immediately apparent, but is something that can potentially lead to damage in the future (Rogers, 2017). One potential benefit of buying and eating local is that it removes the perception of much of the impersonal risk associated with food. For example, if I choose to buy from a generic company that mass produces a product , I often have little information regarding how my food was produced, what methods were used to transport it, whether or not GMO's were used, and many other useful pieces of information. Because of this, there is an impersonal risk associated with food; I do not have much information about the food and how it will affect me. By choosing to eat local then, individuals are given a relative *sense* of the dynamics surrounding a particular type food, which leads to a reduction in the risk of deciding to eat it (Rogers, 2017; G. Edward Jones et, al., 2008). However, as previously mentioned, many of the perceptions regarding the benefits of local food tend to be varying in nature, so the reduction in risk perception often does not hold true to reality. To explain this, I posit that people are being given a sense of aesthetic narrative and first order visual responses in regard to local agriculture that provides a sense of reduction in impersonal risk, but is actually appealing to the pre-existing aesthetic motives of the individual.

To support this claim, I must first turn to evidence that shows that the idea of a narrative is an aesthetic concept. In traditional aesthetics, much of the analysis that takes place is of works of art, including novels and works of fiction (Carlson, 2007). The idea of a narrative or story surrounding an object or person is indeed considered to be an aesthetic concept as narrative often

defines our perceptions by discussing qualities that are separate from the physical object or person (Carlson, 2007; Bychkov, 2013; Huston, 2015; Carlson, Berleant, 2007). It is as such that when local markets provide narratives or stories behind their food, they are attempting to appeal an aesthetic desire of the individual. The idea of a narrative in the local food sense is to provide the purchaser with an aesthetic sense that the food they are buying is more natural, more well-crafted, more environmentally conscious, and better for their health (Born and Purcell, 2006). To accomplish this, one need only to provide a narrative that appeals to these aesthetic qualities. For example, if I explain that our beef is produced by an organic "Mom and Pop" operation, then that provides an aesthetic image of a happy and well treated cow. This leads to the sense that you are purchasing something socially just and animal friendly, which then may lead to a perceived environmentally positive outcome. Does this mental image hold true for the actual environmental consequences and farming processes of the cow? Not in all cases surely, but the aesthetic image that the narrative provokes attaches a quality to the food that is separate from the food itself. It is as such that we see scenarios where the food itself does not actually contain the qualities sought by the individual, but the individual was lead to believe that it does because of the aesthetic narrative (Born and Purcell, 2006). It is as such that I believe that the narrative surrounding much of what we consider local provides a sense of comfort and appeals to a predetermined interest for the individual, thus leading to a perceived reduction in the impersonal risk associated with food.

2.1 Putting a Face to the Name

Since one of the major incentives for buying local is the perception that it supports local business, there seems to be a relationship that develops between purchasers and their relative local vendors (Born and Purcell, 2006). As individuals continue to return to the same local vendor, particularly in the case of farmers markets, repeated interaction tends to cause for a

relationship to start taking place (Papaoikonomou and Ginies, 2016). Of course, if this relationship turns out to be positive, then an individual will most likely continue to purchase from their favorite local grower. This is to say that the relationship between the local grower and the local buyer contributes to a purchasing dynamic that is heavy influenced by the consumers perceptions of the producer as an individual. In Papaoikonomou and Ginies' article on *Putting The Farmers Face on the Food*, they note,

"Consumers demand healthy, quality products made under fair conditions, but instead of trusting labels and a long production–consumption cycle, they choose local and transparent exchanges dealing directly with the producer." (Papaoikonomou and Ginies, 2016).

It seems then that if the consumer has positive perceptions towards the vendor selling their food, then it is likely that these perceptions will carry on into the food itself (Desrochers and Shimizu, 2012). Therefore, I believe that the notion of local also seems to incorporate associations of likability from the consumer towards the producer or seller, which leads to more positive perceptions regarding the food.

With regard to aesthetics, associations of likability tend to be highly aesthetic in nature, for liking something often falls into the category of taste (Carlson, 2007.; Perullo, 2017). Taste is a preference of aesthetic qualities or notions that are liked by an individual, and in this case the aesthetic notion is the local seller. The belief here being that if one buys from a local seller, than this will fall into their "tastes" regarding what they want from their food. We can see this in the sense that local food is often legitimized because of its perceived morality, environmental friendliness and potential for change, but often what happens is a romanticized commodification. More specifically, *"Local consumption emerges as a sustainable, ''moral'' alternative symbolic*

of authentic production and consumption and used by consumers for their construction as moral subjects." (Papaoikonomou and Ginies, 2016)

What is important to note here is the idea of local being *symbolic* of authentic production and consumption. The aesthetic symbolism involved in purchasing through a visible, local seller is enough to appeal to the tastes of the consumer, which lead to the belief that what they are purchasing actual holds the qualities that they desire.

However, as previously discussed, just because the seller is local and you are buying from them, does not inherently mean that the food you are buying is actually fulfilling the tastes you seek out to fill (Born and Purcell, 2006). The local grower may not be contributing to more environmentally friendly practice, they may not be helping local sellers, and they may not be using more socially just ways to produce their products (Papaoikonomou and Ginies, 2016). Rather then, I believe it is the aesthetic notions of local and the local seller that contribute to these perceptions holding true. The local seller is seen as an extension of the "goodness" that comes with local, which then complicates the relationship between the buyer and the food itself.

