

Book Review
The Routledge Handbook of Food Ethics
Mary Rawlinson and Caleb Ward, Eds.
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Everyone eats, even philosophers. Yet, the discipline of philosophy has a history of paying little attention to food and the agricultural systems that shape the human diet. This lack of attention is unfortunate, but it is being addressed. Today, philosophers are exploring issues that arise alongside what is on their plate and the agricultural systems that produced it. Food brings up a wide range of philosophical concerns, such as the ethical and justice impacts of agricultural production systems, normative concerns surrounding food choice, labor justice, the ethics of food policy and aid, ethical implications of current biotechnologies, and even deep epistemological and metaphysical questions, such as how food reinforces personal and cultural identity and why one thing is considered food, while another is not. Thus, like the modern diet, philosophical inquiry on food is both rich and varied. Mary Rawlinson's and Caleb Ward's *Routledge Handbook of Food Ethics* adds to this growing literature. Specifically, it provides a robust collection of philosophical essays on food ethics and how food impacts the social, technological, and political sphere. One particular strength of this collection is its focus on topics of particular importance to the public (such as food choice and public policy) and how it situates these discussions in the larger philosophical literature. In addition, the volume brings together a diverse array of voices and highlights how nuanced discussions guide work on this field. The handbook is an excellent reference, including approximately forty essays, and will be of interest to food scholars, as well as educators in need of class materials.

Rather than focus on all areas in philosophy of food, the collection hones in on the ethical and social questions that eaters face. Even with this limited scope, the handbook is extensive. For this reason, this review will provide an overview of the seven parts of the handbook and key articles in each section,

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rather than detailed synopses of every essay included in the collection. My hope is that this overview will provide readers of this review with the information they need to determine if the handbook will be of interest. The first section of the handbook focuses on the phenomenology of food, or the exploration of food related subjective experiences. This section is relatively short and I believe is intended to ground later discussions. The first chapter discusses how shifting our definition of food, from a commodity to a multi-directional network, could provide a unique avenue for ethical evaluation. Moore and Del Biondo's chapter builds on this multifaceted conception of food, examining how personal identity is created and reinforced through daily patterns of dietary consumption. They argue that "we come to know and identify ourselves as members of communities, appropriately gendered beings, citizens of nations... through our consumption of food..." (16). Eskine's chapter further deepens reader's understanding of the complicated link between definitions of food and identity, as food metaphors (she's sweet, he has a bitter attitude, etc.) define our individual and social self. The final two chapters provide two distinct strategies for situating our relationship with food, with Ward arguing that the human food relationship should be the starting point of understanding the human as an organism. Thus, all food related activities should be understood as grounded in "natural" or organic systems. In contrast, Kaplan's chapter provides an illuminating account of how technology permeates our food systems, as technologies are used in every step of the agricultural production process, from growing to distributing foodstuffs.

The next two sections of the handbook "Gender and Food" and "Food and Cultural Diversity" continue to explore the metaphysical and phenomenological connections between dietary practices and selfhood. Rawlinson's chapter identifies clear connections between food related definitions, ethics, and social conceptions of gender. This chapter is an important contribution to philosophy of food, as gender often fails to be adequately discussed in the literature. In this vein, Rawlinson writes that philosophers often "fail to tarry with women's labor long enough to notice that home cooking provides a rich field for the discovery of figures and principles in ethics" (61). Similarly, Randall argues that food related trends, such as the global increase in meat consumption, cannot be fully understood without including a detailed analysis of gender identity and hegemonic masculinity. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 make up the "Food and Cultural Diversity"

component, which includes essays that specifically explore how social and cultural identity is connected to food practices. Irrera's chapter pushes food security narratives to recognize the importance of cultivating dignity and self-respect. This contribution may be of particular interest to those working on hunger related issues. Both of these sections do a great job of providing theoretical frameworks to ground latter discussions on ethical and justice concerns.

The next three sections of the handbook align with areas in philosophy that have greatly contributed to food ethics: Social and political philosophy, environmental ethics, and animal ethics. In particular, the section "Liberty, Choice, and Food Policy" largely covers key topics discussed by philosophers in the first sub-discipline, such as food labeling, policy and intuitions, biopolitics, individual liberty and choice, and market-based consumerism. This section is more robust than previous ones, with seven articles on these and other key topics. Bonotti's chapter on food labeling provides an interesting analysis of the normative dimensions associated with food related marketing and governance, while Loi's chapter attempts to justify government interference designed to impact individual food choice. Loo and Skipper's chapter questions whether we have autonomous food choice at all, as coercion becomes an ever-increasing feature of food systems. Korthals' chapter may be of particular interest to food scholars, as it provides a detailed analysis of food governance, identifying 4 key areas of contention.

