The Applied Ethicist and the Practice Lens:
On Moral Guidance in Food Practices

Abstract:

In this thesis, I take readers on an ethical journey through the grocery store. Along the way, I argue that *ethicists should complement their use of ethical theories with a practice lens in food practices*. First, it will be argued that the minimal requirement for meaningful ethical work in practices requires coherence with the lived experience argument; stating that moral reflection, in practice, must always depart from within particular moral frameworks encountered. Second, grocery shoppers are characterized as moral agents, with different priorities and life-projects, therefore requiring flexibility in engaging their particular outlooks. Then, practice theories and 'a practice lens' are discussed, to examine how they reveal the workings and elements of human practices, and how they provide a better view of the interconnected practices that make up social, and moral, life. Third, moral guidance from mainstream ethics and practice-based approaches is discussed with regards to grocery shopping experience. This will reveal some of the difficulties for mainstream approaches to 'speak to' shoppers deliberations in practice. The complementary use of practice-based approaches and a practice lens will then be argued to provide connective tissue, or a conduit, between ethical theorizing and the lived experience of agents.

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Introduction:

> There are two principal ways in which reflective human beings try, by placing their lives in a larger context, to give sense to those lives. The first is by telling the story of their contribution to a community … The second way is to describe themselves as standing in immediate relation to a nonhuman reality … I shall say that stories of the former kind exemplify the desire for solidarity, and that stories of the latter kind exemplify the desire for objectivity.[1]

In the pragmatist spirit of the distinction drawn above, between stories about solidarity or objectivity, the following thesis will mainly be a story about solidarity[2]. A modest story really. One that quite likely involves many, if not all of us. Not just as reflective human beings, but as co-practitioners in one of the most mundane and recognizable food practices humankind has ever conceived; grocery shopping.

The mundane and everyday nature of grocery shopping may suggest that grocery shopping is a dull affair. But this ubiquitous and straightforward practice, often unreflective and taken-for-granted, belies a deep connection to the debate on transitioning to sustainable food practices. In the words of Spaargaren et al., it represents 'the nexus of food practices' where dynamic interaction between participants in food practices is most salient.[3] This makes the grocery store one of the most urgent settings for facilitating transitions to sustainable practices. Not just because nearly all of us participate, but because our unreflective way of doing so somewhat hides the moral dimensions of our everyday food choices. This signals the need for moral guidance on how to understand these dimensions, and how to better deliberate on food choices.

Social practices, as objects of inquiry, have an interesting history that in many ways resembles the choice between solidarity or objectivity. One might even be so bold to propose that the story of ethics and ethical inquiry itself resembles this choice in substantive ways. Personally, I consider applied ethics the quest for solidarity through adjudicating moral interests and deliberation, somehow furthering human progress and development. Applied ethics is, in many ways, legitimized through approaches that cohere with this *praxis* (life world) and the practices it sustains, or at least offer a good understanding of practice to facilitate moral deliberation.

The purpose of this thesis is to suggest that moral guidance for grocery shoppers should involve a certain perspective on, or sensibility to, practices. It will be argued that traditional ethical theories do

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[1] Rorty, R., "Solidarity or Objectivity", from *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, Ed. Michael Krausz, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989, 167.

[2] I use this term to reflect the concept of solidarity as a 'union … arising from common responsibilities and interests, as between members of a group or between classes, peoples' (dictionary.com), more than the actual account of Rorty that describes the choice between pragmatism and objectivism/realism/foundationalism in ethics as the choice between grounding objectivity in solidarity (pragmatism) or solidarity in objectivity (objectivism/realism/foundationalism). See Rorty, R., "Solidarity or Objectivity", 167-170.

[3] Spaargaren, G., Oosterveer, P., & Loeber, A. (Eds.), *Food practices in transition: changing food consumption, retail and production in the age of reflexive modernity*, Routledge: 2013, 16.

not adequately ‘speak to’, or concur with, the lived experience of everyday grocery shopping. To that end,

In this thesis, I will argue that applied ethicists should complement their use of ethical theories with a practice lens in the area of food practices.

In the following, I will take the reader on an ethical journey through the grocery store. My argumentation will be modest, leaning on the priority of lived experience argument; which urges practical ethics to cohere meaningfully with the lived experience of agents. Along the way, I will argue that mainstream ethical approaches do not adequately ‘speak to’ the experiences of shoppers. I will further argue that employing a ‘practice lens’ has distinct advantages in applied ethics. Staying close to the grocery shopping metaphor, there will be several distinct stops throughout this journey.

The first stop is *‘the entrance’*. Here, the anti-theory debate, in particular the priority of lived experience argument, will be discussed. Several pragmatist notions related to this argument will also be discussed, which, taken together, describe a certain ethical disposition when engaging agents in practice. This will, quite literally, serve as our entrance, because it presupposes that coherence with the lived experience of shoppers is the minimal requirement for conducting meaningful ethical work.

The second stop is *‘the shopping basket’*. Here, differences between shoppers (moral agents) and the contents of their baskets are discussed. The focus here is on the variety of moral priorities and circumstances of shoppers when entering the store. Furthermore, practice theories and the practice lens are discussed, to reflect on their possible function in applied ethics.

The third stop is *‘food choices and deliberations’*. Here, moral guidance on food choices and deliberations of shoppers is discussed. Contrasting, and comparing, the way mainstream ethical approaches (such as consequentialism) ‘speak to’ shoppers, and the way practice-based approaches (such as virtue-oriented and narrative ethics), combined with a practice lens, might help to connect mainstream theorizing to the lived experience of shoppers.

The fourth, and last, stop is *‘checkout’.* Here, we quite literally check out of the grocery store; to cash out the results of this ethical journey (or line of inquiry). This chapter focuses on the conclusions drawn, and discusses several implications, limitations and objections to this line of inquiry, which will help determine the contribution of this discussion to the larger field of applied ethics.

Chapter 1: '*The Entrance*'

The Anti-Theory Debate and the Priority of Lived Experience

This inquiry presupposes that applied ethics must, at the very least, meaningfully cohere with the lived experience of moral agents. What this entails will be specified in this first chapter of our journey through the grocery store; *the entrance*. First, some considerations on the choice between solidarity or objectivity, as a ground for, or cornerstone of, moral practice, will be discussed. Then, the anti-theory debate, as presented by Dwight Furrow, is elaborated, focusing on ethical theories' inability to explain moral life. This debate introduces the priority of lived experience argument, which will serve as this inquiry's main argument, supplemented by several considerations from Aristotle and the pragmatist tradition. Together, these considerations articulate the requirement of cohering with the lived experience of agents when providing moral guidance; in terms of general concreteness, feasibility and persuasiveness for the deliberations of shoppers.

1.1 The Anti-Theory Debate

In his article, "Solidarity or Objectivity", Rorty poses a deceptively simple choice between pragmatism and realism as ethical pursuits: Does one reduce solidarity to objectivity (realism)? Or does one reduce objectivity to solidarity (pragmatism)? For Rorty, the former option represents the story of oneself "as standing in immediate relation to a nonhuman reality", a desire to relate one's life to a notion of objectivity.[4] This is the objectivist legacy of philosophical traditions running "from the Greek philosophers to the Enlightenment."[5] With it, we inherited the assumption that in order to understand the purpose of man, we must deduce it from nature itself, in some objective sense.[6] The other direction, reducing objectivity to solidarity, is telling a story of one's community. This can consist in the socio-historical circumstances one lives in, or the cultural and ideological structures one is embedded in. It expresses a desire to explain one's life in terms of solidarity, or living with others.[7]

For Rorty, the pragmatist choice for solidarity means that, while one holds objectivity to be unattainable, we can refine and improve our best conceptions what we consider to be good, while waiting for a possibly "better idea."[8] Telling the story of human beings as historically developing and refining their best ideas of morality, a just society, and the ways we ought to live. This leaves ample room to contribute to moral development in practice, while putting aside the need to approximate a measure of objectivity (external to human reality). While Rorty would rather do away entirely with theorizing, or retain it only as a form of 'self-creation',[9] I merely wish to follow this pragmatist notion that applied ethics, at least in principle, should aspire to a notion of solidarity; as a "union … arising from common responsibilities and interests, as between members of a group or between classes, peoples"[10] That is, to legitimize applied ethics, it must at least cohere with the experiences and responsibilities of agents in practice.

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[4] Rorty, 167.
[5] *Ibid*, 167.
[6] *Ibid*, 168.
[7] *Ibid*, 168.
[8] *Ibid*, 169.
[9] Furrow, D., *Against Theory: Continental and Analytic Challenges in Moral Philosophy*, New York: Routledge, 1995, XV.
[10] See Dictionary.com; 'common but …

This notion ties into the anti-theory debate, as sketched by Dwight Furrow. In his book, *Against Theory*, he traces different strands in the anti-theory debate by discussing skeptical concerns about theories' ability to meaningfully explain moral life. The success of scientific theories in explaining natural phenomena over the years has inspired an optimism "to mimic this success by employing formal methods in philosophy, history, the literary arts, and the social sciences."[11] Bernard Williams, however, questions whether ethics can strive for this form of objectivity. As he explains, science measures objectivity by determining how proper perceptual mechanisms (e.g. senses, instruments, processes) yield certain perceptions in certain cases, leading to a 'scientific standard'. Perceptions that do not accord with the mechanism can be identified as faulty.[12] This standard does not hold in ethics, for it requires a standard (or account) of moral belief acquisition (what are they, how do we acquire them?) that explains deviations as errors in moral judgment. This is why "the conditions that establish objectivity in science are simply not present in the moral case."[13] Furrow stresses that a coherent anti-theory position is hard to find, because there are many degrees of anti-theoretical positions.[14] Nevertheless, he draws important parallels between different positions, explaining general anti-theoretical (anti-objectivist) views of the role of theory in moral reflection. Specifically, he explains:

> The anti-theory position is one motivated by the perception that when moral agents think about moral questions, they do so not in terms of abstract principles with an aim to systematize some large chunks of moral experience, but in terms of concrete relationships with other people within the context of their understanding of those relationships, histories, and the institutions in which they are embedded.[15]

For human beings, engaged in different activities and relationships, moral judgments are considerably guided by everyday life. Routines, habits and ingrained behaviors often proceed unreflected or unarticulated. Systematicity of moral life (e.g. in principles) can therefore be seen as an *emergent* feature of everyday practice. Moreover, anti-theorists are concerned that propositions of 'objective' points of view distort the contingent nature of the contexts of these judgments, and how they inform daily moral reflection. Opponents of this view stress a need for justification and legitimization of our judgments according to objective ethical standards. Concerned more with how judgments originate and inform our moral life, or how moral theorizing can be imposed on people, and at what cost. The ability of consistent and intelligent theories to argue for either sides of a case without result, however, as for example in the abortion debate, fuels concerns that moral judgments cannot be decided if prescriptions must always conform to theories.[16] Putting theorists and anti-theorists on two ends of a seemingly incommensurable spectrum of conceptions regarding moral reflection.

Furthermore, injustices perpetuated in the name of proposed moral goods (e.g. crusades, slavery, nazi ideology) question whether we simply cannot live up to moral ideals, or whether we cannot overcome this case of tragic moral blindness. Therefore, Furrow urges that "critical skepticism towards one's own

[11] Furrow, XI.
[12] *Ibid*, 4.
[13] *Ibid*, 4-5.
[14] *Ibid*, XII.
[15] *Ibid*, XIII.
[16] *Ibid*, XIII.

ideals is an essential part of a moral point of view", especially for accounts of morality that wish to cohere with lived experience.[17] Another reason for skepticism towards moral frameworks is the tension between theoretical pursuits of objective morality, and the practical reality of moral life. Moral judgments have meaning "in virtue of [us] having internalized the norms of a particular community."[18]. Are agents aware of norms? What hold do they have and do they incur obligations? On the other hand, moral reflection is a confrontation with 'otherness'; being faced with beliefs, norms and histories that deviate from our own. In these cases, moral reflection occurs outside the context giving meaning to those norms. Pulling moral reflection in opposing directions: It aspires to express and sustain "local mores and practices that give moral life its content", while on the other hand seeking a "point of view representing all moral agents.[19]

This is why Furrow distinguishes searching for universal moral agency (desires for objectivity) from what he calls 'concrete ethics', seeing the distinction between theory and anti-theory as a continuum. Different positions on this continuum show different degrees of incommensurability between theory and practice. Efforts to successfully overcome the distance between theory and practice lend plausibility to a notion of universal moral agency; if conflicting points of view can be brought together, it shows that different conceptions of morality converge in meaningful ways, leading to refinement of what could be called universal moral agency.[20] Plausible conceptions of universal moral agency can therefore only be those that transcend the limitations of given moral frameworks.[21]

1.2 The Priority of Lived Experience

Rorty dismisses the quest for objectivity as an unworthy pursuit to turn away from what is truly at stake in moral life.[22] I prefer to remain agnostic on whether objectivity is attainable. I concur with pragmatist notions that objective 'truth' in practice *is* a 'refinement of our best accounts', and that there could be 'something better'[23]. But I cannot follow Rorty's idea that *desiring* objectivity, or objectification, is an unworthy pursuit. Objectifications of categories, structures and unifying patterns (in science, political and social theorizing, etc.) have led to remarkable developments, furthering society. Furthermore, when pragmatists insist that 'a story of progress' is our best 'approximation of the truth' and that "there is always room for improved belief", they may be asked to provide a criterion for assessing this improvement or progress.[24] At which point objectification, involved in finding 'objectively better' accounts of morality, becomes a necessary option.