Therefore, we can see how aesthetic notions towards the local seller can drive our incentive and behavior regarding food. By putting a face to the name of the product, there are new found qualities of likability that tend to carry over towards the food itself. Indeed, this seems to be commonplace in the realm of local, as many local markets and companies try to incorporate the identity of the seller into the food to provide the idea that local business is being supported and remove some of the risk perceptions that accompany uncertainties of a product. (Desrochers and Shimizu, 2012; Papaoikonomou and Ginies, 2016). This is of course in many cases, in addition to being scientifically inaccurate, logically inaccurate as well, as it would be fallacious to think that the qualities of an individual reflect the qualities of their product. There may be an

increased likelihood of the food being better if the individual holds certain qualities, but in no way does it immediately deem it the case. Aesthetics then, seem to be far more influential in people's decision to eat local than the actual science and morality surrounding it.

2.2 Local Beauty and Pride

This concept of likeness and aesthetic symbolism seems to be an overarching theme within the realm of local food and aesthetics of food as a whole. Perceptions about local food and local sellers must be positive in nature, and the narrative that is provided must appeal to qualities of likeness sought out by the individual. It seems then that if local is to be considered something that is positive, then it must contain qualities of likability.

However, as mentioned, local food is not as well defined as some people make it out to be. The local terminology is more of a notion than a strict definition, for the variability in the word local tends to be great in nature (Weber and Matthews, 2004; Born and Purcell, 2006). For example, is local in Colorado anywhere from the state borders inward, or does it extend to Wyoming and New Mexico? What is the amount of miles between the purchasing location that constitutes local? In addition, just because something may fall along the ambiguous lines of local, doesn't necessarily mean that it is inherently better. Therefore, what people define as local largely relies on their preconceived notions and interests for what local is, what they want to it to be, and how well their local market appeals to these qualities (Born and Purcell, 2006; Desrochers and Shimizu, 2012).

Let us take the idea then of how the perception of local by an individual can be negative in nature. Say that this individual lives in a polluted, industrial district that holds little to no aesthetic beauty or regard. The land is barely fertile, the vegetation lacking in diversity and prosperity, while the residents of this area tends to be violent and thieving in nature. What would

this individual's perception of the notion of local most likely be? Assuming that they are rational, then they would likely regard local as a negative quality. In fact, wouldn't this individual want to purchase explicitly from somewhere *other* than local?

It seems then that local must be aesthetically appealing to be appealing at all in the first place. Since local is fairly ambiguous in nature, people tend to project their own understanding and interests regarding what local is. Scientific research and studies have shown that the belief that local is inherently better is really a trap, because it may not hold true. It seems then that local must be associated with positive aesthetic notions of beauty and pride, otherwise local isn't really appealing at all. In this case, the aesthetic image of what "your" local is, seems to create some of the initial justification and drive towards eating local that many people have in contemporary food systems. This is substantial in terms of how aesthetics affects our behavior, for it seems that if local does not contain the initial aesthetic qualities that we desire, then we may not pursue its interest. Take away the positive aesthetics, and a substantial portion of the drive to eat local may be lost.

Chapter Three: Advertisement and Presentation

One of the most obvious but important aesthetic qualities that affects our perception and behavior regarding food is the role of advertisement and presentation (Simmonds and Spence, 2017; Zelnar et al., 2014). How our food is presented to us through things like packaging, narrative, atmosphere, and environment can have substantial impact on our decision to eat the food. Indeed, it seems true that it can even have effect on our perception of taste and quality. In a study by Zelnar et al. in the *Journal of Appetite*, subjects were given the same meal over two nights with a different presentation each night. On the night where the food was presented in an "attractive" and organized manor, subjects reported that the taste was for more enjoyable (Zelnar, et al. 2014). In this scenario, the attractiveness of how the food was plated affected the individual's flavor and positive opinion of the food. This raises substantial considerations for how presentation of food can so drastically change our perceptions regarding its quality. Presentation is also more than just arrangement or attractiveness of the food, it is also the branding, packaging, labeling, narrative and storefront where it is purchased (Simmonds and Spence, 2017). These qualities lie within the realm of aesthetics, for the idea is to provide an aesthetic image that creates a positive association and expectation in the mind of the individual. Since the consumer is usually not allowed to sample the food before purchasing it, many of the considerations that we hold regarding the food rely entirely on the presentation of its elements (Simmonds and Spence, 2017). The descriptions of the food combined with the packaging style, the brand name and the label, create associations, expectations, and aesthetic responses in the mind of the purchaser. In this section then, I intend to analyze a few cases where the aesthetic presentation of food has noted effect on our perceived value of the food itself.

