

University of Michigan Law School
University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository

Articles

Faculty Scholarship

1997


Gluttony

William I. Miller

University of Michigan Law School, wimiller@umich.edu

Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/articles/697>

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/articles>

 Part of the [Food and Drug Law Commons](#), [Legal History Commons](#), and the [Religion Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Miller, William I. "Gluttony." *Representations* 60 (1997): 92-112.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact mlaw.repository@umich.edu.

Gluttony

*Among them all, who can descry
A vice more mean than Gluttony?
Of any groveling slave of sense,
Not one can claim so small pretense
To that indulgence which the wise
Allow to human frailties
As the inglorious, beastly sinner,
Whose only object is—a dinner.*

—Wm. Combe 1815¹

GLUTTONY DOES NOT HAVE THE GRANDEUR OF PRIDE, the often brilliant strategic meanness of envy and avarice, the glory of wrath. It does manage to gain some small allure by its association with lust, its sexy sibling sin of the flesh. Yet there is something irrevocably unseemly about gluttony, vulgar and lowbrow, self-indulgent in a swinish way. Gluttony is not the stuff of tragedy or epic. Imagine Hamlet too fat to take revenge or Homer making his topic the gluttony of Achilles rather than his wrath.² With gluttony, compare pride and anger, sins that mark the grand action of revenge, sins that can be emblemized by tigers, lions, eagles, and hawks, rather than by pigs (dare I say it) humans. Gluttony requires some immersion in the dank and sour realm of disgust. Gluttony inevitably leads to regurgitation, excrement, hangover, and gas and to despair and feelings of disgust. But it has a cheerier side too that I don't mean to ignore: the delights and pleasures of good food, drink, and convivial joys. If gluttony often drags disgust in its wake, it also motivates a certain kind of amiability that makes for good companionship, hospitality, and even a kind of easygoing benevolence.

Most of the seven deadly sins are less properly sins than dispositions, tendencies, or traits of character. Nor are they a complete list of sin-generating dispositions. Fearfulness, for example, is surely a much graver motivator of sin than gluttony and even pride. Just what is it about gluttony that makes it a vice? Do the grounds of its viciousness shift through time? Could one ever claim gluttony a virtue without also being a shallow hedonist? Even David Hume, who took great delight in making the case for the virtue of pride, was willing to go only halfway on gluttony's behalf, arguing, in effect, that obsessing on its viciousness meant you were moved by the unamiable vices of crabbed moralism and frenzied enthusiasm, not that you were manifesting virtue:

To imagine, that the gratifying of any sense, or the indulging of any delicacy in meat, drink, or apparel is of itself a vice, can never enter into a head, that is not disordered by the frenzies of enthusiasm.³

We are somewhat conflicted about the precise moral status of gluttony. Indeed, as we shall see, so were earlier ages, although the grounds of their ambivalence were rather different from ours. Among us the sin of gluttony is the sin of fat, whether it lolls about men's paunches (note that fat transforms stomachs into paunches, pots, or beer bellies) or else squiggles loosely about women's thighs, or clogs the arteries in a gender-neutral fashion. Gluttony for us is the sin of ugliness and ill health, but chiefly ugliness. Except for philosophers and theologians, most of us have never managed to distinguish too well between the good and the beautiful, between the ethical and moral on one hand and the aesthetic and pleasurable on the other. As a matter of practical morality, ugliness remains, despite centuries of pious exhortation to the contrary, a sin. And the very cachet of gluttony's historical pedigree as an honored member of a select group of capital sins helps relax the grip of those niggling scruples we may have acquired about blaming the fat for their obesity. There is nothing quite like the sin of fat. Its wages, we are told, is death—physical, moral, and social. The author of a best-selling how-to-raise-your-adolescent-daughter book reports that 11 percent of Americans would abort a fetus if they were told it had a tendency to obesity. Elementary-school children judge the fat kid in the class more negatively than they do the bully.⁴ In this life, the fat are damned, the beautiful (who manifestly are not fat) are saved, and we are not sure that this ordering doesn't also anticipate arrangements beyond the grave.

But this is a very recent historical development, for when the poor were thin, fat was beautiful. And when poverty came to be characterized less by insufficient calories and more by too many calories of the wrong kind, fat became ugly. In a perverse way, the poor determine fashion by providing an antimodel of the ideal body type that the rich then imitate negatively. I will discuss these issues more fully later but let me not loosen my grip on this morsel of an argument without adding the following tidbit: although not all gluttony leads to obesity, nor is all obesity the consequence of the voluntary indulgence in the vice of gluttony, we antigluttonous moralists are never quite willing to pardon fat. The burden of proof, we think, is upon fat people to adduce evidence that they are not gluttons, for fat makes out a *prima facie* case that they are guilty and thus owe the rest of us an apology or an explanation for having offended.

When the first list of the chief sins appeared at the end of the fourth century there were eight of them and gluttony headed the list.⁵ Pride may have been thought more serious, but gluttony still got first billing. Gluttony, doing general service for all the sins of the flesh, was also listed first in the shorter list of the

three temptations of Christ, although the temptations never enjoyed the long-running popularity of the seven vices.⁶ Gluttony also was listed first by John Cassian who introduced the list of sins to the Latin West in the fifth century, and an occasional writer would see fit to start with gluttony as late as the thirteenth century.⁷ Considering that the ordering originated with severe desert ascetics, it was no accident that they listed first what was torturing them most: desires of the flesh, food first, then sex.⁸ In the end, however, the ordering of St. Gregory the Great (d. 604) carried the day, and in that order *Superbia* (Pride) claimed its prideful place as first, as made sense for the moral ordering of a less obsessively ascetic and more secularized world; gluttony was stuck back in the pack one step ahead of lust, which figured last.

But the preacher whose topic was gluttony had no problem finding biblical and patristic support for claiming its historical priority even if it was in some sense less serious a sin than pride and avarice. After all, was it not appetite for the forbidden fruit, desire for that apple that cost us all paradise? Thus Chaucer's Pardoner:

O glotonye, full of cursednesse!
 O cause first of our confusion!
 O original of our damnation,
 Til Christ had bought us with his blood again!
 Lo, how deare, shortly for to sayn,
 Aabout was thilke [this, such] cursed vileynye!
 Corrupt was all this world for glotonye.⁹

And considerably earlier in the fourth century St. John Chrysostom was also willing to add the flood to gluttony's discredit: "Gluttony turned Adam out of Paradise, gluttony it was that drew down the deluge at the time of Noah."¹⁰ Quite an unsavory beginning for our amiable vice.