Whether one believes anti-objectivism or not, Rorty emphasizes that epistemological and meta-philosophical questions are not what is truly at stake here. Instead, it is the moral question of how our society should want to be, and what we can do to improve it.[25] The anti-objectivist standpoint thereby dismisses external points of view, from which to judge moral beliefs as being 'correct'. As Furrow points out, "there is no non-circular defense, no ultimate, argumentative recourse to justifying one's moral

[17] *Ibid*, XV.
[18] *Ibid*, XVI.
[19] *Ibid*, XVII.
[20] *Ibid*, XVIII.
[21] *Ibid*, XIX.
[22] Rorty, 169-170.
[23] *Ibid*, 169-170.
[24] *Ibid*, 174.
[25] *Ibid*, 175.

beliefs."[26] Which introduces the priority of lived experience argument. Williams rejects the scientific standard of objectivity as a meaningful pursuit for ethics, and is therefore committed to the idea that

> Moral reflection must begin from inside some particular moral point of view – from within the norms, values, and ideals each agent has acquired from living in a certain culture or tradition … Moral reflection begins with a commitment to a particular set of values, norms and ideals on which the process of evaluation and assessment must rest.[27]

Privileging particular perspectives before engaging with moral reflection creates the circularity and tension between theoretical pursuits and 'concrete ethics' mentioned earlier. This leads into the idea of 'inevitable mild ethnocentrism'. As Rorty states, "[e]ither we attach a special privilege to our own community, or we pretend an impossible tolerance for every other group."[28] It is important to distinguish this ethnocentrism from forms of relativism that consider each moral framework equally valid. What Rorty has in mind is our inevitable ethnocentric view when we engage in any form of debate. People justifying their beliefs do so to their community (their *ethnos*); the context sustaining shared beliefs for fruitful conversation.[29] In denying genuinely objective points of view, the anti-objectivism argument leads to the priority of lived experience and its necessary 'mild ethnocentrism' when engaging in deliberation.[30] Moral reflection, in life, always departs from within one's moral framework. The lived experience and moral content of a given community is what ethicists face in practice. The realist, who refines theories to accord with objective truth, and the pragmatist, denying its possibility, are both at the mercy of 'mild ethnocentrism'. For the realist, hope remains that he knows something about what objectivity might resemble in practice. The pragmatist merely asserts that searching for it is a process of refining our 'best approximation' of what it might entail, even if it remains elusive.[31]

Accepting the priority of lived experience is a necessary commitment in the field of applied ethics, by virtue of diverging moral beliefs in practice. Initial privileging of some moral beliefs, and 'inevitable mild ethnocentrism' of moral reflection, are all but unavoidable. This does not, however, preclude the use of non-foundational approaches, departing from within moral frameworks, "working outward to explore common ground with other perspectives". Enabling ethicists to codify conceptions of moral goods, personhood, motivation and other considerations, demonstrating logical connections and concurrence with available normative theories and alternative frameworks.[32] For example, in methods such as wide reflective equilibrium.[33] The only constraint is that at least some of the moral beliefs in question must be initially credible. Moral anchors for reflection if you will. Justifying theories in practice therefore hinges on degrees to which principles and prescriptions cohere with the experiences of agents.[34]

This search for common ground between competing moral perspectives resembles the interdisciplinary paradigm of sustainability and food practices, which average grocery shopper are faced with every day. Embedded in pluralistic societies, with competing conceptions of morality, the good, and

[26] Furrow, 7.
[27] *Ibid*, 6.
[28] Rorty, 176.
[29] Rorty, 177.
[30] Furrow, 7.
[31] Rorty, 178.
[32] Furrow, 8.
[33] *Ibid*, 8.
[34] *Ibid*, 8.

interests and life-projects, pursued by different people. This embedded nature of practical ethics reflects a separation of philosophical (ethical) pursuits, as once initiated by Aristotle. The Platonic tradition before him looked for certainty in human affairs; eliminating contingency in life and conceiving of action as "application of general, calculable, precise, and truthful principles", which "would make it always possible to choose the best course of action."[35] Instead, Aristotle postulated three incommensurable forms of knowledge; *episteme, phronesis and techne*. *Episteme* is concerned with apprehending universal principles, and understanding the essence of reality analytically. "The aim of *phronesis* is to produce *praxis* or action informed by knowledgeable value-driven deliberations". While *techne* is the instrumental rationality needed to create and use material artefacts.[36]

Although Aristotle established a partial incommensurability between practice and theory, it did grant *praxis* "the status of an independent, legitimate, and worthy form of knowledge", because it cannot, in principle, be captured in a system of universal rules (the subject of *episteme*). Practice is characterized by change, mutability and contingency. This dynamic nature of life means that engagement with agents should occur within their *praxis*, or lived experience, as produced by deliberative action.[37] Following London's reading of Aristotle, this means ethicists ought to facilitate cooperation and deliberation between "free and equal persons" in the *praxis*.[38] It amounts to dealing with normative issues of ordinary people, in everyday deliberations between alternative courses of action. Because we are personally involved with these normative issues, responsibility for settling them cannot just be passed off to experts. The best we can do is appeal to reasons and motivations accessible and justifiable to other persons.[39]

1.3 Engaging Agents as 'Persons Free and Equal'

Focusing on common interests, as the union of moral agents in the *praxis,* represents a choice for solidarity. Hesitancy to apply ethical theories in practice was a matter of fairness and transparency for Aristotle. He believed those lacking the time and effort, needed to fully understand ethical theories, would not have the same access to their 'truth' in practice. They would not be treated as 'free and equal', lacking information and experience to deliberate on something they do not (yet) understand.[40] Applied ethics thereby becomes a matter of settling moral disputes between people on account of reasons they can understand and apply themselves. Withholding theoretical insights in practice out of fear of complexity is unwarranted, however. If ethicists cannot explain the significance of insights to deliberations at hand, they may simply need to try other tools at their disposal. If a natural scientist conducts experiments, he does not forego using Einstein's *theory of general relativity* because the empirical world does not precisely fit its calculations. He knows this theory describes the laws of physics well enough to make accurate predictions. Whether a 'moral issue at hand' can be systematically elaborated, using theories, therefore depend on theories' responsiveness and adequacy in settling ethical matters. The takeaway is that we must understand and reflect critically on theoretical insights, if they are to shape or influence our lives.

[35] Nicolini, D., *Practice theory, work, and organization: An introduction*, Oxford university press, 2012, 24.
[36] *Ibid*, 25-26.
[37] *Ibid*, 27.
[38] London, A., "The Independence of Practical Ethics", *Theoretical Medicine* 22 (2001), 88.
[39] London, 95-96.
[40] *Ibid*, 97.

Nevertheless, the role and nature of ethical theories that Aristotle postulated still concurs with the priority of lived experience. As London points out, ethical theories are ongoing projects, defining and refining moral perceptions, values and priorities into coherent structures.[41] The goal of practical ethics is to engage similarities in thought, reasoning and emotion between 'persons free and equal'. Making it highly likely that there will be convergence among theories, as long as their construction departs from shared horizons between agents.[42] When done correctly, this makes a significant difference to facilitating moral life. The main difference between theoretical and practical aims within ethics is their "attempt to facilitate moral understanding within the constraints of very different circumstances."[43] This division of labor is as understandable as distinctions between different areas of science (examining different phenomena, levels of abstraction, or employing different concepts and methods). In the words of Rorty, it can be considered a choice between a desire for objectivity, or a desire for solidarity. Even if one is unsure whether objectivity must be reduced to solidarity, or the other way around, these two purposes or objectives of ethical reflection can, and necessarily must, be able to exist side by side.

For average shoppers, concerns about which ethical theories best characterize their moral experience are often far removed from daily deliberations. Chances are, many ethical theories offer valuable insights regarding their shopping experience. The diversity of shoppers ranges from wealthy to poor, old to young, from different cultures and walks of life; coming together in a shared moral domain. Encountering this diversity in moral outlooks need not be a problem for ethicists arming themselves with a wide range of theories and methods. In fact, as Darwall et al. point out, there is considerable convergence and overlap between theories when engaging in practice.

For one, anti-realists (who do not believe in independent realms of moral truth) look for concepts like 'good' as evaluative criteria used by agents in their moral vocabulary. While realists (who postulate moral 'truth') look for real 'good-making-features' that the concept 'good' expresses. The function of the 'good' explored is similar (expression of what agents consider to be good or worthwhile), even if it is merely contingent for anti-realists, and hard fact in the eyes of realists.[44] These approaches both ground practical ethics in actual persons and their actions, rather than a "domain of moral facts", independent of human thought.[45] Even if realists are concerned with finding objectivity, and anti-realists with the question of 'why be moral?', this question is often still asked under idealized conditions. Reasons why agents are better off acting according to moral demands in specific cases must still be reflected on, and justified. Regardless of where moral demands, obligations, features, or facts originate[46].

Secondly, Darwall et al. are right to ask what "the best philosophical clarification of the nature of morality" would even lead to. Would it makes us reject *that* conception of morality and proceed with moral practice on a different account?[47] Or would coherence with the lived experience of moral agents remain equally important? It is doubtful that 'correct' theories (most accurate conceptions of morality) will be undone by 'incorrect' practice. Critics of ethical theories usually do not suggest that *less* theory would improve ethics, but suggest how theories can be improved, refined and supplemented with variables and

[41] *Ibid*, 102.
[42] *Ibid*, 100.
[43] *Ibid*, 103.
[44] Darwall, S., Gibbard, A., and Railton, P., "Towards Fin de Siecle Ethics: Some Trends", from *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 33.
[45] *Ibid*, 34.
[46] *Ibid*, 34.
[47] *Ibid*, 33.

complexities, to better fit our lived experience as agents.[48] This shows that problems associated with adopting opposing theories do not always persist in moral practice. It signifies their shared "desire to understand morality, its preconditions, and its prospects".[49]

For Darwall et al., the conclusion is that "more careful and empirically informed work on the nature or history or function of morality is needed."[50], especially if moral practice is to meaningfully cohere with experience of everyday pursuits. Another useful point, in this regard, is Rouse's criticism of posing a "special domain of rules, norms, values, transcendental conditions, natural law, or any other grounds to which philosophers or anyone else has distinctive access."[51] To this, he responds that critical reflection on the meaning of life and moral interactions must arise from within shared circumstances. Especially if moral deliberation is to have authority or force over the way we conduct ourselves.[52]

1.4 From a 'Context of Justification' to a 'Context of Discovery'

The priority of lived experience argument, with its related inevitable 'mild ethnocentrism', is strongly related to Aristotle's notion of engaging agents as they stand; shared participants in moral practice. These considerations also reflect the broad pragmatic approach to philosophy that Keulartz and Schermer suggest is crucial to applied ethics. Moving away from the counterproductive tendency of foundationalist approaches to find abstract truths irrelevant to, or incompatible with, concrete moral problems as found in real world circumstances. Problems are "tied to particular times and places", requiring "tact, flexibility and context sensitivity."[53] We are constantly confronted by changing ways of life, emergence of new norms and values, and moral issues that these changes bring into view.[54] This proposes a need for a "creative capacity for the innovation of vocabularies which provide new meanings and open new perspectives."[55] On this account, the anchor of moral practice becomes, in the spirit of Aristotle; "[p]eaceful cohabitation and fruitful cooperation."[56] Although this pragmatist focus does not imply a departure from current ethical practice, it does require several shifts in emphasis.