3.0 The "Natural" approach

The idea of presentation extends far past considerations of taste and gustatory pleasure. It is thought that packaging and advertising could also lead individuals to believe that what they are purchasing is more environmentally friendly, natural, organic, or better for their health, purely through aesthetic presentation (Bae, 2014). For example, an article on *The Washington Post* noted that the word "natural" when placed on packaging, helped sell over 40 billion dollars worth of food in the U.S each year, even though the word natural has no definition by the FDA (Ferdman, 2014). One reason is because the word natural is often associated with positive qualities of lifestyle, health, environmental consideration, or wellness, despite the lack of a better definition for what natural even is (*Strategic Direction*, Volume 30, 2014). An entry in *Strategic Direction* notes that the participants of their first research group (in a study about why people choose to eat organic or natural food) claimed that they ate organic or natural food because of health, quality of life, wellness, lifestyle, and respect to the environment and environmental harm (*Strategic Direction*, Volume 30, 2014). In fact, one study notes that when it comes to food that is meant to be organic or natural, emotional appeal of the product was far more successful in gaining a positive response than providing dry information (Bae, 2014). It is as such that aesthetic presentations of food, if able to appeal to the right cognitive qualities, can convincingly cause an individual to associate positive mental assertions towards the food that may or may not correspond to the food, as we see in the case of natural labeling (Simmonds and Spence, 2017).

This idea is similar to the concept of the narrative discussed in the locavores aesthetic, in the sense that qualities are created through something external to the food itself. The aesthetic in this scenario is supposedly strong enough to convince individuals that the food they are buying is in line with their personal interests, even though the only evidence they have is their response to

the aesthetic presentation (Simmonds and Spence, 2017). It could be said then, that the narrative of the word "natural" serves to provoke an aesthetic image that embodies positive qualities sought by the individual. The word creates positive associations in the mind which lead to the development of a unified and wholesome aesthetic image, regardless of whether the food corresponds to those associations.

3.1 Ugly Produce

Another scenario where we see aesthetic presentation having substantial effect on perceptions of value is regarding "ugly" produce. According to a report by UNESCO-IHE, one in five fruits and veggies produced in the United States do not meet cosmetic standards of markets and consumers (Mekonnen and Hoekstra, 2010). Another report by the National Resources Defense Council notes that up to 24% of fruits and veggies are discarded before reaching the store, with reasons being attributed to imperfections in size, shape, and color (Gunders, 2012). One disturbing report from the same journal mentioned that one grower, on average, could fill a truck with 22,000 pounds of unsellable tomatoes every 45 minutes during harvest.

The NRDC defines this assessment as product grading, where cosmetic and quality considerations factor in to whether or not the product is sold. Product grading is so influential in getting food from the farm to the table that in some cases, entire agricultural blocks are considered below market-quality and will therefore not be sold. In addition, harvest workers are often trained to select specific produce that meets certain aesthetic demands, while ignoring anything else (NRDC, 2012). All of this is of course, an enormous contributor to a waste of resources, C02 emissions, and lack of food security.

On the other hand, we can also see how aesthetics are valued in regard to product grading with companies that specialize in selling ugly produce. Imperfect Produce, based in SA

California, frames their business on selling imperfect fruits and veggies for 30-50% less than the standard market price (Imperfect Produce, 2017). The way it works is by sourcing directly from farms that were otherwise going to throw out their product or leave it to rot in the field, of which they then deliver to your home. It seems then that it is possible to sell the ugly produce as long as it is devalued by a substantial amount. From an observational standpoint however, ugly or imperfect produce does not imply that it tastes worse or is worse for you, so this reduction in value is purely due to aesthetic notions.

Indeed, in these scenarios, it seems to be purely the aesthetic notions of ugliness and imperfection that prevent us from wanting eat the food. When large scale agricultural companies create product grading standards, they are setting an aesthetics standard that does not rely on considerations for health, safety, or quality (NRDC, 2012). Again, when companies like Imperfect Produce choose to sell the ugly produce, they must devalue its financial worth purely because of its aesthetic imperfections. I believe this idea gives substantial considerations for how powerful aesthetic presentation can be in determining people's connection and interests toward food. It is apparently enough to contribute to 24% of produce loss at the farm level, and enough to reduce the financial value of the produce by up to 50%. In addition, this also goes to show how aesthetics are contributing, at least in part, to some of the environmental change that we are experiencing today.

3.2 It's Not an Animal, It's Meat!

Another area where presentation is particularly important is when it comes to meat. As discussed in the section on meat consumption, there seems to be a paradox amongst many individuals where people want to eat meat, but do not want to harm animals or have animals die (Halsam et al., 2014). This paradox causes for many internal negotiations to try and justify one's

consumption of meat, and potentially even leads to a shift of values in order to reduce the aesthetic repulsion felt by the paradox. As such, advertisers know that meat holds a sense of repugnance and repulsion for some people, and try to reduce these responses through packaging and presentation (Halsam et. al, 2014). We can see through observation that mass-produced meat is often created to be as cookie-cutter, mainstream, and product-like as possible in contemporary supermarkets. By product-like, I mean to say that meat is presented in a way where it is seen to be more of a food item or product then it is (was) a living animal. For example, when companies package meat products, it seems that the emphasis lies in the meat itself being an object for consumption and aesthetic pleasure. Qualities such as leanness, tenderness, and style of cut, are emphasized. The focus then is on the physical properties of the "meat" while distancing the product from the animal. I believe this is because the aesthetic response from the concept of dead animals is repulsive for most people, so pushing forward the positive aesthetic aspects of the meat is essential to people making the decision to purchase it. As mentioned before, people only have so much time and so many cues to decide what they want to purchase in a supermarket. Advertisers and companies try to create a presentation of the food that captures immediate interests of the consumers (Simmonds and Spence, 2017). If the immediate response to meat was a sense of repulsion, then people would most likely not want to eat it (Graca, 2013). It seems then that one goal of presenting meat in contemporary food systems is to remove its association with the animal as much as possible, so that people do not experience paradoxical interests. By removing the aspects of the animal from the meat itself, people are not immediately provoked to consider the negative aesthetic concepts of death and eating something that is dead.