To us, Eve has more in common with Prometheus than with the fat lady in the circus. No desperate resort to the gloss of food-obsessed ascetics was required to give pride and avarice preeminence. Does not *Ecclesiasticus* declare pride the beginning of all sin (Sir. 10:13) and St. Paul in his first letter to Timothy make avarice "the root of all evil" (Tim. 6:10)? But the image of gluttony as the first sin was persistent. The official homilies of the Anglican church followed the same line. Adam and Eve were gluttonous, said the homilist, and their excesses cost us paradise.¹¹ Higher-brow theologians, perhaps the highest brow of all, St. Thomas Aquinas, even felt compelled to address the issue of gluttony's priority before dismissing it and asserting the preeminence of pride and avarice.¹²

Whether gluttony is first or penultimate is not so crucial; what is remarkable, however, and this was obsessed upon by medieval and early modern moralists, was just how fertile gluttony was of other vices. The power of a vice to generate

other vices was what the theologians understood to make a vice capital. Less rigorous souls—or rigorous souls who doubted their powers to resist a good meal—could argue that gluttony should be winked at: “But is there anyone, O Lord,” says a desperate Augustine, “who is never enticed beyond the strict limit of need?”¹³ Eating is necessary for life and the blame for lack of measure should be discounted for that reason. But Aquinas concluded that gluttony’s productivity of vice was undeniable and the sin was thus unarguably capital.¹⁴

Gluttony paved the way to lust. It was lust’s “forechamber” in the words of a seventeenth-century sermonizer.¹⁵ If in a post-Freudian world we have learned to eroticize food, privileging sex and lust as the prime movers and motivators of virtually all desire, premodern people rather astutely inverted the order. They alimenterized lust. It was food, ingestion, and alimentation in all its forms that provided the dominant metaphors and explanations of motive and desire. No medieval preacher, in his most free-associative moments, ever thought to make lust the first sin or the prime sin. But gluttony sprang immediately to his mind. It was feasts and food that engendered lust. Food and drink come first, as even today they must, despite the bad twentieth-century cliché of following sex with the oral gratification of a cigarette. (Should smoking be included within the broad parameters of gluttony? Arguably yes.) In the Wife of Bath’s raunchy idiom “a lickerous [gluttonous] mouth must have a lickerous [lecherous] tail.” Notice how the connection between gluttony and lechery was even reproduced at the level of the word *lickerous*. *Lickerous* meant tasty when describing food and gluttonous when describing people or their mouths as in the Wife’s quote, but it could also mean lecherous or lascivious as it did when the Wife used it to modify *tail*. Middle and early modern English supported delightful punning possibilities that followed the Wife in playing suggestively with the homophony of *lickerous*, *lecherous*, and *lick*, in which genital lust is a handmaid to the larger gluttonous oral order.¹⁶

In spite of myths perpetuated by pop culture as to the primacy of the genitals, lust often needs the assist of drink or dietary satiation to dull our initial, less generous assessments of the other’s desirability or to quell our concerns about the inevitable sacrifice of dignity that comes with indulging lust. Feeding may itself be sufficiently dignity-deflating to pave the way for even greater riskings of it. The picture isn’t all as dark as that, for food suggests the delights of conviviality, and conviviality suggests the delights of fleshly pleasure. Most of us find the occasional risks to our dignity well worth it. But can there be any dispute about the relative ordering? At the level of the individual, eating enables fornication which in turn produces the next generation of gluttons.

Gluttony was also inextricably linked with sloth and this strikes us as perfectly apt. It was only toward the end of the medieval period that sloth started to take on the sense of laziness; medieval sloth was *accidie*, a kind of despairing torpor of thinking you were excluded from God’s grace.¹⁷ It was the nobler medieval ver-

sion of our contemptible notion: low self-esteem. But sloth had a homelier side too. It was the despair of the morning after, hangover, nausea, heartburn, and headache. William Langland's allegorical glutton in *Piers Plowman* vomits, passes out drunk, and is carried home to bed by his wife where "after all this excess he had an accidie."¹⁸ Langland even alters the traditional ordering of the sins to substitute sloth for lust at gluttony's rear. He gives us a reality check: lust may indeed follow upon gluttony but that is, in fact, a consummation to be greatly—if not quite devoutly—wished. The grim fact is you mostly end up in bed humiliated and with a hangover, rather than with some delightful enticer of the flesh.

Sloth seems to capture the sense of defeat and shame that are the frequent aftermath of gluttony and lust. It is the shame of having indulged in the present without thought for the future. Or for those binge eaters of today it is the shame of weakness of will, of eating to fill a void that no longer exists in the stomach, but rather in life itself. It is the shame of preferring present sensory satisfaction even to present dignity. Sloth is the retreat into primordial ooze. Gluttony thus becomes the fosterer and hence the emblem of all sin that favors instant gratification, the filling of present emptiness with corporeal sensation at the expense of spirit and futurity.

Gluttony was also thought to lead to pride. Food and feasts were the central props in competitive displays, as in a slightly different way people who care about being especially gourmet or discerning about their food and wine compete among one another today. In premodern and classical times it was not just the quality of food that was at stake in the competition, but glorying in the display and in the expense. Gluttony thus came to be understood as something more than just the swallowing of too much food; it was the whole culture of eating and competitive production for the table that engaged the sin of gluttony.¹⁹ Gluttony and pride, in other words, connived to fuel a form of potlatch. And pride's influence on gluttony justifies the reasonable belief that there may be as much gluttony in the pretentiousness of small and highly produced portions of nouvelle cuisine as in the huge portions and endless replenishments of a Texas barbecue.

Even envy figured in gluttony's retinue. One early fifteenth-century writer, blasting the gluttony of the court, recounts that one of the consequences of the general gluttony there was the misery of the lowlier courtiers who suffered the bitter envy of seeing the best smelling and best tasting dishes made available to those higher in the pecking order, but not to themselves:

But when these courtiers sit on the benches idle
Smelling those dishes they bite upon the bridle,
And then is their pain and anger fell as gall
When all passeth by and they have naught at all
.
Such fish to behold and none thereof to taste,
Pure envy causeth thy heart near to brast.²⁰

Avarice, on the other hand, had an ambivalent and more complex connection with gluttony. We can get at it best by noting that the archetypal villainous glutton for the medieval and early modern period was also cast as the archetypal avaricious man. He was Dives of the parable of Lazarus in Luke 16:19. Dives fared sumptuously every day, and to the medieval mind that sumptuous faring was a sign of avarice, or cupidity in their terms, as well as of gluttony. Avarice meant something more than just tightfisted hoarding back then. It meant being overly concerned about acquisition to the exclusion of more spiritual matters. Dives, after all, was hardly a miser, but he spent freely on the wrong things and so was understood to have been damned eternally for his gluttony and wealth. This strikes us as a pretty disproportional system of punishment, given that Dives's joys were finite, more, in fact, sins of omission, of being blind to the suffering of another, than sins of commission.