The section titled "Food and the Environment" is particularly strong, with contributions from leading scholars doing work at the crossroads of environmental philosophy and food ethics. Reiheld's piece on hunger, climate change, and vulnerability offers an excellent bridge between the previous set of essays and this section, as it connects shifting consumption patterns to vulnerabilities exacerbated by environmental degradation. Vandermeer's essay expertly discusses the interplay between food production, development, and biodiversity. Thompson's chapter continues to explore key concerns shared by food scholars and environmental ethicists, as it offers a refined meditation on sustainability and the relevance of this literature to food production.

The next section "Farming and Eating Other Animals" builds off of these nuanced discussions, but hones in on ethical questions concerning animal agriculture. Agricultural production methods, dietary choices, animal welfare all take center stage in this extensive section. There are several key

contributions by scholars who have made considerable contributions to the literature, including chapters by Bernie Rollin on confinement agriculture, David Fraser on animal welfare, and Gary Francione and Anna Charlton on animal rights. The final chapter by Harris on seafood ethics pushes the debate further, as it offers an analysis of the fishing industry, which is an area largely ignored in the wider literature. Scholars interested in the ethics of animal agriculture and animal ethics, more generally, will find this section highly informative.

The design and choice of essays in the final section of the handbook highlights the editors' commitment to food justice as an essential component of food ethics. This section is the largest section of the volume, including ten essays, and offers treatments of a wide array of topics that fall within this category. Both Grey and Werkheiser's chapters provide illuminating overviews of the local food movement and their connections to food justice. Whyte's chapter critiques facile definitions of food sovereignty that guide local food movements, arguing that ideals of community self-sufficiency and cultural autonomy thought to guide these initiatives are not universally accepted. He argues that, in contrast, "food sovereignty should be seen – at least in part – as a strategic process of Indigenous resurgence that negotiates structures of settler colonialism that erase what I will call the ecological value of certain foods for Indigenous peoples" (354). Other notable chapters calling for a more nuanced understanding of food sovereignty include Chappell's and Schneiger's chapter on agroecology and food sovereignty and Loo's analysis of food justice that highlights participative inequalities in the movement.

The *Routledge Handbook of Food Ethics* is a monumental undertaking that includes approximately forty chapters on important topics in the literature. I applaud both Mary Rawlinson and Caleb Ward for organizing and making this extensive collection available to readers. The varied array of voices and topics ensures that readers will find chapters that align with their interests. The handbook also draws connections between work coming out of several disciplines, highlighting the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of work on food. This is particularly important in food ethics, as food is complicated and scholarship on food related topics should reflect this complexity. The editors do a great job of communicating this complexity, while organizing the handbook into separate sections, so that readers can easily find specific discussions in the literature. The offering also includes work by several leading scholars in the field. This fact, coupled with the

organizational structure, ensures that the volume could provide scholars with a robust introduction to the literature. Thus, the offering may be of particular interest to those wanting to do work in the field and to students, as well. It is a strong contribution to food ethics, in particular, and philosophy, in general. However, there are also some areas that could be improved. First, while the handbook is made up of seven sections, some appear underdeveloped. For example, “Gender and Food” and “Food and Cultural Diversity” both include only three articles each, while other sections include ten articles. This may signal to readers that research in these areas is a bit thin. If read this way, the volume points scholars to exciting and lively areas of research— areas where they may want to contribute to. However, it could also intimate that some areas are of less interest in the field than others. There are several pragmatic reasons why some sections appear underdeveloped, but the varied length of sections is troubling. However, it should be noted that the editors’ commitment to the inclusion of diverse voices and to food justice is also signaled in the volume, which is a clear strength of the offering. In addition, there were some sections where topics overlapped significantly, such as treatments of food labeling in the “Liberty, Choice, and Food Policy” section. I would have liked to have seen a wider array of subjects covered in each section. However, the overlapping discussions provided readers with a nuanced understanding of these subjects, so this may have been an editorial decision. Additionally, it would have also been helpful for each section to include a brief introduction (in addition to the general introduction), discussing why the material was organized in the manner that it was, the importance of each contribution to the wider literature, and how the section reflects important discussions in the field. This could provide students and scholars not familiar with food ethics with helpful background information, as they engage with the material. For example, I was interested in better understanding why the editors focused on phenomenology, in particular, rather than epistemology and metaphysics in the first section. However, these critiques are minor and could be easily addressed in additional editions.

Overall, *The Routledge Handbook of Food Ethics* is an important contribution to food ethics and philosophy. The extensive collection of scholarly work provides readers with an extensive introduction to the field and insight into how food impacts the social, technological, and political sphere. I was impressed with how the collection includes a diverse array of voices, hones in on topics of particular importance to the public, and situates these

discussions in the larger theoretical literature and public food movements. It is essential reading for researchers in food ethics and is also an invaluable resource for those in related disciplines such as environmental ethics and bioethics. It is also an invaluable resource for educators teaching classes on the subject. Everyone eats, even philosophers. This collection is a testament to the growing body of work on food ethics, as philosophers explore issues that arise alongside what is on their plate.