For one, it requires a change in focus from epistemological questions to methodological ones, or a change from 'products' of ethics (theories, presuppositions, arguments) to 'processes' in ethics (public deliberation, elaboration of moral dimensions). Pragmatic flexibility means choosing methods effective to the "moral problem at hand, the setting in which the problem occurs, the context in which an intervention is required and so on".[57] Secondly, it requires attention to the changing character of moral life. As stated before, changing societies experience new, emerging moral problems. Approaches that do not concur with the lived experience of agents, in their settings, are unlikely to aid in their deliberations. From this

[48] In this regard, it seems that especially theories of a generalizing kind, such as consequentialism and deontology, are unfit for this purpose. They cast agents into universalized moral perspectives or standpoints, detached from their circumstances and priorities. In terms of refinement and improvement, these theories are usually resistant to changing substantively, often opting to merely provide practical heuristics for application of principles in practice, rather than accept different conceptions of goods, personhood and ultimate goals that may be suitable to practice at hand.
[49] Darwall et al., 32.
[50] *Ibid*, 34.
[51] Rouse, J., "Social practices and normativity", *Philosophy of the social sciences* 37.1 (2007), 55.
[52] Ibid, 55.
[53] Keulartz, J., and Schermer, M., "Pragmatism as a research program–A reply to Arras", *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 24 (2003), 25.
[54] Keulartz, J., Schermer, M., Korthals, M., and Swierstra, T., "Ethics in technological culture: a programmatic proposal for a pragmatist approach", *Science, technology & human values*, 29 (2004), 4.
[55] Keulartz & Schermer, 26.
[56] *Ibid*, 25.
[57] *Ibid*, 27.

follows the third, and most important, shift in emphasis; from a 'context of justification' to a 'context of discovery'. The current context of justification implies ethics is concerned mostly with providing justifications for moral judgments. These often occur under idealized circumstances, that do not fit lived experience, meaning little attention is paid to discovering new ways to deal with emerging moral problems in their context. This new 'context of discovery'[58] involves inventing heuristics and vocabularies to better facilitate deliberation between conflicting interests and dispositions, focusing on the process of deliberations, rather than its enduring results in theoretical forms.[59]

Before we enter the grocery store, and embark on a journey through the deliberations of everyday shoppers, the necessary requirements for entry, discussed in this chapter, need to be summarized. The diffuse nature of shoppers, in terms of socio-economic circumstances, degrees of knowledge and different moral priorities, warrants approaches that cohere meaningfully with their lived experience. This means moral reflection inevitably departs from within groups of moral agents. It also means that resources, for facilitating deliberation, need to weigh on the types of deliberations relevant to those agents. Engaging persons as they stand, in an Aristotelian sense, involves exchanging reasons and justifications in ways that are mutually understood. As several pragmatist considerations in this chapter have shown, applied ethics needs to be responsive to the changing nature of moral life, discovering new heuristics and vocabularies that facilitate deliberation on emerging moral issues. One of these issues is sustainable consumption, strongly tied to daily food practices.

In the next chapter, approaches that can complement ethical theorizing, for better concurrence with lived experience of shoppers, are discussed; in the form of practice theories, or a practice lens. After that, we embark on our ethical journey through food choices and deliberations, using mainstream and practice-based approaches.

[58] For the purpose of this inquiry, I will not argue for a complete shift from contexts of justification to contexts of discovery. In fact, I believe the practice lens can contribute to connecting these different contexts of ethical work, with their own aims and purposes in understanding and facilitating moral life.
[59] *Ibid*, 25-27.

Chapter 2: *'Shopping Basket'*

Shoppers as Agents and the Practice Lens

Entering the grocery store with our lived experience as a moral anchor, what are the conditions and circumstances of our shopping? Which sorts of agents engage in this practice? And how might a practice lens analyze or understand grocery shopping? In this chapter, I first reflect on 'the grocery store' as an object of inquiry, discussing interesting social and moral dimensions of this activity. Its connection to food practices, and sustainability, will reveal some important ethical considerations. Secondly, discussion of the diverse group of shoppers will serve to elaborate their 'baggage'; in terms of moral priorities, beliefs and commitments they hold when entering the grocery store. Revealing some interests and motivations shoppers may have when 'doing groceries'. Lastly, I discuss practice-based theories and approaches, to examine their distinct perspective on human activity, and understand their relevance for thoroughly explaining human affairs. Following Shove et al.'s model of three necessary elements of practices, I will propose how a practice lens explicates the elements of living practices, and is crucial for understanding the moral opportunities practices provide for agents. A practice lens will be shown to afford richer, thicker descriptions of moral life; by grasping the lived experience of everyday grocery shoppers better, and being more tailored to shoppers' moral constitution than abstract theorizing.

2.1 The Grocery Store as a Site of Moral Reflection

Before proceeding with our journey, some preliminary remarks on the grocery store (as a site of moral reflection) are in order. Several interesting characteristics of grocery shopping make it highly relevant for ethical inquiry and deliberation.

Firstly, grocery shopping is interesting because of its iterative or successive character. Each performance of shopping follows another, building repertoires of shopping competence in terms of acquired routines, preferences and tactics. This strongly determines how everyday shopping is practised by a range of shoppers. Furthermore, interactions between shoppers, and the ways mid-level actors (e.g. store management) might facilitate them, could signal other interesting dynamics that determine the shopping experience.

Secondly, the scope of grocery shopping signals the tension between local action and global consequences. As with many types of consumption practices (e.g. food, electronics, entertainment), local consumption (e.g. the family dinner table, one's local community), in individual purchases, affect large networks of food producers, retailers and consumers. Local choices affect the supply chains, markets and market-actors (producers, consumers, regulatory institutions) that come together in food provision. Following Spaargaren et al.'s distinction of three food practice categories, grocery shopping is situated in the category of food distribution and retail, between food production and processing at the beginning of the chain, and food consumption at its end.[60] Thus, the influences of shopping practices extend further than their localized settings suggest.

Thirdly, food choices show interesting tensions between freedom (autonomy) and constraint of choice. Grocery stores provide wide ranges of different products, from many corners and cultures around the world; suggesting that freedom of choice is virtually unlimited. Most people, however, purchase their food in a local store (often the same one), meaning choices are restricted to what that

[60] Spaargaren et al., 16.

store offers.[61] They may not have the types of food one desires, or the types of products that, for example, contribute to more sustainable consumption (e.g. organic and sustainable foods).[62]

Fourthly, the evolution of social and moral dimensions of grocery shopping shows an interesting trend. Technological innovation, globalization and mass production have reduced some of its 'social' dimensions. We rarely buy products from local, specialized shops (e.g. butchers, bakeries, delicacy shops) anymore. Where direct interaction with the people that 'make' or provide our food is possible. The advent of grocery stores has supplanted this 'social' interaction, with long rows of neatly ordered products from a wide range of providers, mass produced and shipped around the world. We hardly interact with others when buying food in the store. Adding to that, automated checkouts and fast-paced cashiers have replaced much of casual (social) interaction on our way out of the store, which is more suitable when visiting small, specialized stores. Meanwhile, the 'moral' dimensions of grocery shopping are becoming ever more pressing. Climate change and sustainability discourse has made people more conscious of the fact that their choices have wide-ranging implications for global food distribution and the environment. Moral issues surrounding animal welfare (in meat production), and social inequality (fair trading, livable wages for farmers), have never been so directly implicated in everyday food decisions.[63] The 'moral' dimensions of grocery shopping are becoming more salient and visible, while its 'social' dimensions (interaction and conversation) are somewhat on the decline.[64]

Lastly and most importantly, the grocery store can be seen as the 'nexus of food practices', where dynamic interaction between 'upstream' producers of food and 'downstream' consumers of food is strongest.[65] The grocery store embodies the retail and distribution of food, sitting at the cross-roads of the global foodscape. 'Upstream' producers tend to be concerned with 'system rationalities', i.e. systems of mass-production and regulatory requirements and constraints. While 'downstream' consumers "are predominantly led by 'life-world rationalities' and logics", governed by everyday experience of buying, preparing and serving food.[66] At this nexus of food practices, effects from upstream and downstream sources interact dynamically. Making the grocery store the center of our collective food practices, and a highly relevant avenue for ethical inquiry, moral guidance and policy interventions regarding sustainable lifestyles.

2.2 Grocery shoppers as moral agents

[61] Because local choices cumulatively affect which products are supplied (through market mechanisms), this choice will in some ways be determined by individual preferences and routines, but the influence of a single shopper is rather negligible, and preferences and routines are strongly shaped by one's preferred store. This questions whether one ever had any choice at all in terms of preferences and acquired tastes, being unfamiliar with vastly different offerings of food elsewhere.

[62] Spaargaren et al., 9-10.

[63] The discourse on climate change and sustainability nowadays moralizes consumption in a way that addresses global responsibilities more than local ones. Choices of consumption do not simply affect one's own health, or the livelihood of local commerce, anymore. Food choices are now implicated as bearing on a global climate, the change of which will negatively affect everyone.

[64] To this I would like to add a caveat. While social dimensions of grocery shopping are somewhat on the decline, the awareness of moral issues implicated in food practices has led to a groundswell of movements aiming to re-introduce us to food traditions and the story behind them. Think, for example, of the re-emergence of artisan bakeries and butchers, or local organic and sustainable food initiatives. These examples can be seen as attempts to bring back the social dimensions of food practices; in terms of interaction with producers, awareness of processing and distribution, and reflection on the implications of our choices for others, both locally and globally.

[65] *Ibid*, 16.

[66] *Ibid*, 17.

As grocery shoppers, we carry moral priorities, values, beliefs and commitments. This is, if you will, our 'baggage'; the empirical collection of interests and motivations we hold while shopping. This baggage defines our lived experience, as our moral beliefs shape our views of right and wrong regarding fundamental issues. As Timmons points out, practices permitted in some cultures may be condemned in others. Within cultures, individuals may further have very different moral codes, accepting certain norms or reasons for action and rejecting others.[67] In practice, this confronts the ethicist with a plurality of moral beliefs and priorities. Adjudicating conflicts in these settings requires flexibility and adaptation, to cohere with shoppers' possibilities for moral action in terms of shopping.

The community of grocery shoppers in practice is varied in socio-economic circumstances. For many, if not most, grocery shopping signifies everyday prudential needs to sustain oneself and one's family, exploring avenues for affordable, healthy and enjoyable cooking and eating practices. Opinions on nutrition and taste vary greatly between shoppers, leading to wide variety in purchases. But there are more principled reasons for purchasing food. While some are concerned with sustenance, and some with enjoyable cooking practices, others may wish to express moral concern for fair production and distribution of food (e.g. by choosing 'fairtrade' products), or show substantive commitments to certain causes (e.g. vegan diets, organic products, brands supporting charity or fighting inequality). Still, grocery shopping is often short-term decision-making; the here and now determines if people have the means and motivations to engage in principled shopping behavior. The problem with such principled motivations is that the consequences of our food choices, and whom they affect most strongly, are highly uncertain.[68]

The tapestry of grocery shoppers is often literally multicolored, but different interests may align substantially through a shared practice. The requirement to concur with the experience of shoppers is therefore paramount. This implies adopting 'mild ethnocentrism' towards a particular group of shoppers, and their moral concerns, in practice.[69] From there, as Furrow emphasizes, ethicists can codify existing moral beliefs in a community, and adjudicate conflicting moral interests that emerge.[70] As Darwall et al. point out, however, this may require going *against* particular moral conceptions, as much of historical moral progress has shown (e.g. emancipation of slaves and women, establishing international law and human rights). In these cases, abstraction from particular moral frameworks has been necessary to achieve such progress.

Furthermore, consensus based on shared practices may be difficult without "reaching for a high level of abstraction or generality, a level that seems at times unrelated to the conditions and motivations characteristic of actual lives and their particular sources of interest."[71] Suggesting it may be difficult to provide moral guidance in practices that lack consensus on moral beliefs. Therefore, "a better reconciliation of universalizing ethics and the particularity of individual lives and communities" will likely

[67] Timmons, M., *Moral Theory: An Introduction,* 2nd Edition, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013, 41.

[68] Goodwin, R., "The sustainability ethic: political, not just moral", *Journal of applied philosophy* 16.3 (1999), 249.

[69] Mainstream ethical theories, especially of a Kantian deontological or Peter Singer's consequentialist kind, often exclude considerations of broadened moral interest (e.g. care for the family, concern for traditions and culture) as truly morally relevant. This narrow view of appropriate moral concern is somewhat blind to the wide-ranging varieties of moral priorities as found in agents in practice, engaged in many social practices with different degrees of moral relevance for their overall experience.

[70] Furrow, 8.

[71] Darwall et al., 30.

look less like a theory (such as deontological or consequentialist theories), and be more responsive to the pluralistic, dynamic character of moral life.[72]

Grocery shopping *does* provide a meaningful consensus in terms of solidarity between shoppers. We all do groceries, albeit in different ways. Just as solidarity can be conceived as 'a unity of common but different interests'[73], our common but differentiated interests in shopping may provide meaningful consensus on moral beliefs, enabling ethicists to guide shoppers through changing, dynamic moral landscapes. Adhering to the practice at hand, grounded in this notion of solidarity, requires a perspective or approach that is sensitive to mutability, and the dynamic character of moral life. One group of theories enabling this view, of interconnected forms of human activity, are practice theories, or practice-based approaches, to which we now turn.

2.3 Practice Theories and the Practice Lens

Next to the empirical collection of moral priorities, interests and motivations of shoppers, the second, perhaps most important, item in our basket is the practice lens. What is the nature and role of practice theories and approaches in ethics? Here, the model of three necessary elements of practices (as proposed by Shove et al.) will serve as the template for a practice lens to analyze human affairs. But first, we explore the nature and purpose of practice theories.

One way of characterizing practice theories is by their different understanding of (human) social order, as compared to traditional social and cultural theories. As Reckwitz distinguishes, understanding social order on the idealized model of *homo economicus* suggests that we have individual purposes, and that social order comes about through the combination of those interests. Meanwhile, the idealized model of *homo sociologicus* suggests that human beings have collective norms and values, and conceives of social order as the normative consensus that emerges from these collective interests.[74] These conceptions, as opposing ends of a spectrum, either view agents as rational, individual decision-makers, or as part of a collective that presupposes a significant consensus on norms, values and interests. Thereby sharing the same blind spot; dismissing or ignoring the shared collective structures of underlying knowledge, symbolic interactions and material organization, which define social order as being constantly produced and reproduced through human performance.