But Dives's wrongs were more serious in that earlier moral order than in ours. His avarice and gluttony are played out in the face of a famished and leprous pauper. And these sins mean something quite different in a world of constant and pressing caloric scarcity. In an economic order in which there is not food enough to go around, in which starvation and famine are always lurking about, gluttony's moral stakes ratchet up. Gluttony was not just self-indulgence as it mostly is among inhabitants of developed countries where it imposes on others only the trivial cost of the unpleasantness of seeing the glutton's fat; for that earlier economic order it was, in a sense, murder or a kind of criminal negligence, like drunk driving is for us. The medieval writer who most directly worried about the distributional aspects of gluttony was Langland. In *Piers Plowman*, every mouthful a glutton took beyond his measurable need was an affront to the poor. Eating was a zero-sum game. The more you ate the less someone else did. And any ingestion beyond what was necessary for the maintenance of life was an act of injustice. Langland's gluttons were the nonproducing rich, sturdy beggars who would not work, and above all the friars whose gluttony was undertaken not only in the face of the poor but also in spite of their own vows of poverty. The friars shared with Dives the mantle of personified Gluttony, actually doing him one better by spicing their gluttony with hypocrisy. In Langland's arresting image they "gnaw God in the gorge when their guts are full" (*PP*, B 10.57).²¹

But it is in precisely such an order of scarcity that the impulses to glut are at their greatest. Despair can drive some to live according to the principle of eat, drink, and be merry. Others, more prudent, might be driven to acquire desperately, avariciously in their sense, so as to engorge themselves—not as a form of consumption but as a form of saving. They are literally fattening themselves for the lean times ahead. And this paradoxical method of saving by avidly consuming makes sense when any postponer of gratification was certain to see a good portion of the grain he had stored ravaged by rats and birds, stolen by humans, rotted by damp, or consumed by fire.

Dives raises another issue that was noted back then. Feasting, though necessarily risking gluttony, was also the occasion for some redistributions from rich to poor—paltry, but redistributions nonetheless. Remember that Lazarus received the crumbs from Dives's table. Gluttony becomes a kind of attenuated almsgiving. Conviviality means consuming food to be sure, but it also means sharing it and even wasting it so that human scavengers and gleaners can be nourished. And though William Langland vents considerable indignation on wasters who destroy with gluttony what hard workers produce, he is equally indignant when the consuming classes grow less hospitable, curtail the size of their board, and start eating in private so as to exclude the poor and avoid their claims for the scraps:

Now hath each rich a rule—to eat by himself
In a private parlor for poor men's sake,
Or in a chamber with a chimney, and leave the chief hall
That was made for meals, men to eat in,
And all to spare to spill that spend [waste] shall another. (*PP*, B 10.98–102)

The last line scorns avarice of a new sort; the kind that works against gluttony; the kind that makes for smaller portions, for smaller guest lists, and for quieter and more civilized company. Civilization, Langland intuits long before anyone else does, means not only eating in private but also saving, deferring consumption. It is still too early for Langland to imagine that preventing wastage (“spare to spill”) will amount to any good. He still sees the savings as merely funding another gluttonous waster (“that spend shall another”), rather than creating the capital that will fund the construction of private spaces.

Feasting was also the occasion for sociality. Chaucer is able with wit and economy to demonstrate the hospitable amiability of his Franklin simply by giving the generous plenitude of his board a natural energy of its own: “It snowed in his house of meat and drink.”²² To be too abstemious about one's food, to put out a spare and meager board, was to risk giving social offense. Moralists knew this and said that it was a temptation of the devil to allege reasons of sociability to indulge gluttony. Don't be a party pooper says the fiend: “Dost thou know that people are calling thee a niggard?”²³ Virtues like sociability, hospitality, and amiability seemed to require a certain indulgence in gluttony. This is astute psychology on the part of the devil as well as on the part of the moralist who understood just how powerful a hold the norms of sociability, generosity, honor, and competitive conviviality have on us. Even among us, the nondrinker and the vegetarian prompt less praise for their temperance than wariness and a touch of annoyance for their implicit condemnation of the forms of conviviality. We might be willing not to behave like pigs, but that does not mean, suggests the devil, that we have to behave like self-mortifying and joyless desert saints either, especially when acting in such a manner avariciously keeps our purse thick as it thins our paunch.

Gluttony in the Middle Ages and early modern period was a seasonal sin.

Where there is no refrigeration and storage is more costly than consumption, more gluttonous consuming goes on when the perishable foodstuff is ready to eat. So people gluttoned at harvest and at the late autumn slaughter of beasts. Orgies of food at certain times were almost a requirement of their state of productivity and technology. Sin it may have been, but they didn't have much choice. And they would suffer too, to the moralist's mean delight, not only the hangover of the feast but the desperate shortages in early spring when gluttony took the form not of eating well or fully but of thinking obsessively about food and where one was to find it. The contrast with our alimentary economy could not be more startling. We can save food, and our production levels are high enough to let us glut day in and day out, spring or fall.

The core of gluttony has always been understood to mean the excessive consumption of food. In the Middle Ages it was assumed that excessive drink was also at the core. In fact, it was via drunkenness that even wrath was admitted to be a mournful consequence of gluttony's powers to generate other sins. The gluttonous drunkard is quick to anger and short on controlling his temper. Lot was conventionally cited to show just how bad a fix excessive wine-bibbing can get you in. In Langland's words:

Through wine and through women there was Lot encumbered,
And there begot in gluttony girls [children] that were churls. (*PP*, B 1.32–33)

But by the late sixteenth century gluttony had come to be seen as more a matter of food than drink, so that one moralist felt it necessary to explain himself when he included drink: "Under Gluttony, I shroud not only excess in meat, but in drink also."²⁴

We are psychologically subtle enough to recognize that anorexia and compulsive dieting as well as addiction, bulimia, gourmetism, alcoholism, and any number of irrational and obsessive behaviors regarding the ingestion of food and drink properly belong under the rubric of gluttony. Medieval commentators also understood that gluttony was more than just eating to excess. Following distinctions made by Gregory the Great in the sixth century, writers on vices and virtues well into the fifteenth century understood gluttony to have five main branches: eating too soon, too much, too avidly, too richly (in the sense of expensively), and too daintily. One remarkable tradition of medieval writing on the deadly sins subsumed under gluttony all vices of the mouth:²⁵ lying, backbiting, blaspheming, boasting, perjury, and grumbling. Even heresy and witchcraft, apparently by way of blasphemy, were dealt with under the rubric of gluttony. In this tradition the tavern is seen as the devil's temple in which riotous drinking leads to gambling and swearing and taking God's name in vain.²⁶

