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The educational problems of aesthetic taste

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Die Materialität der Erziehung: Kulturelle und soziale Aspekte pädagogischer Objekte

Herausgegeben von

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BELTZ

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Lynn Fendler

The Educational Problems of Aesthetic Taste¹

Fast alle Menschen mögen Süßes.

Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Umwelt und Gesundheit (n.d.)

It is possible to argue that education has always entailed the cultivation of aesthetic Taste. This essay, however, is about tongue taste and educational curricula. For purposes of disambiguation, I follow Carolyn Korsmeyer's (2005) convention: Capitalized *Taste* refers to a cultural capacity to distinguish beauty; and lower-case *taste* refers to the gustatory (tongue based) sensation. As the term *Geschmacksbildung* connotes, education cultivates a Taste for beauty, a Taste for morality, and a Taste for learning. However, there is no evidence that gustatory taste has ever been included in curricula of modern Western schooling, except in Biology where the sense of taste is explained in terms of tongue physiology. Visual perception and auditory perception have been proper curricular components: observation skills are cultivated for scientific investigations and creative writing; listening skills are developed for music, language acquisition, and communication arts. However, tasting skills are absent.² There are no curricular standards that require students to be able to distinguish between the taste of fresh food and that of stale food; no one has developed educational assessments of flavor literacy. The term *gustaracy*³ does not appear on any website, so in some sense, the concept of tasting skills does not exist in educational discourse. We do not expect students to be able to evaluate levels of sweetness and tartness among apple varieties, detect the presence of monosodium glutamate in soups, or discern levels of fat, sugar, or salt in the foods they eat everyday.

In general, we take it for granted that taste is not a proper school subject. However, the exclusion of taste from ordinary school curricula was not inevitable, and in some respects it is paradoxical. There are some historical factors that make the absence of taste from curricula seem reasonable, but there are other factors that make it appear nonsensical. This essay addresses that puzzle from an aesthetic and historical point of view. I begin by setting up the problem, arguing that from the perspective of curriculum analysis, the absence of taste is surprising; given various purposes of modern schooling, we should have expected to see taste included as part of the curriculum. In the second part of the essay I suggest three historical facets – subjectivity, ocularcentrism, and pleas-

1 The author is grateful to Karin Priem and anonymous reviewers for help in shaping this paper. Thanks also to Stuart Foster for sharing his taste with me in our life.

2 Smell and touch are also absent from Western curricula, but I think those omissions require their own respective historical analyses; for the moment, I am concerned only with gustatory taste.

3 The tasting equivalent of literacy or numeracy.

ure – that help to make sense of this curious absence. In the course of the examination, the problems of aesthetic taste will be shown to have implications for how schooling practices have played a role in constituting fundamental relationships between people and material things.

1. Historical Contexts for the Disappearance of Taste from Schooling

Sensory experience connects people with material things of the world. Throughout Western history, sensory experiences have played a variety of epistemological roles. In some historical circumstances, sensory experience has been highly valued; in other circumstances, it has been degraded. Launched by Descartes' formulation of a mind/body dualism, the most famous of the Enlightenment debates has been that between the rationalists on the one hand – for whom logical mental processes are the source of knowledge – and empiricists on the other hand – for whom sensory experiences are the source of knowledge. Sight and taste both belong to the empirical realm, but those two senses have divergent histories with respect to education. This section discusses the changing role of taste in education, and relates those changes to broader historical contexts.

There was a time in Western history when taste was a core subject for education. Classical Greek *paideia* was focused on the cultivation of self-mastery for purposes of intensifying the beauty and pleasure of life, and taste was a featured element in the efforts to live a proper life. Classical pedagogical texts include detailed instructions about tasting food and drink (see, e.g., Marrou, 1948-1956; Foucault, 1990) as well as instructions on how to choose foods with regard to season, context, occasion, health conditions, taste, and compatibility with other foods. Because the purpose of education was to enhance the quality of life, gustatory skills were a key element in classical Greek education.