Moreover, as the dynamic nature of moral life suggests, these "cognitive-symbolic structures … reproduce a social order even in cases in which a normative consensus does not exist."[75] As already mentioned, it may be difficult to find meaningful consensus without overly abstracting from lived experience (of particular agents). But as reality indicates, social order is constantly produced and reproduced in practice. Understanding how these practices work, and how performances of individuals within them constitute social order, is one of the advantages of employing practice theories. In terms of emerging moral issues, as society and technology progress and change the moral landscape, a practice-based view may be all but indispensable. As Shove et al. emphasize, a practice view reveals "how practices change and stay the same", which is invaluable for adequately responding to complex challenges such as climate change and sustainability. Especially since "the reproduction and

[72] *Ibid*, 31.
[73] "solidarity", *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, Random House, Inc. 22 Jun. 2016, <Dictionary.com http://www.dictionary.com/browse/solidarity>.
[74] Reckwitz, A., "Toward a theory of social practices a development in culturalist theorizing", *European journal of social theory* 5.2 (2002), 245.
[75] *Ibid*, 246.

transformation of social practices has implications for patterns of consumption and for institutions and infrastructures associated with them."[76]

This echoes several reasons why practice theories (or practice perspectives) have become more popular in understanding complex and interconnected activities that make up our lives. It builds on the intuition that human activity, and the knowledge, meaning and language that sustains it, "is routinely made and re-made in practice, using tools, discourse, and our bodies." Describing our world as the culmination of successive performances. Offering a more performative perspective on human activity and social order.[77] This new perspective resonates better with an interconnected world in flux, where ingrained and organized practices (such as superstores, hospitals, offices) are both the site, and the result, of performances.[78] But there are more fundamental possibilities for understanding human activity that a practice lens offers. It solves many of the irreducible dualisms that other theoretical traditions struggle with. For example, the dualisms of actor and system, social and material, or theory and action.[79] The capacity to dissolve these tensions stems from several shifts in understanding that a practice perspective offers.

Firstly, practice theories are fundamentally processual, stressing the importance of activity, performance, work, and other recurring processes that create and sustain social life. This view of the world does not, however, make everything fluid or relative. Injustices and inequalities are very real, often deeply embedded in how practices are organized. A practice lens contributes to solving these issues, by uncovering problematic features, or elements of practices, that sustain such inequalities.[80] It changes the basic unit of analysis to activities and practices. Instead of practitioners as rational, individual decision-makers.[81]

Secondly, they foreground the role of the human body, and material objects and instruments (tools, buildings, etc.), that come together to produce human activity. These material dimensions are critical to both the accomplishment of an individual performance (as part of a practice), as well as the endurance of practices over time (subsequent performances with the same characteristics). It conceives of social phenomena as situated occurrences, positioned in a specific historical and cultural setting.[82] It also emphasizes that the meaning and significance, of activity and action, is primarily located in the material conditions of a practice, which are essential to its successful performance. The importance of the necessary objects and material conditions of a practice further suggests that we need to understand how they relate to individuals and the performances they carry out.[83] Understanding the dynamic interplay of materials, competences, and meanings of practices is essential to understanding the reasons for engaging in practices, and the significance and value of practices for agents.

This feeds into its third shift in understanding. Practice theories create a specific space for human agency. Following up on Reckwitz' distinctions (between *homo economicus* and *homo sociologicus*), a practice lens conceives of human beings as *homo practicus*, carriers of practice who carry out practices. Performances in practice require initiative, creativity, and adapting to changing

[76] Shove, E., Pantzar, M., and Watson, M., *The dynamics of social practice: everyday life and how it changes,* Sage Publications, 2012, 1-2.
[77] Nicolini, 2.
[78] *Ibid*, 2.
[79] *Ibid*, 2.
[80] *Ibid*, 3.
[81] *Ibid*, 7.
[82] *Ibid*, 4.
[83] *Ibid*, 7.

circumstances, making actions "neither mindless repetition nor complete invention". As such, performances occur only as part of ongoing practices (as a stable background), or within "the horizon of intelligible action it makes available to agents."[84] The space for agency, or the landscape of opportunity for action, created by practices, powerfully constrains and limits the types of actions available to people. By considering practices objects of inquiry, one realizes that "there is nowhere to go outside the world of practice", and "human agency is loosely but unavoidably contained with a universe of possibilities defined by historically specific complexes of practice."[85]

The fourth shift prompts an embedded understanding of knowledge and discourse. Knowledge is no longer conceived as an external (eternally valid) source of input for rational deliberation and discourse. Rather, it becomes a form of mastery, a "way of knowing shared with others", the ability to carry out activities and perform intelligible actions.[86] Practices presuppose a certain way of understanding oneself and the actions undertaken in the course of practising. Without this sense-making, action, and the knowledge (and discourse) underlying it, has no meaning. No background setting against which actions make sense (such as a practice). It also emphasizes how a practice lens views the world in relational terms. The networks and connections of practices we engage in compose our social reality. Practice theories ask why this reality results from the practices it contains, and how it could be different. This helps understand the features of our world (social practices and their connections) that produce social reality, and its meaning to everyday agents.[87]

Lastly, but perhaps most important to our present inquiry, a practice lens reveals the centrality of interest and power in all our activities and affairs, providing a closer link with politics and social arrangements than ethical theories' singular lenses, on all of reality, offer. "[T]he importance of power, conflict, and politics as constitutive elements of social reality" is foregrounded, with practices necessarily serving certain interests over others. Because practices, as temporal and spatial ordering of activity and performance, allow certain actions and prohibit others, they "put people and things in place", creating and sustaining the differences and inequalities embedded in practices. Their historical and situated character presents a distinct moral dimension and further suggests that, "in principle, given different practices, the world could be different."[88]

To conclude, the practice lens requires a shift in perspective that reveals how material conditions, meaning and significance, and the historical and social situatedness of human activity, come together to produce social reality and the fabric of life. It also reveals the powerful enabling and constraining forces that determine the landscape of possible actions we can meaningfully undertake in a highly complex and interconnected world. Practice theories are therefore more than just descriptive tools. In fact, they reject the idea that "by simply observing the activities of the world in more detail, one gets closer to 'reality'".[89] Instead, they reveal the performative dimensions of our activities. In terms of the meaning of our actions, our identities as practitioners, and the social order these practices produce and sustain in life.

[84] *Ibid*, 4-5.
[85] Shove et al., 126.
[86] Nicolini, 5.
[87] *Ibid*, 8.
[88] *Ibid*, 6.
[89] *Ibid*, 7.

Practice theories come in many forms, and as Nicolini and Reckwitz emphasize, there is no unified 'grand theory' of practices.[90] Instead, the broad family of practice-based approaches is connected through historical and conceptual similarities. They can only be described as a plurality of theories and approaches, that share certain features and elements. This means that much is to be gained by making similar features and aspects of practice-based approaches work in our favor when applying such a perspective to a practice at hand.[91] Or, as Reckwitz suggests, practice theories offer a way of analyzing social phenomena, in the form of heuristic tools and frameworks for research, that reveal the political and ethical dimensions of our being in the world.[92] Practices, as objects of inquiry, can be considered 'molar units' of analysis, as distinct spheres of activity. Examples of practices that have been analyzed range from very mundane activities (sitting at tables, making phone calls), to more comprehensive, durable, and organized activities. Such as sports, food diets, education, scientific inquiry, even ethics itself.[93]

This flexibility in levels of abstraction adds to the usefulness of practice theories and approaches in tackling diverse issues in society. Considered in this light, the specific terminology of elements (e.g. ''objects', 'artefacts', 'know-how') and concepts, across different theories and approaches, becomes less important than considering how they are used. What matters is that one employs a coherent heuristic, tool, or framework, revealing how different elements are effectively configured into living practices. This flexibility of practice-based approaches, or the practice lens, completes two important tasks for our present inquiry. It stays close to the lived experience of practices, practitioners and the meaning and significance of performances, as well as ensure a flexibility to approach different sorts of practices, with very different types of elements and meaning, in different configurations. To that end, the practice lens I intend to use in this thesis is modelled on Shove et al.'s eloquent simplification of three necessary elements of practices; materials, competences, and meaning.

Materials include objects, buildings, technologies, infrastructures, and other physical aspects of practices, which are integral to the adequate performance of practices. Think for example of how 'a grocery store', as a physical object, is indispensable to 'doing groceries in a grocery store'. More than a mere matter of conceptual necessity, these materials often include objects that practitioners use in order to achieve a successful performance (one hardly does groceries without shopping baskets, shopping bags, or money). Even the human body is a form of material in practice, as certain bodily motions and activities are appropriate to certain practices and not to others (think for example of how sports prescribe certain motions of certain body parts, or how 'breathing' figures into the practice of yoga, etc.).[94]

Competences include necessary knowledge, skills, or techniques that are used in practices.[95] Performances in practices can only be successful if one is aware of how to execute them. Think for example of how grocery shopping involves knowledge about composing shopping lists, technique or skill in terms of picking products and proceeding to checkout, and awareness of how to use money to pay for them. Competences can include background knowledge, know-how, and practical consciousness, both to understand performances in a practice (to evaluate them), as well as to perform them effectively.[96]

[90] Nicolini, 9; Reckwitz, 257.
[91] Nicolini, 9.
[92] Reckwitz, 257.
[93] Nicolini, 10.
[94] Shove et al., 14, 23.
[95] *Ibid*, 14.
[96] *Ibid*, 23.

The last element of practices is meaning, perhaps the most significant element for ethical analysis. Meaning encompasses mental activities and emotions involved in carrying out performances, as well as their symbolic significance, ideas, and aspirations in the form of motivations and beliefs. These are all involved in motivating performances and giving meaning to those performances (and the practice itself).[97] Some practice theories consider meanings external elements of motivation and intention, explaining why we engage in practices. But I am with Shove et al. in considering meaning an integral part of practices themselves.[98] Consider the meaning of grocery shopping. Outside the context of a grocery store, it is doubtful that engaging in 'grocery shopping' would carry any meaning. The motivations, ideas and intentions that make people engage in the practice need not be exclusive or internal to that practice (e.g. treating loved ones to a meal, sustaining one's body, cleaning oneself or one's home). But to engage in 'grocery shopping' on account of those intentions requires an actual 'grocery store' (materials), and the act of 'doing groceries' (competence), for any meaningful performance to occur.[99]

It is important to realize that materials, competences and meanings, as elements of practice, have no 'independent' life outside of living practices. While elements may travel between and across practices (the same materials used in several practices, the same motivations to engage in different practices), it is not until they co-exist that we can say practices extend or endure.[100] This does not mean that elements have no significance in isolation whatsoever, but rather that their role in a practice is only appreciated fully when considered in integration with other elements making up a practice. This is why Shove et al. urge us to consider living practices "effective configurations" of elements.[101] For these configurations to work and be effective, "practices are provisionally stabilized when constitutive elements are consistently and persistently integrated through repeatedly similar performances."[102]

A further consideration of is needed to understand the connective tissue between practices; the networks of activity that make connections between practices persist and sustain one another in the form of bundles and complexes of practices. As Shove et al. explain,

> Just as elements link together to form practices, so do practices link to one another to form bundles and complexes. Bundles are loose-knit patterns based on the co-existence and co-location of practices. Complexes represent stickier and more integrated combinations, some so dense that they constitute new entities in their own right. Inter-practice relations of these and other kinds have emergent, cumulative and often irreversible effects for individual practices, for the elements of which they are composed, and for the spatial and temporal texture of daily life.[103]

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[97] *Ibid*, 14, 23.
[98] *Ibid*, 24.
[99] Exceptions to this may involve 'doing groceries' in a different setting than a grocery store, or even doing 'imaginary' grocery shopping in a meadow or grass field (perhaps out of fun, perhaps due to mental inacuity). However, in this case the act of buying food products arguably cannot be called 'doing groceries' in the situated sense of buying food in a grocery store. Which is how I define the practice of grocery shopping in this present inquiry.
[100] *Ibid*, 5.
[101] *Ibid*, 11.
[102] *Ibid*, 13.
[103] *Ibid*, 81.

This means the influence of connected practices often extends beyond their own boundaries. In the case of bundles, offices may be the location for both administrative practices and work, as well as janitorial cleaning efforts. Complexes of practices, meanwhile, imply a more connected and interdependent relationship between practices. Think for example, of how the practice of farming may become irrelevant without distribution and retail practices for products and resources. And conversely, how distributing, advertising and retail enforces certain kinds of farming, often driven by price-driven mechanisms of marketplace competition. Or how scientific inquiry is connected to practices that implement knowledge gained (medical science for practising medicine, psychological science for therapy, or combinations of medical and psychological science for devising policies on health issues).