This has particularly interesting insights into contemporary food culture in that it shows how our connection to meat is evolving and how aesthetic presentation can have a great deal of

effect on our perceived qualities of value. In the case of our connections to meat, it shows that people are more comfortable with eating animals when it is presented in a way where it does not provoke our aesthetic considerations of slaughter. We are okay with eating the animal, but only in the sense that the animal-like qualities are omitted and the product-like qualities of the meat are emphasized. It may be the case then, that by distancing ourselves from the aesthetic qualities of repulsion and death are we able to enjoy eating animals. Regardless of the moral dilemmas involved in killing the animal, if we can distance ourselves from it aesthetically, then we may not have to feel the negative response associated with eating it.

Chapter Four: Aesthetic Appeal and Potency

It seems to be the case that aesthetics are influential toward our dietary interests and behaviors, and they certainly seem to constitute at least part of our moral beliefs (See sections, The Meat Paradox and The Locavores Aesthetic). People seem to have a general desire to do the "good" thing when it comes choosing a behavior, but the power of visceral aesthetic desires can be more potent, which potentially conflicts, falsely satisfies, or overrides other desires.

One overarching question that arises then is why aesthetic responses, qualities, and desires can take precedence over the desire to do what is "good". To answer this question, I will first discuss why aesthetic responses and desires seem to have a particularly visceral and powerful quality behind them, and specifically, qualities that are strong enough to motivate other behaviors and realms of thought. Second, I will argue how the aesthetic experience (specifically in regard to food) is particularly frequent throughout our daily lives. By showing how aesthetic responses appear in everyday life, I intend to argue that individuals participate in aesthetic decisions regarding food more frequently than they do ethical ones, therefore making aesthetic desire seem more familiar and close to home. Finally, using the *The Humean Theory of Motivation* and Neil Sinhababu's five aspects of desire, I intend to show how the desire to do (and believe that one is doing) the "good" can be muddled or trumped by our aesthetic desires because of the way it evokes motivation. Based on this information, I then suggest that using aesthetic appeal to change behavior should be used in the future to incite environmental change, due to the potency of aesthetic desire.

4.1 Desire to do Good and Aesthetic Desire

People seem to generally have the desire to do what is considered "good" from various standpoints. In the case of meat eating, many people don't want animals to die or to be harmed,

they just want to eat the meat (See section 1 through 1.2). In the case of the locavore, people who eat local want to embody the qualities of sustainable agriculture, fresher food, less environmental harm, and supporting local business, but they do so through the belief that local is how these concepts are achieved (See section 2 through 2.3). In the case of advertisement and presentation, people may want to purchase food with consideration towards positive health and environmental effects, but are often lead to believe that the food they are buying contains these qualities because of its presentational qualities (See section 3 through 3.5). I would like to posit then that people have a general desire to do what is considered "good" in many regards, but that the aesthetic desire and qualities of the aesthetic experience potentially muddle, compete, or override with this original desire to act through moral goodness. This is to say that aesthetics seems to be the more powerful determinant between desires (and the perceived satisfaction of desires) of doing what is good and what is aesthetically *appealing* to the desire to do good. However, this is not to say that aesthetic desires *never* align with the desire to do good, but rather to show that when they do not, the aesthetic desire can take precedent for not-so-obvious reasons. In order to explain why this is, I would like to argue that there are three potential reasons for why aesthetics may be a more influential desire when it comes to food.

4.2 Aesthetic Relatability and Potency

The first is that aesthetics seem to carry qualities of *viscerality* and *potency* when it comes to human desire. We can note that aesthetics at its core, relies on a variety of responses that contribute to an end aesthetic experience (See section on the Aesthetic Experience). Expectation of quality, first order responses, cognitive qualities, and second order responses, are all examples of aesthetic elements that lead to an end aesthetic experience. The idea of the aesthetic response is key to understanding the visceral nature of aesthetics, for these responses appear to not need

argument, logic, or obligation to be evoked in the mind. Rather, things like repulsion, disgust, taste, or satisfaction are extremely reactionary and emotional in nature. Even more so, how we formulate aesthetic preference is through the accumulation of aesthetic responses through our life. Therefore, aesthetic desire is shaped by our first-hand, *visceral* aesthetic responses. This seems to be very different from how people form the desire to do what is "good" or what is morally just, as these considerations tend be complex, argumentative, and logical in nature. Contrarily, we can see that aesthetic desires only become complex and argumentative when we try to argue what the "good" aesthetic response or desire is. I would also argue that even when individuals base moral perceptions off prior experiences, that these experiences would at least in part be aesthetic in nature. This is to say that the aesthetic experience may serve a role in extending itself to other types of experience as well (See Section 1).