According to Sweeney (2007), taste became less important in the context of modernity. Since schools are modern institutions, this historical shift is relevant:

During the nineteenth century, this concept of critical taste metaphorically based on gustatory experience is overthrown, and a new paradigm is introduced. The notion of critical taste is replaced by the *aesthetic*, which is a new category referring to a special attitude toward, or critical experience of, nature and of the arts. With the rise of the aesthetic, gustatory taste loses its status as the major paradigm for critical appreciation. (Sweeney, 2007, p. 120)

Sweeney is of course referring to the shift in intellectual orientation that was formulated in Kant's critiques, most especially in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790/1951). Kant's synthesis of rationalism and empiricism forged a new epistemology of aesthetics, in which knowledge and perception required distance from things. Specifically, the proper way to experience things was mediated through critical rationality, and judged on the basis of abstract principles. Within Kantian aesthetics, immediate experience such as

gustatory taste became devalued in favor of detached and rational aesthetic judgment (see also Dickie, 1996; Korsmeyer, 1999; Stolnitz, 1961).

The first step in untangling the mystery of taste, then, is the realization that since Kant, *taste* and *aesthetics* have been distinguished from one another (see also Ferry, 1993). In modernity, taste was demoted to a bodily reflex, while aesthetics was elevated to intellectual reflection. This hierarchy has sustained the tradition since Plato's famous advice that philosophers not concern themselves with food and drink, but rather devote themselves to loftier intellectual pursuits. The philosophical debasement of taste forms the historical context for understanding some of the educational problems of aesthetic taste. Since the onset of modernity, taste has been pushed so far into the background of culture that modern educationists for the most part have never considered taste to be a possible element of the curriculum, and most people have never even wondered about its absence.

Another related aspect of modernity is the rise of psychology as the ruling discipline for education. Educational historians have shown that schooling has increasingly emphasized cognition. Vision has been the most important sense; only rarely do educationists regard other bodily sensations as valid sources of knowledge. With the development of psychology as a science, people began to think of the mind as being located in the brain and increasingly separable from the rest of the body. With these influences, knowledge for education became constructed primarily as a mental process, not a sensory experience (see, esp., Wozniak, 1992). All bodily sensations, not just taste, with the notable exception of vision, have been a problem for education in modern times.

Taste has not been included in modern curricula, but it is possible to argue that taste *should* have been included, regardless of what we hold to be the proper purposes of education. It is well known that school curricula are never coherent. Rather, curricula are shaped by political negotiations and cultural trends, subject to political whims and entrepreneurial advertisements. In their analyses of curricula, historians have identified a diverse array of assumptions underlying what people have assumed to be the purpose of education (see, e.g., Kliebard, 1986; Labaree, 1997), and some of the competing aims of education that have been identified by curriculum historians are: to cultivate participatory democracy, develop virtuous characters, prepare students to lead productive lives, redress social injustices, sort and stratify the population, promote humanistic values, and/or supply society with a viable workforce.

If we begin with the purposes of education that have been suggested by curriculum historians, and try to understand the absence of taste in relation to those frameworks, we begin to see that the absence of taste is curious indeed. The following section discusses the absence of taste in relation to three of the possible curricular aims – democratic humanism, social efficiency, and competitive advantage. This section concludes that taste would have been an appropriate element to serve any of the three curricular aims, and therefore, from the perspective of curriculum history, the absence of taste is a mystery.

1.1 Democratic humanism⁴

The curricular aim of democratic humanism asserts that both society and the individuals in it would benefit if everyone were educated in basic humanistic values including communication skills (to facilitate participation in a democratic society), critical thinking (to develop capacities for ethical judgments), and art appreciation (to enhance quality of life and cultivate a shared sense of values). Humanistic curricular influences serve the purposes of social cohesion and democracy by educating children from diverse cultures into what is traditionally deemed as the best of what society has to offer. Toward that aim, they have imparted particular political ideologies, a canon of literature, tolerant attitudes toward religious practices, and a sense of artistic merit.

If one of the aims of schooling is to cultivate shared social values, then it would have made sense to include taste as a curricular goal. Food and drink are basic cultural artifacts, and they differ greatly across classes and cultures, but schools have not taught those tastes. Tafoya (2007) calls this the “diplomacy of the dish”. He makes the argument that sharing tastes is an effective mechanism for advancing goals of shared community values. In some schools, there have been efforts to regulate the school cafeteria offerings to make them more healthful. However, education in tasting skills has not accompanied the changes in cafeteria offerings. This approach of providing food without lessons in tasting skills is akin to providing a selection of carefully chosen books in the library without teaching students the literacy skills and cultural sensibilities to read them.