Furthermore, as Shove et al. emphasize, it makes no sense to separate performances of practices we engage in "from the institutional and infrastructural systems in which they are embedded/of which they are constituted." Relationships of temporal sequence (one performance follows another) and synchronization (one performance depends on another, or happens simultaneously) are often vital to connected practices.[104] The rich, interconnected nature of social life, and the practices it is made up of, may be so dependent on one another "in terms of sequence, synchronization, proximity or necessary co-existence", that its emerging tapestry cannot be reduced to any one individual practice.[105] This thick richness of moral life emerges through the dynamic rhythm of all our social practices, and the different institutions, cultures and socio-technical regimes that interact in complex ways, and enable and constrain action and activity for moral agents in the real world.

2.4 The Practice Lens: Toward Thicker Descriptions of Moral Life

These characterizations of a practice lens offer some insight into its potential use for ethics and moral deliberation in practice. While practice theories are also forms of theory, they have a substantially different goal, structure and commitment in terms of understanding social, and moral, affairs. They emphasize the processual and relational way our dynamic social life is structured, "without losing touch with the mundane nature of everyday life and the concrete and material nature of the activities with which we are involved."[106] This makes practice theories highly compatible with mainstream approaches across many scientific disciplines, because they do not presuppose alternative epistemological and metaphysical conceptions, or radically different understandings of how moral life is structured. If anything, they present a highly flexible lens or perspective that reveals tacit, unreflected background conditions, that enable and constrain our activities and endeavors. This is why authors such as Nicolini and Reckwitz urge against attempts to synthesize or reduce practice theories to a unified and coherent theory. As Nicolini points out, this "would run against the spirit of most practice approaches which strive to provide a thicker, not thinner, description of everyday life."[107] The reductionist urge to find a definitive practice theory or approach would reduce the rich character of complex interconnections, and networks of activity, that make up our world. Furthermore, by embracing "the 'grand lake' of practice-based approaches", and allowing multiple levels of abstraction in defining practices, one can exploit their similarities and differences to better understand our activities.[108] It is a matter of appreciating difference,

[104] *Ibid*, 86.
[105] *Ibid*, 87.
[106] Nicolini, 8-9.
[107] *Ibid*, 9.
[108] *Ibid*, 10.

to understand the history, traditions, and social and material circumstances that enable the emergence of specific bundles and complexes of practices.

To summarize, there are several distinct advantages to practice-based approaches in terms of understanding our lived experience.[109] Its focus on the performative nature of social life emphasizes how social order is constantly made and re-made through practices, instead of conceiving of actions in practice as a form of unreflective or mindless repetition. It provides understanding of constitutive elements of, and connections between, practices (and distinct performances within them). This, in turn, defines our landscape of opportunities for moral agency, and strongly influences the way injustices, inequalities and constraints become ingrained in practices. This makes practice theories especially suitable for designing and implementing policy interventions, because they allow us to find problematic elements, bundles or complexes of practices that ought to be reconfigured to tackle injustices, inequalities and other complex moral issues.[110] Lastly, the scope and flexibility of abstraction, that a practice lens offers, is virtually limitless, meaning that any form of organized activity or action (comprehensive or mundane) can be analyzed and understood using a practice perspective, offering an indispensable tool for understanding the rich tapestry of our lived experience.[111]

In this chapter, grocery shoppers have been examined in terms of agency, moral priorities and beliefs. Having discussed practice theories, and the advantage of a practice lens, we now embark on the nitty gritty of this ethical journey through the grocery store; food choices and deliberations. Here, mainstream approaches will be contrasted with practice-based approaches and complementary use of a practice lens, to see whether ethical theorizing can better cohere with lived experience of grocery shoppers through a practice sensitivity.

[109] Lived experience as the totality of social (and moral) life, through our individual and collective engagements in practices and shared activities.
[110] Shove et al., 137.
[111] Nicolini, 10-11.

Chapter 3: *'Food Choices and Deliberations'*
Moral guidance from Mainstream and Practice-based Approaches

Having filled our metaphorical basket in the previous chapter with grocery shoppers' lived experience and the practice lens, the purpose of this chapter is to proceed with the business of ethical guidance through food choices and deliberations in the grocery store. First, grocery shopping will be analyzed through a practice lens. Revealing some necessary materials, competences and meanings of grocery shopping, as well as provide insight into their living integration. Secondly, moral dimensions of this practice will be discussed, by more closely examining its meaning. This will shed some light on its inherent normativity for shoppers. It further addresses the moral question of how we *should* buy, and the practical question of how we *can* buy; two determinants of food choices and deliberations. Thirdly, mainstream approaches to ethics will be discussed, in terms of how they speak to shoppers. To this end, Peter Singer's brand of Utilitarianism (consequentialism) will be considered. Here, some discord between the singularly principled nature of mainstream theories, and lived experience of shoppers, will be elaborated on. Lastly, practice-based approaches to shopping will be discussed. Including appeals to virtues and narrative ethics. This will foreground the importance of individual possibilities for action, and stories and narratives, to understand experiences of shoppers; answering the question of how we actually *do* buy. Moreover, complementary use of mainstream approaches and the practice lens will be argued for, to examine its possibilities for connecting abstract ethical theorizing to the lived experience of shoppers.

3.1 Grocery Shopping through a Practice Lens

What are some of the relevant materials and competences of grocery shopping? How do they integrate with its meaning for everyday shoppers? And what is the moral relevance of these distinct elements to shopping experiences?

Material elements of grocery shopping are abundant. Grocery stores are large spaces, populated by aisles, filled with different types of products, neatly ordered and categorized for shoppers to find what they need. At exits, rows of cash registers allow quick check-outs, so as to efficiently move shoppers through the store. This "arrangement of entrances, exits, and aisles … is physically and psychologically welcoming", ensuring shoppers can find products, and check for freshness and price.[112] It contains sections for different types of products, and 'store magnets' are often placed in strategic positions to influence "the flow of customers". Placing of these 'magnets' of interest allows shoppers to come across all the different sections and be exposed to the variety of products available.[113]

Shoppers often bring requisite materials for shopping. Including grocery lists detailing products they need, shopping bags to transport groceries, money to pay for them, and transportation to get to the store and back. Although use of specific types of shopping bags (e.g. paper, plastic, fabric), shopping lists (e.g. digital, paper, memorized) and transportation (e.g. bicycle, car, public transportation) vary, they all represent more or less indispensable materials for grocery shopping. Without a shopping list, the trip may become long and tedious, having to decide what to buy in the store among fast-paced shoppers

[112] Ohta, M, and Higuchi, Y., "Study on the Design of Supermarket Store Layouts: The Principle of" Sales Magnet", *Proceedings of World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology*. No. 73, World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET), 2013, 209.
[113] Ohta & Higuchi, 209.

purposefully moving through the aisles.[114] Without money, one cannot pay for groceries. Without a shopping bag, and form of transportation, it is doubtful one gets the groceries home at all. The nature of materials (size, material) here is less important than how they facilitate shopping. Materials are "the only elements that literally move in the sense of being physically transported", their use in practice depending on the presence of appropriate infrastructure and transportation. As such, circulation of materials may modify the competences required to use them, and the meaning of their use in different contexts.[115]

Enduring structural features make the successive performances of shopping easier, because one builds a routine, a familiarity with a favorite store or layout style. It signals several competences required for grocery shopping. There is know-how and skill involved in composing shopping lists, choosing a certain bag, operating certain modes of transportation, moving through the store while knowing where to look for certain products). Knowing which ingredients are needed to cook food at home requires competence as well.

Competences are often cognitive processes, skills, or forms of practical knowledge that "travel in ways that materials do not".[116] Materials are often tailored to fit specific uses in practice, while competences can be modified and adapted to be used in different practices. Composing a shopping list, for example, requires memorizing and differentiation (of concepts, or products), as well as ordering and systematization for effective use. Such competences are generic, playing a role in nearly every type of 'list-making activity'. Furthermore, acquiring a competence often takes time, which is why competences often "accumulate and build during someone's life", developing necessary skills and knowledge to engage in many different practices.[117] Structural features of shopping experiences have a normative significance. Proper use of materials and requisite competences signify 'good shoppers', effectively and competently doing groceries. But structural features also constrain possible actions, often designed to significantly influence shopping routines. Their moral significance is their enabling, and constraining, of possible shopping experiences.

The meaning of grocery shopping is its most interesting element. Its most delicate element, in which "associations can be made, broken and appropriated very quickly."[118] As Harbers, Mol and Stollmeyer articulate, "[f]ood is loaded with meaning, is grown and cooked by some people for others, who eat it jointly or alone, with all the social specificities this entails – while it is also physical. Living bodies die if they go without it."[119] Shopping may be done for prudential reasons like sustaining one's body, or value-driven reasons such as caring for one's family and expressing moral concerns. Other values of significance in grocery shopping are convenience, ease and accessibility. The most important values found in empirical studies of grocery shopping are so-called 'self-direction' values. Shoppers value freedom of choice, autonomy and independence while shopping.[120] Implying that shoppers value the

[114] There are of course those who forego using shopping lists because they prefer to choose as they go, or have a routine memorized for certain essentials. The point of indispensable materials for one's own shopping routine is to discipline or routinize one's shopping. Building up this experience makes successive or iterative performances in practice easier.
[115] Shove et al., 56.
[116] *Ibid*, 52.
[117] *Ibid*, 57.
[118] *Ibid*, 61.
[119] Harbers, H, Mol, A., and Stollmeyer, A., "Food Matters Arguments for an Ethnography of Daily Care", *Theory, Culture & Society* 19.5-6 (2002), 207.
[120] Shaw, D, et al., "An exploration of values in ethical consumer decision making", *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 4.3 (2005), 188-190.

abundance of choice and freedom of association that come with such a wide variety of products. As such, grocery shopping is viewed as an important avenue of self-expression, both in terms of preferences for consumption and expressing moral concerns through food choices.

Consideration of materials, competences and meaning of grocery shopping calls for deliberation on two related questions within this practice. The practical question: how *can* we buy? And the moral question: how *should* we buy? The practical question of how we *can* buy is strongly related to available materials and competences in a practice. Without other materials, one cannot buy differently. And it may be futile to learn competences other than those tailored to materials present in a practice.[121] The moral question of how we should buy, however, is strongly tied to meaning. It asks whether materials and competences in a practice allow certain buying behavior, as well as which materials and competences would be required to be able to buy differently (e.g. more sustainably or responsibly).

These questions can also be seen as comparisons between desirability and feasibility of particular types of shopping. Echoing insights from construal level theory, desirability pertains to primary aspects of available options, in terms of values or goals (is it sustainable or responsible?). Whereas feasibility pertains to secondary and subordinate features of actions, such as prudential considerations of available time and means. Desirability is a long-term consideration of our ideal selves, expressing our moral concerns (the goals we pursue, the values and beliefs we hold). Feasibility is a short-term consideration of our pragmatic selves, expressing instrumental and practical concerns (time, money, resources).[122] These questions conceptualize, if you will, the moral and practical range of average shoppers' experiences.

3.2 From Meaning to Normativity of Lived Experience

Because materials and competences needed for grocery shopping are relatively stable, enduring, and similar for different shoppers, the meaning of shopping is more interesting for ethical analysis on food deliberation.[123]

As Borgmann points out, before the advent of modern grocery shopping, "consumption rarely took place at a great distance from production." We depended on local production and provision, of food and water, to be able to produce a meal for the family. With the introduction of modern shopping practices through technological innovation, consumption increasingly became a form of disburdenment; the instant, "limitless availability of consumer goods."[124] This form of 'paradigmatic consumption' leads to a form of detachment and disengagement with the actual efforts and activities involved in putting a meal on the table, such as "the marvels of industrial agriculture, food production, refrigeration, and microwave

[121] While materials may be the only element that moves physically between practices, competences acquired in some practices can be, or become, useful in others as well. As competences are often general cognitive skills suitable to wider ranges of activity. The futility of learning new competences *within* a practice consists in there being determinate materials, for which only certain skills will be useful. Without other materials present, irrelevant competences remain irrelevant.

[122] Agerström, J., and Björklund, F., "Moral concerns are greater for temporally distant events and are moderated by value strength", *Social Cognition* 27.2 (2009), 261-263.

[123] Grocery shopping varies between nations and cultures, but the materials and competences it requires can be generally seen as on par for shoppers in different regions of the world. Consistency in their material design, and presupposed competences, enables different shoppers to equally understand the possibilities for action they provide. Even as we travel to different parts of the world with different food cultures and habits.