There is something bizarrely modern about generalizing gluttony to encom-

pass all the sins in which the mouth figures. Sigmund Freud achieves the same effect by suggesting a matching of each member of the triad of erogenous zones with its particular sin. Gluttony is oral, avarice anal, and lust genital. Each of these vices has its particular pleasure and the prospect of that pleasure is precisely the temptation to indulge it. This contrasts greatly with, say, envy, which is its own punishment, except to the extent it allows for the indirect pleasures of *Schadenfreude*. But food and talk, these are the very substance of oral pleasure and conviviality. The drawbacks come from overindulgence, not from just any indulgence. That is, little gluttonies are pretty much a pleasure pure and simple (the notion of little gluttonies is not incoherent, for even if gluttony by definition means exceeding measure, there is a sense in which such excesses can be minor or major); big gluttonies, however, end in the misery of hangover and the heaviness and shame of satiation. The culminating vileness of gluttony is the vileness of vomit and the repeated return to it in the manner of the dog in Proverbs; the punishment is oral just as the sin is. In this way our physiology seems to be committed to the law of the talion: what by mouth offends shall by mouth make atonement. Both pleasure and pain will focus on the mouth. And in this oral world, spewing foul words is a vomiting forth, revealing one's soul as stinking and as unnatural as we perceive vomit to be.

What is it that is sinful about gluttony? I have already touched on this briefly when I noted that the gravity and even the content of the sin might vary depending on whether the relevant society is one of plenty or one of endemic and severe scarcity. The general moral regime would also alter the moral stakes and the moral content of gluttony: for instance, in rigid ascetic communities gluttony might be more of a temptation than pride, lust more than wrath. The idea that gluttony is sinful because it involves an unjust distribution of necessities for the maintenance of life is rarely posed as the central moral issue of gluttony even in the Middle Ages. Still it figured in the Middle Ages, and more then than now. But even in modern times we are asked to consider our own plenteous consumption in the face of the starvation of others. The difference is that Dives ate, literally, in the face of Lazarus; Lazarus was looking on. We, on the other hand, must exercise a bit of imagination to see the starving as we eat. The walls that grant us our privacy and the basis for no small amount of our complacency allow us also to imagine the starving as less repulsive and more pathetically deserving of our attention than their immediate presence would tend to make them, but the same immured privacy lets us simply tune them out by turning off the evening news.

Dives's remedial action is easy and obvious: he should have fed and cared for Lazarus. Ours is less easy and obvious because the other's suffering takes place at a distance and is mediated via impersonal markets and international charitable organizations that promise to translate our cash into food at some distant point

out of our sight. When I was a child my teachers told me to think of the poor starving Koreans and to eat everything on the plate of my government-subsidized hot lunch. Even to a first-grade kid it seemed absurd to think that eating what revolted me helped relieve starving Koreans. There are several layers of irony to a strategy that seeks to combat sinfully negligent waste by training up a generation of gluttons.

There were other grounds, recited by both medieval and classical writers, of gluttony's viciousness and danger. Surely gluttony destroyed the soul, but it also destroyed the body, the very object that the glutton was so devoted to. Gluttony was unhealthy:

Hereof procedeth the vomit and the stone
And other sickness many more than one.²⁷

If arguments urging charity toward others fell on deaf ears, and arguments directed toward postmortem eternity were too remote to impel compliance, the preacher had recourse to naked and present self-interest. The Anglican homily tried to terrorize his listeners into compliance by noting the sudden deaths that cometh with banqueting. Excess generates unnatural heat making the body sluggish and "unfit to serve either God or man." And the glutton gets more negatives than positives from his food: "Except God give strength to nature to digest, so that we may take profit by [our foods], either shall we filthily vomit them up again, or else shall they lie stinking in our bodies, as in a loathsome sink or channel."²⁸

The preacher pulls no punches here; he seeks to quell appetite by reminding the glutton just how his body transforms his delectables into the quintessence of the disgusting: vomit and feces. Food thus becomes its own punishment, its own hell on earth. One writer even suggests that the glutton should be punished as a suicide:

We do nothing but fatten ours souls to Hellfire. Our bodies we bombast and ballast with engorging diseases. Diseases shorten our days, therefore whosoever englutteth himself, is guilty of his own death and damnation.²⁹

The devil, of course, was no slouch either, and he used arguments from health to prompt gluttony. Fasts will weaken you, you must keep your body's health for holiness. Says the devil, "Don't eat for the delight of the body, but to serve God the better; thou shalt keep thy strength to serve God; that's what David says."³⁰

We, like those premodern preachers, make gluttony a matter of health, more so than they did. For us it is a major argument, for them it was a minor one. Some of the viciousness they find in gluttony strikes us as strange. Gluttony not only wastes what others could more profitably use; it also wastes your own estate. The fear was not just ill corporeal health, but poverty, even as late as the early eighteenth century:

Fat pamper'd Porus, eating for Renown,
In soups and sauces melts his manors down
Regardless of his heirs, with mortgag'd Lands,
Buys hecatombs of fish and ortolans.³¹

This concern is a corollary to the economic point made earlier regarding a regime of severe scarcity. Sumptuous fare was expensive. And recall that gluttony is always more than a matter of quantity; it is also about delicacy and rarity, exquisiteness and voluptuousness of the palate. Robert Burton notes in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* a perverse psychological verity that “those things please most which cost most. The dearest cates are best.”³² And as we have seen, pride entered the fray to up the ante too, because how much you spent determined your rank in this gluttonous potlatch.

Gluttony is vicious because in some economies it is a form of homicide, because it is also unhealthy and so a form of suicide, and because it wastes one's own goods, risking poverty for oneself and securing it for one's heirs. Some of these grounds strike us as more compelling than others, but they were all makeweights in the moralist's argument against gluttony. The true ground of gluttony's sinfulness was that it, along with lust, was a sin of what was once known as “security,” that is, of culpable negligence in the ordering of one's own system of values. Thomas Nashe, writing in the late sixteenth century, puts it best: Security is “forgetting mortalitie; it is a kind of Alchymical quintessensing of a heaven out of earth.”³³ These are the people whose God is their belly, the ones who drove the flinty St. Paul to tears.³⁴

In a moral order that sets great stock by what it calls the spiritual, the glutton poses against it not just general corporeality, but the most vulgar and unseemly corporeality: not the arms and legs, not muscle, but organ meat, the gut. The gut should never be an end in itself; it should always figure subserviently as a means that enables other less embarrassing portions of the body and soul to thrive. The belly is there to serve the spiritual, the intellectual, and the productive working body that tills the soil. In the Christian scheme the glutton's sin was close to apostasy; it was infidelism. Paul chose his metaphors with a purpose: these people substituted their guts for God. The belly is more than a false god. It constitutes a special affront; it mocks God in a way his other competitors do not. Some false gods at least demand heroism, sacrifice, or the denial of self-serving concerns about one's own salvation.³⁵ But the glutton's God was his own pampered gut; by thus incarnating God in such a low-status organ he also reduced himself to mouth, guts, and anus, a mere tube fueling a feel-good machine.