A curriculum of democratic humanism also includes courses focused on art appreciation as a means of imparting to younger generations, across all classes and ethnicities, the cultural values of a society, and to enhance quality of life. Most school curricula contain some attention to the arts (although “the specials”⁵ have been dropped from many schools recently in favor of increased attention paid to literacy and math). Paintings, sculpture, music, literature, and drama are readily classified as art, and have been included in school curricula under the rubric of art appreciation. Such works of art are understood to be aesthetic objects of potentially high cultural value, and therefore worthy of inclusion in the curriculum. However, wine, food, and architecture have been classified as being not art, and therefore of lower value. Smell, taste, and touch are rarely included in art museums; a gourmand is rarely regarded as an artistic connoisseur (although there is ongoing debate about this classification; see Turin, 2006).

4 In the United States, the terms “democratic humanism” or “liberal humanism” refer to a broad comprehensive education including arts, sciences, literature, and critical thinking. Unfortunately, both “liberal” and “humanism” have very different connotations in Europe, so this terminology is somewhat problematic. The approach of “democratic humanism” can perhaps be understood as being related to *Bildung* or formation.

5 In U.S. schools, “the specials” refers to courses outside the core or “regular” curriculum. “Specials” include art, music, physical education, family and consumer science, health, library and technology skills, and sometimes foreign languages.

I understand the broad classifications of art and not-art to be a reflection of whether things are useful or not. In general, there is a cultural sense that art must have intrinsic value (not instrumental value), and useful things lack a kind of purity that seems to be necessary in order for something to be regarded as art. Crafts might be useful, but art must usually be not useful. Most aesthetic theorists prefer to draw clear distinctions between *artistic* elements and *aesthetic* elements of things (see, e.g., Monroe, 2007), and within these understandings, taste might be an aesthetic sensibility, but it is not regarded as an artistic sensibility, so it does not seem to fit into the liberal arts curriculum.

Within the curricular goals of liberal arts, it is possible to understand why taste has been absent from the fine arts curriculum; however, it is not easy to understand why taste has been omitted from the regular curriculum.

1.2 *Social efficiency*

The curricular aim of social efficiency holds that one important purpose of education is to prepare students to live productive lives and fill the positions that are needed in order for society to function. Social-efficiency oriented curricula prepare students to live productive lives, drive cars, recycle materials, avoid drug abuse, exercise regularly, type, dress appropriately, groom themselves, and balance a checkbook; but they do not teach about tasting. Eating and drinking are everyday necessities, and the development of sensory skills in taste is relevant for students in order to provide them with basic skills for making informed choices about food and drink. It is peculiar that schools have never included the development of tasting skills in a social-efficiency curriculum.

School curricula frequently include courses on parenting, cooking, sewing, money management, and health. Schools routinely regulate dress codes, health and grooming standards, and language use. In the United States these “life skills” courses are often mandatory, even for college-bound high school students. Graduation requirements typically include curricula focused on tobacco and drug use, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, physical fitness, and basic dietary recommendations. But they have never included tasting skills, even in the cooking segments of Family Ecology⁶ classes.

Social efficiency also advocates that the purpose of schooling should be to prepare students for gainful employment. In terms of vocational preparation, taste is relevant in home economics and most jobs associated with food industries. The food industry employs “flavorists” who receive training in an apprenticeship approach from a senior flavorist. Some curricular emphases (including communication and technical skills) have been added in response to needs expressed by industries. Food industry analysts bemoan the absence of taste from the curriculum. Lawless (1993), for example, described the state of taste education in food science education as deficient. Lawless’s account of the history of taste education blames the absence of taste education on sexist attitudes that render cooking as lowly women’s work:

6 Formerly Home Economics.

Sensory Evaluation is often taught within a program in food science or within a department of nutrition. In the US these departments often have different historical origins. Since nutrition departments are often administered by divisions of human ecology, they have sometimes have [sic] an origin in what was formerly called home economics. Such programs may have status problems within the eyes of natural science programs and sensory evaluation may share in this unfortunate historical offshoot of misogynous academic sexism. (Lawless, 1993, p. 57)

From a social efficiency point of view we can see that taste would have been useful curricular component for purposes of vocational preparation. The absence of taste from the curriculum in this case is not easy to understand.

