

Motivating worries and questions, coming from my life and philosophical work:



(1) My children drink 'muscle milk' ... is this the end of meals?

It seems we do not need to combine the project of nourishing ourselves with the having of meals, so why do we do it? What would we lose if we stopped having meals?

(2) Are meals an art form, valuable and meaningful as art is?

Certainly meals can hold aesthetic and artistic value, through complex experiences and creative design.



No, meals themselves cannot be art (even if food, wine, tableware, etc. can).

Meals and art differ in how they help our lives be meaningful:

- Artistic meaning should be accessible to and manifested in our experience of art – we aim to know and understand artworks unusually well.
- Our experience of meals does not have to give us access to their meaning – *what makes meals meaningful does not have to be a focus of attention for, or even be understood by, people experiencing a meal.*
- Meals and art thus represent two extremes – meaning that is collectively enacted and accumulated (but not necessarily experienced) and meaning that is individually experienced.

We need both kinds of meaning-making.



1Detail, Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*. Brooklyn Museum. Jook Leung Photography.

Meals are important: to have more than individually anchored meaning, we have to surrender some meanings to what we enact unknowingly.