These aesthetic elements seem to be deeply connected to our personal perceptions and experiences, which perhaps explains the potency of aesthetic desire (Perullo, 2016). Aesthetic considerations have effect, and are affected by, various parts of human thought and behavior, making them an important part of our perceptions. In addition, the concept of an "experience" is something that is relatable to everyone, so the aesthetic experience is presumed to be extremely relatable as well (Saito, 2016) (Perullo, 2017). Aesthetics then seem to be deeply woven into our personal perceptions and experiences, in addition to having a peculiar sense of relatability (See section on The Aesthetic Experience and Power of Aesthetics to Influence Behavior). It is as such that we personally connect to aesthetic responses, qualities, and the aesthetic process as a whole, fairly frequently throughout our lives.

Food is no exception to this case, for our end perceptions of food also rely on a combination of aesthetic responses, just like the aesthetic experience (Perullo, 2016). It is as

such that our daily experiences around food must involve, at least in part, elements of aesthetics, for it is the various aesthetic responses and desires that we have toward food that influence perceptions of value or quality (See sections 1 through 3). Nicola Perullo in her book on *Taste as Experience* notes,

> *"...believing in the value of food and taste means having understood how it becomes possible to explore at least a large part of the sphere of everyday and ordinary human relations from a vital and fruitful perspective, <u>through</u> the experience of food"* (Perullo, 2017).

Food can therefore be seen as a highly *responsive* object that potentially gives understanding and motive to other realms of human interaction and behavior (See section on Power of Aesthetics to Influence Behavior). In a quote by Massimo Montanari in *Taste As Experience*,

> *" ...taste is an aesthetic <u>relationship</u> that indissolubly binds together the leading character (the eater, what is eaten), but also the link between biology and culture, and the connection between gesture and thought"* (Perullo, 2017).

Aesthetic experiences then, particularly regarding food, seem to have a significant place in its connections towards certain types of behaviors. It also seems that the aesthetic experience is embedded into our general thought process and decision making, thus making it a particularly potent form of desire. If aesthetics can influence other realms of thought and behavior, then perhaps the aesthetic desire can have influence on the desire to do good.

4.3 Aesthetic Frequency and Familiarity

The second reason I believe this to be true is due to the aesthetic nature of food and the frequency of which we engage in it. For most of the developed world, people are given the

option to make food choices every single day. Indeed, most people are the given the option to make food choices *several* times per day, *every day*. Since food has strong aesthetic qualities connected to it, when we engage in experiences with food we engage with qualities of aesthetics (Perullo, 2016). Since we engage with the aesthetics of food so often, I believe a case can be made to say that that our repeated interactions with aesthetic responses and desires leads to a sense of familiarity, thus making the aesthetic response more relatable.

While it may be said that individuals encounter ethical desires on a daily basis, I would like to say that the potency and frequency of these events is far less than when we engage with aesthetics, especially regarding food. Morals and the desire to do good is a complex task, mainly because what is considered good requires an argument for why its interpretation holds true. Aesthetic responses on the other hand, are natural responses that do not need a logic or justification to legitimize their action, making them more of a reaction (Carlson, 2007). This brings up two points for consideration:

1. that aesthetic responses are powerful in nature and
2. they occur more *easily* than then the formulation and enactment of an ethical desire.

When most people decide what they want to eat for the day, they do not put forward substantial argumentative logic and intellect for what and why they want to eat; they mainly base it off aesthetic preference.

This is not to say that people never put forward arguments or intellect for reasons behind eating, but that even why they do they are A) at least in part influenced by aesthetics and B) are being argued for a certain aesthetic desire to be fulfilled. As an example, if the environmentalist wants to eat at a restaurant that sources local chicken, then they are looking to fulfill the aesthetic desire of eating something pleasurable *because* it has more narrative

surrounding its background. The chicken would not be enjoyable for the environmentalist (enjoyment of taste being an aesthetic concept) if it was not locally sourced, thus affecting the aesthetic experience of eating the chicken. I would like to posit then that the aesthetic responses we have in regard to food are more potent and frequent than the desire to do what is good, in addition to having influence on what we may consider to be good as a whole.

4.4 The Humean Theory of Motivation and The Five aspects of Desire

The third reason why I believe that aesthetic desires take precedence when it comes to food choice is due to the way differing desire affects our levels of motivation. According to the Humean Theory of Motivation, belief is insufficient for motivation as motivation requires the presence of desire in addition to belief (Smith, 1987). This leads to the first point that in both cases of desire being discussed, (the desire to do good and the aesthetic desire) there is sense of motivation that leads to changes in behavior. Both desires seem to be apparent for they act as a motivator to pursue a specific type of behavior-- however--it seems the aesthetic desire has far more potency to actually evoke this motivation. In order to support this, I will turn to Neil Sinhababus' five aspects of desire, which potentially explains why aesthetic desires contribute more heavily to a sense of motivation.

Neil lists the five aspects of desire as follows; the *Motivational,* the *Hedonic*, the *Attention-Direction,* the *Two Flavors*, and *Intensification by Vivid Images*:

The Motivational Aspect: "If agents occurrently desire D, and they occurrently believe that they can bring about D by doing A, they will be motivated to do A. The strength of their motivation will increase with the strength of the desire and the subjective probability that they can bring about D by doing A. If at any time there is some action that they are the most motivated to do, they will initiate that action."