1.3 *Competitive Advantage*

Curriculum historians have identified the influences of Social Darwinism in the designs and practices of school curricula. Individual competition and social sorting have played a role in curricular design, and there are people who want schools to provide their children with competitive advantages for purposes of improving their socioeconomic status.⁷

As part of a curriculum of competitive advantage, school curricula have included survival skills. For the most part, social institutions do not rely on warning labels on products as sufficient for teaching people about what is safe and unsafe. Schools teach many basic survival skills including prevention of bodily injury, avoidance of environmental hazards, and emergency responses. Perceptual acuity in taste also aids in survival, but that has not been taught. Taste can help people discriminate between things that are poisonous and those that are benign. Cultivated sensitivities to salt, sugar, and fat serve to help people make healthful eating choices. Chances of survival are improved with the ability to discriminate among harmful and healthful foods. Taste sensitivity to mineral content (like salt, iron, and sulfur) is relevant for making dietary choices and disease prevention (Wynn & Fougère, 2007). From the perspective of maximizing human survival, taste could have been incorporated as an important school skill. These sorts of taste discriminations can be taught, and yet they have been disregarded as educational aims.

The capacity to be eloquent about taste has also been a cultural advantage. From that perspective, taste could have been included in the curriculum as a skill parallel to literacy and numeracy that provide students with competitive advantages in cultural capital and vocational opportunities. Shaffer (2007) argues that culinary experts are not necessarily more skillful tasters, but they are definitely more skillful at using language to describe and interpret taste, “The perhaps surprising conclusion that will be defended here

7 Labaree, 1997, calls this “social mobility”, meaning that schools ought to provide students with the wherewithal to move up in the world.

is that [...] there is very little reason to believe that gastronomic expertise is anything more than an ability to more eloquently describe fundamental taste experiences” (Shaffer, 2007, p. 75). Shaffer’s argument suggests that there is a literacy of taste – a gustaracy, if you will – that provides people with capacities that have high cultural value. From the perspective of gustaracy, we would expect taste to have been included in the curriculum as one of the opportunities for students to raise their cultural capital and social status.

Regardless of what we hold as the ultimate purposes of education, taste should have been included in the curriculum as a contribution to community building, a factor in social survival, and a dimension of the good life. Therefore, the omission of taste from the curriculum cannot be easily understood. The following section tells another side of the story by suggesting three historical components of culture that might help us to make sense of the absence of taste in education.

2. Historical Materiality and the Disappearance of Taste

The previous section showed that from the perspective of curriculum theory, the absence of taste is a mystery. However, there are other historical factors that may be worth considering as we try to understand the disappearance of taste from education. In this section, I suggest three salient factors – subjectivity, ocularcentrism, and pleasure – that may be offered to help us understand the educational problems of taste. These factors situate schooling practices in relationship to broader cultural contexts, in particular the relationship of education to the material stuff of food and drink.

2.1 What’s to Teach? The Problem of Subjectivity

In philosophical discussions, taste has traditionally been regarded as the most subjective of the senses. For most theorists it is usually the case that *De gustibus non est disputandum*, or in Allhoff & Monroe’s (2007) words, “the radical subjectivity of taste” (p. 7). In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant (1790/1951) distinguished taste from aesthetic judgment. He called taste subjective, while asserting that aesthetic judgments of beauty were simultaneously autonomous and universal. The subjectivity of taste makes it a problem for education: What can be taught and what can be learned if all criteria are relative, and various capacities to taste cannot be differentiated by standards of quality?

Subjectivity has been an ongoing debate in aesthetic theory: should we regard beauty – or sweetness – as a property of the material object, or as an experience by the perceiver? As Crane (2003) has written, “wine also provides philosophy with a vivid illustration of one of the most difficult of philosophical problems: the relation between the objective and the subjective” (p. 2). Subjectivity was addressed by Hume (1757) who wrote:

According to the disposition of the organs, the same object may be both sweet and bitter; and the proverb has justly determined it to be fruitless to dispute concerning tastes. It is very natural, and even quite necessary, to extend this axiom to mental, as well as bodily taste. (Hume, 1757, §7)

Kant (1790/1951) famously argued that the judgment of beauty is (i.e., ought to be) transcendent and universal. Taste, however, is particular and individual:

As regards the pleasant, therefore, the fundamental proposition is valid: *everyone has his own taste* (the sense of taste) (§7, p. 47).

And this is the case not only as regards the taste of the tongue, the palate, and the throat, but for whatever is pleasant to anyone's eyes and ears (§7, p. 46).

