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Public Lecture:

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Counting Calories: From Logos to Praxis

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What is a calorie? One might say, following physics (and Wikipedia), that a calorie is 4.18400 Joules, or the amount of energy necessary to increase the heat of a gram of water by one degree Celsius. It is a big step, from this description, to the calorie that circulates in our daily lives – where, after all, it holds much more than this tiny amount of energy. And yet, it is precisely this step that I want to take in this lecture: from the notion that, because we know how to *define* it, we know what a calorie *is*, to the exploration of what a calorie *does* – all in support of the claim that a thing is what it *performs*. In this lecture, then, I ask a praxiographical set of questions: I seek to find out what comes *with*, and what is *in*, the calorie, rather than what it *is*. I ask questions about its *praxis*, rather than providing answers that mobilize its *logos*. And of course, our exploration today will tell us something about this move from praxis to logos: it will suggest a few things about how to practice “praxiography.”