This was no minor sin in the Christian scheme, at least as Paul would have it. True, pride set oneself up against God, thus in fact its special grievousness, but pride took one's virtue, one's glory, one's might and main, one's gifts and achievements seriously and valued them. Pride did not deny the spirit. Rather it chal-

lenged God by posing an indomitable human spirit against the demands of the Divine One for obedience and subservience; gluttony simply sets up the alimentary canal as the end, an end that sees us finally reduced to fat, sated flesh lolling in a viscous, oozing, spiritless life soup, in an eternal recurrence of feeding, excreting, rotting, and generating. (To be sure, pride has its vulgar side too, but the simplification still captures a certain truth about the difference between pride and gluttony).

Yet didn't Christianity ask for the trouble it got from gluttony, at least once the doctrine of transubstantiation was made dogma in 1215? Christianity, after all, featured the mouth and the alimentary canal in the central mystery of the faith: the Eucharist. This is not a twentieth-century secularist making a fanciful connection. The faithful made it seven centuries ago. A certain style of mystical devotion that focused its intensity on the Eucharist used images of glutting, sating, and eating to describe taking in the wafer and wine. There were, in other words, gluttons for God in the multiple senses "for" can have in that phrase: they wanted to serve him (there is even a pun here) and eat him. Consider this thirteenth-century hagiography describing one Mary of Oignies, a mystic who was especially devoted to the Eucharist:

the holy bread strengthened her heart; the holy wine inebriated her, rejoicing her mind; the holy body fattened her. . . . Indeed she felt all delectation and all savor of sweetness in receiving it, not just within her soul but even in her mouth.³⁶

There is a wit in this kind of devotion. It takes the sin of gluttony and consciously seeks to spiritualize it, enlisting it and the gut in the service of God, miraculously, by eating him.

The passage from Mary of Oignies reminds us that gluttony is more than just chowing down and glutting to the point of sickness. There is more to it than the belly; there is also the palate. That Mary was fatted by eating Jesus was only part of the pleasure; it was also that he tasted good, "all delectation and all savor of sweetness." Gluttony has two chief forms that at times raise demands inconsistent with each other. One form is about ingesting excessive quantities; the other about excessive refinements in quality. The quantity/quality distinction was there in Gregory the Great's taxonomy of gluttony back in the sixth century: not just eating too much, but also eating too daintily. We may even suppose that when Paul spoke tearfully against those who made their bellies their God he did not mean to exclude those who made the palate their God. The belly metaphor seems big enough to include the devotees of quality as well as those of quantity. Here the psychology and physiology of alimentation helps make the case. Consider that taste alone is seldom, if ever, a pleasure entirely unto itself. If it were, dieting would hardly be a challenge. The fact is that there is little pleasure in tasting a good taste only to have to spit it out before swallowing. The pleasure of a good taste remains to a large extent inchoate unless the substance bearing the good taste is swallowed.

The bulimic helps make the point by swallowing first, thus completing the pleasure cycle of ingestion and only then putting the process into reverse.³⁷ No swallowing, and instead of pleasure we experience frustration and disappointment. The analogy with *coitus interruptus* suggests itself, but not swallowing good tasting food might be even more displeasing. So it is that the belly is a necessary condition to the pleasure of the palate.

Does the glutton who lives to gorge on large amounts have values more out of whack than the glutton whose chief goal in life is the experience of subtle delectations and rarefied pleasuring of the palate? Is one more a sinner than the other? More shallow? Do they offend in the same way? Both, it seems, can be accused of finding in fleshly sensation the desired end of their existence and in this sense both have equally given themselves over to a false and very corporeal god. But there has been a historical ebb and flow between which style of gluttony—the quantitative or the qualitative—was most offensive, although both always merited the scorn of the moralist.

Hume makes the following claim:

The more men refine upon pleasure, the less they indulge in excesses of any kind; because nothing is more destructive to true pleasure than such excesses. One may safely affirm, that the Tartars are oftener guilty of beastly gluttony, when they feast on their dead horses, than European courtiers with all their refinements of cookery.³⁸

Hume introduces the idea that the civilizing process bears a powerful relation to the nature of particular vices, especially, as here, to gluttony. Hume, of course, in this passage is making the case for the virtues of refinement as these are secured by the civilizing process. In brief, that process led to an increase in sensitivities of disgust and embarrassment and an internalization of norms of bodily decorum. You were no longer to fart, pick your nose, piss, or defecate in the presence of others. Food was to be eaten decorously without slurping or burping.³⁹ By Hume's time you ate with a fork, not with your hands; it was barbaric to wipe your hands or blow your nose on the tablecloth or to spit on the floor. Just two centuries earlier these behaviors were possible without calling any special attention to yourself. We already witnessed the earliest stages of this process when Langland opposed the privatizing of eating, preferring instead the distributional advantages of large riotous feasts where bones were tossed to the dogs and to the poor. That very limiting of eating to smaller more intimate and less festive groupings helped in part to do the work of turning Tartars into courtiers, although at some cost in social and psychic dislocation.

But is Hume right? He admits that gluttony is not eliminated by refinement. He seems to concede that European courtiers are gluttons even with their refinements. More correctly, he admits that courtly gluttony is a function of these refinements. What he is arguing is that the European courtly obsession with deli-

cate cuisine is not as gluttonous as are some Tartars chomping on their dead horses. Gluttonous it still is but, in his estimation, paler in comparison. So what precisely is the ground of comparison? At first glance it appears to be merely a matter of quantities of food consumed, the notion of excess being more attracted to quantity than to quality. What the Tartars lack in culinary refinement, they make up for in bulk, and that very bulk makes them more gluttonous than the courtier. The cleverness of Hume's imagery reinforces this. He makes us see a hoard of Tartars each eating one newly skinned, barely roasted horse that was either ridden to death or shot out from under him, "beastly" gluttons in more than one sense. The courtier on the other hand eats delicate morsels delicately, each morsel bearing no resemblance to the ingredients that made it up. But is there no excess there? Excess there surely is, but it is not of bulk so much as in fleshly sensation, the courting of fleshly delight. What refinement succeeds in doing is not eliminating gluttony but doing just what refinement is supposed to do: make the pleasure more exquisite, but no less sinful, no less a confusion of the means for the proper end. Refinement proceeds by a kind of condensation in which more punch is packed in a smaller package.