Even as Kant argued for the universal transcendence of judgments of beauty, he still regarded taste (i.e., the sense of the pleasant) to be individual and subjective.

It is possible, then, to think of the educational absence of taste as being related to the pervasive cultural assumption that taste is purely subjective and there are no standards that can be applied to taste preferences. This assumption appears to hold fast even though popular culture clearly manifests hierarchies of Taste from highbrow to lowbrow. High status restaurants and food shops do not carry the same products as low-status places. There are a plethora of books, magazines, television shows, and cooking schools that are focused on the improvement of food Taste and tasting skills. A sophisticated "wine palate" is generally regarded as a mark of high culture and civilized behavior. The *Geschmacksbildung* strand of curriculum strives to instill highbrow values for literature, music, art, language, and lifestyle.

If we share in the cultural assumption that taste is purely subjective, then it makes sense that taste would be absent from the curriculum. Educationally speaking, tasting is not regarded as a skill that can be improved, and there is nothing productive that can be accomplished with respect to evaluating or educating people's ability to taste. Cultural assumptions about the radical subjectivity of taste may help to explain why taste has been absent from the curriculum.

2.2 Ocularcentrism: Keeping Things at a Distance

Traditionally, sight and hearing have been classified as the "distal" senses, while touch and taste have been known as the "proximal" senses. For proximal senses, the human body makes direct, immediate, physical contact with material stuff; for distal senses, the material things are remote from the human body, and sensations are mediated by photons or air waves that are emitted by objects. The status of smell is under debate; some classify smell as a proximal sense and some classify it as a distal sense, but taste is clearly a proximal sense, and that has been a problem for education.

History provides ample evidence that vision gradually became more important than all other sensory perceptions in modern Western culture. Korsmeyer (1999) calls attention to the “hierarchy of the senses” (p. 11). “Our Sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our Senses” (Addison, 1712). Carspecken (2003) wrote that seeing has been “the paradigm for perception” (p. 986) since the writings of Augustine. Ocularcentrism is universally regarded as a characteristic of modern worldviews: “a core theme of modernity has been the primacy of seeing in notions of certain knowledge” (Carspecken, 2003, p. 982).

Theorists have offered various explanations for why proximal senses were replaced by distal senses in modernity. For the most part, this shift is regarded as a sign of progress and improvement for human society. In some cases, the progress is conceived as being from a more animal state to a more civilized state. For example, Freud’s (1930/1961) account says that sight became more important than smell when we evolved to become upright, bipedal creatures:

This change seems most likely to be connected with the diminution of the olfactory stimuli by means of which the menstrual process produced an effect on the male psyche [...]. The diminution of the olfactory seems itself to be a consequence of man’s raising himself from the ground, of his assumption of an upright gait; this made his genitals, which were previously concealed, visible. (Freud, 1930/1961, chapter IV)

Howes (2003) explains the shift away from proximal senses and toward sight as a consequence of scientific advancement:⁸

Louis Pasteur’s discovery of the germ theory of disease severed the connection between olfaction and infection, and smells lost their life and death significance [...]. As another example, the meaning of the odor of sanctity, which in premodernity was a sign of spiritual grace, was inverted, and came to be interpreted as a sign of mental and physical illness. (Howes, 2003, p. 200)

Regardless of how historians explain the mechanisms of change, the shift from taste to vision is usually portrayed in terms of progress and betterment. Furthermore, the preference for distal senses is concomitant with the modern scientific quest for objectivity. The distal senses have become more valuable than taste and touch because perception is further removed from personal subjective experience. Objectivity implies depersonalization, which is typically accomplished through detachment and mediation. A “personal experience” is not acceptable evidence in a scientific worldview that purports to value objectivity; therefore taste, as a direct proximal sense, has become less valued for education in the historical context of modern science.

⁸ Howes (2005) tends to explain the disappearance of taste as an effect of hyper-capitalism and the growth of consumer culture.

Ocularcentrism, then, as a historical phenomenon is reflected in our cultural preferences for science in education. Sight puts us at a distance from material things and has come to represent a more evolved and intelligent form of experience. Taste puts us in direct contact with things and has come to represent a more primitive form of experience. Ocularcentrism may help us understand the absence of taste from the curriculum: schools, as institutions of modernity and progress, have been more inclined to emphasize the culturally evolved sense of sight than the culturally primitive sense of taste.