[124] Borgmann, A., "The moral complexion of consumption", *Journal of Consumer Research* 26.4 (2000), 420.

physics."[125] This disengagement makes it difficult for shoppers to show wider moral concern for those involved in food provision, as they are hidden from sight in the context of a grocery store.[126]

There is hope, however, for rescuing the disengaged character of overabundant and unreflective consumption. Using practices as heuristic tools, narratives of meaning (weaved into consumption practices) can be exposed. Rescuing consumption from 'the spectre of disengagement' in this way, as Borgmann puts it, may be the only way to restore its moral significance for our culture and society.[127]

From the layered meaning of grocery shopping, its inherent normativity can be extrapolated and subjected to ethical inquiry. That is, normativity broadly understood as "the whole range of phenomena for which it is appropriate to apply normative concepts, such as correct or incorrect, just or unjust, appropriate or inappropriate, right or wrong, and the like."[128] This inherent normativity determines the significance of everyday shopping experience; why we strive after certain *goods*, and avoid certain *bads*, while engaging in shopping.[129] It is constituted by our mutual performances as shoppers. Therefore, authors such as Rouse and Bohman do not see normativity as having to be identical for every agent.[130] In fact, conceiving of normativity in practice as the "mutual accountability of … constituent performances"[131] teases out the intersubjective and relational nature of collective normativity in practices.

Many conceptions of normativity posit a dualism between reality and a normative realm with "stable meanings, rules, norms, patterns, or presuppositions underlying the manifest diversity of social life."[132] They posit divides between (normative) thought and reality where there are none. Grocery shoppers are already part of reality, displaying "ongoing patterns of causal intra-action within partially shared circumstances."[133] A practice lens views these performances and their circumstances as a single object of inquiry, with its inherent normativity an indivisible part of ongoing performances and a reflection of shopping experiences. As Rouse aptly summarizes,

> normativity is not to be expressed in terms of governance by rules or de facto regularities in a community's behavior, values, or preferences. Normativity instead involves a complex pattern of interrelations among performances through time. Such performances are normative when they are directed toward one another as mutually accountable to common stakes, albeit stakes whose correct formulation is always at issue within the practice.[134]

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[125] *Ibid*, 421.
[126] The exception to this being products that explicitly tell a story of how they are sourced, produced, and shipped. Or products whose labels, in terms of status, describe regulatory requirements (e.g. organic, fair-trade) of production. However, the reliability of these labels and 'stories' may vary between different forms of certification, and even in-depth knowledge of what a label entails may not tell the whole story of those involved in food provisioning.
[127] *Ibid*, 422.
[128] Rouse, Social practices and normativity, 48.
[129] Harbers, Mol, & Stollmeyer, 219.
[130] Bohman, J., "Do Practices Explain Anything? Turner's Critique of the Theory of Social Practices", *History and Theory* 36.1 (1997), 106.
[131] Rouse, 48.
[132] *Ibid*, 53-54.
[133] *Ibid*, 52.
[134] *Ibid*, 53.

Common but different interests (solidarity), in practices such as grocery shopping, are shared needs, mutual accountability of performances, and similar stakes in participation. We do not have external conceptions of normativity, or a "god's-eye view that offers a definitive standpoint from which to discern what those stakes really are". Only through applying a perspective that reveals the mutual accountability of our performances, "from the midst of our complex causal intra-actions in partly shared circumstances", can we reveal what is at stake in these interactions.[135] A practice lens reveals how norms (in practice) have authority for shoppers; why they are effective in enabling and constraining certain actions, making the accomplishment of highly coordinated shopping practices possible.[136] If, for example, sustainable shopping behaviors are facilitated (by structural features), and performed regularly by others, chances are this will prompt more reflection by shoppers on the mutual stake we have in transitioning to more sustainable food practices.

This conception of normativity may not satisfy skeptics demanding more 'principled' conception of normativity, and mechanisms for justifying individual actions. However, this seems somewhat irrelevant to the field of applied ethics; where one inevitably encounters a wide range of moral belief-systems, and consensus and overlap represent the only shared ground for deliberation between agents.[137] Normative structures of shared practices (e.g. family life, grocery shopping, working and living together) represent the moral fiber of society, which is what applied ethicists face. However, prescriptivity of mainstream ethical theories, in the form of moral obligations, can sometimes cohere, (or arguably overtake), the lived experience of grocery shopping. Think, for example, of the way NGO's and interest groups 'moralize' meat consumption by invoking principled duties and obligations towards animals and the environment.

Shoppers' responsiveness to these forms of prescriptivity depend on whether they are versed, linguistically speaking, in its meaning. And whether it has a hold over their deliberations. This echoes Rouse's statement that "linguistic and other practices are always an integral part of the circumstances in which human beings are situated."[138] And Rorty's insistence that one cannot step outside of our linguistic traditions, our understanding of meanings of moral language, and the way it shapes "our thinking and self-criticism".[139] For prescriptive language in ethics to bear on shoppers' deliberations, their moral vocabulary (or imagination) must accommodate these prescriptions. In insisting that escaping this space of understanding is impossible, pragmatists such as Rorty merely remind us that our moral vocabulary is historically contingent, and out in the world. Not in some independent realm of moral mental states that we tap into.

The contingent and historical form of normativity, as found in practices, may be considered a mere descriptive account of currently held moral ideals. That is, it may only aspire to reflect temporary consensus on norms, ideals, and values we wish to uphold. But this sells normativity as found in practices short considerably, as Keulartz et al. emphasize with the example of technological artifacts. As mentioned in the first chapter, broad pragmatist approaches to ethics entail mild ethnocentrism towards

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[135] *Ibid*, 55.
[136] Bohman, 105-107; Rouse, 55.
[137] This is not meant to discard the importance of justification of actions through mutual accountability, which, following Rouse and Bohman's characterization, means justifications could occur within practice normativity. This also echoes London's reading of Aristotle, mentioned earlier on, urging ethicists to 'engage agents as and where they stand', employing principles, judgments and their justifications in ways understandable and relevant to those agents and their circumstances.
[138] Rouse, 52.
[139] Rorty, R., "Introduction", from *Consequences of pragmatism: Essays, 1972-1980*, University of Minnesota Press, 1982, 7.

the group of moral agents encountered in practice. Rather than conceiving of their current moral frameworks as contingent (perhaps defective) states of affairs, it would be much wiser to consider their normative development through the complexes and bundles of practice they have engaged in. The role of technological artefacts in a fast-paced and changing society shows how they may profoundly affect the moral fiber of society.[140] For Keulartz et al., this points to the blindness to change that mainstream ethical theories fall victim to. Grounding moral norms in universal starting points and principles somewhat ignores "*change* of norms and morals over time, influenced by technological and other developments."[141] Foundationalist theorizing often wrongly assumes that changing practices, with technological developments and progress, have no normative significance. They judge developments "from within the existing moral framework," and do not change their moral vocabulary to accord with new moral ideas and developments.[142]

Still, as discussed in the first chapter, much of moral progress has been achieved by going against entrenched, contingent, moral ideas and practices (e.g. slavery, discriminatory practices, etc.). The use of certain technologies afford people different roles, power relations, and strongly embody possibilities and constraints for available actions. The example Keulartz et al. offer in this regard is the contraceptive pill, which, upon introduction, profoundly influenced marital and procreative practices (e.g. control of childbirth, and implications for abortion practices).[143] This applies to the practice of grocery shopping as well, which owes its ubiquitous (globalized) character to the invention of conservation (e.g. refrigeration, conservation of food), transportation (e.g. infrastructures, supply chains), and retail (e.g. marketing, stores) technologies. Rapidly changing technologies can bring about profound changes to the moral fiber of society, and strongly affect the power structures and roles of moral agents.

Ethical theorizing tends to treat technological change in terms of continuity (trivializing change as mere variation on something existing, and denying the need for debate on its pros and cons), or 'slippery slope' arguments (demonizing change as the first step in a series of developments leading to a "moral abyss"). These arguments are mainly used to stop debate, or the practice itself.[144] But, as Keulartz et al. state, "normative ramifications of technological artifacts are rarely limited to the practice for which they are intended but often also filter through into associated or adjacent practices (in the case of the pill, into marriage and abortion)."[145] Regardless whether ethical theories offer the 'best approximation' of moral goods, bads, and principles for justified action, their focus "remains limited to the actions of people, thereby ignoring the normative significance of technological artifacts."[146]

By limiting their focus to actions of individual people, they ignore the social structures of power that enable and constrain actions for individuals.[147] Each successive iteration of practices, including its

[140] The evolution of meat production technologies, for example, has arguably desensitized us to the moral significance of rearing, killing and butchering animals to provide the ready-made portions found in the grocery store. We simply cannot perceive these process during our shopping trip.
[141] Keulartz et al., 10.
[142] *Ibid*, 11.
[143] *Ibid*, 9-10.
[144] *Ibid*, 11.
[145] *Ibid*, 10.
[146] *Ibid*, 10.
[147] While I have no space for this argument here, an example of this might be utilitarians such as Peter Singer. Who, for example, postulates the duty to donate part of one's salary for the poor (e.g. ten percent), without reverence for the structures of power in society that may stand in the way of this possibility. Either through constraining possibilities for charitable initiatives, or necessitating the full use of one's salary to foresee in personal expenses (perhaps living is becoming too expensive in a given country to allow space for charitable giving).

material dimensions, tells an ongoing story of the developing (sometimes arguably progressing) moral fiber of society. The correspondence of ethical theorizing to human affairs is therefore contingent on the circumstances under which insights and prescriptions are relevant to our experiences. Without understanding material dimensions of our practices, and their relation to our conduct, it is doubtful ethicists can truly 'apply' ethical theorizing to shopping experiences.

3.3 Mainstream Approaches in the Grocery Store

How might mainstream approaches in ethics provide moral guidance to everyday shoppers? What do they prescribe? How do they frame and conceptualize agents and their actions? To answer some of these questions, Peter Singer's brand of consequentialism will be shortly discussed. Appeals to consequences, as found in Utilitarianism, will show some of the issues with translating theories to practice.

Efforts of ethical theories to provide moral guidance are, roughly speaking, attempts to answer the moral question of what or how we *should* buy. This presents several difficulties for mainstream approaches. Theories diverge substantially in terms of framing agents and characterizing moral issues; centralizing either agency or structure, focusing on individual or collective decision-making, or prioritizing (self-evident) rights and moral obligations.[148] This is further complicated by different justifications and applications of moral principles, and different amounts of deliberation needed to operationalize principles for everyday conduct. Because ethical theories often generalize morality into universal moral principles, or a single criterion of good, they propose fairly abstract prescriptions.

Agents in practice therefore need to operationalize these insights for them to influence daily deliberations and conduct. In the words of Hoffman, moral principles "may acquire … affective and motive properties and become emotionally charged representations or … 'hot cognitions.'" By learning, for example, how moral principles proliferate certain norms and equip us to handle wide varieties of moral encounters.[149] Levels of mediation, or translation, required to do so represent the distance between ethical theorizing and the daily deliberations of shoppers.[150] When we do groceries, the question of what we *should* buy has many moral dimensions. Such as the nature of production, with considerations of sustainable sourcing and production, or fair trading standards safeguarding adequate incomes for farmers and producers, and equal distribution of resources. Or the types of foods we eat, including the choice for meat consumption (the meat and dairy industry is one of the biggest contributors to climate change and overexploitation of land), or a choice of diet for health and nutrition. Short-term, everyday decision-making does not permit lengthy deliberations in the store. Often, preferences and food choices are set beforehand. This urges ethical theories to provide workable rules of thumb, or practical principles, through which expression of moral concern in daily food choices is made possible.

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[148] This locus of moral concern varies between theories; they can be centered on agents themselves, the structures they are embedded in, or focus on the moral value of self-evident principles and rights. Not all approaches employ 'mild ethnocentrism' to proceed from within particular groups of moral agents. The way theories conceptualize agents and cohere with lived experience therefore varies between theories and contexts of application (agents as shoppers are more locally and specifically conceptualized than, say, citizens in a nation state, or members of a democratic society).

[149] Hoffman, M., "Introduction and Overview", in *Empathy and Moral Development*, Cambridge: University Press (2000), 15.

[150] This can consist in different amounts of specification, adaptation, or calculated application needed to tie moral principles and prescriptions to relevant deliberations for individual agents. In a sense, this space or divide often represents the very 'ethical work' to be done in practice; the amount of adjudication needed to settle conflicts, the amount of deliberation and guidance needed to help agents pursue certain goods, and so on.