But it is not just a matter of an excess of titillation and delectation. Hume knows, I suspect, although he is suppressing the knowledge for the purpose of making his anti-Puritanical point, that there can also be an excess of refinement itself, not just of the delicious and voluptuous sensations it makes possible. Excesses in refinement might be a contradiction in terms, because true refinement should also know how to regulate itself, how never to engender vulgarity, how always to be decorous even if that means compromising certain rules of refinement in the interests of its spirit and style. Yet refinement seems, inevitably, to foster the production of its own brand of vulgarity and excess that is both engendered by it and parasitical to it: for example, foppery, gourmetism, and certain kinds of priggishness.

It is thus not altogether clear that excesses of refinement can't generate disgusts in the observer almost as great as the bestial excesses of devouring huge quantities. Compare for instance a thick-necked, potbellied man stuffing the contents of a heaping plate of barbecue into his pink and sweating face as he gropes for another beer, to a slender elegant man with an Anglophilic accent, the kind affected by the transatlantic liner set in thirties movies, sniffing his wine glass and pronouncing the vintage to be superb. Both disgust most of us. And depending on the social class or the body type of the observer it is not at all clear who disgusts more. Both manifest ineffable shallowness, even though the shallowness has distinctly different styles. Both engage in a kind of unseemliness, and unseemliness is generally a matter of excess. One style is gendered vulgar masculine, the other vulgar feminine; one low-class, the other pretentiously claiming for itself the superiority of expertise and highness, but often taking on the style of an unintended

parody of highness. And both make their gut their God, although the second, having adopted the idiom of excessive refinement has the palate serving as his gut's vicar on earth.

Both demonstrate that there is something very dangerous about eating. It is hard not to offend God or your fellow man or woman when you do it. And God and humanity seem to be taking offense at roughly the same thing: the unseemliness of gratifying bodily urges. Eating is like other necessary bodily functions: dangerous in the extreme and best done out of sight. In fact the Brahmins have pretty much adopted this course.⁴⁰ Like sex, eating must be hemmed in with all kinds of rituals and rules precisely because the process is so likely to prompt disgust when viewed by others. Watch with a detached eye as someone, even a well-mannered someone, eats. It is not a thing of beauty. But if skilled we can at least make feeding ourselves relatively inoffensive, when, again as in sex, we agree to put ourselves at mutual risk by eating together so as not to make ourselves so vulnerable to the gaze of a non-eating other.

The civilizing process, the process that made eating riskier than it already was, shifted the emphasis in gluttony from a matter of excessive amounts to a matter of excessively concentrated sensation. It was the civilizing process that in no small part helped make the very civilized sensibility of David Hume possible. And at the same time the advancing notion of refinement shifted the moral focus of gluttony from a disgust prompted by the perversion of proper spiritual values or by consuming more than your just share amidst starving Lazaruses to a disgust for bad manners, for looking vulgar as you ate. In either case, unseemliness was at issue. But refinement held the seeds of its own undoing. Refined cuisine might taste so good, so much better than dead horses, that it could work to prompt its refined consumers to excesses of quantity in the old gluttonous style. Hume, we might note, was quite portly and appeared to enjoy his refined cuisine in abundance. No wonder Hume's moral order rescued gluttons from the third circle of Hell where Dante had them wallowing in the mire like hogs. Hume, matching Christ's harrowing of hell, led forth the gluttons to a new order. If they were vulgar gluttons, their punishment was to be banished from refined company, but if they indulged sensation in ways that the new refinement anticipated and supported, then, as long as they did not do so to the exclusion of other virtues, they were to be excused for an eternity.

I confess that I have been exaggerating somewhat in order to capture what is merely a shift in emphasis. The core unseemliness of gluttony remained fairly constant through time and it was largely Paul's version of unseemliness that governed. The pursuit of cheap thrills, of mere feel-good sensation was sinfully shallow. Even Hume admitted that the vice of luxury, lust, and gluttony, is vicious "when it engrosses all a man's expence, and leaves no ability for such acts of duty and generosity as are required by his situation and fortune."⁴¹ When gluttony and lust undermined benevolence and amiability they were still for Hume vices.

But like the gluttony of the classical and premodern moralist, the spiritual bankruptcy of Hume's gluttony bore an unseemly connection to the risk of worldly bankruptcy.

Philology, the words people used to talk about excesses in fleshly and alimentary matters, also provides evidence of gluttony's transformation through time. Words like *delicacy*, *gourmand*, and *luxury* moved from distinctly pejorative senses to fairly neutral ones. *Delicacy* initially meant the quality of being addicted to sensual pleasure and encompassed both lust and gluttony, but mostly gluttony. Thomas Nashe (sixteenth century), for instance, discussed under the general heading of Delicacy, gluttony, luxury (meaning lust), sloth, and security. Delicacy was the excessive immersion in bodily pleasure—especially that of the palate—to the exclusion of all else. But then slowly the notion of delicacy got caught up in the civilizing process; it got refined. Instead of referencing sin it now referenced a delicacy of taste, a sensitivity to the elegant, to the pleasing, to refined and subtle sensation, so that from its immoral beginnings in gorging, it ends, by the time Hume is writing in the first half of the eighteenth century, marking feelings of modesty, the sense of propriety, and a delicate regard for the feelings of others.

Once delicacy comes to operate in the terrain of refinement rather than sin, however, that very refinement starts to spin off pejorative senses again, not, this time, pejorative in the old excessive style of gluttony, but in the new more refined one. Without quite giving up on the positive senses of refinement it had come to acquire, delicacy begins to be colored by an insinuation of excess of a different cast than its early gluttonous one. Its new excess is one of exquisite decadence, or of a kind of tender weakness and fragility that is gendered feminine. In other words, the history of the word *delicacy* tracks almost to a *T* the changes we noted in the shift in gluttony's focus from eating too much to caring too much about what you ate. Delicacy, like gluttony, got caught in the trammels of the increasing sensitivity to disgust and embarrassment that was part of the civilizing process.

Gourmand is less interesting, but it, too, moves from meaning glutton to meaning, by the middle of the eighteenth century, someone who has a refined expertise in food, a gourmet, before drifting back again toward gluttony. The history of the word *luxury* tells a similar story, with the emphasis, however, more on lust than on gluttony. It moved from being the proper word for what we call lust to meaning luxury as we know it—the general indulgence in costly and superfluous finery, including food. The move in each case is toward a “decriminalization” of gluttony, lessening its moral stakes, and then a subtle recriminalization of it at a lower level, reflecting again the drift from the unseemliness of quantity to the unseemliness of excessive concern with quality. What was once a masculine sin (in medieval portrayals of the sins gluttony is masculine) becomes the effeminate excesses of fastidiousness, delicacy, and persnickety. The eighteenth century in many respects sees gluttony at its low point as a sin. The new form of the gluttony of quality, of hyperfastidiousness, was not, like the old gluttony of quantity, a sin of

denying one's humanity in favor of hoglike bestiality; it had become the sin of a particular form of human shallowness annexed to vanity and pride. Yet unlike pride, it had its roots in the shallowness of purely physical pleasure.