2.3 *The Problem of Pleasure: Morally Suspect Things*

Etymologically, the word *taste* itself has value connotations that are not parallel with the words for other senses (sight, hearing, smell, and touch). For example, the Latin root *gustare* means “to taste, to enjoy, to relish”. Taste connotes pleasure in ways other sense words do not: sight (*videre*) and hearing (*audire*) are value-neutral and pertain to their respective sense organs (eye and ear); smell (*olfacere*) and touch (*toccare*) may have a slight tendency to negative valuation, which we can intuit in the forms “smelly” and “touchy.” Antonyms, *disgust* and *untouchable*, have been extended to mean abhorrence of any sort; but *untouched* means clean and pure, while *distaste* means dislike or disapproval. The semiotics of the word *taste* both reflect and inscribe a particular association with pleasure that is unlike other sense words (Korsmeyer, 2007). Finally, unlike other sense words, *taste* is ambiguous because it means both Taste (cultural discernment) and taste (gustatory sensation). Even in its etymology, taste more than any other sense is associated with pleasure.

As we have seen, the absence of taste from the curriculum goes together with the epistemological dominance of rationality over sensuality and the predominance of vision as the source of knowledge in modernity. At the same time, however, there is a religious dimension to the history of curriculum. Protestant Puritanism in particular has influenced the general Western cultural perception that proximal senses must be suspected for their associations with sin. Descartes’ argument separating mind from body included the moral judgment that minds are associated with God and the spirit, while bodies are the source of evil and sin. But from even more ancient times, the proximal senses have been suspected of being more prone to falsehood than the distal senses: the closer to the body, the farther away from God. Consider, for example, that there is no visual or auditory equivalent of the sins of gluttony or lust. It is not gluttony to enjoy a rich chocolate dessert; gluttony is *excessive* eating or drinking. However, it is not classified as sinful to gaze at an excessive number of paintings, or listen to music for an excessive amount of time. A visual analogy for the sin of gluttony would go like this: There would be no moral strictures against pornography, but there would be moral strictures against looking at too many paintings or gazing at sunsets to excess. Sight and taste are not parallel in terms of their respective moral influences in Western cultures. Even in secular and non-Protestant societies, the cultural legacy derived from Descartes’ sinful bodies predominates cultural sensibilities and is reflected in social domains including education.

Schools have traditionally promoted moralism in curricula. Educators have justified the selection and inclusion of literature in the curriculum based on the assumption that particular kinds of books can help to raise people's moral sensibilities above the appetites of the flesh and toward more spiritual asceticism (see, e.g., Brass, 2011). However, the foundational assumption of Puritan morality, which denigrates and even abhors the experiences of the flesh, rarely arises explicitly in curricular debates. Rather, the suspicion of the flesh operates tacitly. It is almost as if mention of taste is avoided as if a discussion about taste might be obscene. Is taste a dirty word? Taste lurks in the null curriculum,⁹ and the education of the "whole person" is evidently supposed to refer to every body part except the tongue and genitals.

I would like to suggest that the link between bodies and sin must also be considered as a possible factor in the exclusion of taste from the school curriculum. I suspect this exclusion is tacitly justified based on syllogistic reasoning that goes something like this:

- Taste is associated with the body and pleasure.
- Bodily pleasure must be suspected as being immoral.
- Schools should not teach immoral things.
- Therefore schools should not teach taste.

Another factor that suggests the influence of religious Puritanism in the curriculum is that when taste is presented in textbooks, it is reduced to anatomical descriptions, namely the physiology of the tongue. This pattern is similar to sex education in most U.S. schools. Discussions of feelings, pleasure and emotion are censored from the curriculum while sex education takes the form of an anatomy lesson. As Probyn (1999) has written, "Examining several food sites, and following Foucault's suggestive remarks about the Greek dietetic regimen, I argue that food can be seen as a line that intersects with sexuality" (p. 215).

Culturally speaking, there is a nagging sense of prurience in any eagerness for taste experiences, or in taking too much enjoyment from tasting. In contrast, there is no corresponding prurience associated with a viewer who swoons over a Monet painting or cries with emotion at the climax of a Beethoven piano trio. Bodily pleasure has been a problem for education (see, e.g., Donzelot, 1991; Foucault, 1990; McWilliam, 1999). Under the influence of religious Puritanism, pleasure has been constructed as an experience that should be mediated through aesthetic judgment. For proper education, we must keep material things of the world at a critical distance from people's bodies.