Because there is limited space for comprehensive criticisms of different approaches in terms of practical feasibility and coherence with lived experience, I will focus on Peter Singer's branch of consequentialism, and the ways a practice lens can complement this approach to better inform shopping. Consequentialist ethical theories consider consequences of actions to determine their moral worth. The principle of utility that usually flows from these theories urges us to maximize wellbeing (or happiness) as much as possible, and for the most people (or other entities of moral concern), through our actions.[151] This is why Utilitarianism has been so prominent in the climate ethics debate. Climate change is a global problem, negatively affecting everyone, meaning the utilitarian aim of bringing about the best possible world through our actions (as a consequence) seems well positioned to help us deal with this issue.[152]

For consequentialists like Peter Singer, who is very vocal in the realm of food choices, the principle of utility extends to all beings capable of pain and suffering. Moral concern therefore extends to animals, who are "like humans and unlike rocks" in being capable of pain and suffering.[153] The general instrumental attitude of the meat industry (often treating animals as mere means for food), "intensive farming methods [that] inflict unnecessary distress on chickens, pigs, and veal calves", and the significant contributions of the meat industry to climate change, all contribute to Singer's argument that we should become vegetarians on utilitarian grounds.[154] He further urges us to work from sound theories (e.g. Utilitarianism) to practical judgments (e.g. we *ought* to become vegetarians), as opposed to the other way around. And he is adamant that "we should always try to find out as much as possible about the probable consequences of our actions."[155]

This brand of consequentialism presents some discordances with shopping experiences. For example, Singer's practical judgments that "a vegetarian diet does not involve great sacrifices … in the pleasures of the palate", and "the unimportance of the difference in pleasure between eating animal flesh and eating vegetarian food." And his further belief that pleasures of taste are trivial compared to pleasures of eating; arguing that if meat was uniformly delicious, and vegetarian food uniformly awful, his case would be weaker.[156] This presupposes a great deal about tastes and preferences of everyday shoppers, for many of whom vegetarian diets are unknown, let alone viable choices.[157] Stating that pleasures of taste can be wholly separated from pleasures of eating is also mistaken. Pleasures of eating arguably consist in preferred measures of sustenance, combined with preferences for flavor and cuisine. Adding up differently for everyone. Saying that we *could* be vegetarians is, therefore, not the same as arguing we *could* or *should* do it happily. Regarding this point, he confirms the suspicions of Philip Divine that his recipes for vegetarian cooking are essential parts of his argument.[158]

Moreover, it seems practical judgments do, in fact, inform his defense of sound theory (to prompt vegetarianism). But if consequences of our actions are the relevant criterion of moral evaluation,

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[151]Singer, P. "Utilitarianism and vegetarianism", *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1980), 328.

[152] Jamieson, D., "When Utilitarians Should be Virtue Theorists", from *Climate ethics: Essential readings*, Oxford University Press on Demand, 2010, 316.

[153] Singer, 328-329.

[154] *Ibid*; 331, 334.

[155] *Ibid*, 327-328.

[156] *Ibid*, 333.

[157]A viable choice being one that coheres with one's current moral priorities, as opposed to just being strictly feasible. I agree with Singer that nearly all of us can survive on a vegetarian diet, but I am unsympathetic to the notion that our choosing not to do so is seen as morally apprehensible. This would be blind to how specific practices and cultural histories shape our, often ingrained, food preferences.

[158] *Ibid*, 333.

and knowing about those consequences involves looking to practice (judging that the meat industry is problematic), it is unclear why he urges us to work from sound theory to practical judgment only. Especially if we should always try to find out as much as possible about probable consequences of actions. Lastly, while Singer is mostly concerned with promoting vegetarianism on account of the aggregate suffering of animals, using utilitarian calculations to argue for a vegetarian diet, this somewhat discounts other (principled or deeply felt) reasons people may have to refrain from meat consumption.[159]

Consequentialism, in general, struggles with applying the principle of utility to everyday deliberations. The 'one principle' concern of consequentialist theories (maximization of wellbeing) holds regardless of the means to achieve it. Making it somewhat blind to moral priorities of shoppers. Even seemingly immoral practices (perpetuating violence, deception or unfair distributions of goods) are defensible, if they maximize wellbeing overall. Implying "that that we should lie, cheat, steal, even appropriate Aristotle, when that is what brings about the best outcomes."[160]

If hiding atrocious meat-farming methods from shoppers and continuing with business as usual contributes to more overall wellbeing, consequentialism may prescribe just that. Furthermore, it is unclear how shoppers should weigh the time-scale and scope of their actions. Are they maximizing wellbeing in the short or long-run? How could they even calculate the long-term effects of their actions when moving through the fast-paced environment of a grocery store? As Birnbacher points out, "the principle of utility as a purely aggregative principle is completely, and deliberately, insensitive to the way a given utility is distributed among the members of a society."[161] It is also insensitive to the way overall utility relates to special moral priorities of shoppers (moral concern for one's family, loved ones, etc.).

If one does accept the singular, one-principle orientation of consequentialist theories, several problems regarding feasibility of application still remain. Including uncertainties regarding the effects of our actions and contributions of others, as well as uncertainties regarding possibilities for action at one's disposal. As a moral issue, climate change is caused by the cumulative effect of many seemingly inconsequential actions by people unknown and distant from each other. This presents shoppers with uncertainty regarding the impact of their actions. If they buy sustainable products, what difference will it make overall?[162] Because consequentialism compares the local utility of actions to aggregate global utility, the inconsequential contribution of single actions is unlikely to move grocery shoppers to act.[163] This uncertainty is enlarged even further through the demand of non-contingency, which urges grocery shoppers to contribute to minimize climate change regardless of whether others do so as well.[164] While these uncertainties apply to other ethical theories, consequentialism especially suffers from these issues. Its inherent global scope of moral concern (individual action as related to global wellbeing) is too large for everyday deliberations. Furthermore, we are simply unsure whether others are also contributing

[159] If love for animals is a moral priority, this likely presents much stronger reasons to refrain from eating meat than asserting that animals are capable of suffering (therefore having moral standing), and should therefore be spared to maximize wellbeing. Most people are aware of some measure of suffering and pain for animals in current meat-production practices, and many of them have not switched to vegetarian diets on account of that reason. For these people, a switch to a vegetarian diet may sooner be prompted by moral concern for the environment, or desires for more sustainable, balanced relations to nature than current food practices can facilitate.
[160] Jamieson, 326.
[161] Birnbacher, D., "Ethics and social science: Which kind of co-operation?", *Ethical theory and moral practice* 2.4 (1999), 333.
[162] Sandler, R., "Ethical theory and the problem of inconsequentialism: Why environmental ethicists should be virtue-oriented ethicists", *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 23.1-2 (2010), 167.
[163] Ibid, 171.
[164] Jamieson, 318.

to overall utility in their shopping. An appropriate response to the issue of climate change requires large scale action, and uncertainty regarding the contributions of others makes this all the more difficult.

Other uncertainties involve opportunities for action provided in practices. Consequentialist theories conceptualize action as a form of production (bringing about consequences), "a matter of manipulating 'the causal levers' within one's reach", relating actions to the world as blind causal mechanisms. Meaning the value of actions lie in available "means of controlling the events within our power."[165] But as the practice lens revealed, possibilities for action in practice are powerfully enabled and constrained for everyday practitioners. Because actions in practices acquire meaning through participation, "it is not possible to evaluate an action falling under a given practice from a perspective independent of that practice."[166]

Maximization of wellbeing, as the singular criterion of moral concern, is far removed from the deliberations of grocery shoppers. While a notion of solidarity can ground shared practices; such as family life, sharing food and cultures, even human flourishing and continuing searches for the good life, it is doubtful that an indifferent principle of maximizing wellbeing can do the same for shoppers. It does not speak well to their everyday food deliberations. In the next paragraph, the use of practice-based approaches, to complement mainstream theories, will show how the practice lens might help mediate ethical theorizing to the lived experience of shoppers.

3.4 Practice-based Approaches in the Grocery Store

The preceding discussion on the business of applied ethics, to provide moral guidance in practices we engage in, presupposes a strong coherence with the lived experience of agents and their everyday deliberations. Employing pragmatic or practice-based approaches in ethics, with complementary use of the practice lens, can help mainstream approaches speak more adequately to shoppers' experiences.

For one, the practice lens can complement the use of consequentialist theories in grocery stores. By shifting its conception of action, as production, to action as 'moves in practice', that constitute shoppers' authorial power. As Rawls argues in "Two Concepts of Rules", actions in practice are "governed by the rules of games and social institutions", and have different structures than consequentialism presupposes (action as production). While practices overall can be evaluated in terms of consequences (how much wellbeing do they maximize), particular 'moves' within practices are judged by practice rules and normativity.[167] The possibilities for action that the grocery store provides constitute the 'authorial power' of meaningful action within a practice. Action as production, on consequentialist grounds, considers "the power to make things *happen*", while authorial power "is the power to make things *count*." Our power to act and produce consequences in practice exists by virtue of the background conventions, rules and possibilities of those practices.[168] Our engagement in practice enables and constrains our possibilities to make things count "in virtue of a complex of shared attitudes and intentions", relative to our mutual stakes in participation. By supplementing consequentialism with a practice lens, possibilities for maximization of wellbeing in practices, as 'moves' through authorial power,

[165] Schapiro, T., "Three conceptions of action in moral theory", *Noûs* 35.1 (2001), 95.
[166] *Ibid*, 102.
[167] *Ibid*, 100.
[168] *Ibid*, 110-111.

can be conceptualized. This enables consequentialists to translate or mediate their singular principle of moral concern to the experiences of everyday shoppers.

Another possibility for complementing mainstream approaches is invoking virtues. Virtue ethics is better positioned to cohere with shopping experiences than consequentialism.[169] Virtues entail appeals to character, dispositions, skills and traits. Shifting "the focus of assessment … to the agent herself … making the effort … is a matter of personal integrity."[170] Appeals to characters of shoppers coheres better with their experience, as they likely already possess varying traits, contributing differently to their held moral priorities in practice. Virtue-oriented theories include wellbeing among a plurality of possible goods (e.g. sustainability, distributive justice) to strive for, and "evaluates attitudes or perspectives of people directly … on the basis of patterns of behavior throughout a person's life and among people generally".[171]

Their integrating effect makes a range of goods relevant for moral concern, and considers possibilities and constraints of agents in being able to promote certain goods through their actions. Acknowledging the way "institutions play important roles", and "can disable as well as enable the development of various virtues."[172] Actions become right to the extent that they are virtuous, or contribute to moral goods (such as sustainability, the good life, etc.).[173] Thus solving the problems of inconsequentialism and non-contingency that utilitarian theories struggle with. Acting virtuous is considered good, regardless of whether contributions have substantial effects, and whether others contribute as well.[174]

To conceptualize available virtues in a grocery store, the practice lens can be employed to reveal the mutual accountability of our performances, and what is at stake, in shopping. Refining the continuum of possible actions or authorial power available to shoppers. Thereby conceptualizing the range of possible virtuous actions in the landscape of opportunity of grocery shopping, sensitive to shoppers' limitations and moral priorities.[175]

Virtues can be tailored to the context or practice in which they are useful. This allows shoppers to express consumption related virtues in the store (moderation, self-restraint), while adopting other virtues in their home (recycling, reducing energy use).[176] Different practices allow different actions for promoting moral goods, meaning virtues are ideally positioned to translate moral criteria of concern (e.g. maximization of wellbeing) to daily activities of shoppers. Giving them room to deliberate on the feasibility, relevance and persuasiveness of virtues at hand, and enabling wide ranges of moral action, conducive to a plurality of different goods (e.g. sustainability, family life). Virtue-ethics might, in this regard, articulate a theory of 'the good shopper', sensitive to the authorial power of shoppers in practice

[169] Virtue ethics is often characterized as one of three dominant mainstream approaches in ethics, along with deontological and consequentialist theories. In this thesis, however, I approach virtue ethics as a practice-based approach for argumentative reasons. I believe its orientation on the different traits, dispositions and skills found in different agents makes virtue ethics decidedly practice-oriented. In that it acknowledges differences between agents in terms of possession and expression of virtues, and considers virtues in practice to contribute to pursuit of specific moral goods as strived for by members of communities or societies.
[170] Sandler, 167.
[171] *Ibid*, 177.
[172] Jamieson, 325-326.
[173] Sandler, 176.
[174] *Ibid*, 177.
[175] *Ibid*, 177-178.
[176] Jamieson, 325.

and the mutual stakes of participation. Virtues tailored to the moral issues at stake in shopping practices, and the possibilities for action of everyday shoppers.