If gluttony was less urgent as a matter for moralists in the eighteenth century, it still was of considerable political concern. Politics still paid homage to gluttony as a sin; it became kind of a rallying cry in fact. When Marie Antoinette relegated the poor to their wretched cakes while she enjoyed refined multicourse dinners, these new Lazaruses in the Jacobin style were not so willing to trust God to deal with Marie as He had with Dives, nor, it should be added, did they trust him to deal with themselves any better in the next life than He had in this one. So they made their earthly Paradise by ensuring that Marie got her hell right here. The lower orders, it seems, saw the consumption of refinement to be no less offensive than the consumption of barbaric and bestial excess. From their perspective, in other words, the transition from a gluttony of quantity to a fastidious gluttony of quality was too subtle to notice. Yet there was a difference. Marie conceded a lot more to the Parisian mob than Dives did to Lazarus. Production levels were higher; they at least had their *gâteaux*, unrefined though they may have been.

We are now roughly at the end of the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries gluttony continued to recognize two styles, the one of excessive quantity, the other of excessive concern with quality, but these were altered to accommodate an even more secular world. Gluttony still was a sin, and indeed a sin around which religio-political movements could rally. This time it was not food so much as drink, demon rum. Temperance movements made the mouth and the gullet the originators of moral and social offense. If revulsion and indignation at what and how the rich were *eating* fueled the riots of the Parisian poor, the thought of what and how much the poor were *drinking* revolted and terrified the middle classes and the rich. The temperance movement was a riot of the better-heeled, and in America they succeeded in ruining conviviality for quite some time. In the Middle Ages no real distinction was made in the sinfulness of indulging drink rather than food; the poor had precious little of either. Class distinctions, however, helped give social and political stakes to the distinction between food and drink in matters of gluttony that was already beginning to be made, as we saw, by the late sixteenth century. It is only recently, that is, post-World War II, that the food/drink distinction has ceased to matter much.

With increasing secularization, gluttony, in the second half of the twentieth century, was no longer the special provenance of the preacher or the moralist as we conventionally think of them. The new preacher was the doctor, the personal trainer, the dietitian, the aerobics instructor—shrinks for the body and shrinks for the mind; and preaching came to us in voice-overs in commercials, or in the mere sight of the models in them and other figures of desirability and beauty purveyed in art and mass media. Despite our post-Freudian obsession with sexuality, we, like our medieval forebears, put food before sex, except we gave a rather

different meaning to the ordering. Eating for them meant festivity, jollity, conviviality, communion both sacred and profane, and then rolling in the hay (I am painting a cartoon here, but not an altogether false one). Food was its own pleasurable end, but it was also foreplay for the occasional lusty and lickerous frosting on the cake. They ate because it was desirable and generated sexual desire as a consequence; we strategize, count calories, worry, and undermine our pleasure in eating so as not to undo what little desirability we may be lucky enough to possess. *Food first then fornication* described for them the paradigmatic ordering of pleasure; for us the same motto describes a regime of mortification of the flesh for an overrated payoff.

The moral discourse of contemporary gluttony has rather different emphases than earlier styles. We speak of eating disorders and addictions that are classified as illness rather than as sin. But in our culture of health in which the state of one's body is felt to govern largely the state of one's soul, we have simply attached sin to illness so that in the end we hold people to *moral* account for their illnesses. The alcoholic, the anorexic, the bulimic, the obese do not become unblamable just because they are cared for by doctors and psychologists rather than confessors and preachers. Of course, those who have eating disorders that make them fat rather than thin fare much worse in the moral calculus, much in the way a calorie of sugar from fruit is *morally* superior to a Twinkie calorie. We are thus more likely to excuse the anorexic than the obese, to make her somewhat less culpable, partly in deference to her tender years, partly in deference to her sex, but mostly because we are not as revolted by her disorder until its terminal stages. She also benefits from our willingness to allow the thin tragic possibility; the fat, in contrast, are relegated almost without exception to comedy, farce, and the grotesque.

Bulimia, addictions, and binge eating are classic instances of gluttony. Anorexia is slightly more complex, but it captures all that the earlier moralists held to comprise the sin of gluttony. The alimentary canal takes over; it dominates one's life; thoughts of quantity become all consuming. The belly still stands as God even if it has a minus sign in front of it. Medieval moralists understood this also. They discussed fasting under the heading of gluttony, and while they approved of reasonable abstinence within recognized and regulated religious ritual, they blamed excessive fasting as unhealthy both to body and soul. Moreover, they suspected the compulsive and aggressive faster of hypocrisy, of putting on shows of sanctity: "thou fasteth much in men's sight in order to be lean and pale, to seem ghostly [that is, spiritual]. Thou art an hypocrite."⁴²

Anorexia and bulimia show that modern forms of gluttony are distinctly gendered. Both these disorders are almost exclusively the provenance of teenage and college-age women. Although it has been suggested that the occasionally suicidal fasting of certain medieval women saints had all the trappings of anorexia, the ideal of abstinence and mortification of the flesh made such behaviors less exclusively female then than they are today, even if women then pushed themselves

more toward self-destruction than did males. In our age, the styles of gluttony track class and gender divisions. Fat is as consistent a marker of lower class membership as there is for both sexes; it may even be a better predictor than skin color. The fat, really fat, are not likely to be as educated, as wealthy, or as from California, as the thin. Class predicts rather well which gluttons will be gluttons of quantity and which will be gluttons of quality.

Gluttony occupies the extremes—Rabelaisian gluttony as well as anorexia and saintly mortification of the flesh—because at either extreme the spirit has been turned over to the alimentary. Our only hope is the mean, the dull middle in which reasonableness governs. Even here we run into trouble. Reasonableness may once have been the answer, although we may surely quibble on that point; but in a culture obsessed with health, longevity, and beauty, reasonableness sounds less like the advice of the moralist or theologian than of the doctor. The middle ground is no longer the region in which the spirit can thrive freed from the body's control; it is the very ground on which alimentary obsessions are claimed to produce the best results for fleshly pleasures and ends. Perversely, after being down but not out in the mid-eighteenth century, gluttony has arisen to reaffirm the place it held on the first extant list of the capital sins some sixteen hundred years ago. Gluttony now seems to be working mostly in the service of pride, yet so much of modern pride is consumed by gluttony that it is not always quite clear which vice is really bringing home the bacon. *Gula vincit omnia.*

Is there no remedy for gluttony? Are we without effective resources to oppose our desires for oral and visceral gratification? Simple admonitions to be temperate, the standard fare of the moralist, pale in the face of the desire they oppose; mere advice rarely constitutes much of a threat to energetic vice. Yet, eventually, insistent advice may end in creating the conditions that engender remorse. And that is a start, even though remorse alone is seldom adequate to its task. The metaphorical rechewing that is remorse, the biting again of inwit, doesn't quite get it right. But in suggesting regurgitation, the working over again of what we have already chewed and swallowed, remorse hints of a more powerful and appropriate sanction, one more purely talionic, one that forces the alimentary canal to suffer for its desires. If the alimentary canal, mouth and gut, offended, so must it be punished. We need to feel our pain viscerally and orally. We need nausea and the risk of regurgitation and diarrhea, the painful elimination of sinful excess.