9 Curriculum theorists typically identify a variety of curriculum modalities including the official or explicit curriculum (what is written), the enacted curriculum (what is practiced in the classroom), the hidden curriculum (what is taught by implicit example), and the null curriculum (what is absent).

3. The Future of Taste in Education: A Postmodern Revival?

Schooling institutions are notorious for being slow to change. Even as most other cultural sectors have drifted away from modern tendencies toward coherent objectivity and towards postmodern eclecticism, schooling practices have generally remained stuck in modernistic worldviews. This final section, however, offers some evidence that things are changing. With a shift to postmodern sensibilities, combined with new strands of research prompted by the rise of cultural interest in food, taste may soon enjoy a comeback in educational settings.

First, there is robust scientific research upon which a taste-based curriculum could be based. Food industries have recently been conducting scientific research that acknowledges expertise in sensory tasting, and this body of research could readily provide a scientific basis for the inclusion of taste in school curricula (see, e.g., Bartoshuk, 1993). This empirical research is accompanied by fully elaborated theories. Food-science disciplines have developed instruments and methodologies for measuring taste perceptions. For example, the field of food science has resolved the subjective/objective question in a pragmatic way:

Sensory analysis can mainly be broken down into three sub-sections:

- Effective testing (dealing with objective facts about products)
 - Affective testing (dealing with subjective facts such as preferences)
 - Perception (the biochemical and psychological aspects of sensation)
- (<http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Sensory+analysis> [12.01.2012])

By conceiving of taste in these three domains, food sciences have developed a theoretical framework for supporting research protocols that describe, measure, and analyze taste in both objective and subjective dimensions. There is now an elaborated research base on which curricula could be designed at various educational levels.

Second, in addition to the scientific research base, fields of nutrition and food sciences have also developed teaching methods and lesson plans for the development of gustatory skills (Jacob, 2008; Jellinek, 1985; Stone & Sidel, 2004). In another recent curriculum reform, research has been funded to add tasting skills to a high school Chemistry curriculum called “A Taste of Chemistry”:

The Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation (New York) has awarded a grant to the Monell Center (Philadelphia) and the Springside School (Chestnut Hill, PA) to train high school teachers in taste science and chemistry. A Taste of Chemistry will develop a combined chemistry and biology curriculum that focuses on the human tongue as a sophisticated chemical sensor. [...] Monell research scientist Danielle Reed said, ‘One of the most sensitive chemical detectors is readily available to students, free of charge: the human tongue.’ (Monell Center, 2010)

The Career Technical Education program (California Department of Education) now offers a course called “Developments in Taste Perception”¹⁰ that includes (among other things) cultural taste-test mapping: “the students will locate where each food item came from and write that on their individual World Maps”. Taste is now included in the undergraduate curriculum of at least one Ivy League institution. A course in the education of taste has been offered at Yale with taste researcher Linda Bartoshuk and master chef Jacques Pépin as co-instructors (Bartoshuk & Pépin, 1999).

Finally, there are new directions of research that incorporate taste to a greater degree, including synesthesia and the relationship of taste to other sensory experiences (Crisinel & Spence, 2010; Woods et al., 2011). For example, recent research suggests that there is a relationship between the proximal sense of taste and the distal sense of hearing:

We investigated whether there are interactions between auditory stimuli and basic tastes [...]. Participants took part in a version of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) in order to measure the strength of the association between high-pitched sounds and (the names of) foodstuffs having a sour taste, and between low-pitched sounds and (the names of) foodstuffs having a bitter taste [...]. This result suggests the need for research into the influence of auditory stimuli on food evaluation [...]. (Crisinel & Spence, 2009, abstract)

Even if taste does make a comeback in educational settings, I suspect that it will be framed in the context of food sales and marketing, and not in the context of enjoyment or quality of life. In so far as taste discrimination contributes to the growth of food industries, tasting skills may re-enter school curricula. Of the three obstacles to the inclusion of taste, the problem of subjectivity is the most readily resolved. The cultural attitudes toward ocularcentrism and pleasure, however, seem to be well entrenched. Present circumstances suggest that taste is unlikely to become a prized educational value anytime soon.

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