

# Cognizing Food: A Delicate Case of the Phenomenally Conscious.

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The warm blend of dark chocolate fudge melting on your tongue; the tingling sweet sensation of fresh lemonade and the cool air flowing through your nostrils as you exhale with a scent of mint; the overwhelming soundscape that echoes through your mind when devouring a homemade potato crisp; or the mouthwatering olfactory dome forming around you as a slice of bacon slowly roasts in the pan. All these examples illustrate most vividly how food can be cognized. Evidently, the experience of food can occur in multifarious ways with exhilaration and aggravation merely being two points on an infinite continuum.

Subsequently this research attempted to tap into the lived experience of food. For though a thought for food can be embodied as a complex construct of sensory and perceptual sensations for one, whereas another individual might experience it as something social or cultural that is emplaced into a context or environment. Implementing an empirical phenomenological approach conveyed a multiple case study highlighting the diverging experience of food and provided a basis for understanding how different individuals cognize food. Doing this deconstructs common concepts such as *food cravings* or *hunger* that are taken as exemplary for the manifold of phenomena that are poorly understood in science. Often conceptions as such have reached a certain consolidation that do not allow for movement and leave us with stereotypical approximations or operationalization. To Maurice Merleau-Ponty the »whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression« [1].

In the end discussing the characteristics, complexity, frequency, value and hence overall structure of the experience of food poses a fundamental question for the study of cognition, in *what we consider as (phenomenally) conscious?* By returning to the »things themselves« [2], as Husserl advocated for the study of phenomenology, a fresh perspective is facilitated that will hopefully reveal novel nuances for contemplating the idea of a *social mind in the connected world* as is the focus theme of this interdisciplinary college.

## References

- [1] Merleau-Ponty, M. 2002. Phenomenology of Perception. *London; New York: Routledge.*
- [2] Husserl, E. 1970. The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. *Northwestern University Press.*