It is disgust, that sickly sensation of our own defilement, of our own impurity, that gives us some hope of resisting desire by doing the work of suppressing and repressing it. The result of this repression is the re-creation of a much more potent remorse than the kind generated discursively by advice. The disgust-originating remorse, borne on a suffusion of self-loathing, really hurts; it makes

us sick. And to this unpleasantness we must also add the shame of knowing that our fat and our fleshly indulgence is very likely to be even more disgusting to others than it is to ourselves.⁴³

Notes

Thanks to Rob Bartlett and Kathy Koehler.

1. From William Combe (1742–1823), “The Glutton,” lines 9–16, in *The English Dance of Death* (London, 1815), 68.
2. So impossible is it for us to conceive of a fat Hamlet that when Gertrude declares him “fat and scant of breath” during the duel with Laertes (5.2.290) editors have come to the rescue with glosses to show that fat meant sweaty and out of shape, but manifestly not fat: see Harold Jenkins’s spirited note in his edition of *Hamlet* (New York, 1981), 568–69.
3. David Hume, “Of Refinement in the Arts,” in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, based on the 1777 edition, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, Ind., 1985), 268.
4. Reported in Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (New York, 1994), 184.
5. Evagrius of Pontus (d. c. 400); see Morton Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Lansing, Mich., 1952), 59–60.
6. 1 John 2:16, in *The Holy Bible, King James Version* (Apocrypha included), original electronic version, Oxford Text Archive. All subsequent biblical citations are to this online edition. See Lester K. Little, “Pride Goes before Avarice: Social Change and the Vices in Latin Christendom,” *American Historical Review* 76, no. 1 (1971): 16–49, at 21.
7. Guillaume Perrault’s *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* (thirteenth century) follows the Casianic order beginning with gluttony; see Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, 124.
8. See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York, 1988), 220–22.
9. Geoffrey Chaucer “Pardoner’s Tale” 498–504, in *Canterbury Tales*, in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2d ed. (Boston, 1957). I am committing what I consider a deadly sin in supplying modern spelling, where possible, and on occasion translations for the Middle English forms.
10. Quoted in Aquinas *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae.148.3, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (New York, 1947).
11. “Sermon against Gluttony and Drunkenness,” in *Homilies Appointed to Be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth I, 1547–1571*, ed. Mary Ellen Rickey and Thomas B. Stroup (Gainesville, Fla., 1968), 96.
12. Aquinas *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae.148.3.
13. St. Augustine *Confessions* 10.31, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1961).
14. Aquinas *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae.148.5.
15. Humphrey Sydenham, *Sermons upon solemn occasions* (London, 1637), 106.
16. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.vv. “lickerous” and “lecherous.”
17. See Rom Harré and Robert Finlay-Jones, “Emotion Talk Across Times,” in *The Social Construction of Emotions*, ed. Rom Harré (Oxford, 1986), 220–33.
18. William Langland *Piers the Plowman* 5.360, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (New York, 1978). Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text with the abbreviation *PP* followed by *passus* and line numbers.

19. See *The Book of Vices and Virtues: A Fourteenth-Century English Translation of the Somme le roi of Lorens d'Orleans*, ed. Nelson Francis (London, 1942), 52.
20. Alexander Barclay (1475?–1552), “The Second Eclogue of the Miseries of Courtiers,” lines 821–24, 829–30, in *The Eclogues of Alexander Barclay*, ed. Beatrice White (London, 1928), 51–106. For a powerful example of envy and indignation for the sumptuous fare hypocritical friars claim for themselves as they preach of patient poverty, see *PP*, B 13.25–110.
21. *PP*, B 10.57; the alliteration shows that the initial *g* of gnaw was pronounced (c. 1370). See Chaucer’s “Summoner’s Tale,” in *Canterbury Tales*, for a delightful treatment of an oily friar who discourses on the virtues of the fasting regimen of friars as he sups sumptuously at a townsman’s board.
22. Chaucer “General Prologue” 345, in *Canterbury Tales*.
23. *Jacob’s Well: An English Treatise on the Cleansing of Man’s Conscience*, ed. Arthur Brandeis (London, 1900), 143.
24. Thomas Nashe, *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* (London, 1593), 76v.
25. On this tradition of gluttony, see R. F. Yeager, “Aspects of Gluttony in Chaucer and Gower,” *Studies in Philology* 81, no. 1 (1984): 42–55.
26. See Chaucer “The Pardoner’s Tale” 463–76, in *Canterbury Tales*; see also Barclay, “Second Eclogue,” lines 538–92. *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, 53–55, makes the point that whereas God in Holy Church makes the blind sighted, the halt whole, the insane sane; in the tavern the devil does the opposite.
27. Barclay, “Second Eclogue,” lines 627–28.
28. “Sermon against Gluttony and Drunkenness,” 98.
29. Nashe, *Christs Teares*, 76v.
30. *Book of Vices and Virtues*, 51.
31. Thomas Warton (1688?–1745), “The Glutton,” lines 1–4, in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748; reprint, New York, 1930), 177–79.
32. Robert Burton *The Anatomy of Melancholy* 1.2.2.2, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York, 1938). *Cates*: choice fare, delicacies, dainties.
33. Nashe, *Christs Teares*, 75v.
34. Phil. 3:18–19.
35. I suppose we could imagine a glutton fighting a duel with the cook who ruined his pâté, but he would not be doing so as a glutton if he did.
36. Cited in Caroline Walker Bynum, “Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Fragmentation and Redemption* (New York, 1992), 119.
37. There are some small exceptions, chewing tobacco for instance. There still is ingestion but it is not effected in the gut and not by swallowing. One of the many vulgarities of chaw is the perversity of raising expectoration to a pleasure on a par with swallowing.
38. Hume, “On Refinement in the Arts,” 271–72.
39. See Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners*, vol. 1 of *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1978).
40. See Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System*, trans. Mark Sainsbury (Chicago, 1970), and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London, 1966).
41. Hume, “On Refinement in the Arts,” 279.
42. *Jacob’s Well*, 143.
43. I devote an entire book to the moral and social dimensions of disgust; see William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).