Aesthetic desires can therefore be seen as desire A in this scenario. In the case of local, agents desire to eat healthier, support the environment, and support local business (D), and the belief that the way to do this is by eating local (A). As discussed in the Locavores Aesthetic, the notion that local is inherently better is due to aesthetic notions surrounding concepts of narrative, direct interaction, and local pride. Therefore, it is the aesthetic considerations that give the perception that desire (D) is being fulfilled. In the case of the advertisement and presentation, people have a desire to eat healthy, eat fresh, and be environmentally supportive (D), but the aesthetic presentation and method of advertisement is what leads to the belief that these desires are being fulfilled (A). The presentation therefore is what leads to, yet again, perceived motivation that it fulfills desire D. Since aesthetics in many cases give the perception that a desire to do good is being fulfilled, the motivation to engage with aesthetics is all the more increased (Sinhababu, 2009). Therefore, one potential reason why aesthetics take precedent over the desire to do good is because aesthetic qualities are seen as a prominent reason for why their desire to do good is being fulfilled.

> **The Hedonic Aspect:** "If agents occurrently desire D, increases in the subjective probability of D or vivid sensory or imaginative representations of D will cause them pleasure roughly proportional to the strength of the desire and the change in subjective probability or the vividness of the representation. Decreases in the subjective probability of D or vivid sensory or imaginative representations of situations incompatible with D will likewise cause displeasure."

Aesthetics in this case serve as the vivid sensory images or imaginative representations of the desire to good. In the case of local, we are given narrative representations of the positive qualities we wish to seek out from our food and our community, and these representations appear to be "vivid" or "probable" in nature. The desire to eat local does seem to be this way, for there

is no actual evidence saying that local is better aside from the aesthetic representation that it is (See section 2). Advertisement and presentation also seem to be this way, for if the representation of goodness is strong enough on the packaging and label, then it it is enough to create a wholesome image in the mind. Therefore, individuals gain pleasure based on the vividness and probability of aesthetic images being put forward that represent the desire to do good. This is to say that aesthetic desires and qualities create vivid and probable representations that the desire to do good is actually taking place. Contrarily, if the aesthetic representation does not coincide with the desire to do good, than individuals will not experience motivation, even if their desire to do good could actually be fulfilled through this action. We can see this in the case of individuals not supporting large scale farming operations because they do not represent environmentally friendliness, even though some are be better for the environment as a whole.

> **The Attention- Direction Aspect:** "Desiring that D will make agents more likely to focus their attention on things they associate with D than things they do not associate with D"

This is very similar to the Hedonic aspect in the sense that people choose to focus attention on things they *associate* with the desire to do good. People may want to eat local because they associate it with positive qualities, where they may also want to purchase "natural" products because of the same reason. Whatever is subjectively considered associable by the individual with their desire to do good is what this individual focus attention on. Therefore, if the association is believed to correct, then this is where their attention will shift. Even if the association does not hold true, such as in the case of local, people still put their attention towards it because they associate it with the desire to good. Aesthetics then, seem to do a superior job at

creating these associations and giving the probable appearance that they match up with their desire to do good.

> **The Two Flavors:** "Agents who desire that D either have positive desires that D, or aversions to not-D. The pleasures and displeasures associated with positive desires are delight and disappointment; the pleasures and displeasures associated with aversions are relief and anxiety"

The importance of this aspect is to show that people have positive and negative responses to their desire being fulfilled and not being fulfilled, as well as avoiding or not avoiding concepts that conflict with their desire. This aspect also falls heavily into the Hedonic and Attention-Direction aspects, for people can experience associations of their desire being fulfilled by not participating in certain actions as well. For example, the locavore may take pride in not eating anything that comes from out of state, leading to a sense of relief. On the other hand, if they did happen to eat something that wasn't local, the response would be anxiety. Therefore, people can be given incentive to not participate in certain behaviors which further leads feelings of relief or the satisfaction of a desire. If aesthetically, the large-scale production facility seems to be environmentally harmful, then not purchasing from this facility will fulfill the desire to do environmentally good.

> **Intensification by Vivid Images:** "When agents are presented with vivid images they associate with a state of affairs they desire, either in imagination or by their senses, that will strengthen the desire's causal powers. The desire's phenomenal effects increase greatly, and its motivational powers increase substantially as well."

This is the aspect that I believe to be most explanatory for why aesthetic desires yield greater motivation than the desire to do good. Aesthetic qualities present individuals with vivid images that strongly associate with the state of affairs that they desire. This strengthens the aesthetic desire and the motivational powers associated with it, leading the aesthetic desire to overrule the original desire to do good. Neil puts forward an example of the desire to be married to further

represent this point. *"To consider a different case, if I desire to get married and then see a couple in an unhappy marriage or vividly imagine myself unhappily married, perhaps I will be less disposed to pursue marriage. But the principle above can explain this - I have a variety of aversions to a strife-torn marriage, and the vivid image of marital strife intensifies them more than it intensifies my desire for the benefits of marriage"* (Sinhababu, 2009).

Vivid aesthetic imagery and qualities could then be said to intensify the desire to eat what is aesthetically appealing rather than what is perceived to be the "good" thing to do. I may have a desire to do what is environmentally friendly, but by learning that I have to purchase from big companies I may still choose to eat local because it does not fit with my aesthetic desire. This is to say that in some cases, not all, people prefer the aesthetic qualities surrounding what they believe to be good rather than actually doing what they believe to be good itself. Therefore, aesthetic qualities of vivid imagery, sensory experiences, and imagination, may motivate the desire to do good far more than the desire to do good does by itself.