Another promising approach in the grocery store is narrative ethics. Which views every moral situation as unique, emphasizes the tensions between individual and shared meanings in practices, and considers their coherence with individual life stories and circumstances. Engaging our social embeddedness and the way it shapes, enables, and makes meaningful, the "values and conceptions of the morally good life … established in the communities in which the individual lives."[177] Lived experience itself is a narrative, that privileges our beliefs and self-understanding, capturing what matters to us most by describing "what we actually do".[178]

Narrative ethics does not reduce the "discord, disunity, and disagreement" that characterizes moral life. Instead, it emphasizes that the task of ethics is to embrace and engage its diversity, focusing less on settling conflicts of perspective, and involving more people into deliberation and dialogue. Relational virtues, such as dialogue, empathy and solidarity are centralized, and help disclose what goods we collectively strive for, in ways sensitive to our possibilities for action. It emphasizes moral imagination, to mediate between ultimate moral goods and the everyday possibilities for promoting and realizing those goods, in practice.[179] Because institutions and power structures strongly determine our possibilities for moral action, and our life stories reveal our deepest values fully, the goal of narrative ethics is "to get the stories into the open where we can examine their values, sift their conflicts, and explore their power to work on us."[180] The practice lens can be used to connect our stories to insights from ethical theorizing. This way, our lived experience, as a narrative, can be brought into open ethical deliberation regarding life's most worthy pursuits.[181]

Thick descriptions of interconnected moral life, acquired through a practice lens, can inform ethicists of the relevant possibilities and constraints for moral action of shoppers. Foregrounding narratives and stories, as historical accounts of personal journeys and moral priorities, that determine the goods we strive for, or the bads we wish to avoid. The practice lens can help ethicists to mediate between lived experience (as narratives and stories) and ethical theorizing regarding conceptions of the good, the right, and possible duties and obligations. As Birnbacher emphasizes, "empirical descriptions, theories and hypotheses are not only desirable supplements to applied ethics but a necessary part of it."[182] Both to assess impact and feasibility of principles on daily deliberations of agents, as well as adapt them to the context of application required.[183]

The dual responsibility of applied ethicists is therefore reflecting on moral principles in terms of consistency and coherence with moral life (at the level of theories), as well as on their effectiveness in practice (for pursuing moral goods).[184] Arguments regarding shoppers' food deliberations should be

[177] McCarthy, J., "Principlism or narrative ethics: must we choose between them?", *Medical Humanities* 29.2 (2003), 67-68.
[178] *Ibid*, 68.
[179] *Ibid*, 68-70.
[180] Morris, D., "Narrative, ethics, and pain: Thinking with stories", *Narrative* 9.1 (2001), 70-71.
[181] Arguably, a practice-based approach such as narrative ethics can itself perhaps accommodate ethical theorizing from mainstream approaches. Although I feel that a practice lens can prove indispensable to narrative ethics for better understanding of how individual narratives and stories connect in more performative settings for human conduct (such as practices).
[182] Birnbacher, 319.
[183] *Ibid*; 319, 321.
[184] *Ibid*, 330-331.

grounded in thick descriptions of their experience, in "local circumstances where 'real' decisions are made." Grocery shopping is embedded in domestic routines, and food practices, involving considerations of value, quality, taste, or substantive moral commitments (being a good parent, cook, shopper, etc.). The "repertoire of store choices to fulfil [shoppers'] diverse requirements" is constrained by the available stores, products and routines available to them.[185] Moral duties, or obligations, need therefore be sensitive to socio-economic circumstances, engagements in practice, and personal moral priorities.[186]

While different theories can be employed in practice, be they consequentialist, deontological, or virtue-oriented, some mediation is often needed to make moral prescriptions feasible for, and coherent with, shoppers' experience and possibilities for moral action. Singular principles, such as utility maximization, stand too far from daily food deliberations. Its scope of moral concern is too wide (global) to allow quick deliberation in the store, and they are somewhat indifferent to special moral priorities that characterize our lived experience. Virtue theories, narrative ethics, and other more practice-oriented approaches speak better to shopping experiences. Offering space for a plurality of moral goods to strive for, a variety of ways to achieve them, and stronger coherence with the lived experience of shoppers in terms of their perspective, possibilities, and limits, for action.

Complementary use of a practice lens affords ethicists a perspective that unearths our mutual stakes in practices, and examines possibilities for action we have, together with their significance to us as agents. Providing thick descriptions of moral life to describe our circumstances, and revealing our authorial power[187] on a shared moral stage. Narratives and stories may help conceptualize the lived experience of agents (what *do* we do?), and can be connected to abstract ethical theorizing (what *should* we do?) by the connective tissue of a practice lens or perspective (what *can* we do?).

[185] Jackson, P. et al., "Retail restructuring and consumer choice 2. Understanding consumer choice at the household level", *Environment and Planning A* 38.1 (2006), 23-24.
[186] Birnbacher, 331.
[187] Rather serendipitously, action in practice as 'authorial power' presupposes a certain 'authorship' of one's life-story, cohering (at least metaphorically, and arguably, substantively) with narrative approaches to ethics.

Chapter 4: *'Checkout'*
Conclusion and Discussion

Having completed our ethical journey through the grocery store, with everyday shoppers and the practice lens, what sort of conclusions can we 'cash out'? What are some implications of this line of inquiry? And how might future inquiries contribute to this debate on methodological commitments in ethics? In this thesis, I have argued that

Applied ethicists should complement their use of ethical theories with a practice lens in the area of food practices.

By positioning the priority of lived experience as a minimal requirement for meaningful ethical work in practice, and arguing for the use of a practice lens to uncover the nature and interconnections of our collective engagements, I have attempted to show that its unique perspective, or view, of human affairs, can be indispensable in connecting ethical theorizing to the lived experience of everyday agents. To this end, the ethical journey through the grocery store, that I have taken the reader on, has passed several stops along the way.

In chapter one, *'the entrance'*, we entered the grocery store by specifying some minimal requirements of applied ethical work in the practice of grocery shopping. The anti-theory debate was discussed, highlighting the inability of foundationalist ethical theories to grasp moral life in all its complexities. This revealed the importance of cohering with the lived experience of everyday agents (or shoppers), when doing ethical work in practice. The diffuse nature of shoppers, in terms of socio-economic circumstances and moral priorities prompts a necessary, mild ethnocentrism towards particular groups of agents. Aristotle's notion of 'engaging agents as and where they stand' on account of mutually understood reasons, and the pragmatist shift in understanding in ethics, from a 'context of justification' to a 'context of discovery', emphasized the need for creative heuristics, and flexible approaches, in engaging agents in practice. That is, if applied ethics is to be responsive to the dynamic, changing nature of moral life.

In chapter two, *'the shopping basket'*, shoppers and their particular moral beliefs, commitments and values (their 'baggage') were examined. This revealed the diversity in moral outlooks, frameworks and circumstances of individual shoppers, coming together in a shared moral space in the context of grocery shopping. Then, a discussion of practice theories, and the practice lens, served to show how these approaches are better positioned to understand our lived experience; as performative, ongoing, complexes and bundles of practices. Helping reveal the distinct advantages of a practice lens to understand elements of practices, their connections, mutual influence, and role in shaping the moral landscape of opportunity for everyday shoppers. Making a practice lens highly useful for understanding how agency in practices is defined by opportunities for moral action they provide. Furthermore, understanding the dynamic way social order is constantly produced and reproduced in practices offers a rich description of moral life, and is more suitable for effective policy interventions.

In chapter three, *'food choices and deliberations'*, we proceeded with the business of analyzing moral guidance from mainstream approaches in the grocery store, and comparing this with the complementary use of practice-based approaches and a practice lens. Here, the advantage of a practice lens, to uncover the inherent normativity of practices, was first discussed. Then, the discord between

abstract theorizing (in singularly principled approaches such as consequentialism) and the lived experience of shoppers revealed that mainstream approaches do not always speak well to daily deliberations in practice. The translation of principles to shoppers' deliberations was then shown to be better facilitated through an ethical conduit, such as a practice lens. This helps ethicists connect the lived experiences of shoppers (in narratives, stories, and valuable life pursuits) to ethical theorizing on moral issues and responsibilities (in theories), by understanding the specific engagements of agents of practice, and the landscape of moral opportunities at their disposal.

Our journey has revealed several take-aways for the larger field of applied ethics. Most importantly, that connecting the level of lived experience (in life stories and narratives) and the level of theoretical justifications of moral goods and values would likely benefit from the use of a practice lens. To provide ethical guidance at different levels of abstraction, answering three interrelated questions at the micro, meso, and macro level of moral deliberations.

Narratives and stories may help conceptualize the lived experience of agents (what *do* we do?), and can be connected to abstract ethical theorizing (what *should* we do?) by the connective tissue of a practice lens or perspective (what *can* we do?). The first is a question of narrative, a story of lived experience that constitutes our daily activities. The second is a moral question of what goods and bads we ought to strive for in practice, and justifying the reasons why this is so. The third is a question of practical feasibility, requiring understanding of practices and the possibilities of moral action they provide.

In terms of complementing mainstream theories such as consequentialism, a practice lens might reveal the relevant interrelations of utilities (distributions of resources, goods, opportunities, etc.) that enable and constrain certain actions over others, making moral prescriptions feasible and coherent with experiences of shoppers in practice.[188] Similarly for mainstream appeals to duty and virtues, the practice lens can reveal the landscape of possible duties, virtues, and the values and priorities they promote or safeguard.

The ethics of grocery shopping cannot be equated solely with access to certain stores (e.g. organic, fair trade, sustainable markets), or socio-economic possibilities of shoppers (high or low income, ethnic and cultural histories), but must be examined in the context of particular life stories and narratives of meaning regarding food choices.[189] Taking these into account as the collection of experiences of shoppers, combined with a practice lens on the elements, forces and circumstances that guide us through the grocery store, might yield a thicker and richer description of moral life that is suited for mainstream ethical analysis (using principles and theories). Only by "cherishing the concrete, particular, provisional, personal, partial, subjective, excessive, woolly, fuzzy, engaged, fragmented dimensions of human life"[190], can we begin to facilitate moral deliberation in our everyday food choices and deliberations.

I have not pursued a stronger version of this inquiry, that might question whether ethical theories and practice theories presuppose incommensurable ontological conceptions of morality (of an ideological, as opposed to a normative, nature). My choice to argue for the complementary use of mainstream approaches and a practice lens was motivated by my belief that the practice lens offers innumerable

[188] Birnbacher, 335.
[189] Johnston, 312.
[190] McCarthy, 69.

advantages for many scientific fields of research and inquiry. And that an open-minded ethical disposition in practice, more sensitive to the life-stories, narratives and daily experiences of moral agents, can improve the business of applied ethics substantially. There are, however, several important limitations to this line of inquiry.

I have somewhat underspecified the notion of lived experience of agents (or shoppers). In part, because this specification would take up time and space that are unavailable here, but primarily because I believe that the advantage of employing a practice lens is to provide thicker, not thinner, descriptions of moral life. In a sense, I have therefore used 'lived experience' as somewhat of a blanket term, to cover all the distinct moral lives of ordinary agents, and foreground the importance of their particular stories in the context of grocery shopping. For that reason, this thesis elaborates, along broad lines, an approach that should have to be worked out and detailed much more, before any far reaching conclusions can be drawn. A similar limitation is my cursory discussion of the anti-theory debate, which has many distinct anti-theoretical positions, differing in degrees to which they reject the use of theories, and in the proposed possibilities of ethical theories to grasp moral life. I have not had the space to discuss them all, but feel confident in following Furrow's discussion of their similar concerns regarding theorizing in ethics. My discussion of practice theories, and specification of a practice lens, has also remained rather broad for two reason; because there is no unified or coherent practice theory, and because I believe that practice theories articulate a certain view or perspective, that is less sensitive to specific terminology and can be applied rather flexibly.

Along the way, several objections to this line of inquiry have been discussed. Including the charge that practice theories are merely descriptive tools, and have no prescriptivity to offer for applied ethical work. To this, I have answered that the inherent normativity of practices, as mutual accountability of performances, can help ethicists mediate prescriptivity from mainstream approaches to the lived experience of shoppers, and that this objection is somewhat irrelevant to the purpose for practice-based approaches I have set out here.

Another objection might be that the approach I have explored is merely another form of pragmatism. Both through my 'choice for solidarity' (as opposed to objectivity) as the anchor of this story, as well as my consideration of the pragmatic shift in understanding from a 'context of justification' to a 'context of discovery'. To this, I answer that I have not made the pragmatist choice for solidarity over objectivity; instead pursuing arguments in favor of both co-existing as valuable aims in the larger field of ethics. Furthermore, I have not followed the pragmatist notion that we should shift our ethical paradigm to a context of discovery completely. Instead, I believe that there is room in applied ethics for justification, both in theorizing and in interpersonal moral encounters, as well as discovery, to unearth the fuzzy and messy nature of moral life, and help us deal with emerging moral issues. In this sense, I believe the practice lens to be somewhat novel, in that it has potential to connect these different contexts of ethical pursuits, in ways that might benefit both, equally valid, aims of ethics.

This introduces some suggestions for future research on this debate. The feasibility and effectiveness of this tentative methodological proposal will only prove itself through implementation and experimentation. Ironically, this means the proposals I have put forward ought to inspire their use, if we are to know whether this approach has any merit. On top of that, the complementary use of mainstream approaches and a practice lens will be more successful for non-foundationalist theories, meaning that the complementary use of foundationalist theories and a practice lens is difficult, if not outright impossible. The flexibility of different approaches (mainstream or practice-based), and their susceptibility

to a practice lens, as a conduit, will have to be further examined in future lines of inquiry, and practical implementations.

To conclude, some final considerations. Because we are engaged in shared practices through common but different interests (or solidarity), and the moral fiber of our society can be seen as the culmination of normative development of our shared practices (in which lived experience occurs), this moral fiber is much more likely to be apprehended and understood in stories and narratives of solidarity, rather than the indifferent, universal god's eye view that ethical theories struggle to articulate. Mediating between abstract ethical theorizing and the lived experience of shoppers through a practice lens will benefit both the aims of ethics generally, as well as enable us to better guide moral agents through their practical engagements. The practice lens can serve as a conduit between levels of abstraction in applied ethics, the connective tissue between lived experience (in stories and narratives), the practices we engage in (through a practice lens), and ethical theorizing on moral goods we ought to strive for (ethical theories, principles, and justifications) in our endeavors and pursuits. To help further our shared goods and ends through solidarity, as commonly but differentially invested in grocery shopping and other practices.

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