In conclusion then, aesthetic desires appear in some cases to take precedent over the desire to do good because A) They carry potent, visceral, and reactionary qualities that potentially motivate other realms of behavior B) Occur far more regularly and are more familiar than ethical formulations in regard to why and how we eat our food and C) Serve as a strong motivator for changing a behavior and can provide the illusion that other desires are being fulfilled.

Chapter Five: Suggestions and Implications

It seems then that aesthetics are a powerful instrument in changing people's behavior and motivation regarding a variety of issues. Because of this, I believe that aesthetic qualities should therefore be implemented in the future when considering behavioral change towards more positive environmental effects. Specifically, regarding climate change and food behavior, I believe aesthetics can serve a prominent role in getting behavior to substantially change, potentially opening new areas of study for approaching solutions to these issues. In this concluding chapter, I will start by giving suggestions for why and how we can orient aesthetic desires to change behavior regarding 1) meat, 2) perceptions about local, and 3) methods of advertisement and presentation for a more positive environmental effect. Then, to conclude, I will respond to a potential counter argument for why aesthetics should not be used to change behavior, in addition to broadly discussing why aesthetics are a good and justified way to change behavior.

5.0 The Appeal to Cognitive Qualities

If it is indeed cognitive aesthetic qualities and symbolism that play a substantial role in driving meat consumption, then a potential question arises: Is it possible to appeal to these qualities without using meat? In order to answer this question, I will take three cognitive qualities or meta responses from the section on meat and analyze whether substitutes for meat can fulfill the same response. Since there are many cognitive qualities that meat can appeal to, I will focus on the ones I believe to be most affected by aesthetic symbolism. These qualities will include community, comfort, and status.

I believe it is important to note that there are a variety of foods that can serve as aesthetic symbols (Perullo, 2016). It does not strictly have to be meat that serves the purpose as

symbolizing a sense of community or comfort, so it is definitely possible to fulfill these quality through means other than meat. However, one potential question that arises is how can we mimic the specific cognitive qualities or aesthetic responses of meat while still appealing to the same qualities of taste. One potential avenue for how to accomplish this is through the use of lab grown meat and (and meat alternatives in general) from companies such as Beyond Meat. Beyond Meat is a meat-substitute company that specializes in creating meat like products from alternative vegetable sources (Yacoubou). Although specifically geared towards vegetarians and those not looking to consume meat, many of the carnivorous people who try these products are generally satisfied with the taste (Elzerman et. al, 2013). As such, it may be possible to sort of centralize or mainstream meat substitutes in contemporary society by promoting the perception that their taste and look are generally the same. If people can experience the same first order responses from the meat substitute or from meat alternatives, then it would only be a matter of incorporating these products into the social dynamics of developed countries for it to appeal to certain cognitive qualities.

For community, meat substitutes and meat alternatives as a whole open up a new range of inclusion for social gatherings or communal behavior. There are many cultures and people that do not eat meat, but meat occupies such a central part of communal gatherings in most of the developed world (Ingela, 2015). By including meat substitutes or vegetarian-oriented food as a normal part of social interactions and gatherings then, the range of community that can and may want to be involved is significantly increased. This is to say that by including alternatives to meat in communal events, people are given an opportunity to share a greater sense of community by appealing to those who do not eat meat. Meat substitutes then, could be incentivized by

appealing to the notion that they serve as a tool for bringing larger and more diverse amounts of community together.

It terms of comfort, there are many meat substitutes and vegetable-focused dishes that provide a similar level of satisfaction and nutritional demands as regular meat (Elzerman et al., 2013; Yacoubou). Many of the meat substitutes and vegetarian meals take into consideration the nutritional demand of the average person, and therefore try to fulfill some the same nutritional qualities that meat possesses. In addition, many of the meat substitute companies strive to make their meals as tasty as possible, so as long as the substitute is from a reputable company, it will most likely have a relatively good taste. The same goes for vegetable focused meals: if the meals are of high quality and from a reputable company, they will most likely have a good taste. Perhaps then, alternatives to meat can be tasty and nutritional at the same time, leading to a sense of comfort and satisfaction.

In terms of status, I believe the world of lab grown meat and meat substitutes has great potential for serving as its symbol. Currently, the mechanisms surrounding lab grown meat and meat substitutes are complex, and the development of these mechanisms is only getting more complex in nature. Mimicking specific proteins, culturing muscle cells, and maximizing bonds between cells, are all examples of the complex nature surrounding meat substitutes (Jones, 2010). As such, there is a sort unique quality to the ability to create a meat substitute that properly mimics the qualities of meat. Meat substitutes then, can potentially be incentivized by appealing to the notion that they are high craft, artisanal, artistic, and difficult to produce. Indeed, one of the many things we associate with status tend to be items that are difficult for others to obtain and difficult to find or make. Perhaps then, people can be encouraged to purchase meat substitutes by appealing to the notion that high quality meat substitutes hold an aura of status or

newness. For example, bringing a high-quality meat-mimic to a party may be more indicative of status than bringing a high-quality cut of meat, because it is rarer and more new.

5.1 Bundling for Success with Unique Produce

Bundling is motivational technique where we one can pair environmentally positive actions and behavior with aesthetically appealing actions and behavior, without requiring appeal to the desire to be environmentally positive (E, 2016). This is to say that people can be attracted to do what is aesthetically appealing, (which appears to be far more desirable and easy to do), while also doing environmentally positive actions. One place where this can be extremely useful is in the realm of aesthetically unattractive produce.

It seems to be the case that more and more people are starting to participate in programs like Imperfect Produce for a variety of reasons. One of the primary reasons seems to be financial, as people are given an opportunity to buy produce while spending half as much as they normally would at their average market (Imperfect Produce, 2017). However, I would like to focus on a separate drive for purchasing ugly produce, mainly that it may hold its own aesthetic appeal. Since there is no direct data currently available for why people choose to adopt programs like Imperfect Produce, there are still some substantial observations that can be made. For example, the idea of uniqueness is indeed an aesthetic concept, particularly so within the realm of food (Perullo, 2016). Ugly or imperfect produce is very unique in the sense that it does not conform to what we would generally expect when looking for fruits and veggies. As such, this sense of uniqueness may potentially serve as an avenue for encouraging people to eat ugly produce. The non-conformist, for example, may be attracted to aesthetically unattractive produce purely because it is that; unattractive. Indeed, if the physical taste and health considerations of the food

are truly not negated by its aesthetic, then it possible for people to pursue it purely because of its aesthetic qualities.

I believe this idea to be particularly important when it comes to inciting environmental change. Aesthetic notions of uniqueness and non-conformity do not have be strictly tied to environmental or health concerns, but can still contribute to a more positive environmental behavior. This is to say that people who want to explore quirky, unique, and non-conformist produce, can be given the option to do so at a low cost while also helping reduce food waste. By appealing to these interests then, we may be able to change the environmental behavior of someone who does not often consider the environment. It is the idea of appealing to an interest separate from the problem at hand, that still contributes to a solution of the problem. In this case, it would be the uniqueness of the ugly produce that serves as an aesthetic attraction which encourages people to buy it.

5.2 Shift focus and Emphasize

The last suggestion I put forward is a shift in focus of the aesthetic qualities surrounding local to be put towards somewhere that better actualize consumers desires to be environmentally friendly. Since local may not be the *best* option for eating in a way that best supports the environment, I believe we can take some of the aesthetic qualities surrounding local and place them somewhere else. For example, take a large scale agricultural operation that consciously practices sustainability and environmentally friendly processes. This company may indeed be the more sustainable choice for purchasing food, but the aesthetic appeal and aesthetic desire could be lacking in nature and focused somewhere else (like local).

Therefore, I believe if we take the positive aesthetic notions that surround local (Narratives of Wholesomeness, Community, Unification, Green-Friendly) and place them

towards companies like the ones mentioned above, we may be able to increase the amount of people who buy from sustainable operations. This is to say that people have certain ties to eating local that are heavily connected to aesthetic representations and desire. People have a desire to do good and the aesthetic qualities can lead people to thinking that their desire to do good is being fulfilled, but it is only the aesthetic desire that is being fulfilled. As such, it would merely be a shift in these aesthetic qualities towards something that fulfills the desire to do good, rather than provide the aesthetic illusion that it is. Essentially, it is using the power of aesthetic appeal that surrounds local and placing it somewhere it is more just.

5.3 Counter Argument and Response

The main counter-argument that potentially arises is that aesthetic appeal can be seen as manipulative, deceitful, and unjustly motivating. This is to say that because aesthetic qualities can yield stronger responses, mimic other-sought qualities, and lead to behavioral change without argument, they may be a manipulative and immoral way about going to change behavior. Advertisers already do things like this such as Greenwashing, or falsely advertising environmental friendliness, so the concern is raised on the perception that aesthetic desires may lead someone to do something that they originally did not intend on.

I put forward two responses to this argument:

1) We can take the consequentialist approach to say that environmental destruction through contemporary food systems is far more damaging and immoral than people making more environmentally conscious choices through aesthetic appeal. In addition….
2) When aesthetic appeal is prudential and within self-interest, it is not seen as something negative. Even though the consequentialist approach holds as a valid response, a further

explanation will note that acting in accordance with one's aesthetic preference is acting within one's desire, therefore not requiring a violation of autonomy.

It is as such that using aesthetic appeal to change behavior is not something negative if it appeals to people's desires and is used with good intent. The role of aesthetics is more of an instrument or a tool to be used in various scenarios and in various ways rather than an objective good or bad. The role of aesthetics in this sense is to work with appeal, not obligation, to encourage behavioral change toward a more positive environmental effect. Aesthetic appeal seems to align "wanting to do" and "being expected to do" by appealing to the visceral motivation that comes from aesthetic responses. As environmentalists, we expect people to be environmentally conscious when it comes to food choice, but it's difficult to get them to do that without providing obligation. However, we also do not want to victim blame or argue against their risk perceptions, for that may lead to further harm. Aesthetics then, can use appeal to align the "expectation of doing" and "wanting to do" so that people can naturally make more positive environmental choices. I believe that from this perspective, aesthetics can be seen as a salient and useful tool for behavioral change that should be strongly considered in future studies for encouraging positive environmental action.

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